Scripting Gender Through Cinema: Analysis Of Indigenized Cinematic Shakespearean Adaptation's Trailer

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Abstract

In the process of 'identity' assimilation in an individual, references of the society around and the rules, norms to be learnt and internalized play a predominant role. Cinema is one of the largely viewed mass media platform for the Indian audience. Cinema with its intriguing quality of creating a society along with the narratives has been widely studied by researchers in influencing the constructed world around. The trailers are essential to the reception of cinema. Hence, trailers are made accessible for public view to a larger extent to advertise the film. This quality of the trailers makes it a fertile platform for research into the society, cinema propagates as accepted. This paper mainly focusses on Shakespeare cinematic adaptation trailers by Vishal Bharadwaj Maqbool (2003), Omkara (2006) and Haider (2014). The research concentrates on the 'masculinity' the trailers surreptitiously imbibe and in turn advertise to the viewers.

Key Words: Mass Media, Gender Studies, Cinema Trailers.

1. Introduction

Identity plays an integral role during creation and internalization of the individual to the world and its norms. As Friedrich Nietzsche states "facts do not exist, only interpretations," the individual develops an

understanding of the ideal world around (he/she has to follow) based on the acquaintance world provides. Research related to Hegemony explains (the process of internalization of societal scripts, bifurcation of sources and tools that enforce the world and society to the individual) the intimate interactions shape individuals through ISA's (Ideological State Apparatus- in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation 1970) as family, peers etc. However, as the child grows into adulthood to interface with the broader world, secondary ISA's such as media, schools, churches etc. create platforms to understand and learn about their roles in society.

In understanding the tools of secondary ISA's, role of media is paramount, and cinema is predominant on the list as the most persuasive medium among the many divisions. As Laura Mulvey explained, cinema in its process of representing the story of its characters, additionally creates a world of interaction amongst characters and audience, who become part of the pseudo realities on screen and in turn imbibe the life they see on screen through the narcissistic and voyeuristic interactions.

Cinema in India is the highest production house of mass entertainment as recorded in 2019. Though Indian cinema might be dismissed by many producers as just a means of entertainment, the many research in recent times proves otherwise. According to Goswami & Sharma (2020), cinema's impact on the audience is seen irrespective of age and gender. Especially with the youth imitating the style, fashion, and dialogues (Goswami, M. P. (2020). Research scholar Santosh Kumar Gautam (2017) also recorded the influence of drug and alcohol abuse negatively impacting the youth with the valorisation of such habits by heroes and villains alike.

The history of Hindi cinema and male characters in representation concerning the of stronghold patriarchal representations has been ever-changing. From the initial angry young man movies with Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, etc., to the hero roles as protectors by Sunil Dutt and Akshay Kumar, to toxic masculinity representations by Salman Khan, Shahid Kapoor to the Metro, broadminded representations of characters by Irfan Khan, Aamir Khan etc., has taken many decades (Gulati), (Mehra M 2019). That means masculinity is not constant and indestructible, but it is historical (Kimmel, 2005: 25). Its meaning may vary due to the changes in time and people. As explained by (Hasan 2017), cinema is cyclic in its relationship to society; the representations and their influence on the audience in shaping the meaning of gender are observed in this study. This reality validates the need to address the many negative realities cinema propagates as a medium of social communication.

2. Theoretical Framework

Among the many aspects of identity and related realities, gender is one of the primary identities that is imbibed by the persona right from birth, that continues till death. Hence gender is a complex process and mostly an injunctive nature of norms instilled through discursive constructions that is integral to the existence of both the self and the society. The theory of Social Constructionism explains the constant exposure and interactions with society's already established norms/scripts that guides the individual to imitation and trial and error (consistently associated with reward and punishment) to construct oneself. The basic belief that people "make their social and cultural worlds at the same time these worlds make them" generates varied realities for each individual based on their perceptions and experiences. Grant, David (2010).

In an extension of Social Constructivism, Simon and Gagnon explain, 'sexual scripts' are influenced on three levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapsychic scripting (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Cultural scenarios are the ritualized scripts used in society. These are the already established norms of society that the individual is exposed to, to be believed as the truly expected behavior from an individual. Intrapersonal scripts involve the acts that each individual presents to suit situations based on the learnt scripts. Lastly, intrapsychic scripts refer to the personal world of imagination that allows the individual to prepare for the performative act based on the scripts.

The societal norms that are presented, become a tool to surreptitiously influence, to mold expected behavior in the audience. However, the producers' purposeful intentions to create such behavior cannot be held true as the producers themselves are products of the same society and very often only are presenting the world that they are made to believe is the truth. As explained by many philosophers such as John Fiske, Antonio Gramsci etc.

Extensive study encompassing Feminist studies in observing the clandestine means of power play of enforcing the subjugation of women and a few sections of men under the pretext of heterosexual patriarchy has been confirmed by Donaldson (1993) Benjamin, J. (1996). Berger, M.; Wallis, B. & Watson, S. (1995) Connell, R. W. (1995). Largely the research explores the influence of media on socialization of the feminine (Behm Morawitz and Mastro 2009; Cobb and Boettcher 2007; MacKay and Covell 1997; Stermerand Burkley 2012) which validate the need for research into the masculine.

3. Methodology

The texts chosen for this study are the Shakespeare cinematic adaptation trailers by Vishal Bharadwaj. As the promotional media used in cinema reaches a larger audience due to the commercial pressure for these glimpses to reach alarger crowd to increase the box office income. (Ghaznavi, J., Grasso, K., & Taylor, L. (2017). Hence producer of cinema makes efforts to connect to the general symbols and meanings that are universally shared amongst the community represented. (Schroeder, 2002, p. 37)

The study intends to analyze:

1) The general tools and attributes cinema trailers reinforce as masculine.

a) In examining Control (which entails power, hierarchy, attributes of bravery, leader, head of the family or the people, the image of self in the public space in opposition to compromise, subordination, and submission).

b) As an extension of power (the actor and the acted upon).

c) Emotion- an expression of emotion (care, love, sobbing, hugging, laughing) in opposition to emotionlessness.

d) Violence and aggression (revenge, anger, thrill of risk opposition to fear, meekness, friendship, equality, passivity)

2) If toxic masculinity, hegemonic masculinity is seen in the representations.

3) If the producers of the cinema and the characters have been able to escape the pressures of the societal gender norms, to present individuals of independent thought or have been standard stereotypes.

- 4) If the passage of time has changed the representations of masculinity.
- 5) The women's representations in opposition to the male.

The Shakespearean cinematic adaptations trailers that are studied are Maqbool (2003), Omkara (2006) and Haider (2014). The three texts chosen for study follow the signature pattern of the trailers by Vishal Bharadwaj, as the visual texts present the outline of the script elaborating and highlighting the critical incidents and dialogues that intrigue the audience to want more and solicit them to the cinema hall. The conclusion becomes a kaleidoscope, collaging all events of the movies before the audience to culminate with a bang. This style of presentation allows us to understand various aspects producers of the text desire for the audience to foresee in the movie and preferred aspects that intrigue interest in the viewers hence allowing for the study of the general and accepted preferences in audiences' expectation of representations in cinema. In order to aid the in-depth study of the masculine representations in opposition to the representation of the feminine, mise-en-scène, dialogue and song that forms the trailer is observed.

3.1 Maqbool

Scene 1-The trailer opens with the police officer (in the characterisation of the three witches)foretelling the fate of Maqbool to be the 'king of kings. Scene-2 Nimmi questions if he isn't thirsty for her anymore.

Scene 3- Abbaji warns Maqbool to control his emotions, or all would be turned to dust.Scene 4- Nimmi proclaims to Maqbool that he would die and even kill for her.

Scene 5- Nimmi confronts the need for revenge, describing the disgust of having to layherself before an old man's desires.

Scene 6- Maqbool as if to himself claims, 'Wo mera baap hay', he is my father.

Scene 7-The rapid display of all the events continues with a voice-over of 'the relationshipsof love, tears, blood, desecrated by one sin of lust, anger, awe'.

Scene 8-As Sameera's cries are heard in the background, the trailer ends with Nimmi withonly one question, 'Our love was true isn't it'.

3.2 Omkara

Scene-1 Rajju Tiwari celebrates Langda's possibility of becoming Bahubali. Scene-2 Kesu Firangi the next Bahubali, Langda announces to the crowd.

Scene-3 Rajju reiterates Kesu' sly move of being an outsider, yet being able to snatch all theprivileges that were rightfully theirs

Scene-4 Omkara's title song plays in the background as the hero Ajay Devgan is introduced.'Sabse badhe ladhaiya re Omkara'.

Scene-5 Dolly confesses she would not be alive without Omkara in her life. Scene-6 Indu states there is an animal in Langda Thyagi.

Scene-7 Langda sows the seed of suspicion with 'I don't understand what Kesu was doingwith Dolly when Omkara was not home'.

Scene-8 Omkara regretfully confides his choice of Kesu as the Bahubali.Scene-9 Bipasha Basu introduced the Item song 'Beedi Jalaile'.

Scene-10 Omkara states to Dolly, either you are a fool or a witch.

Scene- 11 Langda Thyagi states now truth or lies don't make any difference, continuing hesays Omi will listen to none now.

Scene 12- Billo chides to the camera that you are of impure blood, what more could beexpected of you?

Scene 13- Dolly is in tears wondering what her crime for the punishment Omkara is issubjugating her.

Scene 14- Indu's comments on the scriptures have already tarnished the past of women, paying the way for the future of women under the hands of men like Omkara.

Scene 15- Dolly is seen requesting Omkara to add her to his list of murders.

Scene-16- The kaleidoscope of all the scenes with the song 'jag ja re gudiya...naino me haumhi hein...hum hi hain na?'- wake up my doll...your eyes

behold only me isn't it? in the end

3.3 Haider

Scene-1 The voice-over similar to Hamlet calls the son to avenge his death. To torture and shoot the eyes of the brother that laid lustful eyes on his wife.

Scene-2 The voice-over is an unknown voice warning Haider, that he too will disappear likehis father if he continues his search for the truth.

Scene-3 Khurram campaigns as a victim whose brother has also been arrested and hiswhereabouts unknown.

Scene-4 Gazala presents the state of the wives whose husbands have been arrested by theIndian army. She calls herself 'adhi bewa', half widows as very rarely returned.

Scene-5 The peoples protest calling 'Hum hai ke hum Nahin', We exist or not. Scene-6 Arshiya states 'I loved you more than my life', to Haider.

Scene-7 Haider states the mother lying doesn't seem an acceptable act.

Scene-8 Establishing the dilemma of Haider, he continues to Arshya professing love to hold agun doubting 'jaan lu ya jaan du', 'Me hoon ya me nahi'.

Scene-9 Arshiya shouts 'You have cheated my trust'. Scene-10 Gazala is seen shouting 'You will leave or not'.

Scene-11 The scenes show present the state of insanity in Haider.

In observing the trailers as establishing cultural scenarios -the already established norms of social and sexual exchange and creating the possible pseudo realities, the following attributes are observed in the scenes to examine if the representations are adhering and propagating standard stereotypes or providing a positive and balanced representation of greys of the typically gendered attributes:

4. Findings

In all the trailers the story revolves around the hero's life. As all the trailers start with the male character introducing the main theme of the text starting with 'King of Kings', 'Langda Thyagi Bahubali', 'Haider Mera Inthaqam Lena'. The lines symbolise the characteristics of power, violence, and revenge as the main theme of the texts and as associated to only the male gender.

In the process of briefing the narrative, all texts have voice- overs with Maqbool - One relationship of love, of blood, of tears, to be desecrated by one sin, one's lust, one's anger, one's enmity. Omkara- Story of Trust, Seduction and Betrayal. Haider has the father call for revenge for his brother's crime of enticing his wife. In adherence to the sexual scripting, the picturisation has the women emerge in the trailer only when lust, sin, and body are in focus. In all three movies, the women characters prominently are present in the love-making scenes as (Kilbourne 2000) supports themes of sexuality, and violence braided to be normalised authenticating the ownership of the heroine's body by the hero. (Mehra, M (2019) (Derné, & Jadwin, 2000) (Derné, 2000). The focus on the need for action, however, is placed in the masculine domain. The act of sex captured in the trailers has men as the actors and women as passive (gatekeepers) reciprocators, Cate, R.M., & Lloyd, S.A.

(1988). The women in the narrative too become the passives to be protected and fought over. Secondly, the women's few scenes of autonomy are seen in Maqbool scenes 2 and 4, and 7 (where the stereotyped presence of the woman in sin is evident), where she displays power over Maqbool. In Omkara with the words Seduction Billo and Kesu are depicted.

In Maqbool, Nimmi confidently wants Maqbool to choose her over his loyalty to Abbaji, Dolly's stance to love Omkara for life, Gazala reciprocating to Khurram's advances (the scene 4 where Gazala is with confidence and pride as she sits Besides Khurram), Billo's possibility of marriage, and Arshiya desiring Haider are all the unlikely lead women characters in Indian Cinema. The final choice of acceptance though lays in the man's decision to accept them confirming the power to act still lies in the hands of the masculine as seen in scenes 6 and 7 in Maqbool, scenes 5 and 14 in Omkara.

The predominant expressions of anger, power, hierarchy, bravery, and leadership are seen in nearly all the scenes of the three movie trailers. The power hierarchy is established with Maqbool, Abbaji, Kakka, Guddu and the policemen are all present in each scene interactions establishing one's power over the other adhering to the hierarchy in their system in the mafia. Omkara clearly is based on the establishment of hatred and anger Langda Tyagi (being denied his position in the hierarchy) harbours due to the presence of Kesu Firangi who has ruined the prospect of political growth. Rajju too is in a similar situation where his marriage is ruined. Haider has a father (Dr Hillal Meer), son (Haider), brother/uncle (Khurram Meer), the police and the armies all battling the India-Pakistan war

symbolising the plight of Kashmir. The masculine is placed in the micro and macrocosm of the public space, with a clear hierarchy of power relations. The women mostly are placed in private spaces. The women's presence is never related to the larger world. Their concerns, problems, and needs are only in personal and private relationships. Their concerns, as seen in Haider scene 4, Gazala though shown working as a schoolteacher, the state of women being called 'adhi bewa', or half widows is her greatest worry. This situation also shows the woman's lack of autonomy to choose their lives. Additionally, men's choices' adversely effects on women go unpunished. Gazala is judged by the son for choosing a life she desires, in scene 7 Haider verdicts his mother to be lying and as a mother she is chided by the son. However, the father and the son in Haider who forsake their responsibility towards the family go unquestioned, even praised as martyrdom.

The women too, who are related as sisters, mother-in-law and daughter-inlaw do not show established hierarchy. There is a meandering relationship of power relation, (without the standard rule book like the masculine), making the relationships murkier as they seem equal in status, in opposition to men in their lives, as they share laughs and tears as equals in the purview of the masculine. The women characters show emotions of care (all women), laughter (Dolly and Indu), cryingDolly, Nimmi, Arshiya), and screaming in pain (Sameera in Maqbool). Unlike men, they don't have scenes where they are fighting for their rights. Only Indu- the universal mother, 'Durga', the symbol in Omkara is seen slapping Langda Thyagi and holding a machete attacking someone. She too becomes the voice for the feminine against the societal imbalance in the treatment of women in scene 14, where she calls the scriptures to justice for burdening the women with 'Ariya charitra ka kalank' (the tarnished image of women's character).

The men and their 'ego', becomes a character in the texts In Magbool, scene 6 where Maqbool holds the gun to Nimmi's temple. Scene 7 in Omkara where Thyagi questions, why Dolly entertained Kesu's presence in the house when Omkara isn't present. Haider opens with the father calling for revenge for losing the wife to the brother scene 7 also has Haider judging the mother for cheating on his father. Men are seen fighting for their rights over the women in their lives to safeguard their stance as the head of the family and relationship. Though, the women are seen weeping, begging, and sobbing for the men in their lives as seen in the climax of Maqbool trailer where Nimmi's last words is begging Maqbool for confirmation that their love was true. Dolly in Omkara sobbing and confused and unable to understand the sudden change in treatment by Omkara and all she's seen doing is sobbing but never questioning the reason Omkara's behaviour. Arshiya in Haider too stands as a mute spectator witnessing the changes in Haider's behaviour fromsanity to insanity as seen in Hamlet. She's also seen crying at being cheated. The feminine is objectified under the control of the public image of the masculine.

Toxic Masculinity is evident in both Maqbool and Omkara, with Nimmi forced into a relationship with Abbaji, whom she detests and is unable to free herself without Maqbool's help. In Omkara, all women are confined to norms of the patriarchy. Even though Dolly defies her father to be with Omkara, she is transferred from the control of her father to Omkara. Additionally, most of the characters are macho, masculine stereotypes. It is common for the characters to be brandishing guns and weapons. The introductory song for Omkara credits him for being the best fighter. Maqbool is mostly emotionless, though a wreck unable to bear Nimmi in the arms of Abbaji.

Violence is a common form of expression even in love. However, Kesu Firangi and Haider seem caught between the societal expectations of masculinity and independent expressions of self. Hence disregarded by other men and this characteristic becomes a sign of weakness.

Billo is the only female character even though a prostitute (natch vaali) an independent character as an economically independent, though socially ostracised entity, she is able to judge and live away from the societal expectations for a woman.

Hussain Meer is the male character who states the failure in the cycle of revenge as a futile effort to truth, countering the male ego's search for revenge. The inspectors in Maqbool become the voice of irony, foretelling the future of masculine ego if unchecked as warned by Abbaji to Maqbool, as Inspector Purohit shouts in scene 14 'Tumne toh Mumbai ko Khun me bahadiya as the inevitable end.

5. Conclusion

In the socialization tools of masculinity in and by society "the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender and the effects of these practices in ... culture" (Connell, 2005, p. 71) create meaning of relationships on screen, the masculine too like the feminine has a stereotypic representation. The men especially between the age of 25-30 are presented as the protector, warrior, and valorized epitome of power. Hence creating a false understanding of the expectations for the men to idolize. As seen in Omkara, Dolly desires the valorous powerhouse Omkara in opposition to Rajju, a normal man by the standards of the societal expectations.

The men are shown as responsible for the expectations of the public space in opposition to the private space. The masculine is very rarely presented in the private space of experience and exchange. Standardising the private space of home, and kitchen and emotions of care, love, compassion, and tears to the feminine, re-enforces the divide between the socialisations of the gender.

Sexuality and violence are other alarming features presented in the trailers. Women are objectified as the property of the masculine to be controlled, safeguarded, won, and fought for. The mythological status of the women as Sit the bait in the war of men), is still standardised as seen in Haider. The women embody the ego of the masculine in society. The adherence of the feminine to the masculine and the patriarchy (towards father, son, lover, husband), creates the insecurity for the male gender to have abridged relationships with the women in their lives. As seen in the fears and dilemmas of Dolly's father, Omkara, Haider. Hence the men and the society created in cinema, largely are unable to escape the pressures of the already-established scripts.

However, with the inclusion of Indu, Billo, Haider, Inspector Pandith and Purohit and Hussain Meer, who question the standardised stereotypes of masculinity to create balance in the narratives. These characters prove Kimmel's statement that the conscious gender expositions efforts could change sexual scripts at all these stages (cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapsychic scripting) (Simon & Gagnon, 1986) to create a better future (Kimmel,2005) on screen to help realities off screen.

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