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Bollywood Actresses's Evolving Figure Consciousness & Role in Hindi Cinema: Comparative Study From 1950 to 2020

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Abstract: ***Bollywood is the name given to the Hindi film business because it is based in Bombay (Mumbai). For decades, Bollywood has been a popular source of entertainment for millions of people not only in India but also around the world. Dada Saheb Phalke launched the Indian cinema business with silent films, and from that time until now, Bollywood has experienced numerous ups and downs and undergone significant changes in terms of technology, fashion, and the impact of political, social, and cultural developments in the nation. The primary Hero (protagonist), The Heroine (his love interest), and the Villain (his enemy) are a few aspects that, despite all these variations, are consistent and common in Bollywood film plots. These components can be found in any Bollywood film from any era. Without it, a Bollywood film is incomplete. The Bollywood heroine has been the style symbol for decades, from Madhubala and Nargis of the 1950s to Sridevi and Madhuri Dixit of the 90's to Deepika and Katrina of the 2020s. They might be seen as a reflection of the social and cultural attitudes about beauty parameters of the period. Women, in addition to young girls, also look up to and emulate these heroines for their beauty, fashion sense, and way of life. This study paper analyses the changes in the attractiveness and Physical appearance of Bollywood heroines, as well as the reasons for these changes.***

Keywords: Bollywood, Heroine, Beauty, Glamour, Fashion, Fitness, Actor, Actress, Blockbuster

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Bollywood as Industry

Studies and surveys indicate that approximately four billion people globally watch Indian movies, which are screened in more than a hundred nations.[15]. According to the information that is currently accessible, Hollywood only produces less than 400 films annually, whereas the Indian film industry produces over 1000 films annually in more than 20 languages. In India, where there are the most theatre entrances, around 3.3 billion tickets are sold each year. According to additional data, over 750 films are produced annually in 72 studios and screened to an estimated 12,000 weekly audiences in approximately 12,000 theatres. [2]. The film business is an integral aspect of the entertainment and media sector (E&M) and has a big impact on a nation's economy. Film production companies, film studios, distributors, exhibitors, film directors, music directors, choreographers, scriptwriters, and many more, including actors, actresses, and other significant characters, are all included in this industry.[15]. The biggest film industry in the world is in India. Each year, it makes more than a thousand movies in twenty different languages. Hollywood, in contrast, makes fewer than 400 movies annually. [5].

II. HOW DID BOLLYWOOD FILMS BECOME A BLOCKBUSTER?

Before making any comments about the types of parts allocated to women in blockbuster movies, it's vital to clarify what makes a movie a blockbuster smash. Knowing this is crucial because, in my opinion, it highlights the reasons why women are cast in the traditional and conventional positions that they are in "blockbuster" movies.[8]. Only when a film generates a profit for the distributors and the producer is it deemed a blockbuster hit. The movie must be a huge hit not only in India's major and minor cities but also in the country's smaller towns and rural areas, in order for its distributors to profit from it. [4].

III. COMPARISON OF ROLES OF BOLLYWOOD ACTORS AND ACTRESSES

Actresses in Indian cinema often begin their careers as teenagers, in a contrast to male performers who begin in their twenties. Even if the actress has only been in the profession for a decade and is only approximately 30 years old, even if she has not aged in terms of years, the industry deems the actress an "old face" and directors begin their search for "new faces." The career span of a male actor, however, is significantly longer and occasionally extends into his early fifties.

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It's quite usual to see an elderly actor in his forties portraying the male lead alongside a female lead who's only 19 years old. However, when slightly older female leads are paired with younger male actors, the press, industry, and audiences criticize the actresses for having lost their "youthful charm," as the audience prefers to see young ladies in leading roles who are alluring to the male lead and perform a sensual song and dance numbers. This demonstrates the masculine centralism and bias present not only in the brains of people who make movies but also in the minds of viewers who have been trained over time to see movie characters from this perspective. [10]. In patriarchal Indian society, younger women are seen as sensual and attractive, while older women are seen as less desirable. This is a male fantasy in action, where the expectation is that the female lead must be youthful and in her prime, whereas the man lead can be in his early fifties and still pass for a young hero/protagonist in his late twenties or early thirties. [20]. It becomes vital to adapt to the modern male's ideal and vision of what a woman should be as society grows more modern and is exposed to the West and globalization.[18].The only change, according to Sivasankaran, is a globalized objectification in which the heroine and the vamp are combined to serve the needs, wants, and fantasies of the globalized man. How the Indian man wants his girlfriend to be, with a Western and contemporary, global perspective. It's incredibly disappointing that nothing has changed in terms of supporting the female lead's actual role. [13].

IV. ROLES OF WOMEN IN BOLLYWOOD FILMS

Indian film has witnessed significant transformations since independence. For instance, it has seen a notable transition from traditional mythological blockbusters to "Bollywoodized" remakes of Hollywood's hit movies. Women have made a significant contribution to the success of individual films in the Indian cinema industry. However, over time, their roles have evolved from complete dependence on their male counterparts to be able to independently advance the plot.[5]. Hindi film narratives have undeniably tended to be male-centric and male-dominated. The perspectives of the male audience have been taken into consideration when exploring certain themes. Always second to the hero is the heroine. Her function is outlined in relation to any central male characters in the script. It could be the main character (Hero), the antagonist (Villain), the parent, the boss, an older male character, etc. She has no separate existence, and the film explores her journey in connection to the male character. This type of constraint restricts the role of women to that of glitz, solace, reprieve, and entertainment. [6]

V. STYLE STATEMENTS OF BOLLYWOOD ACTRESSES

A. 1950

The male-dominated nature of Bollywood filmmaking has made it difficult for their female counterparts to become as varied performers. They primarily performed "sati Savitri" characters, which lacked diversity and female mental depth.[25]. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, filmmakers such as Bimal Roy, Guru Dutt, Mehboob Khan, and Raj Kapoor made an exception with their great portrayal of women excelling as wives, mothers, and adored. In some of their movies, real women are shown with all of their inner complexity and exquisitely vivid personalities. Take "Mother India," "Pyaasa," "Kaagaz ka phool," and "Madhumati," for examples. The great vitality and grace of women in the face of personal adversity are celebrated in all four of these movies, as can be seen by taking a careful look at each one. [23]. The 1950s are often referred to as the "Golden Age of Indian Cinema" for good reason. India had only recently gained independence, but its citizens were very optimistic and driven. Themes like modernism vs traditionalism, as well as affluent versus poor in an India that was still forming, were mirrored in the cinema of the time. Leading Indian women established the path for fashion and style through their roles, such as Vyjayanthi Mala in "Madhumati" and "Naya Daur" with her earthy avatar bringing rural India to the fore. Nargis in "Shree 420" looked elegant in her sarees with loosely fastened pallu. Madhubala in Either a saree with a modest fitted blouse or a long skirt with a blouse and dupatta was appropriate. With beautifully plaited braids or knotted long hair, the hairstyle was typically fuss-free and out of the face.[26]

B. 1960

For Bollywood, the 1960s were a decade of excess. The actresses' fashion sense evolved into something more cutting-edge. Hairstyles were experimented with, and some of them turned into current trends. The Hindi cinema business of the time was distinguished by several classic hits, and the leading ladies of the Bollywood industry defined fashion for the newly independent country as it recovered from colonialism.[23] As she starred in "Woh Kaun Thi," Sadhana helped make the fringe haircut fashionable. The hairdo was so popular that salons all over the country experienced a rise in demand, and nearly every college-bound female could be seen sporting one.[16]. In "Aradhana," Sharmila Tagore introduced a new blouse-saree style that featured form-fitting blouses, deeper necklines, and crisp pleated sarees that highlighted the bodice.[26]

C. 1970

In the mainstream Indian film of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, there was a significant decadence in the way the "heroine" was portrayed. The "female" protagonist was relegated to the role of a "heroine" at that point, conjuring up images of mere glamour dolls dancing around trees with heroes and belting out cabaret numbers. She was portrayed in the movie this way as a showpiece, or, to put it another way, as a "feel-good touch," rather than as a real, live human being. [23]. For Bollywood movies, it was an era of action movies with a dash of romance and hippie culture. Bollywood's finest ladies, including Parveen Babi, Zeenat Aman, Hema Malini, Neetu Singh, and Rakhi, were vivacious and eager to try new fashion trends. Hair had a makeover, and accessories like headbands, clips, and flowers were added, while the clothing selection expanded. [16]. Zeenat Aman introduced a throwback hippy style, and Parveen Babi and Dimple Kapadia looked hot in bikinis. Pants with thigh-high slits became popular, and polka-dot blouses took over. Bell bottoms and bell sleeves were two prominent 1970s fashion trends. Mini dresses with bell sleeves were worn by women. [26].

D. 1980s

The action era, which brought about a lot of changes, started throughout the 1980s. The Bollywood heroines lost their power and space to the hero. She was reduced to acting in the movies as a gorgeous character who danced about trees or was abducted, raped, or killed. [2]

The emphasis on sheer, sparkling clothing like chiffon and crepe, as well as a lot of sequins, led to the continuation and expansion of the disco style.[16]. In cinema, Rekha, Jayaprada, and Sridevi were dazzling icons who had an onscreen romance with their heroes while looking effervescently feminine. The era is sometimes referred to as a potboiler since it had a little bit of everything, from Rekha's "Umrao Jaan" to Sridevi's "Mr. India" and "Chandni," where she wore sheer sarees. [26]

E. 1990

India's economy experienced growth in this year, and with it, a newer cinematic style. The era was dominated by romantic comedies with a hint of family dramas like "Hum Saath Saath Hain" and "Hum Aapke Hain Koun," as well as collegiate romances in "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" and "Dil to Pagal Hai."[23]. In order to get inspiration for their short skirts, maxi dresses, denim jackets, jumpers, and other fusion clothing, the prominent heroines Karisma Kapoor, Raveena Tandon, Madhuri Dixit, Kajol, and Urmila Matondkar began looking to the West. With deep-cut blouses or noodle straps in suits, sarees also received a makeover. [26]

F. 2000

As the millennium approached, actresses were seen in more casual, western attire. Other than historical epics, Bollywood films depicted women in their everyday attire [33].

In this decade, a number of other things appeared alongside the internet. Offshore locales, large-budget films, and NRI material all increased significantly.[15].

The decade was ruled by Aishwarya Rai, Kareena Kapoor, Preity Zinta, and Rani Mukherji, who wore clothing with dangerously short hemlines. It was the decade of bikinis, backless cholis, mini dresses, miniskirts, and crop tops.[26].

The decade saw an eclectic mix of ethnic and western styles since characters were given specific "looks" rather than the actors who were portraying them. In both "Mohabbatein" and "Devdas," Aishwarya looked lovely in desi attire, while Kareena's portrayal of Poo in "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" is still relevant today[].

The styling of the actresses matched their character's personalities and attitude. Aishwarya Rai was seen in Dhoom 2 wearing cool clothes that a modern-day thief would wear. [33]

G. 2010

Through and through revolutionized, the 2010s contain some of the most brilliant films with female-centric themes that not only promoted women's emancipation in words but also in style and charm. Kangana Ranaut transformed the average simpleton into a literal Queen when she travelled to Paris and how in Queen. In Piku, Deepika Padukone also made ordinary clothing appear spirited and enjoyable [26].

Sonam Kapoor was seen in the film Aisha wearing a variety of designer outfits that any fashion enthusiast would wear. Finally, in the youth's favorite, Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani, Deepika Padukone was seen in a simple elegant look that most teenagers in India wear on a daily basis..[33]

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H. 2020

Alia Bhatt In Dear Zindagi, more than simply Alia Bhatt's performance stood out. Her style contained everything millennial girls were looking for, including flirty summer dresses, airy tops, and of course, her distressed denim, which sparked a furor and revived the trend. She wore only effortless, boho-chic outfits throughout the movie, which is exactly how a millennial girl wants to dress.[23]. Anushka wore a variety of traditional and western ensembles in the movie, Yeh Dil hai Mushkil, but when the actress wore kurtas with frayed denim, it started a massive trend! More and more women started copying Anushka's style by wearing kurtas with high slits and torn blue jeans for a more grungy, rebellious appearance. [34]

VI. ROLE OF ACTRESS TO MAKE A BOLLYWOOD MOVIE BLOCKBUSTER

The little towns and villages in India are populated by traditional and conventional people. In order for anyone, including the female viewers, to relate to the film's heroines, the society in which they live has very rigid ideals about what women should be like. Therefore, filmmakers can create a movie that will be appealing to this type of audience.[22]. The primary male protagonist or the Hero is always the one who bears the entire movie on his shoulders, with the ladies serving as relief/ entertainment. Males predominate in the audience.

The majority of moviegoers at theatres are young men between the ages of 18 and forty due to the demographic makeup of the viewing public. It becomes crucial to satisfy their wants and requirements.[20]. The real-life man (who literally cannot beat off ten other men and yet come out undamaged), or the real-life lady (who is not always the young and sexually appealing figure), are middle-aged or elderly, not always objects of want, not simply ready to dance and sing at the first available opportunity, are just plain normal, and are not characters that the real people want to watch. Despite how simple it may be for people to identify with those very real individuals, they do not want to see themselves on screen. They want to see themselves projected as unbelievable, irrational, amazing heroes who adhere to the genuine system of beliefs and values but are more capable than the real man and the average man. In order to continuously appeal to the general public in both urban and rural locations, fantasy film needs to appeal to this sense.

It must be extraordinary but adhere to the conventional moral code.[22].What the audience desires is determined by the difficulties and realities they face. They do not want these facts to be depicted in their brief pleasure of entertainment. The unrealistic fantasy that the reel man portrays for the audience within the boundaries of society, which furthers their belief that all cinemas must be fantastic and unreal, is what the directors think the audience wants and projects to them. This is the vicious cycle that the film industry is working to break.[25].

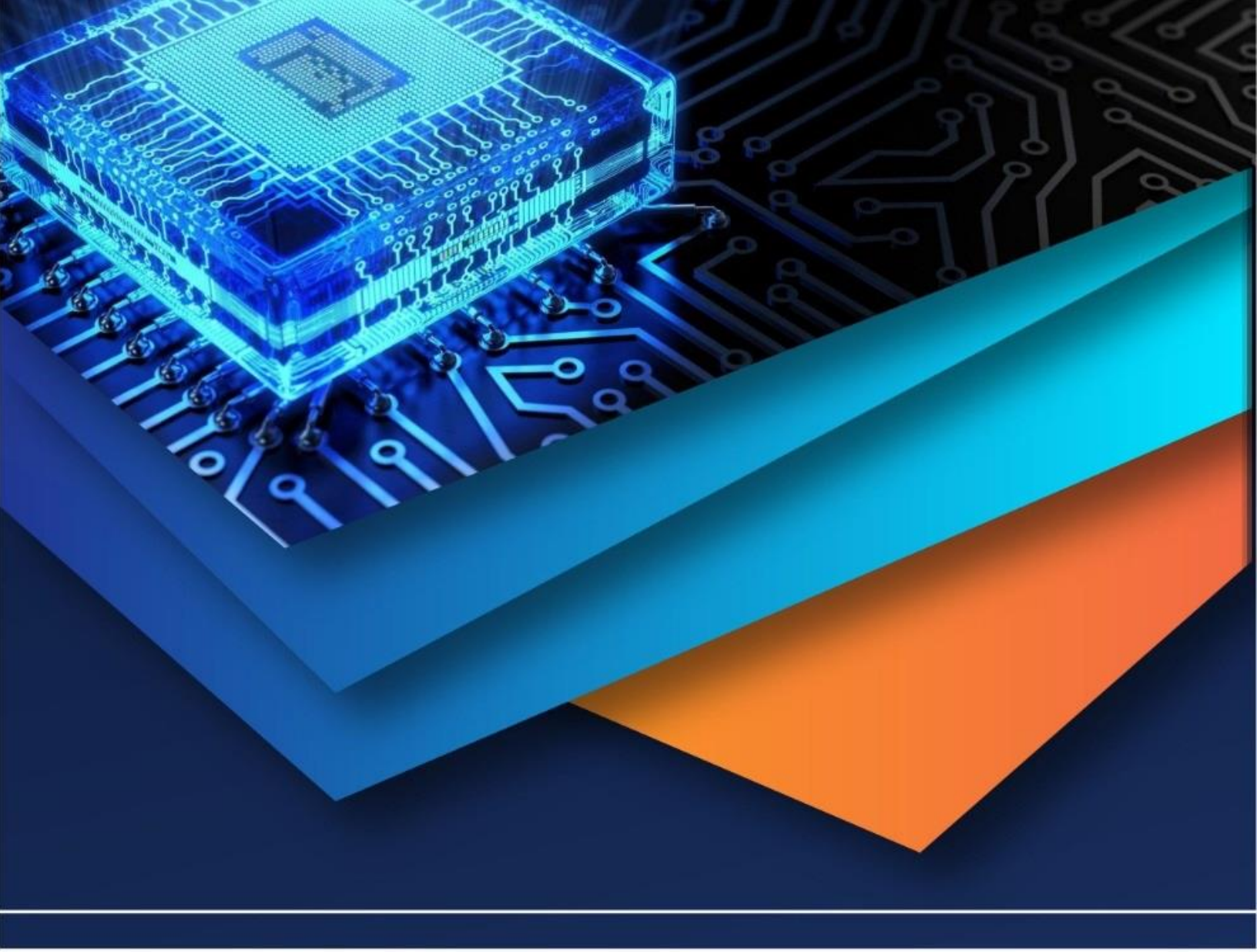
VII. CONCLUSION

One of the biggest film businesses in the world is the Hindi film industry, also known as Bollywood. Everyone who is involved in this firm has invested millions of rupees in it, and since they all want to profit from it, they must abide by the laws of business. The success of the movie industry depends on how the general public reacts; thus, filmmakers must consider audience preferences and satisfy their wants in their works. The Hindi commercial film industry provides the entertainment the audience wants. The audience prefers fiction to reality on screen, but they also expect the fantasy to be plausible. They want the movie's hero to resemble them while still acting like a superhero.

The same holds true for heroin; unlike the girls they are surrounded by in real life, she should be like their ideal woman. According to the social climate and cultural values of the time, heroines' appearances evolved. The audience preferred coy, wholesome heroines in the 1950s and 1960s draped in Indian traditional outfits that time only their faces were visible, the audience didn’t want to see their bare bodies, rather it was supposed to be bad to see such things on a screen. The new generation's perspective, however, altered after the 1970s as time went on and India grew closer to the west as a result of globalization. Now, they are drawn to Hollywood films via VCRs, video, satellite channels, mobile phones, the internet, and social media. Bollywood movies adapt based on public preferences in order to compete with the competition and draw audiences to the theatre. Since the public of today is more demanding and wants to see more than just the heroine's face, heroines have started exposing their bare skin on large screens after the 2000s. Bollywood's leading ladies started exercising and changing to more Western standards of beauty, such as being tall and slender, in order to seem more alluring and receive more offers. After Kareena Kapoor introduced the size Zero figure style to the Indian audience in the 2008 film Tashan, Bollywood actresses began to obtain the size 0 figure and display it on the big screen. Today's Bollywood heroines, like Dipika Padukone, Katrina Kaif, and Kriti Senon have beautiful faces and fit bodies since they need to be in the film industry to seek more offers.

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