



Trends of Social Hierarchies and Women Empowerment Observed in Literature and Entertainment Industry

Isha Mittal 

Department of English, Miranda House, University of Delhi, INDIA

Email Id: isha.2023.1739@mirandahouse.ac.in

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ABSTRACT: In the early Vedas, caste was divided into four categories: Brahmins; Kshatriya; Vaishyas; and Shudras. It is interesting to note that Brahmins (the priestly caste) were given a higher position, while Kshatriya (the warrior caste) were given the position of king. This caste structure, along with the long-standing gender inequality, has remained in place throughout history. In this article, we will look at these dynamics through the lens of various Indian and western literary and cinematic texts. It is important to note that many of these texts depict both discrimination as well as moments when these social norms are violated or held in check. Therefore, our goal is not to criticise, but rather to understand the intricate interplay between these themes.

KEYWORDS: Caste, women empowerment, prehistoric, film industry

1. INTRODUCTION

Taking into account well-known epic tales, classic television shows, and movies, the evolution of how social hierarchy is shown in stories and films is a magnificent voyage through human storytelling and society progress. These stories historically frequently supported the ingrained Vedic system's view that Kshatriyas and Brahmins were the superior social castes. But a trend that actively questions and undermines these ingrained societal conceptions has emerged in contemporary cinema. The clear message of these movies is that caste should never be a hindrance to achieving excellence in life, regardless of the circumstances. They not only offer pleasure but also act as inspiration and educational resources. Additionally, the portrayal of gender relations and roles in these narrativess has undergone an equally significant alteration. Historically, women have been treated like second-class citizens and left to fend for themselves. They weren't included on the front lines of war or in the decision-making process. They were often silenced and portrayed as flawed individuals. But today's storytelling is breaking these taboos. Women are portrayed as

independent and influential figures who play important roles in shaping events. This shift in narrative reflects a more inclusive and equitable view of gender roles. As stories evolve, they reflect society's changing values and aspirations. They challenge outdated norms, promoting a more inclusive and just world where one's worth isn't determined by birth right but by hard work and determination. These stories aren't just a source of joy, but also a powerful tool for social change.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since time immemorial, India has faced the challenge of eradicating poverty and understanding the role of the second gender in society. It has always been a hierarchical process because of the social norms and rules created that women are ruled by men and they have no right to do what they want. In rural India, the women are illiterate and do not know about their right which is why they are ruled by men. Therefore, women empowerment in rural areas is very important. (Singh & Joarder, 2021). Despite India's progress over the past two decades, the country continues to experience significant gender disparities. Gender



sensitization & empowerment programs during adolescence (when gender attitudes are formed) have the potential to reduce gender inequalities. The Girl Rising 'Gender Sensitization Program' (GSP) was implemented in 254 Indian schools to help adolescents identify, articulate, and share their gender related experiences. A pre-test and post-test study was conducted in a sub-group of 2,894 adolescent students in rural Punjab & Rajasthan. Multivariable regression analysis (MRA) adjusted for gender, grade & district showed an increase in gender equality scores (0.66 points), gender roles /privileges /restrictions mean (0.41 points) and gender attribute mean (0.17 points). (Vyas et al., 2020). Each Act of Abhigyan Shakuntalam reflects different social values of women. The dependence of women on their fathers, husbands, and sons was mainly because they did not possess property. Women were no longer free and became dependent on the masculine society. The social, cultural, and religious backbone of Indian society is built on the patriarchal structure. The patriarchal structure gave women a secondary status. Women were expected to follow the instructions and rules of the men in the family. The patriarchal family philosophy is based on the idea that the family tree only grows with the man. This allows him to gain importance and protection in the family. (TANUSHRI MAHATA1ST BABLU MANDI2ND, 2019). Dharma was given the highest position in the Epic 'Mahabharata'. Vyasa believes that it is Dharma that strengthens the social system, improves the well-being of the society and assists the individual to progress. According to Vyasa, the extension of this social system was the Varna system. The four Varnas were interdependent. The most significant contribution of the Mahabharata to Varna is its assertion that it is a social function and not a person. (Dr.RajaniJairam, n.d.) Dalit women face gender discrimination in a completely different manner from upper caste women in India. This is because, apart from the discrimination based on gender, Dalit women also face caste discrimination. The discrimination based on gender intersects with the discrimination based on caste, which further exacerbates the suffering of Dalit women. Dalit women face discrimination based on sex, social exclusion, and stigma. Based on Tamil movie Karnan, two Bollywood movies 200-Halla Ho, and Article15, and the Netflix web series azib dastan-geeli pucchi . (Lalitha & Pankaj, 2022). For instance, caste, class and gender disparities are constantly shown in Indian films, but in ways that strengthen social stigmas rather than demolishing them. Tamil-language movies that definitely demolish the status quo: Pariyum Perumal; Asuran; and Karnan. These films highlight the significance of symbolic and cultural symbols of discrimination based on caste and class. By using many stereotypical characters in films dealing with social issues, they show how objectification, exclusion and silencing all contribute to the perpetuation of systems of domination. Thus, Indian films reveal destructive patterns and explain how to break discriminatory practices. (Radha Rajapandian, Bharathi Dhanapal, 2021) The Fifth Cup, Annobil (Annobil), Jaisiah, and (Jaisiah) are British Dalit writers who are engaged in political and legal campaigns against caste discrimination. All of these writers engage with the idea of law and their writings deal with caste discrimination. However, only Annobil's play (Annobil) deals with caste

discrimination specifically in the UK. The Fifth Cup, Jaisiah's play, and Khankhan's poetry deal with caste violence in India. These writings reflect two distinct political strategies on caste identity and casteism. Khankhan disavows caste identity, or presents it as problematic, in his poetry. In his play, Jaisiah (Annobil) celebrates Dalit identity as having potential to resist casteism. In contrast, Khankhan (Annobil) and Khankhan (Jaisiah): support the legal prohibition of caste discrimination in Britain. (Waughray & Thiara, 2013)

3. MAIN CONTENT

Prehistoric texts offer an interesting insight into historical views of gender and emotions, providing a comprehensive examination of the concept of "rasas", which categorizes emotions and feelings into distinct categories. Examples of this concept include "Sringarasa", which is associated with femininity and emphasizes the importance of women in the realm of love and romantic relationships, and "hasyasarasa", which subtly conveys that women should remain composed and avoid excessive laughing. Conversely, the concept of "veerasa" is associated with male courage and bravery, which is closely linked to traditional ideas of masculinity. Despite this, India's history is full of stories of women who stood up against patriarchy and left a lasting impact on the nation's history. These women showed tremendous strength and endurance in the face of challenges, proving the resilience of India's women population. One of the most mesmerizing tributes is the quote dedicated to Rani Lakshmbai: "**Khoob ladhi mardhani thi voh toh Jhansi wali rani thi.**" Mahabharata is one of India's most popular epics, and it's full of fascinating examples that reveal the complex power relationships and social structures of the era. For example, when Gandhari blesses hundred sons with only one daughter, it's not only a sign of gender imbalance, but also a sign of the power of a sage's blessing. Similarly, when Kunti's sons are blessed with a divine gift, it shows how important Brahmins are and how their status is higher than that of a king or a Kshatriya. Even the cursed king, Dasharatha, was separated from his son, Ram, because of a curse. Also Karna being a Sutra son is denied equal treatment as the Pandavas. But he gets those rights when he is announced as the King of Anga. When we take a deeper dive into these texts, we find moments of empowerment. For instance, in the tale of "Abhigyan Shakuntala", the sage's curse is the cause of the king's temporary oblivion. Within these intricate stories, we find women's empowerment moments. Also glanceat , Kunti's resilience in surviving years in the forest with little money to feed her family, and Gandhari's lifelong sacrifice, represented by the cloth that covers her eyes, are powerful examples of woman's empowerment in difficult situations. Sita's transformation into Goddess Kali to overcome Sahastravan is another example of women's strength and ingenuity. It may be difficult to tell, but these stories empower women and tell the story of their role in their time. This would be unfair to criticise the epic tales of Indian literature if we did not recognize the layers of strength, resilience and power that they contain.

In the modern film industry, which includes Bollywood, Hollywood and European literature, women are pushing the

boundaries of patriarchy and gender inequality that have been around for centuries. It is a powerful force for change and advancement. In literature, there are interesting examples of women challenging patriarchal systems. For example, in the ancient Greek play “Lysisistrata”, a woman gathers women from all over Greece and starts a protest. She calls for a sex strike, where women abstain from their marriage duties until their husbands sign a peace treaty, using their role as wives to demand the end of the conflict. In the text “Tara”, there is a lot of emphasis on the idea that women should follow the traditional norms of beauty. It is a reflection of the social pressure and norms of that time where women were judged on the basis of their appearance. On the other hand, it is encouraging to see the change in the way women are portrayed in modern films and TV shows. It is a clever way of subverting patriarchy to achieve a greater purpose. The story of the protagonist of “Sales person of the Year” follows him on his journey from economic hardship to success. Initially, he is demeaned as a “zero” by his company, but through his determination and sincerity, he manages to start his own business by forming a partnership with a wealthy businessman who is willing to give him back his company. Not only does this demonstrate his worth, but it also serves as a reminder that one’s social position does not depend on one’s caste or financial situation. His resilience and merit make him stand out from all other entrepreneurs, showing that true success goes beyond social labels and economic differences.

Substantiating evidences from “Veer Zaara” and “The Trial” that shows changing dynamics of women and their empowerment. In “Veer Zaara,” we see a strong love story that goes beyond the boundaries and social norms. It proves the power of women who fight for their rights and love, defying the norms and expectations of society. Similarly, in the series “The Trial,” the female judge is portrayed as a determined and highly qualified professional. She boldly takes on difficult cases, often against powerful opponents, often male, and she does so with confidence and resilience. Her success in winning cases, as well as her ability to overcome personal difficulties, is a powerful representation of women’s strength and ability to excel in a variety of roles. This representation in the series serves as a reminder that gender should never stand in the way of professional success and change in the world.

The latest movie “Rocky and Rani ki Prem Kahani” has really taken the world by storm by breaking the taboos and changing the mindset of the society. The heroine of the film “Rocky”, “Rani” and “Kahani” is an example of how women’s agency and aspirations can have a positive impact on society. The heroine, “Alia Bhatt”, encourages women to break away from the traditional household role and follow their dreams, while the hero, “Ranbir” Kapoor, learns “Kathak”, breaking the myth that classical dance belongs to girls only. A fat girl is judged by her family and called 'Golu' while she wants to go to India. Now she was forced to get married. But after Rani's (Alia Bhatt) explanation, her mother decides to sing and the rest of the family finally understands her love for music. Through their respective journeys, both the heroine and hero change the mindset of

the families and help in bringing about positive change in society.

4. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The evidence from texts and films shows a powerful transformation in modern entertainment. The stories tell of women who are strong, brave, and capable of challenging and surpassing traditional societal norms. They excel in all aspects of life and are able to overcome challenges and rewrite their lives. However at this instance, it is important to note that the path to gender equality is not linear and progress is uneven. The challenges of social structures and norms, as well as the persistent discrimination and inequality, can be seen in ancient texts as well as in modern societies.

As we explore these stories, we see the changing landscape of women’s empowerment and how it intersects with the challenges of social hierarchy and gender inequality that continue to plague our world. These stories serve as a reminder of how far we’ve come, as well as a call for action to continue advocating and change in the fight for a more equal future. The texts and film industry are working harder and playing a crucial role in ending the stigma for women and the underprivileged. It is our perception of looking at something that needs to be change through these texts and industries for a positive change in the society.

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