

ROLE OF CONTEMPORARY HINDI FILMS IN CREATING AWARENESS ON PERSONAL HYGIENE

Amanjyoti Kaur

Assistant Professor
Department of Journalism & Mass Communication
Khalsa College Amritsar, Punjab

Abstract

It's not just the present Government's 'Swachh Bharat abhiyaan' that has been trying to educate the masses on the importance of sanitation but the contemporary Hindi Cinema is also coming forth to raise a voice on this active social message. This study aims to find out the impact of contemporary Hindi cinema in sensitizing and creating awareness amongst the masses on personal hygiene. Menstrual hygiene is an issue that has never been showcased on silver screen before the film 'PadMan'. The subject has always been treated as hush-hush affair and more of a 'taboo' in the country. On the other hand the film 'Toilet Ek Prem Katha' backed the ruling government's 'Darwaza Band' campaign to promote the use of toilet while highlighting the need to eradicate the issue of open defecation in India. Cinema has been regarded as an agent of social change. It is the mirror of any society, hence it is expected from this audio visual media to represent as well as highlight the reforms required in the society. To find the effect of contemporary Hindi cinema on the audience, methodological triangulation is done using content analysis, a qualitative method and a survey conducted with 40 respondents to collect the data quantitatively.

Keywords: Hindi Cinema, Contemporary Films, Personal Hygiene, Open Defecation, Menstrual Hygiene

Introduction

Ever since the ruling government flagged the 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan' in 2014, the issue of Personal Hygiene has been debated widely. Dictionary meaning of personal hygiene is the principle of maintaining cleanliness around to avoid diseases. The Indian film industry also marked its strong presence by highlighting the need for sanitation, which is indeed one of the most crucial matters of concern. The production of films like 'Toilet Ek Prem Katha'

and *'PadMan'* argued for a common cause of maintaining hygienic living conditions. According to the UN figures, practice of 'open defecation' is rampant in India.

Open defecation refers to the practice of using fields, open areas or forests to excrete instead of using a toilet. The country has the world's largest number of people defecating in the open without using any toilet. Around 524 million people of India defecate in the open (till June 2017). "Open defecation poses a serious threat to the health of children in India. This practice is the main reason India reports the highest number of diarrhoeal deaths among children under-five in the world"¹ (UNICEF India). The problem of Open Defecation is massive and so is the issue of Menstrual Hygiene. .

"Women have been bleeding since time immemorial"²(Samantha, Tannistha. & Gundi, Mukti. 2018). She has been bearing acute pains like labor and menstrual cramps. According to the study carried out by Neilson on the behalf of UNICEF, social stigma attached to the menstruation effects the overall health of woman in our country. It is the need of the hour to enlighten women about the irrational beliefs pertaining to menstrual cycle. The Neilson study concludes that a vast majority of girls are completely unaware of the diseases that can occur because of poor hygiene maintenance during the cycle of menstruation. Every month nine out of ten girls miss their schools out of fear of staining their clothes. Six in every 10 girls faced restrictions in relation to carrying out religious activities. The taboos that are associated with menstruation in our society have weighed down the confidence of women. It's the definite need to emancipate women from various myths related to periods.³ (Neilson India, 2016) Open defecation and menstrual hygiene; both are important aspects of keeping a healthy atmosphere around.

'Cinema plays a great role in society. Cinema, a powerful form of art possesses the capability to change the society. Its helps people by educating them and making them understand the cultural issues in a better way'.⁴ (Mahmood 2013). This paper tries to find out the impact of the contemporary Hindi films in triggering social change.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the impact of Contemporary Hindi Films like 'Toilet Ek Prem Katha' and 'PadMan' in creating awareness on Personal Hygiene.
- To study the role played by Hindi films in triggering a change in the conventional society.
- To analyze the content of 'Toilet Ek Prem Katha' and 'PadMan'

Methodology

Methodological Triangulation is applied in this study. A combination of different research methods to study the same phenomenon is known as Triangulation. This technique helps the researcher to take a deeper look at the multiple perspectives of the same concept⁵. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are applied in this study. Qualitative approach is adopted by doing a content analysis of the movies 'Toilet Ek Prem Katha' and 'PadMan'. To collect the data quantitatively a survey has been conducted by the researcher. 40 respondents (20 belonging to the age group of **below** 25 years and 20 respondents **above** the age group of 25 years) were selected from the city of Amritsar.

Content Analysis of 'Toilet Ek Prem Katha' & Padman

The contemporary Hindi films like '*Toilet Ek Prem Katha*' and '*PadMan*' have been produced on the subjects that are never openly discussed in the society. Bollywood has set up a new trend of making films on the issues that are treated as a hush-hush affair in the country. The contemporary Hindi cinema has come forth to break all taboos.⁶ Films or motion pictures capture two out of five sensory organs of the human body. Eyes and ears are actively involved in receiving the audio-visual messages. There is an inclusion of roughly 40 percent of the sensory power while watching films. Films are a potent medium to deliver active messages⁷ (Kaur, 2016). Films have the power to motivate the audience. The Reel therapy by Dr. Gary Solomon suggest that films have the capability to inspire, educate and change the existing attitudes of the people. According to Dr. Solomon people can find a way out to their problems merely by watching films.⁸ (Solomon2001) Films that are being analyzed portray two major issues prevailing in the society. The film 'Toilet Ek Prem Katha' unfolds in an Indian village where Keshav (Akshay Kumar) marries Jaya (Bhumi Pednekar) and the very next day of her marriage Jaya finds that there is no toilet. Jaya's dialogue "*agar pehle pta hota toh shadi na krti*" (if I would have known that there is no toilet here, I wouldn't have married you) forcefully projects her strong stand on the matter. Her fierce monologue saying, "*mard toh ghar ke piche baith jate hain, par hume toh jaida mehnat krni padhegi kyunki samjhota bhi hum auraton ko hi krna hai*" (men can defecate in the open but women have go far off, at deserted places or do it in the early morning so that no one can see them; since every sacrifice is expected from the women only) projects her anger against the helpless attitude of the women. Her stand '*No Toilet, No Bride*' is enough to motivate women of the country who rarely protest for themselves. Dinath's (Anupam kher) words to Pandit ji (keshav's father) saying "*If you change*

nothing, nothing will change” argues for a modification in the stereotypical approach towards life. Keshav struggles to find a solution against the system saying, “problem shauch ki nahin soch ki hai” (problem doesn’t lie in defecation but in the mindset of the people”. Jaya’s strong protest to fight the problem is indeed inspiring. On the other hand the movie ‘PadMan’ focuses on the issue of menstrual hygiene. The film is inspired from the innovation of Arunachalam Muruganantham. Lakshmikant Chauhan (Akshay kumar) urges his wife (Gaytri) to stop using stained cloth as it can cause serious diseases. Gaytri is reluctant considering the ‘taboo’ attached to the menstrual cycle of a woman. She appeals her husband by saying “*Hum aurton ke liye bimari se marna sharam ke saath jeene se behtar hai*” (it is better for us women to die of diseases than to live without shame). The film successfully depicts the frame of mind attached to this the feminine affair. Lakshmikant tries to sensitize the people of his village but fails badly. Gatri’s hesitance over the problem can be accounted by her dialogue “*Main bimari se maron ya na maron par sharam ke maarey atamhatya zarur kar lungi*” (I might not die of the disease hence caused by using stained cloth but will definitely commit suicide out of shame). Lakshmikant refuses to give up his idea saying, “*desh tabhi mazboot hoga, jab auratein mazbooot hongi*” (the country can only be strong, if the women of the country are strengthened). An important angle of woman empowerment is also covered in the movie inspiring the men and women both to come forward and reflect on the issue. The film no just motivates to alter the stiff setup against menstrual hygiene but the depiction of passion for innovation is commendable.

Data Analysis

1. Do you think contemporary Hindi Films like ‘Toilet: Ek Prem Katha’ & ‘PadMan’ successfully delivered the social message on Personal Hygiene?

Age Group	Yes (%)	No (%)	Can’t Say (%)
> 25 yrs	85%	5%	10%
< 25yrs	65%	10%	25%
Total %	75%	7.5%	17.5%

Table 0.1

75% of the total respondents (85% below the age of 25 years and 65% of the respondents above the age of 25 years) agreed that the contemporary Hindi cinema is successful in delivering the social message on the importance of maintaining personal hygiene. Although 7.5% of the respondents felt that films like ‘Toilet: Ek Prem Katha’ & ‘PadMan’ were not successful in creating the desired impact on the audiences while 17.5% of the respondents could not state any difference made by such films.

2. Do you think cinema has more power to create awareness on personal hygiene over any other sort of campaigning like ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan’?

Age Group	Yes (%)	No (%)	Can't Say (%)
> 25 yrs	85%	5%	10%
< 25yrs	20%	45%	35%
Total %	52.5%	25%	22.5%

Table 0.2

As the table 0.2 shows 52.5 percent of the total respondents felt that films are closer to human mind than any government campaign while 25% of the respondents feel that government campaigns like ‘Darwaza Band’ are more powerful to educate the masses. 22.5% of the participants could not reflect on the relevance of both films and government campaigning.

3. Has ‘PadMan’ created a platform for the society to openly discuss and break the taboo of menstrual hygiene?

Age Group	Yes(%)	No(%)	Can't Say(%)
> 25 yrs	75%	20%	5%
< 25yrs	50%	40%	10
Total %	62.5%	30%	7.5%

Table 0.3

62.5% of the respondents applauded the efforts made by the movie ‘PadMan’. They appreciated the bold subject highlighted by the movie. They agreed that they are relatively more open to discuss the issue of menstrual hygiene now while 30 percent of the people are still reluctant to speak on the subject. 7.5% weren't able to state any change.

4. Can movies like ‘Toilet Ek Prem Katha’ & ‘PadMan’ influence the rigid mindsets of the people?

Age Group	Yes (%)	No(%)	Can't Say(%)
> 25 yrs	85%	5%	10%
< 25yrs	25%	20%	55%
Total %	55%	12.5%	32.5%

Table 0.4

Above table shows that 55% of the respondents agreed that there is a significant impact created by contemporary Hindi films in the mindsets of the people while 12.5% of the participants felt that such movies do not affect the conventional setup of the society. 32.5% of the respondents neither approved nor disapproved the influence films can make on the audience.

5. Do you think films with social message can bring the desired reforms in the society?

Age Group	Yes (%)	No (%)	Can't Say (%)
> 25 yrs	75%	15%	10%
< 25yrs	65%	15%	20%
Total %	70%	15%	15%

Table 0.5

70% of the respondents agreed that films can result in bringing out desired reforms in the society. 15% felt that movies cannot reshape the existing ideas of the masses and 15% people could not consider any facet.

6. Is Indian society hanging in between conventions and progress?

Age Group	Yes(%)	No(%)	Can't Say(%)
> 25 yrs	90%	5%	5%
< 25yrs	85%	5%	10%
Total %	87.5%	5%	7.5%

Table 0.6

Vast number of the participants i.e. 87.5% agreed that the society is quite confused about marching ahead or staying the conventional way. It is tough for the society to make a decision between advancement and customs. 5% said there is no such confusing whereas 7.5% of the respondents couldn't reflect on the status.

Conclusion

Cinema is a potent audio-visual medium for delivering messages. The contemporary Films like 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha' and 'PadMan' mark a significant new trend in the Indian Cinema. These films brought forward the much important social issues and delivered them quite successfully. Personal hygiene is the most important concern to stay healthy. The issue of open defecation is discussed more efficiently in 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha' backing the government's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. The rigid mindsets of the people are powerfully influenced by cinema making them certain to change their existing inflexible attitudes. 'PadMan' pioneered speaking on the subject that is more of a 'Taboo' in the society. The film enlightens the masses on the need for menstrual Hygiene. These two films have made an impact by discussing the need for eradication of myths and progressing ahead. For a society that is juggling in between conventionalism and modernism films are contributing in assuring the right choices.

References

1. UNICEF India, (n.d.). *Eliminate Open Defecation*. retrieved from: <http://unicef.in/Whatwedo/11/Eliminate-Open-Defecation> (as accessed on march 9,2018)
2. Samamtha, Tannistha., & Gundi, Mukti. (2018). *PadMan, Patriarchy and the Poor Man's Innovation* retrieved from:
<https://sabrangindia.in/article/padman-patriarchy-and-poor-man%E2%80%99s-innovation>
3. Nielson India, (May 6, 2016). *Breaking The Menstruation Taboo*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.nielsen.com/in/en/insights/reports/2016/breaking-the-menstruation-taboo.html>
4. Mahmood, Isttiak. (2013). *Influence and Importance of Cinema on the Lifestyle of Educated Youth: A Study on University youth of Bangladesh*. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 17, Issue 6 (Nov. - Dec. 2013), (PP 77-80)
5. Rothbauer, Paulette. (2008). *Triangulation of Methods*. "The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods". (PP 893)
6. Suri, Rishabh. (Aug 8, 2017) *From hygiene to impotence, taboos are broken by Bollywood: Are viewers ready for it?*. Hindustan Times. Retrieved from: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/bollywood/from-hygiene-to-impotence-taboos-are-broken-by-bollywood-are-viewers-ready-for-it/story-chlfcqhrCB9gB9ihY0kkyJ.html>
7. Kaur, Puneet. (2016). *'Impact of women-Centric Films in triggering Social change special focus on sensitizing and creating awareness among women'*. Ph.D Thesis: Punjabi University, Patiala
8. Solomon, Gary. (2001). *Reel Therapy: How Movies Inspire You to Overcome Life's Problems*. New York: Lebhar-Friedman Books.