



Woman Cinematic Representation and Pay Disparity in Hindi Films and Hollywood Film Industry

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Abstract

Women representation in films is a longstanding issue, with notable disparities with the screen timings, on-screen roles, behind the scenes contributions and how women are portrayed in the films. Equal pay for women is a long time coming. The portrayal of women in the cinematic society has been a matter of object for a matter of time. Women in any industry have to face the same consequences in both Bollywood and Hollywood. Pay disparity is the major concern in the film industry even the deserving actors fail to get their deserving pay. Many actors have openly protested about this issue. According to Trakstar reports a woman earns 79% of a man is earning of the same job. In this article the representation of women in film industry and how gender pay gap is shown towards female actors and how to overcome the factor. The representation of women in cinema has evolved over the years, yet significant differences occur in both on screen and behind the screen portrayals. This paper will explore the role of women in the cinematic world and the pay disparity they suffer and the gender inequality over the years. Despite the increasing number of women on screen and behind the screen and deserving roles between the male and female actors there exists a huge gap in the pay disparity in the cinematic world. Although some measures have been taken to reduce the gap and equality in work there need to be transparent in the transaction and the mind-set of the people through the years.

Keywords: pay disparity, pay-gap, sexulisation, objectification.

I. Introduction

Women are subjected on the continuous radar of society. Women in media are mostly

portrayed as a medium of sensuality and sexuality confirming the gender disparity and gender inequality at home and society. Woman

in any field have to face continuous challenges and difficulties in their daily life. Even in the modern times the status of women in the media has not been changed even today men are seen as experts in the fields of professionalism and expertise where women are seen in a sexist way. They often face criticism and media often focuses about their life and privacy rather on their professional life. Women are subjected to face sexist remarks and often looked as a commodity. Women actors in movie industry often receive secondary and stereotypical representation and tied to the roles of wives and lovers; the film industry often shown as glorified beauty objects and source of entertainment. In the earlier times women actors were often portrayed as submissive and passive characters that were mostly dominant in their situation and be in home roles but the situation has been changed in the modern times women have become stronger and independent not only they are playing the lead roles and also more women centric movies are made.

The study is commenced into four distinctive chapters that explores women role in the in the industry and how they are subjected and the pay disparity that they get in the different roles. It initiates the different roles what they get and what they deserve. Remember those movie scenes where camera rolled and dolled over actor's body sexualizing them and often objectifying and passing derogatory remarks were part of the movies. Many famous boll wood songs like Tip Tip barsa pani and Honey Singh's songs are example of that. Women objectification is not new in the industry it has its roots since ages.

In the 1900s it was the time when women were deprived to act in the movies and even plays. Women were severely looked down and were not allowed to go out of their homes. So much that the first heroine of the boll wood industry was a man himself. The father of Indian cinema Dada Saheb Phalke gave the role of Taramati a female character to a man in his first Indian cinema Raja Harishchandra. Later on he

found two more characters including mohini Bhasmasur and single mother Durgabai Kamat and her daughter kamlabai gokhle making them the first female actor and the child artist. She paved the way for the female actors today. Being a single mother and a widow she was highly criticized by the society. The scripts which were written by men portrayed women either 'suitable bride' or 'vamp'. Women were showing as an ideal character who has always been the replica of the misery in the real life. The misinterpretation of woman was mere shown as mere objects satisfying hero's lust or a moral responsibility of mending her broken self.

Unlike the Bollywood industry women in the Hollywood industry played a significant role in every aspect of the silent film making as directors, writers, producers, editors, and even camera operators. The women periodically exercised real power behind the camera but their names and contributions kept fading away in the name of security on and off to escort them off set. According to some scholars it was estimated that half of the film scenarios in the silent era were written by women, and contemporaries and sometimes with old stereotypes and sometimes with fresh and canny arguments that women were especially suited to motion picture story telling. Talent and brains were mattered not gender.

According to the Celluloid Ceiling Report conducted by the centre of the study of women in Television and Film at San Diego State University.

II. Objectives

1. To discuss the cinematic representation of the women actors in both Hollywood and Bollywood.
2. How to improve the portrayal of women actors as strong and independent and capable of her own actions.
3. To ensure that no more objectification and sexualization of women must be shown in the name of creativity.

4. Trying to maintain pay balance between the women and the male actors and the female actors.
5. To make ensure that the women actors should receive their deserving pay in the industry.
6. Women should get their deserving role in the film rather than being the second lead and should be given more roles than just being a mother, lover or just vamp.
7. Women should be given more diverging roles rather just being just positive or the negative character; more characters should be introduced in their credit.
8. Women should receive the same treatment as of the male actors.

III. Aims

1. To get better work environment of the female actors in the industry.
2. Female actors should be given more deserving roles in their counterpart.
3. Better work and pay balance should be maintained.
4. Objectification and sexualisation of women actors and item numbers in the bollywood should be reduced.
5. More character centric roles should be given to women actors.

IV. Discussion

1. Cinematic representation of women in Bollywood and Hollywood

This chapter represents the presentation of women in the film industry where the representation varies from industry to industry. It will focus on the presentation on the women on both Hollywood and bollywood that how they were represented and how the scenario changed with time Women have been involved in the industry as actors, directors, editors, dancers, writers, critics and other film professionals although their contribution

remain unnoticed for a very long time. In Bollywood the cinematic representation has been evolved during the ages but it still needs the required changes. Early bollywood movies depicted women in the same stereotypical and dominant roles, reflecting the patriarchy of the society

EARLY ERA 1930s-1960s

In the early years of Bollywood, women were depicted very differently. It was an era where women were portrayed as self-sacrificing figures and often concentrated to traditional gender roles. Women were not shown as strong independent characters and often shown as devoted mother, wives and daughters who were responsible to hold the honor of family values. Until movies like *Mother India* (1957) were the game changer and changed the perception of the women characterization portraying the trend of strong independent women who can be the backbone of the family and the nation.

On the other hand, sexism existed in Hollywood too. Even they were confiding to their homes with their family and children. During the golden age of cinema media portrayed a false expectation of what an ideal woman character should be. They were often objectified and had very little speaking time and often shown as second lead characters and very given very less space time with less dialogues. That was the time when there were very less people behind the camera; there were less writers, less directors, cinematographers and writers. Women were not much explored in the screen and often shown as ideal women. Although actors like Marilyn Monroe tried to establish a status of a strong women that women are capable of their own decisions.

MIDDLE ERA 1970s-1980s

The middle era showed a slight improvement from the early ages although women characters were still portrayed as ideal women in the screen. It showed a shift towards more complex roles and layers in the characterization of women although still it was

confined to the traditional roles of women. During this time women were depicted as silently suffering pain in themselves and enduring hardships only through rescued through male interpretations or some supernatural interventions. Films like Seeta Aur Geeta (1972) and Jai Santoshi Maa (1975) highlighted this trend, where women were portrayed as virtuous and patiently figures who found refuge through conformity to social norms.

Women in Hollywood faced the same significant challenges and limitations in that era though the landscape was beginning to change. Women were often cast in roles that were usually emphasized with sexuality, beauty or subservience rather than complexity or independence, many films confined women characters as traditional gender roles with roles like love interests, homemakers or damsels in distress. Although feminist movement in the 1970s 80s started influencing Hollywood, leading to more layered portrayals of women. Films like Kluge (1971) and Norma Rae (1979) highlighted strong and complex women characters.

MORDERN ERA 1990s

The era of 1990s was way different than previous era. It showed a blend of both traditional and modern portrayals of women. Although still there were characters that were confined to traditional roles and showed women as a patriarch of society rules. The movies were shown as objectifying songs about women appearance, songs like Khud ko kya samajti hai and tip tip barsa pani is about the sexual objectification of women. While some movies showed women in the same stereotypical roles, others began to explore the other shades of women too; movies like Mohra and Gupt showed women as career oriented and independent characters and responsible for her own actions. The time of 1990s showed increase in the objectification of women in the name of item songs and hyper glamorous portrayals,

on the other hand films like Damini and Raja ki Aayegi Baraat showcased the societal evils.

The representation of women in Hollywood showed a little shift from the traditional and second lead shift characters and showed more complex and diverse roles in women character. The 1990s showed the rise of empowered female characters in thriller and action genres, breaking away in the damsel in distress stereotypes. Romantic comedies were a dominant genre in that era often portraying women as career driven or quirky characters who are seeking for love and fulfillment in life. Films like James Bond series showed women in action forms and other movies like Thelma & Louise and Pretty Women are examples of such characters.

Despite of the success of the movie Barbie the number of females leads in the last 10 years is low. The advancement of women in behind the scenes roles in the film industry has been disappointingly slow over the last few years. According to Martha Lauzen, executive director of the Centre of the study of the women in Television and Film at San Diego State University, is a analysis of the top 250 highest-grossing films from 1998 to 2023. Over the last 26 years, Lauzen has analyzed over 82000 film credits to determine the proportion of women occupying the positions in the industry. The main result of this report has been staggering slow.

2. Present scenario in the representation of women

The paradigm has shown a great change in the representation of the women in the recent years. Not only the actors but more women have increased working behind the camera. Now movies produced are more character based, women are no more confined to the old traditional stereotypical roles of loving mother and wives but more layered characters are presented on the screen. Now films produced shows female issues and their rights, they are portrayed for fighting for their rights. Women

characters are shown as independent, strong and standing up for their rights. Female actors like Kangna Ranaut, Priyanka Chopra, Vidya Balan and Anushka Shetty are few names in the Bollywood industry who have taken up such roles that have helped in changing the stereotypical thinking of the society.

Not only women actors but there has also seen a rise in the women writers in the industry who have successfully bringing women issues in the screen. Hence more content that creates a fresh perspective on how women lives are evolving are made. Although being a male centric place women tend to suffer to play the second lead characters in the movies and still have to tolerate the objectification of the male gaze and the audience in the name of item songs. With the emergence of good opportunities for females more female centric characters of strong women are shown. Stories of empowered women are being made in the film industry.

There is an increase in the portrayal of complex, multi-dimensional protagonists, breaking away from the traditional norms of the society. On contrary the objectification and sexualization of women in Indian films have been normalized to an extent that it is hard to imagine a film without a mandatory item number or a scene that shows woman in a revealing outfit attracting male gaze. In most of the films, women are portrayed as mere objects and their characters are often reduced to their physical appearance and sexuality. The film industry's depiction of women lies in the beauty of women and her value lies in the attraction of men. Not only women are objectified in the movies but also shown as weak and helpless which perpetuates the need of man to save them.

A new study shows that the number of female leads in Hollywood is at a 10-year low. According to USC Annerberg inclusion initiative top 100 films shows that only 30 feature a female lead or co lead a worst result since 2014.

"This is a catastrophic step back for girls and women in film", Dr Dtacy L Smith, research head, said in a statement. "in the last 14 years, we have charted progress in the industry, so to see this reversal is both startling and in direct contrast to all the talk of 2023 as the 'year of the woman'".

According to the Celluloid Ceiling Report overall women are comprised of just 23% of directors, writers, producers, executive producers etc working in the top 250 films of 2024. Taking this in a long view it shows a very low increase of 6% points from 17% in 1998. By role women are accounted to 27% of producers, 22% of executive producers, 20% of editors, 20% of writers, 16% of directors and 12% of cinematographers working in the top 250 films. According to some study it is accounted that for 9% of the composers. The report also includes the percentage of women working in the top 100 movies. The number of films led by woman of color also fell from 18 to 14 which still marks a major leap from 2007. Only 3 movies in 2023 feature a woman over the age of 45 as a lead or co lead compared with 32 in men in the same age category.

3. Pay disparity in film industry

The gender pay gap affects many industry and film industry is no less than that and it has been in debate for years. Even today deserving actors fail to get what they deserve in comparison to their male co actors. Wage gap is the percentage difference of what a woman receives compared to the annual earnings of men in work fields. This has been prominent issue in most of the workspace where women are discriminated in their workspace. Pay disparity in bollywood is a matter of debate for a long time. Female actors are often seen as a second lead or a 'piece of entertainment' in a film, where majority of the story lies on the shoulder of the male actor. The story is often concentrated on the hero and women have to play the side role of a mother or lover in the movie. The film industry is a male centric place

where men decide the pay gap of the actors. Many female actors like Lara Dutta and Sonam Kapoor have openly discussed the humongous pay gap in the industry. Even top tier actresses struggle to get what they deserve. Even in Hollywood the actresses still struggle to get their deserving pay. Oscar winning actress Jennifer Lawrence have lashed out on the pay gap between the male actors and the female actors in the industry where she is paid millions of dollars less than her male co actors.

The gender pay gap in Bollywood doesn't stem from the belief that actresses are less efficient or less talented than male actors. It is a result of many factors:

Historical Norms: The film industry has traditionally been male dominated. Male actors have active participation in the film and risk taking in the film making. Actors are more favored for their convenience and share in the profit making where women actors are treated secondary or like an employee in the movie. Changing these norms may take time and persistent effort.

Market Perceptions: Usually male actors are seen as drawing big box office numbers, which led to higher pay than the female co actors. Film producers are usually bear risk in the name of big male actors where female actors are seen as a second lead. This perception is slowly but gradually changing as audience are recognizing the talent of female actors.

Role Distribution: Many films are male centric, having narratives of male part which leads to more screen time than female co actors, female actors are seen as second lead to male co actors, thus leads to higher pay than female co actors

However, there is a growing movement towards equal pay and there have been many discussions regarding this topic, with many advocating for the gender pay in the film industry.

Hollywood star Kristen Dunst has said in BBC interview that she grew up at a time

when there was "major pay disparity" between herself and her male co-stars.

She said she was paid less than male co actors, even though there had been more box office successes, with films such as Jumanji (1995) and bring it on (2000).

"I was very young and it just felt like at the time, what do you do?" She said.

Dunst has previously referred to the pay gap between her and actor Toby Maguire, who was starred alongside in spider-man in 2002, as "**very extreme**".

In a vogue interview Jennifer Lawrence, one of the highest paid actors in the world- and yet she is still paid millions of dollars than her male co-stars.

The Oscar winning actress slammed Hollywood's persistent pay gap in a new interview in Vogue, telling the magazine that while actors are often "overpaid", the discrepancy still stings.

Other actors like Olivia Colman has said in a CNN interview.

"Don't get me started on the pay disparity, but male actors get paid more because they used to say they drew in the audiences. And actually, that hasn't been true for decades but they still like to use that as a reason to not pay women as much as their male counterparts".

Even Bollywood industry is no less there are many female actors in the industry has been vocal about this issue.

Bollywood star Sonam Kapoor has spoken out against gender pay gap that exists in the industry, while speaking at the Creative Industries and cultural Economy Summit at London's Nehru Centre as a part of India Global Forum's U.K- India week on Wednesday. In conversation with Amish Tripathi, Kapoor said

"The gender pay gap is humongous. And I don't think that will be narrowing very

soon, unfortunately, but the roles are getting meatier for sure,”

Another actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas has also spoken about recently. “I’ve never had pay parity in Bollywood,” Chopra Jonas told the BBC. “I would get paid about 10% of the salary of male co actor’. The pay gap is large, substantially large. And so many women dealt with that. I’m sure I will too if I worked with a male co-actor now in Bollywood.

Not only female actors but male actors like Shahrukh Khan, Aamir Khan and Ranbir Kapoor have also supported that women actors should be paid fairly. Shahrukh Khan and Aamir Khan have even recognized for paying fairly for their female co-actors. It is encouraging to see these influential figures using these platforms to promote fairness and equality in the industry.

The big reason behind the pay gap is the star value and box office numbers and some point explains the negotiation process explain the pay gap in the industry the idea is that women don’t push hard for their salaries. However, Hollywood stars on their behalf keep professionals to negotiate on their behalf and get their deserving behalf. These possible results carry potential results to narrow the gender earnings in the industry. Transparency could be the solution and contracts should be made public to reduce the pay gap and encourage more women in the industry.

V. Conclusion

Women are also involved in the filmmaking in all the roles including writers, directors, producers and other film industry professions though they have been under represented in the creative positions. Women had always place in acting but their place seen as a secondary. Although the situation of women in the early era was very much difficult and harsh as they had to bear the pressure of the societal norms, slowly but steadily the situation has bit improved with the scope of betterment in

future. Women are coming forward and participating in all kind of film profession like writers, directors etc; although the situation and numbers are still not satisfactory and needs improvement.

Pay disparity is not a new topic in the film industry. Although women are associated in all the creative professions of the industry, we cannot deny the fact that it a male centric industry and men decide the norms and rules of it and women are tend to follow it. For years, women are paid a way less than their male co-actors. According to Dr Sanchez report the gender pay gap in Hollywood is worth a million dollars with women around US 1.1 million less than their male counterparts. The situation is quite questionable and many actors have talked openly about it. Transparency could be the solution for pay gap and can encourage the coming big talents in the industry.

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