



A study of Female hero: From Mother India to Queen

Movies are considered to be a source of entertainment though they carry some societal reflection, significantly, most of the movies are made keeping public taste in mind. But few are made to highlight the social evil, out dated rituals and tradition prevalent in the society; providentially, condition of woman is among them. Usually, in most of the Indian movies the role of a female counterpart (heroine) is to entertain the public by dancing, singing and by acting on some romantic scenes; thus, the role of a heroine in most of the movies is to add spices and seductive flavor by exposing her figure, while acting is not so important. Consequently, role of a heroine in most of the Indian movies is narrowed down and she is used just to sell the product, mere commoditization of a woman body, nothing else! Humorously, the condition of a female shown in most of the movies projects advancement in style of costumes, make up and life styles but thinking is still outdated. But certain categories of movies have female heroes. They steer the movie on her shoulders without any dominant male counterpart. And they leave behind a long lasting message for the society as they attack those apparently spotless surface of social evil, patriarch locked perception!

Though Indian cinema, especially, Bollywood has produced many movies in which women have main lead creating a tiny revolution of 21st century! For instance Fashion(2008), narrating a story of an ambitious girl, there are movies like Chak de India (2007) Mary Kom(2014), Dangal(2016), two of them are based on real life story, it also brought in an issue of promoting girls for sports. We have movies like Akira (2016), Nirja (2016) who sacrificed their lives for others. These movies are quite motivational but they do not represent a large mass of women as Radha in Mother India, Damini, Vaidehi, Maithili, and Janki in Lajja, and Shashi in English Vinglish; these women represent majority of women in India.

This article contains a study of a journey of reel woman from Mother India to Queen. In the middle of the journey we have movie like Astitva (2000) but at present the issue of sensual urge of a woman has not been given space as there are many more social concepts which seems to be trivial but carry very vital importance; like earning respect in own family, giving importance to profound education and holistic development and putting emphasize on financial independence are few of them.

The movie Mrityudand (1997) brings forth many issues related to women's defenselessness in context of male –female relationships in the society. Along with that the movie pinches traditional mindset of a woman by its famous dialogue by Madhuri Dixit(Star cast) "Aap hamre Pati ho Parmeshwar banneki bhul mat kijie' wonderful dialogue! As since centuries women of India are living under the shield of males in their possible roles. And due to Women's traditional dependency, they are shaped in such a way that they are incapable of either thinking or protecting themselves. When a girl or a wife watch this movie will definitely get affected by this dialogue. As they have brought up with the idea of 'Pati Parmeshwaray Namah.' Thus, certain movies are playing significant role in creating ripples in the minds of women.

India is a big continent with variety of culture and tradition but women is everywhere the same; the other, other than the males, and are suffering from variety of traditional evils. The present article is based on the movies; Mother India(1957), Damini (1993), Lajja (2001), Dor(2006), English -Vinglish and Queen(2014), these movies have put forth some crucial issues established in our society which we are habituated of overlooking. And the purpose of this paper is to show that small revolutions that has been taking place in the mind of the woman heroes to prove themselves to be an independent being (identity) with dignified self-respect in every terms.

Let's take a quick a glance on summary of all these movies.

Mother India(1957): By Mehboob Khan

Mother India portrays a woman of 1957 India, a woman in the character of Radha(role played by Nargis), justifies her traditional role of a wife, a mother and a daughter-in-law but she also dares to think beyond and takes the leadership by convincing the villagers not to leave their home after heavy rain in the village. She is portrayed as an ideal woman during her encounter with Sukhilala too. She also protected Sukhilala's daughter from her own son by shooting her own son. Means when respect of a woman is at risk she forgets her blood relation and also the black deed of Sukhilala. Finally, she becomes an important person of the village and inaugurates irrigation channel in her village. Apparently, one of the major themes of the movie was condition of farmers and their exploitation through money-lenders. But the character of Radha emerges as a super-woman who fights back all the difficulties and problems she came across. Thus the movie becomes story of Radha and that was what most women of India were doing since years. Through this particular movie women of India and her efforts for her family got recognition. Therefore this movie has justifies the title, Mother India.

Thus, in the movie Mother India a woman emerges with her rock-solid confidence and dignified beauty of character. Her character reaches at the height of where role of a mother is in the second pedestal than woman's respect. And that gesture of Radha's character has put her in the category of woman oriented movie, though it was just a beginning in the long path of woman empowerment.

Radha, in Mother India represents a shift in the traditional and orthodox role of the mother in Indian cinema and society by becoming the man of the house and also promoted the values of chastity, wifely devotion and motherhood.

Damini(1993): by Rajkumar Santoshi

The story delineates a journey of a woman who fights back and crushes a rich family's dirty veil of reputation under which heinous deed has been covered. The story is about a woman who could not tolerate wrong occurred to her maid servant by her husband's brother. (gang rape). When Damini (Character performance by Minakshi Sheshadri) tries hard to fight for the justice. During her fight for justice she faces innumerable complications, She was treated inhumanly by her in-law to the extent that she was declared mentally ill by the court and was send to mental asylum still she stood firm against wrong. Unable to bear the mental torture in the institution, she escapes and fortunately got help of a lawyer. And thus with the help of the alcoholic lawyer, Govind(Sunny Deol), the rape case was re-opened. Technical skills of Govind, Damini's firmness and Shekhar's(Damini's husband) timely understanding played vital role in providing justice to the rape victim. Truth prevails... hopeful ending. Which usually not happens in real life, as rightly said, literature shows far- fetched reality.

Damini has in real sense lightening effect. She broke stereotype image of a heroine and paved completely different path for a woman. She fought against Ghar ki izzat, under which tones of women have been crushing since years. Damini stood beside a woman, understood her pain and discarded hollowness of social status. The role of Damini proved to be revolutionary as the woman in Damini showed unusual courage to fight against set social norms and mindset.

Lajja(2001): By Rajkumar Santoshi

This movie is a genuine attempt to bring to notice the social evil and inequality woman is facing in her life time. The lead role of the women characters were named as synonyms of Sita (ideal woman of the epic Ramayana) because the Indian society has accepted Sita as a role model for ideal wife. The movie narrates the story in four episodes which is connected by one thread i.e. the character of Vaidehi.

Vaidehi (Manisha Koirala) was a traditional wife and could not tolerate the ultra modern behavior of her husband so she left her husband. When she get back to her patents' home she was rejected with the traditional dialogue, advising her, " shadike bad patika ghar hi ... arthi uthti he", if you will behave like

this who will marry your sisters?" so Vaidehi left her parent's home. In fact it is a big decision full of self-respect. Again the Vaidehi's role is commendable because she does not want to contract herself in to womb only. She demands respect as a wife from her husband. But she could not get it so she prefers to leave her husband and parents' house. During her escape from home she met Maithli.

Maithili (Mahima Chaudhary) was a girl of extraordinary courage who boldly fought against the tradition of dowry. For her, her father's respect was more important than her marriage. She also understands importance of marriage as a bond of hearts. Besides, she expects her would-be husband to take stand on the matter of dowry but she fails to find a confident man in him. Then she makes up her mind to retort back. Thus, finally she pronounces her views boldly on the face of dowry mongers and throws them out of the marriage hall.

The third woman Vaidehi meets was Janki (Madhuri Dixit), a theatre actress, she was true to herself and conceived a child of her lover before marriage. Though she was not married she understood significance of being a mother. She respected motherhood. She showed her readiness to give birth to her child even if her lover would not accept her.

Here the theatre performance of Ramlila by Madhuri Dikshit attracts and demands discussion. The director and the story writer of the movie has rightly raised the question of woman's piousness of body. Janki articulates sharp dialogues during her role as Sita in Ramlila performance. That gives birth to subsequent argument - If Sita might have opposed going to forest with Ram, then there was no question of Sitaharan, if Sita had opposed going through Agnipariksha, entire definition of women behavior might be different in India. The double standard society might have rethought the value system, but even Valmiki being a male was also locked with man mentality. The movie also shows sharp tragedy when group of women condemns Janki for uttering dialogue against Ram. (<https://youtu.be/delQZ5YqERw>) How ridiculous it is that women have no thinking of their own, they think what men have taught them to think! These women follow ideal of Sita (given by man) unconsciously.

Lastly, Vaidehi meets Ramdulari a woman of indomitable spirit from lower caste. Again it is absurd condition of Indian society where women is considered lower, but low caste women suffer from double burden of being a woman. The episode of Ramdulari represents heinous mentality of man against women where so called man is taking revenge by rapping a woman!!

But, the end of the movie shows good future of all the heroines. Quite far from reality!

Dor (2006): By Nagesh Kukunoor

The movie Dor narrates a story of two women symbolizing confinement and freedom. Meera (Ayesha Takiya), a very young age daughter-in-law of a Rajput family is used as a domestic help in her family after the death of her husband. She is forced to follow all the age old orthodox tradition as a widow. She has to live in a dark room. She is not allowed to enjoy life by even singing a song of her choice, neither has right to be happy. She has to put on sadness on her face always because she is a widow. But when it comes to money, Meera's father-in-law shows his readiness to make a deal of his daughter-in-law in Rs. 5 lac where she will be used to satisfy sexual desires of a businessman. Though he was very much concerned about his social reputation and was minutely taking care of how a widow should live. But when it comes to money he doesn't care for the respect of his daughter-in-law. The movie shows interesting journey of Meera's self-transformation. Meera's friendship with Zinnat (Gul Panag) transforms her, and she becomes strong enough to protest against wrong.

English Vinglish (2012) By Gauri Shinde

The movie narrates a story of a homemaker Shashi who is a good wife and a good mother too. She responsibly performs her regular domestic duties along with her Laddoo business. But because of her weak English she was not respected by her husband and daughter. Fortunately she finds out a chance of learning English in U.S. And gets command over language. Thus, at the end she earns respect of her family not only by delivering a speech in English but also gets recognition as a delicious Laddoo maker.

Queen (2014): By Anurag Kashyap and Vikramaditya Motwane

The movie queen narrates the story of a girl named Rani(Kangana Ranaut),who is rejected by her would-be husband just one day before their scheduled marriage. It was a big shock for a traditional under-confident girl and this jerk proved for her as a big blow on her existence and she decides to go for honeymoon alone. During her journey of various places she discovers her confidence and self-respect. And at the end of the movie, rejuvenated Rani hands over her engagement ring to Vijay (her would be husband), and after thanking him, she walks away with a smile on her face. Thus, the movie ends beautifully. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_\(2014_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_(2014_film))

Analysis:

- A fair study of all the women characters in these selected movies prepare a pen picture of Indian society and condition of women. After 72 years of political freedom also women are struggling to be considered as human.
- These movies project in detail the problem of society along with a solid solution.
- The female protagonists of all these movies firmly took their stand and proved themselves right.
- The female protagonists of all these movies struggle for their self-respect. Moreover, These women hero are not against society or socially set tradition or husband rule. They are against wrong.
- Interestingly, all the movies show a journey of a woman going through low-confident to confident and independent women having self-esteem.
- First women oriented movie was made in 1957, the second best movie was created in 1993, almost after 36 years. But the box office hit of Damini has encouraged some more women oriented movies like Mrityudand(1997)and in first one and half decade of 21st century, we have range of movies led by female hero. That means, people have started to accept the change. The thought, 'woman can do it' gradually spreading its might.
- Movies like Dangal, Chak De India, Mary Kom have created ripple in the society and probably therefore, now people are promoting their girl child to choose sports as a career.
- The ratio of working class women is increasing day by day in the Indian traditional house hold where going out for job for a woman was forbidden.
- Women are becoming financially independent. Educated women is given preference in the marriage market now a days.
- Slowly and gradually, all the prattles of women existence is being addressed in the form of popular media.
- But unfortunately, in second half of 20th century and first two decades of 21st century also, marriage is still ultimate goal for a girl/woman for the Main course of the journey called life in India. Shown in Mother India, Damini, Lajja, Dor, English-vinglish and Queen.
- All the selected movies show Women's Life journey as self exploration, self-discovery and self-realization.
- Most importantly, in all the movies, woman character is supporting each other. That means, a woman is able to understand other's woman's pain. That also means that if woman will not understand a woman who else will? In the movie Mother India, Radha gets support of her mother-in-law, in Damini, she supports the maid of her house, in Dor, Meera get support of Zeenat, in Lajja, Vaidehi supports Janki, in Queen, Rani gets support of her friend, Vijayalakshmi (Lisa Haydon), a free-spirited woman who works at the hotel in which Rani stays.

Movies effect on the society: female point of view:

To know the effect of these movie on male and female a short survey was made and 50 educated males and 50 educated females were asked a few questions:

- Can a woman become the man of the house?

Women can be man of the house. The movie Mother India shows that a woman of Village can run the house and brought up her children without any help of her husband or anyother man. But the mindset of women is such that they do not recognize her ability until they are recognized by man. Mehboob Khan has effectively presented the issue but even modern Indian women hesitate to accept her ability.

- What is more important? Woman's respect and justice or hollow reputation of the house (ghar ki ijat)?

Obviously, woman's respect and not hollow reputation of the house. But even today, many women are crushing themselves in the name of Ghari ki ijat. In the movie Damini the lead character has shown tough dedication towards women's respect and justice but still the real life women are lagging behind in practicing value.

- Does a woman possess the capacity to emancipate herself without a man?

Yes, Rani proved it in the movie Queen. This movie has greatly affected woman's mind. Because of awareness and education among the women.

- Are these movie able to bring noticeable change in the mind of common woman?

Yes, but temporary.

- All these movie do not carry any negative effect as such, in fact they help women lead a confident life.

Movies effect on the society: Male point of view

- These movies are remote reality. Most of the movies have negative effect because women don't think and imitate without thinking. Thus they are harming Indian culture.
- Women are imitating dressing style of the heroines and life style and while doing so they fail to perform their responsibilities.
- **Conclusion:**

Reel life and real life are two different things. Reel life is flowery, exaggerated and made to make money. But the issues raised in these movies are very crucial and need to be addressed with profound steps to improve women condition in the society. And for that women have to initiate and come out of the conch shell to create their identity in social hierarchy. They need not to be dependent on theories of emancipation rather they have to form their own by local articulation and understanding of emancipation.

Source

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