

Hollywood Cinema – Perceptions of Indian Youth towards Sexual Norms

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Abstract- Cinema is a surreal journey for many movie-lovers in India and occupies a considerable part of the spectators' mindshare. Hollywood, transcending the physical borders, became an Indian denizen by tapping the Indian market in various possible ways. The persuasion of Hollywood cinema, while providing various forms of functional alternatives in its presentation of artistry as well as its accessibility, has allowed the viewer to make preferential choices to perceive, and thus illuminate attitudes, behaviours and consequences. The perceptions cropped up either in negative or positives form can escort to certain set of behaviours that tend to create an infringement in various indigenous cultural norms, which is now much debated. This paper analyses the influence of Hollywood cinema viewing on the perceptions of Indian youth towards sexual norms, through survey method. The sample size was 400, comprising the age group of 15 to 25 years. The paper also tries to establish the gender differences, in terms of associated perceptions. The study reveals that the Influence of Hollywood cinema on youth's liberal views towards sexual norms is significantly observed among heavy viewers than moderate and low viewers. Heavy viewers are highly liberal towards the norm of 'sexual chastity' required for a marriage, in Indian cultural context. Male heavy viewers tend to show liberal views in sexual norms to a higher degree than female heavy viewers.

Index Terms- Hollywood cinema, Indian youth, perceptions, sexual norms

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1. INTRODUCTION

Hollywood, transcending the physical borders, could be able to become an Indian denizen by tapping the Indian market in various possible ways. When it

entered India through vertically integrated distribution mechanisms in 1900s, it provided a special tang to Indian audience with the flavours of west. Indians began to take a closer look at Hollywood when the liberalized economic policies facilitated it to widen the market outlets. The fast spread wireless communication and digital technologies have enabled the Indian youth to experience the Hollywood cinema and its semiotics, more personally and interactively.

The current India is not an exception for world-wide simultaneous releases of Hollywood blockbusters. And watching Hollywood cinema is no more a flabbergasting issue, as hundreds of movies are being imported from USA every year. Besides its widespread vertical and horizontal distribution mechanisms, it is a known fact that Hollywood blockbusters trade to a large extent on the appeal of spectacular audio-visual effects, narrative styles and its standard methods of star and genre marketing. And in the case of India, Hollywood's business is amply expanded even to the rural masses through the concept of 'dubbing into regional languages.'

Growing cinematic exhibition outlets like multiplexes in urban and semi-urban has in fact changed the scenario of Hollywood movie viewing experience in India. While the uncensored Hollywood cinema through unauthorized CDs, DVDs has gone deep rooted, now piracy through Internet, and Camcording, has emerged as a harmful activity and spreading fast in India.

Under such strong methods of subsistence, multiple routes of infringement and easy accessibility in India, it has allowed the viewer to make preferential choices to perceive, and thus illuminate attitudes, behaviour and consequences. The perceptions cropped up either in negative or positive forms can create radical impact by collapsing boundaries, tastes and hierarchies, thus escorting to certain kinds of

behavioural changes that tend to create an infringement in various indigenous cultural norms.

2. SEXUAL NORMS IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Societies across world tend to ameliorate the sexual behaviours by setting certain norms based on its cultural dogmas. Hence, as an element of social order, sexual behaviour is considered to convey both individual and social meanings. Sex is mostly shielded with “native” philosophies. Haeberle says that the sexual behaviour of men and women reflects not only their personal tastes, but, to a large extent, also the basic values of the society or social group to which they belong. For example, many cultures like Indian define normal sexuality as heterosexual monogamy between legally married couple in order to produce children. Being a puritanical culture, people here tend to be inhibited in their sexual senses, and will censure or conceal the act as a source of ‘shame’. No matter how much they may differ as individuals, their moral sense is always assumed to be shaped by the underlying assumptions of their whole culture, unless or until a strong medium of inflict occurs to disturb the norm. Hence, it is majorly considered as an ideal moral activity.

However, the biological diversity of the sexual behaviours generally does not fit gracefully within the strictures imposed by particular society or religion. Sexual activities like pre-marital sex, serial monogamy, bigamy, adultery, homosexuality, gay, lesbian, bisexual behaviour though existing and far more common, is still a taboo in a public discussion of a polite society, and considered unnatural. The furtive desires for such sexualities, irrespective of genders, which are non-conventional among societies, have created a need for an evocation. Cinema thus, became one of the blatant rhetoric arenas that can emotionally satisfy various sexual instincts, fantasies, prurient curiosities, by viewing others’ act on screen. Sexuality and cinema have a turbulent relationship that converges with the indigence of human lust, the aesthetics of narrative cinema, and the contours of discursive socio-cultural-historical ideologies.

Talking about the Indian context, where the shift is in midstream with innate traditional roots and extended contemporary branches, the discussion of sex with young children is still debated. The attitude towards

extreme thoughts of sexualization is provoked from basic curiosity and explicit sexual material available through media, especially among youth.

3. HOLLYWOOD AND THE CINEMATIC SEX – A PERCEIVABLE APPROACH TO PANDER THE YOUTH

According to Krzywinska the spectacle of cinematic sex is often intended to produce strong reactions, with controversy providing to be an excellent marketing tool. Sex, has perhaps caused more controversy than any other aspect of cinema and is subject to competing claims that range between extremes of libertarianism and conservatism. The growth of Hollywood film industry paralleled a period of significant social transformation i.e., a change in American’s sex lives which engendered greater individual freedom, where sex was recognized as a source of happiness. The history of American cinema provide evidence that different patterns of nudity, sex and sexualities in films had been mainstreamed explicitly or implicitly and this strategy continued to exist for a longer period, almost till date.

Hollywood cinema has reflected all trends of sexualities, and just as in the real world, it is now not unusual to see people onscreen having a variety of sexual relations. However, as stated by Pennington, ‘not all films had sexual content, obviously, and not all films with sexual content had explicit or a great deal of sex.’ He states that sexual themes and brief shots of nudity or brief sex scenes had become much more frequent in Hollywood films and accepted by audience without any vexation. The approach has been justified on numerous narrative demands and genre conventions that override the social consequences.

However, many studies on narration of sex and sexualities in Hollywood cinema proved it as impactful on young people for whom their sexual self-concepts, attitudes and behaviours tend to be greatly influenced. Young viewers of India, in a study conducted by Banaji bridged a transition between discussions of their own romances and those of screen characters. A respondent of the study expressed that one can learn about sex from Hollywood and about romance from Hindi movies. A similar study on premarital sexual behaviour among

unmarried college students of Gujarat, India evidently reported that students are not well informed about matters relating to sex and relationships, and thus they depend on cinema and peers.

According to Gunasekera *et al.*, the most popular Hollywood movies of the last two decades are of no exception for normative depictions of negative health behaviours and they have almost ignored safe sex messages. Sex in Hollywood movies is often portrayed in the context of profanity, alcohol and drug use, and nudity. Since the 1980s, two thirds of Hollywood movies made each year are R-rated, containing at least one nude scene, and some, such as *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Porky's* etc., contain up to 15 instances of sexual intercourse; and most young people have seen these movies long before they have the required 16 years old age. Strong *et al.*, argues that sex in these popular movies takes place outside of marriage (usually before marriage), reflecting the widespread acceptance of non marital intercourse as normal and a social norm. Looking at the influences, a study for instance on black female teens found that greater exposure to X-rated movies correlated with being more likely to have multiple sexual partners, to have sex more frequently, to have a strong desire to conceive and testing positive for a sexually transmitted disease.

Harding's analytical study on the discourses of mass media on youth sexuality of Indonesia, reveals that severe exposure to westernized lifestyles through Hollywood films, foreign television and music channels have greatly influenced their likelihood towards pre-marital sex and public display of affection towards opposite sex like kissing, hold hands, hugging etc. The media messages of west, in fact, are passing a misconception that westerners do have multiple sexual partners at the same time.

Most of the stories in Hollywood movies are juxtaposed with advices on how to provide pleasure to male by promoting omni-present and stereotypical images, sexual violation and harassment. The unrealistic depiction of sexuality in movies subtly continues to represent the belief that adolescent girls should be sexy for boys and not have their own sexual desire. A woman or young girl when exposed to sexual content and female objectification can learn to fear negative evaluations of her body and may be more focused on her partner's judgments of her than on her own desires, safety, and pleasure.

4. OBJECTIVES, HYPOTHESES, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Although sexual representations in movies have augmented the disparities between conservatives and liberals, it has been given importance based on social and cultural grounds. The studies discussed above have tried to analyze how the depiction of sexuality in Hollywood cinema is influencing the perceptions of youth. However, in India the research in this direction is very meager. Hence, researcher felt it is necessary to study in this context. The key objectives and hypotheses of the study are given below.

Objectives

1. To determine the influence of Hollywood cinema on the perceptions of youth towards sexual norms.
2. To establish gender differences if any, in terms of perceptions associated with Hollywood cinema.

Hypotheses

H 1: Heavy viewers of Hollywood cinema tend to show liberal views towards sexual norms to a higher degree than moderate and low viewers.

H 2: Male heavy viewers tend to show liberal views towards sexual norms to a higher degree than female heavy viewers.

Theoretical framework

The current research is based on the Uses and Gratifications theory, reviewed by Rubin, who gave a contemporary view of the uses paradigm grounded on five assumptions. First, audiences' communication behaviour is goal-directed. Second, the audiences select and use the media to satisfy their needs and wants. Third, a set of social and psychological factors, including predispositions, the living environment, and interpersonal interactions mediate the communication behaviour. Fourth, the media compete with other forms of communication, like interpersonal interaction, for selection and attention. Finally, through processes after people initiate media selection, media may affect individual's attitudes and perceptions, characteristics, or socio-political, cultural or economic structures of society and lead to the people reliance on certain media programming.

Methodology

The survey method is adopted to study the perceptions of Hollywood cinema viewers. The survey includes 400 respondents fall into the age-groups of 15 -25 years representing both the gender. The research is carried the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. The two-stage random sampling technique has been used to select the colleges and the respondents. Care has been taken to give equal representation to male and female.

The influence of Hollywood cinema was hypothetically tested on sexual norms, in terms of level of viewing and gender by using One-Way ANOVA, Student's t-test and Duncan's Multiple Range test of SPSS-16. The sample had been classified in to Heavy, Moderate and Low viewers on the basis of "number of Hollywood movies they watch per a week" and the "duration of years" since they initiated the habit of viewing.

To study the influence on sexual norms, 16 question statements were posed to the respondents and were categorized into four groups, i.e., Pre and extra marital sexual relation is an individual choice; Interest in dating concept; Liberal towards sexual chastity for marriage; Exposure on unnatural sexual behaviours like Lesbianism and homosexuality.

5. RESULTS

a. The Demographic details of the respondents

The sample was fairly uniform in terms of percentage of male and female viewers (53% male and 47% female). The percentage of heavy viewers is comparatively higher than moderate and low viewers i.e., 53.75% are heavy viewers followed by moderate (30%, N=120) and low viewers (16.25%, N=65). A significant percentage of respondents (66.3%) belong to the age group of 15- 20 years and 33.8% of respondents are between the ages of 20 and 25 years. The data on the 'type of family' revealed that a great majority of respondents are from nuclear family (78.5%), and very few are from joint family (18.5%). The distribution of respondents on the basis of 'Status of living' disclosed that a considerable amount of respondents fall into upper class category (44.5%), followed by middle class (30.3%) and upper middle class (25.2%).

b. Hypothesis testing

H 1 - Heavy viewers of Hollywood cinema tend to show a higher degree of liberal views towards sexual norms than moderate and low viewers.

The summary report of one-way ANOVA in table 1 denotes a significant influence of level of viewing on 'liberal views towards sexual norms' with total p-value of 0.049. The total mean scores indicates that heavy viewers with mean value 3.0379 is noticeably higher than moderate (M = 2.8952) and low viewers (M = 2.9506). Also the ranks given with alphabetical letters for the group means by DMRT i.e., low = a, moderate = a, heavy = b, indicates that heavy viewers are significantly differing from moderate and low viewers. *Thus, the hypothesis is statistically supported.*

With regard to influence of level of viewing on the individual variables, it is significantly observed for the variable 'sexual chastity for marriage', with p-value 0.037. Also, the DMRT and mean scores prove that heavy viewers (M = 2.4651, DMRT = b) tend to show liberal views towards sexually chastity, than moderate (M = 2.2792, DMRT = a) and low viewers (M = 2.3500, DMRT = a). The results of study show that there is a drastic change in perception of young viewers of Hollywood cinema in terms of sexual chastity required for a marriage. Also, the mean scores for the other three variables shows that the heavy viewers comparatively to a higher degree than moderate and low viewers perceive pre and extra marital sexual relation as an individual choice, showed interest in dating concept and have enough exposure on unnatural sexual behaviours like Lesbianism and homosexuality.

Table 1- Summary of One-way ANOVA – Influence of 'Level of Cinema Viewing' on dependent variables of 'Sexual Norms'

Sexual Norms	Level of viewing	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-value	p-value
Pre and extra marital sexual relation s- an individual choice	Low	65	3.0269	.65866	1.511	0.222
	Moderate	120	2.9458	.67065		
	Heavy	215	3.0791	.67812		
	Total	400	3.0306	.67364		
Interest	Low	65	3.2523	.72394	1.103	0.333

in dating concept	Moderate	120	3.3433	.83784		
	Heavy	215	3.4214	.87141		
	Total	400	3.3705	.83940		
Liberal towards Sexual chastity for marriage	Low	65	2.3500a	.70545	2.880*	0.037
	Moderate	120	2.2792a	.68076		
	Heavy	215	2.4651b	.70168		
	Total	400	2.3906	.69936		
Exposure on unnatural sexual behaviours	Low	65	3.1731	.95189	1.967	0.141
	Moderate	120	3.0125	.72605		
	Heavy	215	3.1860	.76940		
	Total	400	3.1319	.79133		
Total	Low	65	2.9506a	.54298	2.858*	0.049
	Moderate	120	2.8952a	.51826		
	High	215	3.0379b	.54274		
	Total	400	2.9809	.53804		

Within the traditional cultural ethos of Indian society, sexual chastity, mostly in case of women is considered to be highly imperative, valuable, and a souvenir kind to be gifted to spouse. Whereas male sexuality is viewed in liberal terms, in the sense that it is neither defined by nor confined to the social institutions of marriage and monogamy. Parallel to this, the system teaches to expect their spouse to be a virgin, implicitly as well as inherently. With the aftermath of globalization, there is indubitable complaint from traditional societies that westernization is responsible in spreading promiscuous liberal sexual views. Though widely discouraged in India, many studies done by Ghule and Donta, Abraham and Kumar, Sujay, and Rakesh have noticed a shift in the attitude of current youngsters towards sexual chastity, or sex without legal knot, and found that the erstwhile traditional norms and the role of the family are losing their importance in governing young people's sexual behaviour in India. Nevertheless to say, the issue is still confronted in the traditional society of India and undergoing severe debate.

H 2 - Male heavy viewers tend to show a higher degree of liberal views towards sexual norms than female heavy viewers.

The total probability value 0.035 of independent sample t-test, as detailed in table 2 is measuring the strength of the evidence and indicates that there is significant difference between heavy male and heavy female viewers of Hollywood cinema. And the total mean scores clearly imply that male heavy viewers (M=3.1084) tend to show higher degree of liberal views towards sexual norms than female heavy viewers (M=2.9522), by significantly proving the hypothesis. T-tests also clearly determine that the perceived difference between the male heavy and female heavy viewers is found with respect to two dependent variables i.e., 'Interest in dating concept' with p-value 0.003 and 'Liberal towards sexual chastity for marriage' with p-value 0.020.

The male heavy viewers with mean score 3.5797, when compared to female heavy viewers (M=3.3389) tend to show significant acceptance that dating leads to better understanding between couple, having a boyfriend / girlfriend is quite common now a days, similarly changing the boyfriend / girlfriend is a common trend among youth and it is not wrong for unmarried boys and girls to kiss each other. Similarly mean score for male respondents (M=2.5657) with regard to sexual chastity for marriage, implies that they are more liberal towards the sexual chastity or virginity by agreeing that it is not mandate for a person with whom he / she has had a sexual relationship or with whom he / she have dated first, and it is alright to have sex before marriage if they use preventive methods. The mean score 2.3428 for female heavy viewers indicates that they do not seem to have made up their mind like male respondents on this issue.

Table 2: Results of independent sample t-test to study significant difference between Male heavy and Female heavy viewers' perceptions towards 'Sexual Norms'

Sexual Norms	Gender (studied among Heavy Viewers only)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Pre / extra marital sexual relations - an	Male	118	3.1017	.70122	0.539	0.591
	Female	97	3.0515	.65146		

individual choice						
Interest in Dating concept	Male	118	3.5797	.82954	2.991**	0.003
	Female	97	3.2289	.88647		
Liberal towards Sexual chastity for marriage	Male	118	2.5657	.75279	2.342*	0.020
	Female	97	2.3428	.61589		
Exposure on unnatural sexual behaviours	Male	118	3.1864	.80010	0.008	0.993
	Female	97	3.1856	.73446		
Total	Male	118	3.1084	.58308	2.117*	0.035
	Female	97	2.9522	.47828		

As explained earlier, Indian society lays much emphasis on virginity for women before marriage compared to men. In a way, indirectly the patriarchal nature of society exercises separate sex code to male and female sexual behaviours. This is one crucial reason for women not being much influenced by the sexual liberties portrayed in Hollywood cinema.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS

In the current study, the influence of Hollywood cinema on youth's liberal views towards sexual norms is significantly observed among heavy viewers than moderate and low viewers. Heavy viewers are highly liberal towards the concept of sexual chastity required for a marriage. They are under strong perception that it is not a necessary obligation for someone to marry the person with whom he / she had a sexual relationship, or to marry someone with whom he / she had dated first. They also agreed that it is okay to have sex before marriage if they use preventive methods.

Also, the heavy viewers comparatively to a higher degree than moderate and low viewers perceive pre marital and extra marital sexual relations as a matter of individual choice. They tend to show more interest in dating concept and have comparatively more

exposure on unnatural sexual behaviour like Lesbianism and Homosexuality. They felt unnatural sexual behaviour is a way of life and it is not morally wrong. They opined that gays and lesbians should be allowed to live openly without any prejudice.

Regarding the gender differences, male heavy viewers tend to show liberal views in sexual norms to a higher degree than female heavy viewers. They show more interest in dating concept and believe that it leads to better understanding between couple. Also the male heavy viewers are highly liberal towards the concept of sexual chastity required for a marriage.

7. CONCLUSION

The current study evidently proved that young people are more vulnerable towards the impact of Hollywood cinema. It played a vital role in formulating the perceptions that are more liberal towards sexual norms in a manner different from the Indian culture. These perceptions tend to mimic with real life as 'quite normal' or at least 'the most happening things' rather than 'disorientation'.

Notes

1. Mukharjee, Arpita, 'India's Trade Potential in Audio-Visual Services and the GATS' (Working Paper No. 81, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations: New Delhi, April 2002), Viewed 10 November 2012, <<http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC11154.pdf>>. The main objective of the Indian audio-visual policy is to strike a balance between preservation of the rich cultural heritage of the nation and global competitiveness of the sector through liberalization that encourage foreign investment, the inflow of advanced technology, skills besides providing wide range of choice to consumers. With this core idea of liberalized film import policy, Hollywood's proliferation in India became as easy as its entry.
2. Central Board of Film Certification, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, India, 2009, Viewed last September 2011, <<http://www.indiastat.com/media/21/filmsandcinemas/61/stats.aspx>>. Total number of foreign films certified by Central Board of Film Certification in India between 01.04.2009 to 30.11.2009 were 184 out of which 130 are imported from USA, followed by 11 pictures

- from Hong kong, 11 from Thailand, and 8 from UK.
3. Jamkhandikar, Shilpa, 'Dubbed Hollywood fare trumps Bollywood', The Hollywood Reporter, 22 April 2010, Viewed last October 2011, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content_display/world/news/e3i3a5fb1561d2145a3b1d7f34ecdd733b9>. A sixty percent of total 950 million rupees fetched for movie '2012' from Indian box-office came from dubbed versions.
 4. Treverton, Gregory F., et al., 'Film Piracy, Organized Crime and Terrorism: India Case Study'. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), Viewed last September 2011 <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG742.pdf>. It has been observed in the study that the organized crime based in India and terrorist groups crept in to entertainment industry, counterfeiting a clear pirate monopoly over competitors to dominate the piracy market of Hollywood and Bollywood movies in entire South Asia. It can be very well understood that problem is not just associated with theatrical releases but the technological progress, especially digitalization, has reduced the government's ability in restricting the entry of uncensored foreign content into the domestic market.
 5. MPA and Envisional Ltd. 'India: Internet Piracy Landscape Audit' (September 2009). According to the MPA study, India is ranked fourth globally when it comes to illegal downloads and file-sharing of Hollywood movies, behind US, UK and Canada. The two main internet piracy methods used in India are the file-sharing network 'BitTorrent' and web-based file hosts 'cyberlockers'. The study also reveals that the attitudes of the Indian netizens with regard to piracy or unpaid movie downloads are apparently at ease – 'take it for granted', who are absolutely least bothered about associated legal issues than any of the western countries.
 6. IIPA. '2012 Special 301 Report on Copyright Protection and Enforcement' (International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA), 2012), Viewed on 10 November 2012, <<http://www.iipa.com/rbc/2012/2012SPEC301INDIA.PDF>>. The report says that illegal camcording harms both U.S. and Indian films and the Indian Government needs to enact a measure to outlaw the practice. MPAA reports that in 2011, it identified 33 forensic matches of its members' films, up from 23 in 2009 (as specified in the report). In November 2011, the police in Thane arrested an individual camcording the Hollywood movie The Adventures of Tin Tin on the opening day of its theatrical release in India. In fact IIPA recommends that India remain on the Priority Watch List in 2012.
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 8. Haeberle, Sex Atlas.
 9. Krzywinska, Tanya, Sex and the Cinema (GB: Wallflower Press, 2006), 2. Krzywinska discusses that even big budget mainstream films of Hollywood made for the wider audience base often fairly portray mild sexual content so that they can gain the lucrative 'PG' or '12' grading. Sex is coded in such a way that innuendos or sexual suggestiveness pass over the heads of minor, providing a kind of dual address (see page 4).
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