

# Study on Women portrayal of Media

**Singh Anisha Bhairavprasad**

Researcher, BAMMC Department

Shri L.P. Raval College of Mass Media & Management Studies, Mira-Bhayander, Maharashtra, India

**Abstract:** *Films are the only channels which are looked up by Indian audience to come out of their dream world. Our country and society's values are shown in a very clear way in Indian cinema. This paper has tried to show the way women are being displayed in Bollywood cinema. In this globalized world the portrayal of Indian women is very rigid and there are not many variations in their representation. There is hardly any identity of Indian women in the Indian cinema. Also in this paper there is an attempt to find out if there is a change in the role of women from traditional times to contemporary times in Indian cinema.*

**Keywords:** Indian Cinema, Stereotypes, cultural, contemporary times

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cinema is for entertainment. It takes the people in a different world out of reality, out of their daily routine work. It moulds opinions, builds images and focuses on our cultural values. Hindi is the language which is mostly used in the Bollywood Industry. Millions of people go to theatres every week to watch films. The characterization of women in Indian cinema is mediocre. The fifty percent of the population in our country constitute of women and hence the way they are shown on the big screen develops their stereotypical image. A male centric approach is seen in Bollywood. It has been seen from the olden times that males have an upper hand. The themes are male centric and the heroine is not much visible in comparison to hero. Our society is based on patriarchal values so Indian cinema has been able to show women in different roles is still a question. This paper shows how a woman is displayed and her characterization in Indian cinema.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since Independence Bollywood has changed from legendary movies to taking concepts from English movies. Women role have changed from being dependent on males to being independent.

The importance of Indian cinema today needs to be understood. People escape from reality while watching films. The viewpoint of people is changing. The feminists have spoken about misinterpretation of women in Bollywood. The feminists can see gender bias in cinema like women issues treated in cinema, etc. Feminist theory spoke about how women are treated as an object in Bollywood. Women have been shown in extreme roles like superior or terrible where they don't stand in between anywhere; either as a female lead or the bad women. Even movies are motivated by mythology where women should have image of 'Sita' where she is loyal and obeys her husband. Some of the movies show women as passive and submissive wives. . In seventies women were in doing roles like of a singer or a village tonga driver. The working women vanished in nineties. The women role is of glamour and entertainment like Priyanka Chopra in Agneepath (2012). Some movie makers have made women focused movies.

(Sibal, March 2018)

The role of women in Bollywood is shown in a stereotypical image like passive wife, mother who is suffering which has now changed to independent girl in movies. In this globalized world women role is heterosexual and has a rigid fashion. As we are in a patriarchal society the theory of alter-casting which says that a spectator needs to agree to the role that we want them to perform. Women can be seen in those roles in Bollywood. The women role is to be a offspring, take care of brothers or sisters, doing household work, ideal wife, devoted mother who is self-sacrificing, etc. The vamp in Indian cinema is the Western woman who drinks parties, etc so she is immoral with offensive behavior. In sixties the vamps were Helen, ArunaIrani and Bindu. We can hardly see any ordinary woman in Indian cinema. She is like a decorative object that does not have her own identity. The rain-saree-dancing image of women which is fulfilling the fantasy of men is shown in many movies. In 90's 'family drama' films were the most known. SoorajBarjatya's and

Karan Johar's films which shows women are confident but only confined to their homes. They are always subordinate to men. The symbols of marriage like mangalsutra and sindoor are shown. The women directors later came in the scene who have shown the experiences of women which were ignored. The women directors explored themes of female identity like Water (2005), English Vinglish (2012), etc. Some of the women directors were Aparna Sen, Deepa Mehta, etc. They have many problems in finding private financiers.

(Habib, September 2017)

In women-centric films, women have fought against injustice. The social change is very necessary in our society especially when we talk about the behavior of women. The Bollywood industry is dominated by males. In this industry earlier women used to be an actress or singer but now are even choreographers, costume designers, editors, etc but still when we compare them with the count of men; their count is still less. The male directors decide the onscreen roles of women. Women is supposed to accept injustice and violence hence violence against women is always shown in Indian Cinema. The leading roles are always played by men. In women-centered movies they stand up for themselves and break the conservative roles. When we talk about initial stage women were not allowed to even act in movies; later when they were allowed they had to go as per the society's norms and play a role daughter, ideal wife, mother, etc. It was encouraged from 'Manusmriti'. The actresses have to be beautiful, young, fair skin tone and sensual. She is an item of craving. The directors get new heroines and give them a role with a hero of forties age. The male actors are given better payment than female actors. The films are always based on hero where he protects the heroine. There is sexual aggression seen against women like eve-teasing, rape, etc. In 1960's few directors even questioned the stereotyping of women. They made films on real issues like poverty and many types of exploitations. They belonged to artistic cinema. They have shown a different image of women. They were interested in portraying women in their daily lives, problems they faced, etc. Few women directors made films related to women but they were not of huge success and got funding from West. There were huge controversies on women centric films like 'Fire' and 'Water'. They were not successful and were given title of an art film and it was told that woman director was from outside India and didn't have much information about Hindu religion.

(Sarkar, December, 2012)

The gender biasness is there in movies. When it comes to films posters female does get an equal chance even though they don't have important role in the movie. There is a difference in the job of men and women in films. Their looks and dressing is different. The males are always over-represented, strong and violent. The women are connected with home, calm and less active. More men are shown in commercial organizations and even given salary hike. In social media and dating sites women are judged by their looks while males are judged by how they behave. The males in movies are famous singer, an honest police officer, etc while women are beautiful and simple looking. In some movies 'Kaminey' women have very few dialogues. When we talk about emotions men are mostly angry and women are mostly happy.

(Nishtha Madaan1, October 2017)

The six prominent stereotypical roles of women in Indian Cinema are focused which are mother, wife, daughter, daughter-in-law, widow and other woman. Cinema is a commercial thing where investors look for profit. For a film to be successful in box-office they require equal portion of romance, melodrama, action, suspense, music, dance and comedy. In Indian movies love conquers all, good remains in the end and bad is punished. Stereotyping helps to establish a character quickly and also reinforces the expected models of behavior. These stereotyping has led the real Indian women left ignored or lost as there is no difference between reality and fantasy. As mother women is shown as selfless, protective, great sacrifices, courageous, etc. As wife women is shown as loyal, faithful, uncomplaining, tolerant, patient and forgiving. As daughter women are shown as obedient, well behaved, respectful, doing domestic chores, etc. As a daughter-in-law woman is shown as accepting in-laws as her new parents, obeys their wishes, loyal to them, etc. As a widow women is shown as dressed in white, no makeup or jewellery, cursed, can't remarry, etc. As the other woman; women is shown as who takes revenge, courtesan, vamp, home-wrecker, lust, greed, etc. These roles have been repeated thousand times in the Indian cinema.

(Rehman)

The Heroine in Bollywood plays the role which is acceptable to our society. A victim wife will not leave her husband's house even though she is facing physical and emotional violence and will only leave after her death. In Indian traditions

it is called 'doli' and 'arthi'. The women are not showcased as normal human beings but ideal women who are not liable to do anything incorrect. In any of the scenes their requirements and what they would like to become is not showcased. The Bollywood Heroines mostly stay at home happily after marriage even though they are educated. There are no scenes of women working in office, walking on the street and return home after a tiring day. In the movies men are always the savior and women are always the victim. The heroine is always rescued by the hero. Women are shown physically as well as mentally inferior. In some movies women did play important characters but their identities were absent they were always confined to their family. In movies which are based on battle women wait endlessly for him to return. In many movies like 'Devdas', 'UmraoJaan', etc women is shown as a courtesan where hero has sympathy but will never marry her. The famous actress 'NanditaDas' was told she is a dark-skinned actress amongst fair heroines. The woman who has a dark skin colour, without powder or lipstick or who has more weight is not agreed by the spectators. In Bollywood many things are covered now a day like sexuality, betrayal, surrogate motherhood, break up, live-in relations etc. MadhurBandarkar's films have given real aspects to Indian cinema. His films have shown bold things like mistreatment of women; poverty, crime, bribery, superstar and journalism, etc where majority of films had female protagonists. These empowered women live their life on their own terms.

(Tere, June 2012)

Many films are based on social themes on women issues like dowry, rape, etc but they are not popularly viewed all the time. These films don't focus on women point of view but male point of view. When the heroines are young they start their career and when they are 30 yrs of age they are considered as 'old face'. The Heroes play their role after 30 yrs of age as well. This biasness is not only in the minds of the film makers but also the audience. Though women should remain pure but can have love-affair like 'Radha-Krishna'; that is considered as pure love. So the lead actress plays a role of romantic woman. In some movies women used to wear colourful and sexy dresses to draw the attention of men.

(Nandakumar, May, 2011)

### III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Objectives

1. To study the display of women in Indian Cinema.
2. To study if there is a difference between stereotyping of women in earlier times and contemporary times.
3. To study about feminist criticism on Indian Movies.
4. To study how Indian culture and religion affects the display of women.

#### 3.2 Hypothesis

$H_0$  – Stereotyping of women in Bollywood may not be related to Indian culture and values.

$H_1$  - Stereotyping of women in Bollywood may be related to Indian culture and values.

#### 3.3 Methodology

An Exploratory Research Design is used in this research where the usage of journal articles, newspapers, surveys, etc are done. Quantitative method has been used so that can test the hypothesis statistically. Google forms were used a platform for the survey technique for collecting primary data. This method will enable to researcher to understand the people view point, their attitudes about stereotyping of women. Even Case study method was used.

First hand data and Second hand data both are used in this research paper. In first hand data freshly composed samples are taken and tried to understand the mentality of the people towards stereotyping of women in Indian cinema. The secondary data is used where the information is collected from various articles, journals, books, websites, etc. and proper references are given for the same.

#### 3.4 Sampling Technique

A Possibility Sampling Technique was used for this study. The main aim of this sampling is to put a spotlight on that part of people who are interested to answer the research questions. The sample size was 50.

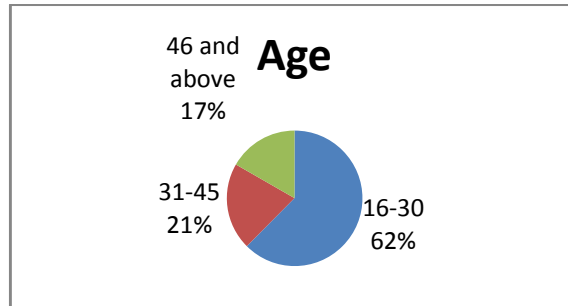
**3.5 Limitations of the study**

Due to time constraints, small sampling size of 50 people have been used in the study; results can vary if larger number of population is taken for the study.

**IV. FINDINGS AND OBSERVATION**

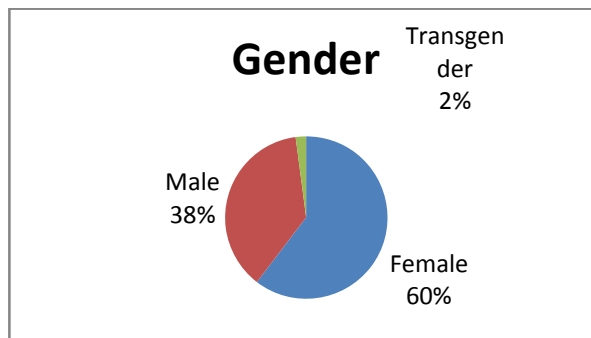
In this chapter the answers received through survey has been taken for the purpose of analysis.

**Age**



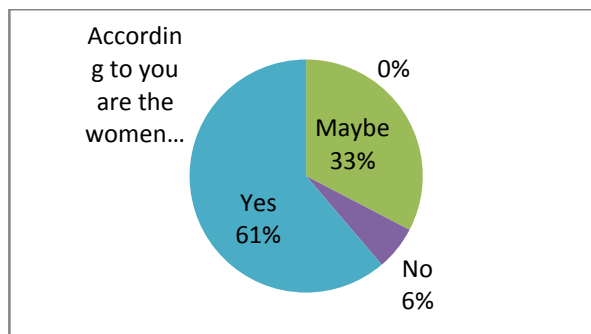
The survey was conducted on 50 people from Mumbai suburbs. From the total count, 30 respondents are between 16 to 30 years, 10 respondents are in between 31 to 45 years and rest was above 46 years.

**Gender**



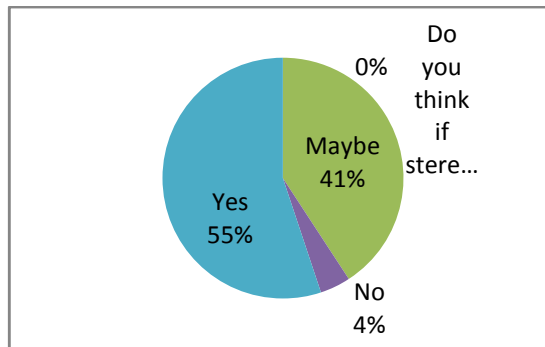
Among them 29 were female, 18 were male and 1 was transgender.

**According to you are the women stereotyped in Indian cinema?**



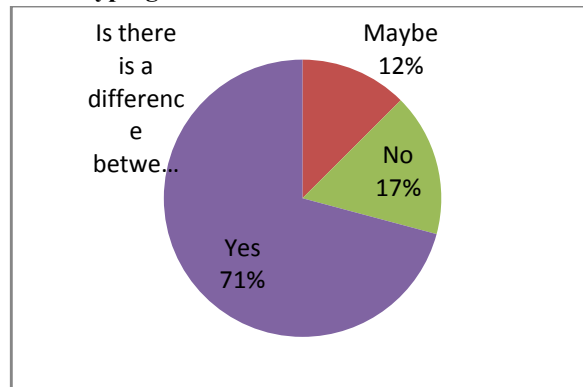
30 people believe that women are being stereotyped while 3 people believe they aren't and 16 people are not sure whether the stereotyping of women is done in Indian cinema. Maximum people though do feel that somewhere or the stereotyping is being done.

**Do you think if stereotyping is done is it because of Indian culture and values?**



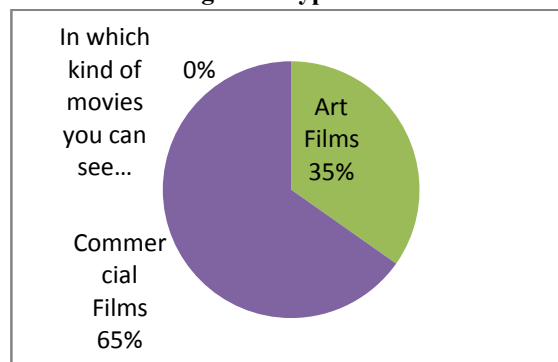
27 people believe that stereotyping is done because of the Indian culture and values which we incorporate in our generations while 2 people believe it isn't and 20 people are not sure whether it is due to Indian culture. Again maximum people do feel that somewhere or the other stereotyping is being done because of the Indian culture which we have been following since ancient times and we need to preserve our culture.

**Is there is a difference between stereotyping of women in earlier times and contemporary times?**



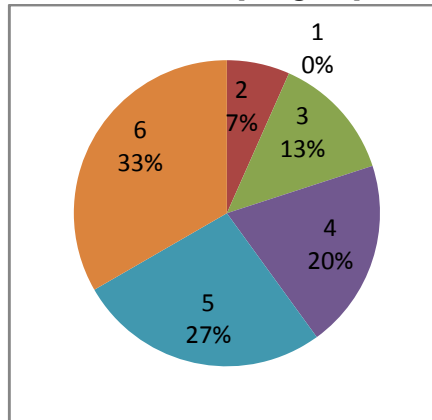
34 people believe that there is a difference in stereotyping while 8 people believe it isn't and 6 people are not sure about the same. Again maximum people do feel that somewhere or the other there is a difference in stereotyping which is being done in earlier times compared to contemporary times. As modern women is being shown in many different roles and have got their own identity in some movies.

**In which kind of movies you can see women being stereotyped?**

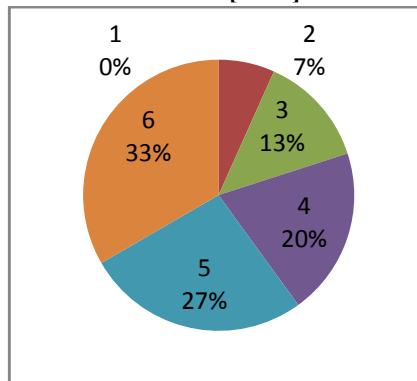


30 people consider women are not shown in a presentable way in Commercial films and 16 people consider that women are not shown in a presentable way in Art Films. Maximum people do believe that as Commercial films are more inclined towards entertainment so they show more stereotypical image of women in these kinds of movies.

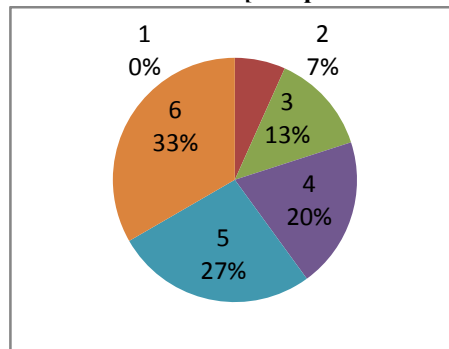
**In which roles women are mostly seen in Indian cinema? [Daughter]**



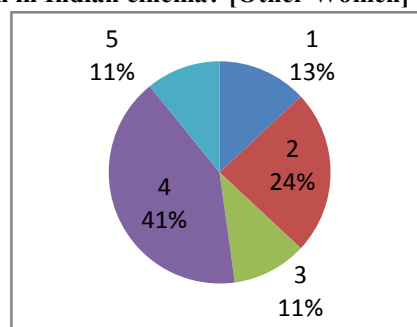
**In which roles women are mostly seen in Indian cinema? [Wife]**



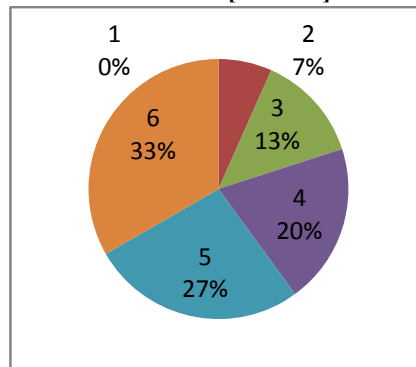
**In which roles women are mostly seen in Indian cinema? [Independent Women]**



**In which roles women are mostly seen in Indian cinema? [Other Women]**

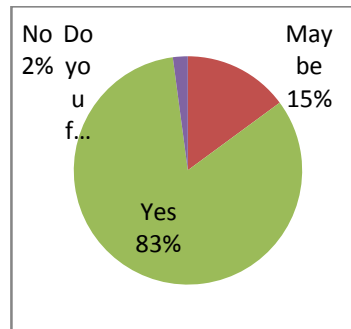


**In which roles women are mostly seen in Indian cinema? [Mother]**



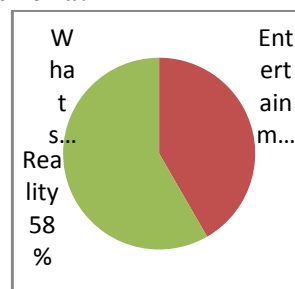
As per the survey conducted people say that the maximum role in which women are seen is Mother then Other Women then Wife followed by Independent Women and last by Daughter. So it's very clear that women is most projected in a role of Mother which is a very ideal image of women and then the other women who is either a vamp or a whore.

**Do you feel more women-oriented films should be made?**



39 people believe that more women oriented films should be made while 1 person believes it shouldn't and 7 people are not sure about the same. Again maximum people do feel that more women oriented films should be made so that the stereotyping of women is stopped in Indian cinema.

**What should be the purpose of the Indian cinema?**



28 people believe that Indian cinema should be to portray reality whereas 20 people believe that it should portray Entertainment. Maximum people would like to see realistic movies in Indian cinema.

**What are your suggestions on the way women are presented in Bollywood?**

There are mixed suggestions on this question. There should not be any stereotyping of women instead they should be shown in multifarious roles where they are balancing both personal as well as professional lives. In movies there should be public welfare message and it should be based on ground reality. Stereotyping is an unconscious activity which happens for the males as well many times. The kids have an adverse effect when they see these gender roles. Instead of showing ideal women image their real struggle should be displayed on the screen. Overall the suggestion is to stop showing stereotypical image of women in Indian cinema and show them as more independent.

### Case Study

Aparna Sen who was a renowned actor and director made a film called “Parama” in 1985 in which she showed an elderly woman having an affair with a young man. Many young men came to her and asked about women liberation while the women thanked her.

“Chingaari” (2006) is the movie which is taken from a work of fiction ‘The Prostitute and the Postman’.

It shows the troubles of women, social group, etc in rural India. The main character is opposing the main person of the village. In this movie Basanti has a main character. She plays the role of a prostitute who has a daughter. She satisfies the bodily needs of priest who worships goddess Kali. Later there is a twist in the story, when Basanti falls in love with a mailman. The priest gets angry and he kills the mailman. Basanti takes revenge of her lover’s murder by killing the priest. The movie tries to review all the communal wrongs that women face in India.

### V. CONCLUSION

The Indian cinema should not be only for leisure but should make audience think critically. The stereotyping of women can only be stopped when our culture is challenged and we stop seeing a woman as ‘Sita’ or ‘Radha’. This will cause women empowerment. In Indian society if we go beyond stereotypes only then it is going to help us. Cinema should have an independent space for women so that they can realize their dreams. Instead of just giving entertainment it should be a medium for social change. There should be more progressive representations of women which will give them justice. The change can come when every individual in the film industry will realize this. The women should be focused with more interesting and challenging roles instead of objectifying them. Cinema creates a high impression; so it’s necessary for them make people understand and have compassion. The researcher was able to agree with the hypothesis that stereotyping of women is done due to Indian culture and values which have come since generations to us and we are passing it to our generations and we comply by them.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1]. Habib, A. (September 2017). Patriarchy and Prejudice: Indian Women and Their Cinematic Representation. *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (p. 4). International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics,.
- [2]. Nandakumar, S. (May, 2011). THE STEREOTYPICAL PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN. *The Faculty of the Department of Communications* (p. 97). University of Houston: University of Houston.
- [3]. Nishtha Madaan, S. M. (October 2017). Analyzing Gender Stereotyping in Bollywood Movies., (p. 8). Delhi.
- [4]. Rehman, S. Portrayal of Women in the Popular Indian Cinema. (p. 17). The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley, USA: The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley, USA.
- [5]. Sarkar, S. (December, 2012). "An analysis of Hindi women-centric films in India.". *University of Louisville* (p. 175). University of Louisville: Electronic Theses and Dissertations.
- [6]. Sibal, V. (March 2018). STEREOTYPING WOMEN IN INDIAN CINEMA. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323786469> , 7.
- [7]. Tere, N. S. (June 2012). GENDER REFLECTIONS IN MAINSTREAM HINDI CINEMA. *Global Media Journal – Indian Edition/ISSN 2249-5835* (p. 9). University of Calcutta: Global Media Journal – Indian Edition/ISSN 2249-5835.
- [8]. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/representation-of-women-in-indian-films-has-been-largely-stereotypical-118011300367\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/representation-of-women-in-indian-films-has-been-largely-stereotypical-118011300367_1.html)