

**How to Cite:**

Pattanayak, S., & Muni, A. D. (2022). Bollywood portrayal of homemaker in selected cinema, formation, deformation, and reformation of identities (1995-2021). *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S4), 11860–11867.  
<https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS4.11410>

## **Bollywood portrayal of homemaker in selected cinema, formation, deformation, and reformation of identities (1995-2021)**

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**Abstract**--Homemakers' efforts to the growth of their homes and economies in Indian society have been downplayed. As civilizations proceeded toward modernism, women's responsibilities changed dramatically. Are the same happening in the Indian film industry and the industry's portrayal of women in films at a time when women appear to have broken free from the Indian home and family setup into the world and are ready to challenge stereotypes? Is this evolving social trend reflected in Indian films? These are all interesting questions. Because a big number of people enjoy Bollywood movies, the industry is thriving. In India, Bollywood cinema is a potent mass medium of communication, and cinematic portrayals are unquestionably impressionistic, as this study will later demonstrate. What is it that this extremely impressionistic media communicates to the general public through the countless stories it tells? What messages does it provide to the general public in terms of how it portrays women? Towards the conclusion, a discussion takes place over whether mainstream Bollywood films have done a good job of portraying women in traditional culture in the role of homemakers and how the women in these films make a living for themselves, gain independence, and take the first steps toward sharing their little earnings to society.

**Keywords**--Bollywood cinema, stereotypes, patriarchial, homemakers.

## **Introduction**

Movies have the power to transport you to another world where you are one of the characters and the tale becomes your own. You're a protagonist in the tale, totally immersed in it. The shift in Indian cinema from old legendary blockbusters to today's women-empowering hits like "Thappad" has been noteworthy. Women's roles in Indian society have evolved, just as they have in Bollywood films. Films show audiences a mirror image of society and concerns that they may not be fully aware of. However, the overall goal of making films has shifted throughout time, becoming more of a source of amusement rather than a reflection. This begs the question of whether filmmaking must still be a reflection of society or can simply be a source of amusement. Women in Hindi cinema have progressed from being ornamental objects in films, if not victims or martyrs, to being significant motivators. To give you a heads up, this paper will primarily focus on the impact of Indian homemakers on Indian culture via mainstream Bollywood films.

The fundamental conclusion of this thesis is that portraying women in films like these as psychologically and financially independent fosters a societal change in how women are treated in Indian society, which is largely male-dominated and authoritarian. As a result, revealing open secrets such as spousal abuse, assault, and other concerns brings these issues to the forefront by allowing women to publicly discuss them.

## **Evaluating homemaker's contribution to the economy**

A woman's contribution to society as a homemaker, according to analysts, is twofold: directly by providing a firm foundation for a close-knit family unit and a healthy society, and vicariously by raising confident, motivated, and productive young folks. Despite the fact that homemakers play an important role in the smooth running of houses (imagine if she went on a protracted strike or became ill), their work (cooking, cleaning, or raising children) is not recognised as economic activity. Many countries' official GDP estimates only represent the value of effort or products and services sold on the market. This crucial social and human capital remains uncounted in official statistics since labour done at home is not part of the market system and does not pay a wage. The unspoken contribution of homemakers to the country's economic progress is unknown. Homemakers had a crucial part in household management. Consider the situation in which we must spend money to hire professionals to perform domestic labour in our home. We're perfectly aware that the price would be prohibitively high. Then we'd realize how important homemakers are to the country's economic success. Women had made their mark in the business sphere, playing and occupying high positions in organisations. Furthermore, as leaders of local bodies, they had considerable power. This shows their capability. As a consequence, homemakers are invaluable unpaid resources with a precious contribution to society.

This uneven treatment of women is reflected in the media in general and the Indian film industry in particular. The Indian film industry is predominantly controlled by men. Actresses were referred to as the hero's "love interest" in the 1990s and early 2000s, and rightly so, because they were only concerned about

one individual: their idol. There were slaps and mocking, and there were flashes of brilliance, but they were too infrequent to be recalled. In movies, "ideal women" were shown as submissive, selfless, pure, and tamed. The "bad" lady, on the other hand, is depicted as arrogant, physically promiscuous, Westernized, and reluctant to surrender. In Bollywood movies, the perfect Indian woman is shown as tolerant of the Unfairness and brutality perpetrated on her by men and society. As a result, violence towards women has long been a typical feature of Bollywood commercials in Formulaic filmmaking. These films featured men in leading roles, with women playing minor roles in the majority of them. This was also the era when "maa" was the most significant figure in a son's life. "Unke pas maa hei to sab kuchh hei". Women characters were considered as the embodiment of morality and morals, people who could do no wrong, "Aurat ke ek nahi teen janam hote hain. Pehla jab wo kisi ki beti bankar is duniya me aati hai. Dusra jab wo patni banti hai. Aur teesra jab wo ma banti hai"- (Chori Chori Chupke Chupke, 2001) in films that were heavily influenced by religion and folklore. After liberation, the notion of women as 'Sita' was frequently invoked in numerous movies. Hindi films effectively established sexist ideals via concepts of obedience and submission to the spouse. In films like *Dahej* (1950), *Gauri* (1968), *Devi* (1970), and *Pati Parmeshwar*, women were presented as submissive, obedient housewives (1988). Though patriarchal standards were criticised in these films, they were implicitly patronised in the sense that the victim wife refuses to leave her husband's house despite severe physical and psychological abuse, claiming that she will only leave the marital home when she passes. Male Indian moviegoers with strong patriarchal attitudes are more likely to see films that promote stereotyped depictions of women.

Women's roles in Hindi films evolved as time passed. The Hindi film actress has grown from a helpless woman to a strong and courageous woman who fights for her rights, speaks out against injustice, protects her self-esteem and self-identity, and rebels when necessary. The problem is that women who live next door, stroll down the street, and spend time working at the home are personified. Where can these women be found in Bollywood films? In this day and age of information overload, it is not unreasonable to seek a moral compass from the film medium. There has been discussion over the media's societal responsibility during this time. So, rather than fostering critical thought, why should a film only focus on giving amusement to its audience? There is no significance in films when it is demonstrated that a tiny financial contribution by the homemaker to her family is significant. It has frequently been ignored. From "Provoked" to the recently released "Tumhari Sulu," the value of a homemaker's meagre earnings in the family frequently faces numerous challenges in proving their identity, whether in society or in their very own house. In Bollywood, the average homemaker's contribution is hardly shown. To have a better understanding of the representation, we must look at several key moments that characterize the role of "homemakers" in mainstream Bollywood movies. This study will examine the hypothesis by analyzing the primary texts of all of the movies listed below.

## **Discussion**

The Indian film industry, as well as the representation of women in mainstream Indian films, have been the subject of extensive research. It's a point of contention

among liberals. Despite the fact that although certain films involving women have aimed to address women's problems, there has been little, if any, sociological research on how homemakers are represented in these films. This paper shows women defying prejudices and promoting themselves as excellent housewives. The literature evaluation will focus on women's issues and the crucial roles played by homemakers in Indian films.

How many times have we undervalued the significance of women who stay at home to raise their children and handle other household duties? Most likely, the pandemic has taught us that staying at home and doing things is difficult. Many of us underestimate the role of housewives in our everyday lives. It's past time we woke up and recognised their contribution, which is on par with, if not more than, that of working women and men. Being a housewife is a 24-hour job, even if you end your workday and retreat to your home for a few stress-free hours.

Bollywood gives us more than simply entertainment; it also educates and informs us. Several films have focused on the topic of men not providing housewives appropriate or equal attention throughout history. Several Bollywood films have portrayed the battle for homemakers' equality. This paper would demonstrate the significance of homemakers, which has long been overlooked in the film business and in society. Many films have taken the matter head-on and dealt with it expertly, from English Vinglish to the recently released Thappad. Several films centred on women became box office hits, undermining Indian society's patriarchal beliefs. These films primarily focus on the problems that a housewife experiences in her daily life and feature Bravery, uniqueness, self-esteem, and confidence were among the attributes emphasised by women in crucial jobs. E.g. Shridevi in English Vinglish, Tapsi Pannu in Thappad, Vidya Balan in Tumhari Sulu.

Sridevi portrayed Shashi Godbole in the English Vinglish film. It depicts how a talented homemaker, wife, and mother is looked down upon and mocked by her daughter and husband because she does not speak excellent English. Shashi Godbole, who is upset, turns things around by learning the language on her own. Sridevi portrayed Shashi Godbole in the English Vinglish film. It depicts how a talented homemaker, wife, and mother is looked down upon and mocked by her daughter and husband because she does not speak excellent English. Shashi Godbole, who is upset, turns things around by learning the language on her own. It also showed that even though her family is financially well, she still manufactures and sells sweets as a hobby. Her little earnings go a long way toward supporting the family. Her elder sister, who resides in America, on the other hand, is a widow and the breadwinner for her family. Shashi wants to accomplish something on her own after seeing her sister's independence, so she makes sweets for her niece's wedding. This tale depicts how a simple housewife's contribution to her family is acknowledged at the end and how it shouldn't be overlooked. Her spouse tells her entire family that Shashi was born to serve Laddoos. He then responds that by speaking in this manner, he is honouring her. When asked to choose between taking her English test and cooking Laddoos, she responds, "What's the point of passing English if I fail my favourite subject?" And this indicates how undervaluing a housewife's meagre earnings has a substantial impact on her mental health. She was readily able to handle and interact with her

customers, and she felt that version of herself was the real Shashi. The film is disguised as a story about women's freedom, and men's superiority over women by dismissing their passion and income. It emphasises the argument that women like Shashi's actual calling is not to be housewives who know nothing rather, the film depicts the uneasiness a housewife feels every day, regardless of her efforts. Gauri Sindhe's straightforward narrative demonstrates how homemakers are an important part of the family whose efforts must be appreciated.

In *Tumhari Sulu* (2017), Vidya Balan portrays Sulochana, a housewife who seeks to show that she is worthy of something. Her unwavering and upbeat attitude toward life should be the sole thing that defines today's generation, not simply women. Sulochana is a homemaker from the working class who is always trying to figure out ways to prove herself. Sulu acknowledges her social position as a housewife, but it is limited to her personal life and does not define her as a person. Her family is always pushing her about, questioning most of her life decisions, belittling her, and presenting her as absolutely incapable of achieving anything. This portion of the film indirectly implies that women are putting other women down, criticising them for seeming inadequacy, and assuming themselves to be behavioural experts. This is aggravated by her father's backing for the sisters, prompting a despondent Sulu to seek help from her husband. She began contributing financially to her home when she started working on a radio show with a beginning salary nearly equal to her husband's and mentioned acquiring a new TV for her household, her husband's remark regarding her salary demonstrates how the family still does not value a housewife's earnings. When her lone child messed up, everyone, including her husband, blamed her, which explains why society usually blames the homemaker when their children cross limits. They're always blaming a woman for their children's misbehaviour. It defines a woman's freedom to portray herself as she is rather than as society expects her to be, as well as her right to be label-free. It also fosters the concept that women should aid other women rather than disparage them. Most significantly, the film claims that feminism is about achieving a balance in both genders' societal expectations, rather than one gender being superior to the other. *Tumhari Sulu* does all of this without making a huge issue out of it.

### **Amdani Atthanni Kharcha Rupaiya**

Several sequences in the comedy film are misogynistic against women. This becomes the movie's crowning accomplishment, despite the fact that it stinks primarily of negative clichés handed on by the markers as "comedy situations that are lived realities of many Indian women." It was meant to be a humorous movie about abusing and humiliating wives. The males in this film hail from low-income families. They spend the majority of their earnings on drinks, drugs, and women, and expect their wives to take care of the family and pay off debts. They resort to violence in order to avoid their spouses' financial problems. Moreover, these scenes are portrayed as amusing. So domestic violence becomes something that entertains people in this movie. When their financial situation worsens, *Jhumri* advises them to start working and contribute to the household revenue. When the husbands hear it, they are outraged, as if it was a crime. First, the ladies go to their husbands for permission, putting themselves on a pedestal. Second, their argument that they would not have contemplated working if their husbands were

earning money is ridiculous. It completely misses the point. It's not as if women should be "permitted" to work during a crisis. Dialogues such as "agar auroton ke kam mard karna suru kardein to wo patal se bhi niche hojayenge" attempt to demonstrate the strong patriarchal foundations in society. Finally, the way all the ladies worked hard to save Mina's child, who was in the hospital, demonstrates that housewives can conquer any issue without relying on their spouses.

Provoked is a very important movie that needs to be watched by all. "Provoked" reveals sexism and the psychological torment that a woman experiences as a victim of domestic abuse. It is based on the true story of a Punjabi woman who marries and moves to London; in order to deal with her husband's 10 years of marital abuse, she murders him and finds up in prison. However, an NGO that advocates against domestic violence supports her in seeking justice. After 3.5 years in jail, she was freed and reunited with her two children. She was financially independent due to her labour in the jail, and she also supported her two children financially after leaving the jail. Because of Ahluwalia's case, legislative reforms were implemented in the judicial system in order to safeguard women who have experienced domestic abuse and rigorously monitor their mental health for early indicators of depression.

She was a shy and fearful lady when she arrived, but she discovered bravery and fortitude in her darkest moments and utilised her time wisely to acquire spoken English, break down cultural barriers, comprehend the legal system, and empower herself. She went on to continue raising awareness and working full time on this social issue following her release. Domestic violence is not a new issue, but it is still prevalent in many homes, regardless of age, religion, colour, or country.

Lajja - Lajja is a one-of-a-kind film that provided us with four strong female protagonists at a time when Bollywood was booming in terms of portraying women differently and firmly in films. This film was talking about the issues Indian Women across classes face on daily basis almost 21 years ago and that's what makes it rare. The film began with this disclaimer, which said, "None of the characters or situations depicted in this film is imaginary or fictional, really speaking. They are echoes of what is happening all around us in our so-called civilized society."

Vaidehi (Manisha Koirala) is imprisoned in an emotionally abusive relationship in the film Lajja. She gets shown the door after she stands up to her controlling husband. Her family refuses to support her because they are afraid of moral persecution, a predicament that many women in India experience. She meets Ramdulaari (Rekha), a nurse and an activist who opposes sexism and repressive village authorities bent on exploiting local women. After her husband abandoned her and her family, she became a midwife and maintained her family financially. She is a powerhouse who strives to provide equality and liberty to the women in her village. The film depicts the evil aspect of patriarchy and how women, at the very least, speak out against it.

Astitva- Shrikant was a budding entrepreneur whose job involved extensive travel. He deserts his wedded spouse, Aditi, who is lonely. Aditi asks Shrikant for

permission to work somewhere to relieve her loneliness, but he denies it because no woman in his family has ever worked outside. Aditi ends up having an affair with her music teacher. When Shrikant finds out about Aditi's affair, he responds by saying that males may commit adultery and be forgiven, but women cannot. Aditi leaves the house, but not before informing Shrikant that she is a whole lady who has realised her Astitva (existence/identity). Revati joins her, and both father and son watch the women leave the house. Shrikant objected to Aditi's plea to go to work. The reason is simple: he is terrified that a woman can be extremely efficient in the role of breadwinner.

Bibi No. 1.- Salman Khan, Karisma Kapoor, and Sushmita Sen feature in *Biwi No. 1*. The plot was predictable: a happily married man meets a gorgeous, young model and begins an affair. When the wife discovers this, she devises a strategy to reclaim her husband by altering herself. She and the rest of the family attempt to present the new girlfriend in a negative/bitchy light so that the man realizes what he had previously was excellent and returns to his family pardoned. Let's not go into detail about what went wrong in this film, but one thing that stands out is Pooja's decision to become financially independent.

Bollywood mainstream cinema has sought to examine subjects including sexuality, adultery, surrogacy, divorce, and live-in relationships, among others, with films like *Lipstick Under My Burkha* (2016) and *Parched* (2015). These videos show women from rural villages in India discussing sex, men, and existence as they struggle with their personal space to confront their urges and fight their own personal battles. They aren't wonder women; instead, they are regular individuals who can make their own choices. Many well-known films condemn sexism, which may or may not employ violence to exercise dominance, but does so in other ways, such as limiting privacy and freedom. It is necessary for society to accept patriarchal control.

## **Conclusion**

A homemaker is a woman who does not work outside the home and spends her time cleaning, cooking, and caring for her family. This description alone demonstrates how difficult the duty of a homemaker is. It performs a wide variety of opportunities and functions. The most vital duty a woman plays is that of a homemaker, yet she does not receive the recognition she deserves. The purpose of this study is to delve into the underappreciated function of the homemaker by exploring its creative and aesthetic impacts. I'd want to look into the position of a homemaker because they are the world's largest labour force, working without hesitation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for no pay.

Women's roles altered considerably as society progressed towards modernisation. The media influenced the image of women in the contemporary world and had a significant part in the modernization of Societies. It's crucial to remember that cinema is a reflection of society before diving into the topic and addressing the issue. Cinema is more than simply a source of amusement or fictitious stories; it also serves as a social reality check. My research will help to raise awareness about the status that homemakers deserve and should demand in society, and to normalise talking about it on a daily basis in order to uplift their position and

treat them with respect and dignity, as well as to appreciate the hard work that they put into their lives on a daily basis.

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