

THE TRANSITION SAGA OF MASCULINITY IN HINDI FILMS: THEN & NOW



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ABSTRACT

The cinema in India has its different mark upon the masses and has a huge fan following. Being the most popular art form in the nation it has been influencing the viewers with its magical effects. With its tremendous reach among the youths, it not only depicts the virtual image of the society but on the same hand it is creating a world which is juxtapose of realm. Since the beginning Hindi films are revolving around the set plots of the scripted feature films showcasing a hero, a heroine, a villain and a climax after which everybody has a happy ending. Accordingly, the Hindi films have defined the heroes in its own way with some set parameters i.e., muscular body, taller than heroine, a fighter, good looks and a never-ending list of traits. However, some heroes have broken this myth that a filmy hero is always a MACHO MAN. They are again redefining the personality of the heroes on the silver screen. Thus, the aim of this research paper is to examine the change in definition of the heroes in Hindi films over a period of time. The researcher will conduct the content analysis of ten purposively selected films from the Hindi Cinema.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The film now a days is not exactly the same feature films which was used to be a year back. The changing paradigm shift from its making to its distribution and further to its exhibition has been tremendously changed over the period of time. From big silver screens to now available on small screens of our mobile phones, the films are the art form which are also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and has reshaped its existence. Eventually, the main spirit of the Hindi films is still the same i.e. seeing the society with the spectacles of patriarchy. Hindi films are second largest film study popularly known as "Bollywood" is also known for its art form capable to entertain, educate, reshape and reflect the thinking of the society. In Hindi Films the plot of



the story revolves around the hero who is a struggler off course, the one who has the responsibilities of the family, fighting with the roughnecks, saving the girl from mishappings, a ruff and tuff body who barely has any kind of pain and many more responsibilities on his shoulder. On the other hand the very important counterpart is the heroine of the film with a fair, beautiful face, sexiest body type and is there in the film to do all the dancing and singing part only. Ironically, almost all the Hindi films have been depicting the hero in the same manner. Although as per societal norms the Hindi films are just the reflection of the same. From the film "Raja Harishchandra" to Baaghi and Angrezi Medium the last released films on silver screen before the COVID-19 outbreak in India. The depiction of the male character in majority of the Hindi films is the same. From angry young man, Mr. Amithabh Bachchan to the dabang hero of Hindi Films Mr. Salman Khan, all has occupied the canvas with their fight scenes and saving the poor heroine and the society from the evils and the devils in the form of villains. However, the various eras of Hindi film industry has witnessed the reinforcement of the roles and their depiction in the Hindi films.

1.1 THE ERA OF TRAGEDY KING TO KING OF ROMANCE

Veteran actor Dilip Kapoor is famous for his tragic roles in the Hindi Films. Hindi films like Andaz (1949), Jogan (1950), Deedar (1951), Daag (1952), Devdas (1955), Yahudi (1958) and Madhumati (1958). It was these films that earned him the title of - 'The Tragedy King'. A man with slightly built up body structure and a moustache on his face gives resemblance to the very common man next door. Simultaneously, actor Dev Anand, the evergreen hero of Hindi cinema in Guide, Jewel Thief, CID and Raj Kapoor, the showman of Bollywood in Sree 420, Jis Desh Me Ganga Behti Hai, Joker, Awara etc has conquered the celluloid from 1950-1960 and has given some of their best in 1970s also. The common factor in all these three heroes is there simplicity, natural acting skills and innocence on the face which unknowingly represented the lower middle class of the India. That middle class which is highly populated in the nation and covers majority space in every census. Perhaps this is the reason behind their strong popularity and fame. Following them the new rise of stars has taken birth that is the first super star of Indian Cinema, actor Rajesh Khanna, from Aradhana to Do Raaste to Anand he won the heart of the audience from romance, melodrama and the biggest emotional weapon in India i.e. the family drama. This is the end of romantic image of heroes on silverscreen with the incarnation of angry young man in the Hindi films in the form of actor Amitabh Bachchan. He looks serious, reserved and less talkative in most of his films from Zanzeer, Sholay, Deewar to Agneepath he has redefined the Indian Hindi films Heroes and entertain the masses with his action performances. In his second innings also he has given his best characters with some quality work as PAA, Mohabatein, Black and Gulabo Sitabo. With the passage of time Indian Cinema got back his romantic hero, the king Khan i.e. Actor Shahrukh Khan who has given Baazigar, Dil To Pagal Hai, Devdas and Zero to Hindi film lovers. Mr. Khan has started the new dawn of Khans in Hindi film industry along with Mr. perfec-

tionist, Actor Amir Khan and the Moustache man Actor Salman Khan. They three has redefined the then existing image of Indian Actors with their characters in Mangal Pandey, Rang De Basanti, Dabang, Dagang 2 etc. later Hindi films has appreciated the presence of Shahid Kapoor, Aditya Roy Kapoor, Vivek Oberoi, Sanjay Dutt, Govinda, Akshay Kumar and many more who are not only rushing behind the actresses but also made their audiences giggle while watching the films.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (Laura Mulvey, 1975), the male character was identified as the driver of the film's narrative, the character followed by the camera. The female character served as a spectacle to provide pleasure to the male spectator, for which Mulvey used the term "gaze". Chronicling the male's experiences, dreams, stories, revenge, angst, ambitions etc has been the essence of Hindi films. In a research carried by Connel reveals that gender has been generated with various ways in different traditions and cultures, particularly in a culture such as at a school or a work place we may encounter with these masculinities.

Aka & Tonel in their studies stated that the concept of masculinity continued to the end of 1970s and based on the sex role paradigm minimized the masculinity to a role model. Accordingly, different eras create different gender regimes resulting the different pattern of masculinity. These masculinity develop different relations with each other and different power focuses and institutions, and they are represented in various cultural products (Ozbay & Balic). Academic interest in masculinity has grown since the emergence of the "new men's movement" of the late eighties. This movement evolved partly in response to second wave feminist politics and has expanded to include both pro-feminist and masculinity arms (Hearn & Morgan).

3. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Films from all over the globe have always been dominated by the men. Many feminist studies has revealed that the females are just kept in the plot to fascinate those men who are sitting in the audience pavilion. Eventually, over the period of time the depiction of female body and its portrayal has been changed which in return changed the concept of masculinity. However, Hindi cinema has seen the transition in the image, performance and the depiction of male leading characters since the time immortal. Thus, this research is a small initiative to understand the causes behind this on screen changes.

3.1 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study has examined the portrayal of masculinity in selected Hindi films from the two different eras of Hindi cinema i.e. the Classic era of Bollywood (1970s-1980s) and New Bollywood era (1990s- present date). The aim is to analyse the leading male

protagonist in the Hindi Film.

3.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The literature review for this study has revealed that lots more work is been done upon the representation of women in Hindi Cinema and their treatment in Hindi films but very less studies are related to the male counterparts. Thus, this study is been carried out bridge out that gap with these following objectives:

1. To analyze the male lead characters from the selected Hindi Films.
2. To understand the change in the depiction of Male protagonists among the selected Hindi Films.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study has used the purposive Sampling method to select the Hindi Films for the analyses and further observation method and collection of data. The universe of the Study is Hindi Cinema and the representative films were selected from the universe from last five decades i.e., from 1970-2020 to draw the inferences that whether there is any change in the depiction of male lead characters or not.

4.1 DATA INTERPRETATION & ANALYSIS

The analysis of the selected films showed that there is a transitional change in the depiction of masculinity in the Hindi films over the period of time. For this study 05 different films were selected from five different decades to represent the heroism of that period. The data and details were collected from the IMDb (Internet Movie Database), an online Online database for movies, television, and video games. The selected films are as follows:

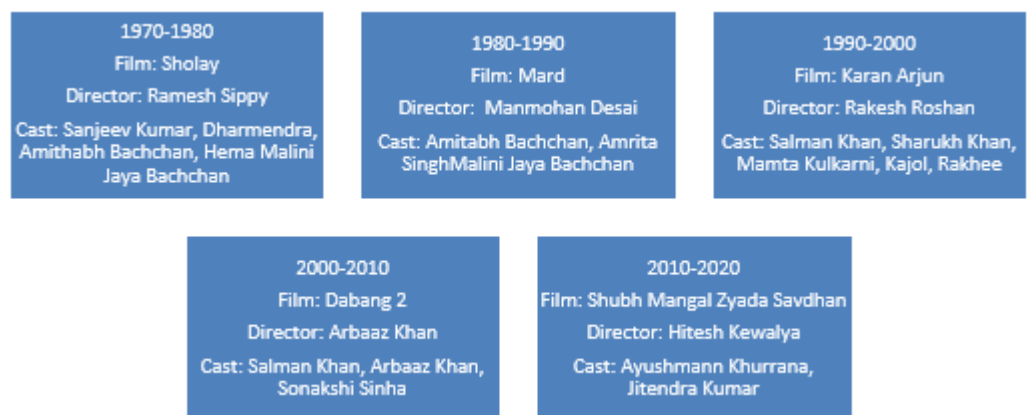


Figure 1

A survey on social media platform i.e Facebook was taken up to understand the meaning of the heroism in Hindi films. The survey revealed the following basic traits of Heroes which are as follows:

- Good Looking
- Tall and Slim
- Rough & Tough
- Sense of humour
- Arouses Sexuality and Sensuousness
- Always has a method to deal with any situation
- Muscular Body

However, the analysis of the selected films showed that the characteristics of the heroes has been changing with the passing of each decade of the film industry. In the beginning of the selected era i.e. from 1970-1980, the hero is more like a person full of anger. These characters lack the trust in the system, law and order of the country like superstar Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Anil Kapoor, Vinod Khanna etc. in various Hindi films. Whereas, in the period of 1980-1990 the films give the feel and space to romance and family dramas. However, the bollywood witnessed the melodious songs, dancing macho men on the sets like Anil Kapoor, Kamal Hassan, Rishi Kapoor, Aamir Khan etc. The decade 1990-2000 has witnessed the commercial hits of bollywood ranging from Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, Hum Aapke Hein Kaun to Andaaz Apna Apna giving the combination of Khans to Hindi Cinema. Ironically, this era also noticed the change in the representation of Hindi film Hero in the form of Shah Rukh Khan. Accordingly, the following decade 2000-2010 has also witnessed the transition of Hindi Cinema from one century to another. This era has witnessed a lot of new concepts, plots, experimentation single screen concept to multiplexes concept in the Hindi films, some of the noticeable faces are Hrithik Roshan, Saif Ali Khan, Akshay Kumar, Shahid Kapoor, Abhishek Bachchan, John Abraham, Arjun Rampal etc. The era 2010-2020 has redefined the Hindi Cinema in the context of its cult films, Content, plot based upon social issues, the highlights of the plot are once again the Indian common middle class man. In this array of star rise few names that has turned the milestones are Ayushmann Khurrana, Ranveer Singh, Vicky Kaushal, Jitendra Kumar, Rajkumar Rao etc.

5. CONCLUSION

To study this topic the researcher has selected a representative film from the last five decades to find out that whether there is any change in the depiction of Hindi Film's Hero or this is just a thought. Thus, the films mentioned in the figure 1.1 were studied keeping the semiotics of the film including the plot and the lead character/s. The analysis revealed that in film Sholay (1975) directed by Ramesh Sippy, there were

two criminals, Jai and Veeru (played by Amitabh Bachchan & Dharmendra) who were hired by a policeman to take a revenge from a ruthless dacoit (Amzad Khan) who has spoiled the family of the police man leaving him and his one daughter-in-law behind. Both Jai and Veeru here are the representative of the young angry men who did not even cared for their life to held the poor villagers and the policeman. They are full of anger, knows fighting, shooting and are helping in nature. The second film chosen from the next following era is Mard (1985) directed by Manmohan Desai, starring Amitabh Bachchan and Amrita Singh, the film revolves around the life of a prosperous king Azad who was later locked by the Dyer, an Army General of the Britesh Empire in the Dungeon. Later his son Raju (Amitabh Bachchan) has reached him to rescue him from the officers of the British Empire. The film also gives one of the very famous dialougue of indi film industry i.e. "Man has no pain" which is still popular among the masses. The film has potrayed that the man woul not express his pain and don't even feel the pain in his life. Man is a powerfull creature on earth. The same theme is been show in the film Karan Arjun (1995) directed by Rakesh Roshan that the heroes in the Hindi Films have only one thing in their life that they are suppose to take revenge only from the perpetrators. The film has a very famous dialougue i.e. "My Karan Arjun will definitely come". In the film both Karan (Salman Khan) and Arjun (Shahrukh Khan) are fighters and can fight many gangsters at a time. They have all the qualities of the super humans. Whereas, film Dabang 2 (2012) directed by Arbaaz Khan has again established the fact that In dian heroes are like macho men and they are good fighters. In the film Chulbul Pandey (Salman Khan) is a policeman with a good physique body build,a cop with tight moustache and fearless eyes and the character also the trend of having moustache. Later in the begning of century the hindi cinema has noticed the new dawn of hindi films, Shubh Mangal Jyada Savdhan (2020) directed by Hitesh Kewalya is the felicitous example for the new hindi cinema,where the lead characters hav been depicted as the boy next door. In the Film Kartik (Ayushman Khurrana) and Aman (Jitendra Kumar) were shown in a relationship as a gay couple who were battling against the family of Aman. Both the boys are having the lean body type normal physique, voice and eyes.They are not even potrayed as fighting with gangsters villians etc.Thus the analysis of these five films revealed the following findings:

1. The analysis of the films claimed that there is a change in the traits and characteristics of the heroes of the Hindi films over the period of time. The samples selected for the study has showed that the from 1970 -1990, the heroes were full of anger and are stronger, are fighters, are struggling for the society and fighting against the evils. Ironically, the period from 1990 -2010, the Hindi cinema has come up with more family oriented films based upon the stories of relationships among the family members, plots with some unique treatments and more common stories were depicted with the additional touch of extra romance. However, the 2010-2020 that is yet to be completed has given space and breathe to new or better say the modern Hindi cinema with more

realistic themes and cult films. Thus, it can be concluded that the Hindi Cinema has observed a noticeable change in the portrayal of Heroes.

2. Secondly, it can be concluded that the change that in the personality of the Hindi film heroes is the result of the need of the story. As soon as more stories of the common man are becoming the choice of the film makers, the Hindi Film's hero is looking more and more realistic. Accordingly, the come up of Rajkumar Rao, Ayushman Khurrana, Jitendra Kumar are the examples of those common man to name a few. Thus, it can be said that yes, the heroes of the Hindi films have changed their looks and appearance time to time. Ahmed (1992); Cinema and Mirror (2012); Dwyer (2002); Kabir and Munni (1997); Kaur et al. (2005); Mehta et al. (2010); Murthy (1988); Nair and N (2009); Robinson (1989); Theb-fan (2013)

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