

LADIES BEWARE BOLLYWOOG CINEMA MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH

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Abstract

A recent content analysis of the popular Indian movies has argued that the stereotypical representation of women in the Indian cinema has remained unchanged in the last 70 years. The stereotypes of mothers, daughters, widows, and daughters-in-law are the same in the 2010s as these were in the 1950s and the 1950s. The only exception is the depiction of 'the other women', who is a vamp, a courtesan, a dancing girl, or a woman of ill repute. Over the years, the portrayal of such characters has undergone a metamorphosis. These women are no longer the passive victims of the social system and their lovers. These characters have become more aggressive, violent, and active revenge-seekers in the Indian movies. Such characters also appear as the main characters in the films rather than the appendages for the subplots in a story. While women are gaining a more equitable status in the Indian society, the recent Indian films have become extremely violent towards the female characters. The (sexual) objectification of women in a new genre of film songs in Indian movies known as 'an item song' repeatedly show women in vulnerable situations where they may be violated by gangs of males. The filmmakers argue that such scenes are mirroring what has become a common occurrence in India - gang rapes, and public humiliation of women. This paper argues that by adding these 'item songs' and scenes of gang violence against women in the movies can only increase the problem rather than rectify it. The paper calls for a more responsible stance from the filmmakers towards the exploitation of females and the violence towards and by the female characters. The presentation will be followed by a sampling of recent 'item song', violence towards women, and the violent responses by the female characters in the recent Indian cinema.

Keywords: exploitation of the female body, objectification of women in the movies, stereotyping in the movies, media violence, media effects.