

Victimhood of Women Under Patriarchy: Some Reflections from Bollywood Movie 'Pink'

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Abstract

Cinema is meant and believed to entertain, to take the viewer to a world that is starkly different from the real one, a world which provides escape from the daily grind of life. Cinema is a popular media of mass consumption which plays a key role in moulding opinions, constructing images and reinforcing dominant cultural values. The paper deals with representations of women characters in mainstream Bollywood movies. It is deemed appropriate to examine this issue because women are a major chunk of the country's population and hence their portrayal on screen is crucial in determining the furtherance of already existing stereotypes in the society. The paper begins with a discussion on the field of feminist film criticism and how mainstream Hindi Cinema has restricted itself to defined sketches of womanhood. It also undertakes some glimpses from popular films to analyse this process of stereotyping the, other "considering that reality in mainstream cinema is constructed from the male view point. A section is devoted to discussion on contemporary realistic brand of cinema and its understanding of women. In conclusion, a debate ensues on whether mainstream Hindi cinema has been successful in portraying Indian women of different shades in a society dominated by patriarchal values.

Reference to this paper
should be made as
follows:

**Dr. Sheetal J.
Tamakuwala,**
"Victimhood of Women
Under Patriarchy:
Some Reflections from
Bollywood Movie
'Pink'", RJPSSs 2017,
Vol. 43, No.1, pp. 80-88,
[http://anubooks.com/
?page_id=2012](http://anubooks.com/?page_id=2012)
Article No. 11 (RJ1887)

Introduction

Pink movie reminds the researcher of Jodi Foster's 'The Accused' in which her character is gang-raped in a bar because of the dressing she carries that is, she wears a short skirt, and has been drinking, she is made out to be a woman on the make. Something similar happens in the same story where all three women who have to bear the brunt of the rage and in the end male entitlement comes with: 'aisi ladkiyon ke saath toh aisa hi hota hai'. Here what does the mentality of the common boys tend to be when he says that "**Aisi Ladkiya.**" Who defines the character and rules for the women in the society?. Why does the society have different set of rules for socialization and rearing boys and girls. Here the paper examines the set of rules mentioned by Mr. Amitabh Bachhan and the arguments shown in the court hearing. The study tries to unveil some hidden and the social mores that its women have live and socialize in the society which is buried under crippling patriarchy and misogyny with a sense of mistaken shame. When a girl says no, it means only one thing. It means a straight no, No grabbing and no forcing. Why people and society considers women as easy going and person of loose morals. The theme of pink movie taken up by Bollywood is a movie which is so simple and clear. It gives direct message without beating about the bush, without prevaricating or using obfuscatory language. It tells us a great deal about the country we live in. Here the story clearly shows if a girl is pawed or victimized, the girl must have done something to provoke the molester.

Rape and sexual molestation are social as well as a personal crime wherein the female body becomes the site of contestation between power and powerlessness, between imposition and freedom, between the system and the individual. The moment there is a protest, all social institutions - marriage, family, law, all ideas of respectability and loyalty conspire to silence the female voice. It is common knowledge that rape is one of the least reported events due to a variety of reasons. One of them is that it results in a longdrawn legal battle, humiliation and public exposure. The film takes up for its subject not merely sexual molestation but the problem of redressal in a court of law. The aim is not to provide a solution but to raise a whole lot of questions regarding women's position in a patriarchal society. Almost all social institutions treat the woman as a body forcing her to subordinate her will.

We can say that globalisation plays a radical role since the past decade, in advancing information technology which have facilitated a global communication network that transcends national and international boundaries and has an impact on public policies, personal behaviours and lifestyles, socialization, attitudes of children and young adults. The potentiality always exists for the media to make a far greater

contribution to the advancement of women. Several women are involved in careers in the communications sector, the numbers are increasing too, but very few women have attained positions at the decision-making level or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy or family as an institution. The lack of gender sensitivity in the media is evidenced by the failure to eliminate the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public and private local, national and international media organizations. The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications -electronic, print, visual and audio - must be transformed. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a objective picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. In addition, violent and degrading or pornographic media products are also negatively affecting women and their participation in society.

Pink does not fall within the category of art films. Thus there are melodramatic and rhetorical elements in it. But it is a film with a social message and rape is only one of the issues. The three female protagonists of 'Pink' movie are the regular young working women of capital city Delhi. Minal (Taapsee Pannu) is an event manager, whose work can extend into the late hours. Falak (Kirti Kulhari) works in a corporate set-up where image is all. Andrea (Tariang) is from the 'North-East' (Meghalaya, she says, but clearly no one is interested in the specifics : girls from the 'North East' are fair game, even if they are covered from top to toe). These three girls share a flat in a 'posh' South Delhi locality, and the story starts when they are shown heading back in a cab in the early hours of the morning, appearing disturbed about something that has just happened. As the plot on one point unravels that he trio was in the company of three young men, after a rock concert which was organized in Surajkund in Haryana. But unfortunately things take an ugly turn after the dinner that follows. The women have to make a run for it, and one of the young men ends up needing stitches in a deep bloody gash above his eye. It doesn't need a genius to discover that the political might backing the injured Rajveer (Angad Bedi) and his friends, Dumpy (Raashul Tandon), Vishwa (Tushar Pandey) and another fellow (Vijay Varma) who wasn't there but is happy to engineer and participate in the humiliation of the women. We can even see it in the body language of the female cop (Shankar, just so) who helps nail the wrong person for the crime. The three female characters played in the name of Pannu, Kulhari and Tariang, the women shown in the movie are all very good, ambitious, hard working young women who are typified with the dilemma of the modern life. Simultaneously the young men who accost them are very much a part of a certain kind of coarse North Indian ethos, but are too coward.

They seek the help for their own protection, also takes patronage and even protection from the nexus of 'netas' and police. The police fails to perform their duties which is not only to protect them, but to make them realise on their wrong-doing. They all tried to turn the tables to prove themselves aggressors instead of being the victims. How can we silence a courageous young woman who has the temerity to ask questions? The lady is labelled as cheap, slut, whore: the film mutes the word 'rxxx', but we can see it emblazoned on the face of the guy who says it out loud and the girls who have to hear it. For the most part in the movie, the male actor comes off mannered, and he shouts out and abuses the women in the movie.

On the other hand another male leading character of the movie, Amitabh Bachchan to be in a pulpit of his own, takes apart those who are in the witness box. The **sporadic** moments shot in the movie when seen on big screen makes the society and audience nostalgic. Meanwhile, the movie Pink is named perhaps because the colour is girly, subverts it and turns it on its head. The another reason for the pink name is stereotypically pink colour is for girls while blue colour is devoted to the superior section of our society. In its best bits, the film blazes, its call-to-arms radiating outwards and forcing us to acknowledge uncomfortable truths. The movie has strong message and has something to say, and says it with courage and conviction.

The movie Pink is a powerful statement on the existing feudal mindset of a majority of India, where men and women are judged by a different yardstick. And if the man happens to be from a powerful family, then the fight for justice is even more skewed.

The court-room sequence, which is inspired by Jonathan Kaplan's *The Accused* (1988), where the accused Minal is asked scathing questions on her virginity and drinking habits lays bare the double standards of the society we live in. Pink questions the society's mindset where we think girls with short hemlines and those who enjoy a drink with men are low on morals. It also tells the society that whether a woman is a sex-worker, wife or slave, if she says 'no' to being touched, then no man has the right to force himself on her, Or outrage her modesty.

Set Of Rules Discussed On Women in the movie:

- Ø No girl should go alone with any other boy apart from her boyfriend, husband, brother or known character in the family, because if she goes alone it is understood that she is of low morale.
- Ø If the girl talks and laughs, touching a man's body than she is proved or understood characterless. It indirectly gives a license to molest you.

- Ø The hands of the clock decide the character of the girl or lady. During the day working hours for women are okay but late working hours decides the character of the women.
- Ø Women cannot drink with a any men of the society. Drinking is a bad indicator of character for girls. Girls should not wear short skirts, jeans, which provokes boys. By wearing sexy dresses, drinking, making parties, sharing seductive jokes, provokes any boy or male in the society and for that the girl needs to be conscious and careful. Boys get attracted so the girls should be careful in dressing and talks.
- Ø Save boys should be the target and not save girls. Girls should not be given leisure , gazettes, freedom, space, mobile phones, education or any extra facilities in order to keep them in discipline. It's never taught the boys to be under controlled or respect girls rather the society has defined and expected the girls to do list things that provoke boys.

Norms designed for girls by the society :

- v Good family girls do not drink
- v Good family girls do not party late nights.
- v Good family girls neither smiles nor talk to unknown boys.
- v Good family girls do not share sexy jokes with boys .

It is a fact that the Indian society generally considers women as weak and inferior. As a result, a woman undergoes tremendous traumas from birth to death. Many girl children are wipe out even before they see the light of the day, and many girls are raped on roads or at homes, many wives are beaten by their husbands and in-laws, many girls have to give up their education to help their parents to earn money. But media need to focus on such issues rather showing the other side of the coin. Media is utmost busy with to publish the gossips of the actors and actresses, the love stories between them. The same negative attitude towards women in real life is much reflected in the way media represents them as well. Media representations of Indian women reveal that they are less accepted and respected as persons and more looked upon as objects. In media women are projected in three major roles—biological, domestic and decorative. Media fails to challenge the gender attitudes promoted and perpetuated by the society. Watching a BBC documentary on Indian cinema a British youngster commented, “Indians must be very poor, and they seem to have very little respect for women”. He had after all seen a few clippings of films inserted in the documentary. What if non Indian watches a full dehumanising song sequences, movie, television serials etc.

Now a days, as a visual media, advertisements also play important role in promoting different products. Every day we are exposed to a number of advertisements through various media vehicles like newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet and various outdoor media. But there has been much criticisms against advertisements as these are portraying women as sex objects. Women's physical attraction has been used as a whole, or in parts, to market everything from brassieres, male under garments to automobiles. These ubiquitous images encourage people to think of sex and women as commodity, and these may contribute to violence against women. According to a United Nations Research Report (1975) on Advertising and the Portrayal of Women, advertisements have been held responsible for projecting women in a derogatory light, and as inferior class of beings (National Advertising Review Board, 1975). Shrivastava's research on the Indian media has shown that the dominant negative stereotypes in connection to the portrayal of women are:

1. A woman's place is in the home.
2. The most important and valuable asset of a women is physical beauty.
3. A woman's energies and intellect must be directed toward finding the right man.
4. Women are dependent coy and submissive; they are masochistic in their response to indignities humiliations, and even to physical violence inflicted upon them.
5. The good woman is the traditional house wife long suffering, pious and submissive; the modern woman who asserts herself and her independence is undesirable and can never bring happiness to anybody nor find happiness for herself.
6. Women are women's worst enemies.
7. The working woman is the undesirable exception who must be brought in to the marriage fold and made to conform to traditional social norms.

Cinema is also one of the most important and cheapest visual medium of entertainment in contemporary India. Unfortunately, the commercial film industry, which is a purely profit based industry, cares little about the image of women they portray to the public. Commercial films have followed a set pattern of female image portrayals wherein women are projected as sacrificing themselves for the family and reaffirming values of self-effacement and devotion to the male head of the family. Women who opt for a less traditional life are portrayed in a negative light. Furthermore, these films vividly portray physical violence against women and hardly ever show women as being capable of thinking for them in a logical and rational manner.

As a result, most of the feminist writers have come forward to study about the present status of women in media. And the necessity of feminist approach to the media is being acknowledged everywhere today. The world wide feminist movement has pointed out that the portrayal and employment of women in media are in a most derogatory position.

As a woman activist, I feel that the story make use of a great deal of reality. A fight for any kind of redressal for the rape victim begins to affect the supporters at various levels- family, marriage, social acceptance. And social responses are loaded so heavily in favour of male control that a woman's body becomes a thing to be exploited, discarded and destroyed. All this activity is wrapped within the notions of respectability and honor, but in actuality it serves the ends of power, wealth and self-indulgence. The investigative methods are designed to be an obstacle course or a trap. The whole legal machinery looks upon a rape victim as an outcast and pronounces her guilty. This is the only crime where victim is perceived as guilty and the male mindset whether of a husband, advocate, police man or judge is unable to see the victim as a person. For patriarchy, rape is no big deal. It is the male right to a female body. Rape can be place within families, related kin, and even within marriage. It is the taking of a woman without her willingness. In a feudalistic structure, the poor have no rights. Male power is supplemented in this aggressive act by money power and while it privileges the male ego, it ignores the women's right to her body as well as to her conscience. It is a total objectification of a person. And physical rape is not the only form of rape. In pink movie body is not violated, her personhood, her sense of self respect, her emotions- all are refuge, her very being is violated. The film makes a powerful statement not only against the blindness of patriarchy but also for the courage which supporters have to display. It emphasises the need for social responsibility and women's solidarity.

Feminist media studies can be classified into three broad categories—

- *Liberal Feminist Media Analysis,*
- *Radical Feminist Media Analysis And*
- *Socialist Feminism.*

In Liberal Feminist media analysis sex role stereotypes, prescription of sex appropriate behaviours, appearance, interest, skills and self perceptions are the core topics of analysis. According to this group of feminists women are depicted in mass media as wives, mothers, and daughters, girlfriends; as working in traditionally female fobs like secretary, nurse and or sex objects. It is considered that media perpetuate

sex role stereotypes because they reflect dominant social values and also because male media producers are influenced by these stereotypes.

In Radical Feminist discourse, there is a social system 'patriarchy' in which all men are supposed to dominate all women. Issues formerly considered as private like sexual violence, wife battering, incest, pornography; sex tourism and trafficking have exposed by radical feminists. According to radical feminist media assumption mass media are in the hands of male owners and producers, so they will operate to the benefit of a patriarchal society.

In Socialist Feminism women's position is not determined exclusively by gender rather it considers the analysis of class and economic condition of women. The reproduction of labour and the economic value of domestic labour are the concepts central to socialist feminism. Recently socialist feminism has attempted to incorporate other social aspects along the lines of ethnicity, sexual preference, age and physical ability (Gallagher; 1979).

Conclusion

The worse part of the whole episode is that there is no revulsion, no change to biased projections and no regrets from any part of the society. We have somehow taken the whole gamut of dialogues, stories and picturazition of women as way of our life or as if of no consequences. It has never been realized that if womanhood is come when the coming generation of the present children will have absolutely no respect for their sisters, wives and mothers. Hence the major objectives of media must be to perform the programmes relating to improvement of women's status that they are free to assert themselves as human beings, co-equal socially, morally and politically with men. There should be positive portrayal of women taking note of their role in all facets of life.

Thus it can be concluded that overall effect of the portrayal of women in media is to reinforce rather than reduce prejudices and stereo types. The mass media is to reinforce rather than reduce prejudices and stereotypes. The mass media in India has not made adequate efforts to discuss serious issues concerning women and prepare the women to play their rightful and equal role in society. To change this condition, it is necessary to monitor the media and point out the merits and demerits continuously.

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