



## IMPACT OF INDIAN CINEMA ON INDIAN MINDS IN CARVING SPACE FOR WOMEN

**Mr. Basant Lal Yadav**

*P.hD Research Scholar, Department of English, Indira Gandhi University Meerpur, Rewari, Haryana.*

### **Abstract**

In 20th century, the films have emerged as part of the visual literature which depicts the social realities in manifold ways. The Hindi film industry has played a significant role in this process since the beginning. And in the context, it may be worth investigating how the depiction of the roles of women has evolved along the time. The role of women should have evolved all along the 20th century. However, such roles were often not relevant in their times as they were more on the screen and less in the real life situations. Towards the end of the 20th century, with relatively more economic empowerment of women in the society, the roles of women in the society have also changed. The present study is an attempt to study how the roles of women have changed in the films that have hit the screen after 1990s. And we have tried to understand the role of women in these films and tried to categorize their roles in some main categories according to the general outlook of our dominant social framework.

It is important to first explain the understanding of the words ‘myth’ and ‘metamorphosis’. Myth is an unproved or false collective belief that is used to justify a social institution and metamorphosis is a major change that makes someone or something very different. Myth actually is a type of speech linked with history or rather chosen by history. Hindi films portraying women are a ‘speech’ in themselves and this research intends to focus on the manner of their portrayal, which has generally been mythical for a long time. Tradition and society have never allowed a woman (from the very birth) to exist as a real human being with her natural traits, feelings and desires. She exists only as she is permitted to exist, that is, not as an individual but only and only as a woman (a myth) with all her so called feminine traits and virtues of chastity, purity, patience, affection, submissiveness, docility and what not. Indian films have generally reinforced these patterns of social expectations. Women have often been shown as the guardians of tradition and honour. They are considered to be ‘ideal’ in all aspects, phases and stages of life but with the passage of time, the Indian cinema also has changed and evolved, reflecting new trends in gender relations. There are many film-makers who are sensitive enough to portray a change in the established gender roles. Taking these changes to be a kind of revolution in the portrayal of woman in Hindi cinema, the present research has found out how far the ‘myth’ has got abolished and what form the ‘revolution’ has taken. Thus this socio-cultural ‘metamorphosis’ is the subject of inquiry for the present research.

Within the constraints of given time and space, we have sparsely gone through films which portray the journey of women from myth to metamorphosis, with the focus specifically on how these films have shown and projected woman as an individual first, a human being primarily, with all natural human emotions and aspirations and most importantly, not only her ambition to fulfill her aims and dreams but very realistically the social obstacles in her path (which are obvious) and finally the remarkable success in accomplishing what she desires.

### **To Facilitate The Research, It Has Been Divided Into the Following Parts:**

The part “The Womanly Woman : The Desire Disclosed” has analyzed the films that are bold enough to give an expression to the ‘sexual’ desires of the women protagonists who, defying all socio-moral codes, come forward with their ‘body’ to ‘celebrate’ their femininity with all its beauty and liveliness. The characters studied for this chapter come out as the ‘flesh-and-blood’ women who brave the world to explore their sexual desires, with an awareness and understanding of their own body and their right on it. With their bodies working for them as resistant spaces, they step forward unhesitant, uninhibited and unbridled.



The other part “The Wonderful Woman: The Stereotypes Subverted” has thrown light on the films that depict women not as one-dimensional characters but rather as having different shades. The chapter has further been divided into four parts to look for the transformation that has taken place in the four traditional roles of women, where they turn out to be:

The Magnificent Mothers  
The Vociferous Wives  
The Bold Beloveds  
The Dauntless Daughters

Till now they have existed in relation to men - as their mothers, wives, beloveds, daughters. But now they want to exist independently with no pre-conceived or pre-defined identities of them. They are very much the real women who need their own personhood to be recognized within the domestic space and without too. They are no longer the modest, self-effacing women entrapped in the oversize mantle of ‘role-frames’. Subverting the stereotypical definitions of woman and her different roles, these women characters have in fact redefined the ‘woman’. Thus the normal definitions of the roles have been radicalized and instead of hitherto sacrificing mothers, dutiful wives, submissive beloveds and docile daughters, now stand before us on celluloid- the magnificent mothers, the vociferous wives, the bold beloveds and the dauntless daughters.

The next part “The Working Woman: The Domains Dominated”, deconstructing the conventional cocoons set for women, has focused on the films that portray women pursuing their careers with full conviction and commitment, thereby recognizing their hitherto hidden and unexplored potentials. Almost all of the characters taken for study are the examples of women who ‘work’ for the cause of living and justifying their professions. With very much being the family women, these are the women who refuse to fall into stereotypical womanly roles and don’t choose the typed professions also. They are into the professions of their own choice and their work is their priority. They don’t allow any social or familial norms to dictate them. Nothing can hinder their growth and they go ahead in all their chosen fields and prove themselves.

The analysis of all the films for the role, position and status of women shows that the Hindi cinema, that has often been said to institutionalize patriarchy and its norms, has now begun to question the traditional mores that have long been imposed on women in the name of culture and religion. The characters taken for study are the ‘reel’ women breaking away from the age old conventions to create a world of their own. They are still the good mothers, wives, beloveds, daughters, sisters and all that they can be, but this expected virtue of ‘goodness’ no more trivializes them as individuals. Coming out of the dump of their socio-culturally prescribed roles, they have learnt how to think of their own interests and acquire peace and contentment for themselves. They recognize their potentialities and are able to draw upon their own competence and strength. These women are no more the extensions of male egoistical ideas but are rather the true individuals in their own regard. They are no more the ‘silent’ images who are only the ‘bearers’ of meaning. They are rather the ‘makers’ of meaning who come to the front to mark and establish their own importance and identity in the light of their own needs and desires. Debunking all the myths and subverting all the stereotypes, these ‘reel’ women portray the metamorphosis that has taken place in their lives which actually is a translation of that breeze of social change which is gradually breaking the shackles of all the myths and stereotypes set for women in ‘real’ life.

### **Conclusion**

Indian cinema industry has changed significantly since 1947 making a name for it and is well known for its techniques. Indian films are now competing with western productions on the world stage, winning prestigious international awards. The success of Indian cinema across the world is spreading the rich cultural traditions of Indian dance and music to a global audience. Culture is the essential factor in the modern society and cinema in particular is acting as a mirror of the society.



It reflects many trends, existing virtues, social struggles, and the living patterns. The Indian cinema portrays the essence of the Indian society. The ethnic and traditional values of the Indian society, its cultural diversity and the unity among the varied cultural and religious sects, is highlighted by Indian cinema. Thus it plays a very important in depicting the Indian values to the world. The Indian films are very popular all around Asia and also in other parts of the world.

With globalization, the Indian cinema is becoming increasingly influenced by Western cinema. Bollywood imports technical expertise from overseas and many films are shot on western locations. Many Bollywood films are also based on Hollywood blockbusters. However at the same time Indian media has several reports on Bollywood's increasing influence in the world film industry and how it is competing with Hollywood.

However Bollywood still retains its very Indian value and sticks to the traditional customs and life of people in India. This is especially true as it is difficult to distinguish between art and life in South Asian society; they no longer imitate each other but have appeared to merge with each other. Political philosophies, social values, group behaviors, speeches and dresses in society are reflected in the cinema and also reflect back on the society. Furthermore, film stars have moved from their fantasyland into politics to emerge as powerful figures guiding the destiny of millions. This includes a number of female actresses as well who have served themselves as the caretaker of the society. This development indicates that the female component in the film industry has made its presence known not just in the films but also in the real world. The role played by women in Indian cinema serves as a as a role model for other women with fewer opportunities to follow. With Bollywood being a big successful industry, the female characters played in their movies allow Indian women to relate themselves easily with these female characters. It is thus possible to view the cinema as a genuine symbol for society and this perception helps to understand the society in a better way.

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