

Paper

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Narrative of the Differently-Abled: How Entertainment Media Looks at Women with Disability



Margarita with a Straw

Abstract

While statistics all over the world differ, it is stated that women with disabilities are at bigger risks of facing violence including sexual violence than women without disabilities (Ortoleva and Lewis, 2012). Despite the state of vulnerability that people with disability live with, their issues find scant mention in the media. A scrutiny of the day's newspaper will perhaps not even give a single story related to issues and concerns of the people with disabilities. This is despite that fact that the disabled population in India is about 2.68 crores or 2.21% of

the total population according to the 2011 census. Lesser are the incidents of violence against people with disabilities and further less is the exploration of the role of gender in the cases of violence. Most news media coverage of issues related to people with disabilities are confined to schemes and projects taken by the government or non-profit organisations, and making a hero out of an achievement. These news items are seldom written from the perspective of the person with disability; their everyday struggle, their perspective of life and society are almost always missing. While scant news media coverage is a cause of concern, the use of disability as a comic relief in

different media productions meant for entertainment is especially worrisome. Violence against the people with disabilities are often justified in films and television serials as 'frustrated outcome' or 'helplessness' of the care giver. When it comes to representations of women with disabilities, it is the images of mental disabilities that are come to the fore. Violence meted against women with disabilities are often depicted with pity rather than an effort to analyse the society's inability to understand the rights and needs of a disabled person. The lack of understanding about disability leaves the majority population considering them as weak, worthless and in some cases also subhuman (Andrae, 2016). The disabled other thus become a subject to sympathize, ridicule, ignore or fear.

However, with education and increased sensitivity of media professionals regarding issues of the people with disabilities, media can function as an advocate, spread sensitivity and social awareness about disability and the related issues.

The paper seeks to critically examine the coverage and representation of issues of women with disability, specifically in the entertainment media. Additionally, the aim is to understand the various possible impacts that misrepresentation or dilution of a problem may cause, and how one part of the population misses the opportunity to speak out through mass media which is supposed to be the spokesperson for the common and the downtrodden.

Keywords: *Gender, disability, media, representation*

Disability: as understood and defined

It is human fate that at some point in life, we are all going to be dependent on others to accomplish our daily tasks. Thus, we all are on the brink of some kind of disability during our life span. However, life poses challenges at those who suffer from a permanent disability of the body or of the mind. Their restricted mobility and limited problem-solving ability have not only been subjects of stereotypes and skewed representation but also subjected them to discriminations. Though many reforms have been introduced to ease the social interaction of people

with disabilities, there is still a long way to before equality is achieved for them. People with disabilities are no longer confined to the boundaries of home. They are becoming aware of their rights and demanding an equal role in society (WHO, 2011).

Defining disability has always been problematic due to the diversity and range of conditions associated the term. However, disability has been defined in diverse words by many. Leonardi M et.al. in their 2006 paper titled The definition of disability: what is in a name? defined disability as, "Disability is the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)" (Leonardi M et al, 2006).

In a foreword to the WHO World Report on Disability, Professor Stephen Hawking points out to the necessity for a friendly environment for people with disabilities. He mentions that he was fortunate to have such an environment that helped him live a fulfilling life. Hawking highlighted that people with disabilities face multiple barriers including attitudinal, physical, and financial (Hawking, 2011).

A definition given by the World Health Organization states disability as "any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being" (Ramesh and Singh, 2011).

International Labour Organization (ILO) takes an economic perspective of disability and defines a disabled individual as one "whose prospects of securing, retaining and advancing in suitable employment are substantially reduced as a result of a duly recognized physical or mental impairment" (Ramesh and Singh, 2011).

Taking cues from the above definitions and descriptions relating to disability I summarize disability in the words of Shabnam (2011), "A disability may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, and developmental or sometimes a combination of these. In the broadest sense of the term, people are labeled as disabled or handicapped because they look different from the rest of the

society on account of their appearance or behaviour or capacity to learn and develop”.

Social Statistics Division, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, GoI, takes note of disability in the following manner, “From the conceptual point of view, there is no universal definition of what constitutes a disability or of who should be considered as having a disability. Moreover, there is no one static condition of disability. A disability is a result of the interaction between a person with a health condition and a particular environmental context. Individuals with similar health conditions may not be similarly disabled or share the same perception of their disability, depending on their environmental adaptations. For example, having access to technical aids, services or medication, or physical adaptation to the environment may allow individuals to overcome their disabling conditions. Disability is not an all-or nothing phenomenon but involves degrees of difficulty, limitation or dependence, ranging from slight to severe. Questions should be designed to capture those with severe as well as those with less severe forms of disabling conditions and should take into account any assistive devices or accommodations that the person may have”.

The Census report of 2011 published by Government of India lists multiple conditions under a list disabilities with headings as seeing, hearing, speech, movement, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple disability and any other. The census of 2011 also states that the 2.21% of the total population of India is affected by some kind of disability (Census 2011).

Status of the Disabled

The fact that disabled people make 2.21% of the population, makes it a serious case. The rights of this population regarding healthcare, education, accessibility, representation, employability and most importantly, acceptability in the society calls for in-depth evaluation and analysis.

Of the total disabled population, 20% have movement disability, and 19% have seeing and hearing disability. These figures indicate to the

necessity of a physical environment helpful for unhindered movement of this population. Mobility is the key to development and restricted mobility is a big hindrance to the development of an individual. That our social and physical environment is not suited to facilitate unhindered movement of the disabled can be cited as an instance of the society’s negligence to the needs of the disabled.

The total literacy rate of the disabled population of India is 55%. Out of the male population only 62% is literate and out of the female population 45% is literate. Only 61% of the disabled students between the age group of 5 to 19 are attending school, where the percentage of male students attending schools is higher by 14% compared to female students. On the employment sector, only 36% of the total disabled population is employed. The percentage of disabled males working is 47% and the percentage of disabled female working is 23%. Further, on matters of marriage, it has been found that only 48.87% of the disabled population is married.

The above data reflected in a report titled Disabled Persons in India: A Statistical Profile 2016 by the Social Statistics Division, Ministry of Programme Implementation (GoI) brings to fore the level of exclusion of the disabled population from various social activities.

The World Health Organisation in their World Report on Disability published in 2011 have noted a list of barriers that hinder social and individual development of the disabled across cultures. These barriers are inadequate policies and standards, negative attitudes, lack of provision of services, problems with service delivery, inadequate funding, lack of accessibility, lack of consultation and involvement, and lack of data and evidence. These barriers have thus negatively affected the lives of the disabled people. Poor health, low educational achievements, low economic participation, high rates poverty and limited participation are a outcomes of the barriers that restrict social progress of the disabled (WHO, 2011). It is often assumed that people with same disabilities have similar needs. However, there is also a need to contextualize and examine the needs

of the disabled as per individual experiences and the environment that they live in.

The Vulnerable Group

The limited access to resources and opportunities also make the disabled population vulnerable. Often their rights are trespassed, and they are taken advantage of. They are more susceptible to physical and mental harm due to their delicate conditions. They cannot access what is readily available to all. Limited awareness among the disabled population as well as their caregivers about their rights and privileges also leaves them open to harm. While the disabled population in totality is often pushed to the margins of society, women and children are more vulnerable to neglect, violence and exploitation. The disabled individuals are also at a higher risk of violence than people without disabilities. The WHO reports that as per study done in 2012, disabled children are more than three times more likely to be subjected to any form of violence than those without disabilities. Disabled adults are 1.5 are more likely to be victims of violence than those who are not disabled (WHO).

The risk of violence further increases in case of girls and women. Disabled women are more likely to experience violence in their lifetime than disabled males. They are also more likely to suffer violence at the hand of intimate partners or spouses, and sexual violence than those without disability (The International Network of Women with Disabilities). Women with disabilities face multilayered discrimination and violence from various spheres. They become victim of violence not only in the public space but also within domestic spaces. Violence against women with disabilities may include 'physical, psychological, sexual, financial violence, neglect, social isolation, entrapment, degradation, detention, denial of health care, forced sterilization and psychiatric treatment, among others'. Many times the abuser is a person living in close proximity. What is even more serious is that these cases either go unreported or the women do have access to adequate services to report them. Many time even law enforcing officials are not well trained and well

equipped to address. So much so, the victims are also at times dismissed a not being a credible enough source to warrant attention or make a complaint (Ortoleva and Lewis, 2012).

While women are yet to achieve the same social status as men in the society, those afflicted by disability are pushed to the margins. Socio-economic discrimination is reinforced via negative cultural and attitudinal practices. Women with disability are thus victim of double discrimination, one on the ground of their gender and another on the ground of their disabilities. Their situation also changes from bad to worse in view of their socio-economic conditions. Those from the deprived sections of the society are further at a more disadvantageous condition (Rao Mallavarapu et. al.). Alongside the increased risks of violence and discrimination, disabled women often face hindrances in leading a 'normal' life.

If women with disability do not physically measure up to able-bodied standards, neither does society expect them to do so. In many cases, they are not expected to adopt the roles of wife and mother. (Daruwalla et.al., 2013).

Media Representation of Disability

Representation in media has warranted much academic debate. Media representation not only circulates images and ideas to a broad group of media audiences but also reinforces those perceptions, which might be a product of popular or stereotypical perceptions. Media images of disabled people or representation of issues of the disabled similarly are open for a huge audience to read and interpret. Negative, insensitive or stereotypical representation of the disabled and their issues will only reiterate the various social biases and discrimination that they are subjected to.

The role of media in influencing as well as forming public opinion is now an established fact. The images of the disabled bodies circulated in mass media also have the power to influence popular perception. Seldom making it to the most circulated images of 'mainstream media', the disabled when seen are either in a state of pity, sympathy or empathy. They are either in the midst of a grim

struggle for survival or accomplishing superhuman feats. It is seldom that we see them presented as a regular part of family and society, and carrying on with their 'normal' lives (ILO, 2010).

Concerns regarding disability and its relation to media is also not limited to issues of representations. Most media content is not equipped to be consumed by a large proportion of the disabled population that suffer from any kind of hearing or seeing impediments. Further, words like 'cripple', 'crazy' are commonly used to hurl abuse or shame a person. While such words are often heard in day to day conversations in similar contexts, their use in mass media content adds in reinforcing and validating the notion that any form of disability is a shame, curse or impediment.

The picturization of the disabled in mass media also fails to raise much hope. Extreme positioning of the 'crippled body' as a comic relief or evil incarnate to be feared or pitied can be cited as the entertainment industry's 'lazy shortcut' (Shakespeare, 1999) to bemuse the audience. Single dimensionality is the norm that has dominated majority of media images of the disabled (Brylla, 2018). Such portrayal is many times also the result of lack of interaction with the disabled and scientific understanding of their condition. While developing media content, the creators are driven by their own agenda that often conflict with interests of those who are represented. Commercial gain by exploiting popular perceptions and beliefs also many times is the force behind one dimensional and skewed portrayal of the disabled (Cunningham, 2016).

On the issue of coverage, news media has been on the line of criticism for scant attention to issues relating to the disabled. The only time when news relating to disability gets all round attention is the time of World Disability Day or any such earmarked event (Biswal, 2015). The apathy of magazines towards coverage of disability related issues is more pronounced. Having given space to all areas from politics to films, the disabled seldom makes it to the magazine pages (Biswal, 2015). Despite presence of a huge number of private news as well as entertainment television channels, only few devote time to programs aimed at the disabled.

Doordarshan is the only known channel to run news for the deaf and mute audience (Biswal, 2015).

Mass media's impact on formation of consciousness and memory has been tremendous. Mass media is a network of communication systems where, interpersonal relations and technological innovations, political-economic incentives and socio-cultural ambitions, light entertainment and serious information, local environments and global influences, form and content, substance and style all intersect, interact and influence each other (Lull, 2013).

The influence of media images is not limited to self-image. It spreads to the formation for popular perception and thus should be read both in the context of private and public spaces. Standards of physical beauty is perhaps the most spawned image of modern mass media. Read in the context of disabled bodies in entertainment media, it is hard to recall a body image that is presented as 'acceptable'. Insecurity, self-pity, shame and self-consciousness about their bodies is a dominant narrative entertainment media, putting them at risk of (body) dissatisfaction and unhealthy behaviour to attain the standards that are commonly represented and appreciated. Studies have further revealed that women are more vulnerable to the ill effects of unattainable body images (bodies that are perfect) as well as body shaming done in mass media content/narrative (Hog et.al., 2017). The disabled bodies are a far cry from the acceptable standards.

In view of the above, it thereby becomes imperative to critically examine media representations of women with disability. The emphasis here is laid on Bollywood films, which caters to the preferences of the mass, with an innate persuasive capacity that resonates in the mind of the audience.

Bollywood Films, The disability Narrative and Women

If one may dare, it can be argued that in a given year Bollywood does not produce many films that deals with the sensitive of disability. This is an alarming situation, owing to the fact that the Indian film industry per say is the largest in the world and it

is estimated that around 1000 films are produced every year in dozens of languages with an international viewership approximately of about 3.9 billion. Bollywood or the Hindi film industry based in Mumbai produces the highest number of films each year. However, the number of films that Bollywood has produced on disability are a few to be counted.

Herein, it is imperative to note that Hindi cinema has continuously been a prime point of reference for Indian culture and society. It acts as a window for the audience to see the ever-evolving scenarios and contours of India's socio-cultural and political sentiments. The impact of Hindi cinema has impacted the manner in which people perceive and deal with varied aspects of their own lives.

Koshish 1972, *Sparsh* 1980, *Sadma* 1983, *Khamoshi* 1996, *Mann* 1999, *Iqbal* (2005), *Black* (2005), *Fanaa* 2006, *Taare Zameen Par* (2007), *Barfi* (2012), *Margarita with a Straw* (2015), *Hichki* (2018), *15 Park Avenue* (2005)—are a few films that have attracted audience's attention by dealing with disability as a subject.

Herein, it is important to reinstate that the role of media especially cinema, in persuading and establishing public opinion is a recognized fact. The images of the disabled bodies disseminated in mass media also have the command to sway popular sensitivity. But the irony remains, that such images rarely are circulated in the 'mainstream media'. If any such depiction takes place, it borders on the state of pity, sympathy or empathy. The disabled are either in the middle of an ugly struggle for survival or achieving prodigious feats. It is rare that they are presented as a regular part of family and society, leading 'normal' lives.

In the context of disability and Bollywood films, it is seen that in the ratio of films focusing on disability is highly skewed. Additionally, films mentioned in this paper with focus on women as lead characters is negligible. Here, it is being argued, where Bollywood objectifies women as a glam doll, sex symbol or the goddess, a disabled lead character that too a woman, may not make the cut for the big box-office hit. Thus, people's perceptions are molded in a definite manner, such that they are lured to a certain genre of film making that goes the extra mile

to make a film palpable by placing a muni, baby doll or Sheela.

Few films have been taken into account for analysis:

Case 1: (*Sadma* 1983)



A film that had a lasting impact on the minds of the audience is *Sadma* (1983), written and directed by Balu Mahendra. Sridevi's performance as an amnesiac woman has been extensively applauded and is considered to be one of the finest performances till date. Nehalata (Sridevi) is shown to be a helpless woman, naïve and coy who is sold to a brothel. She is later rescued by Somu (Kamala Hassan) who gives her shelter in his house in Ooty. Subsequently, as well during her stay in Ooty she is a prey for many like a local woodcutter named Balwant. Though she saves herself, Somu as her protector is enraged and almost wanted to kill Balwant. In the culmination of the film when Nehalata's family finally reunites with her, and she recovers from her ailment, she returns back to her normal life forgetting all about her past life and Somu.

Nehalata all through has been depicted as a helpless woman, in need to care and support. In continuation of the stereotypes she was the object of desire, and her disability adding on to her woes. Nehalata's character was devoid of any kind of decision making power, capacity to express consent and sexuality.

She also becomes the bearer of gaze, a sexual object and an object of lust for the male. Somu imagines her emerging as a beautiful maiden in saree

but disappointed to see her shabby avatar. Not only she satisfies his male supremacy to be a protective hand for the weak (woman) but also is a recipient of his libidinal (voyeuristic) gaze without resistance. She is to fulfill his dreams (Gilbert and Gauber 1980). However, this lovable and meek dame transforms into a vicious cold-hearted person, as the narrative presents, the moment she regains her mental strength. The film's narrative is replete with pity for poor Somu, rejected and left to cry in the mud and rain as Nehalata refuses to recognize him and moves ahead. The 'angel' transforms into a 'monster' (Gilbert and Gauber, 1980).

Case 2: (Black 2005)



Black directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, is another film that is momentous in the history of Bollywood films, for its unconventional imagery and cinematography. The film on its whole talks about disability in various forms, through the characters of Michelle McNally (Rani Mukerji) and Debraj Sahai (Amitabh Bachchan). Debraj is primarily robbed in by Michelle's parents to train her, control her and teach her manners, an 8 year old who is visually impaired and deaf. In one instance Debraj gets exasperated with Michelle's continuing impudent behaviour and he throws her into a fountain full of water. As the film climaxes Debraj's venture is successful and Michelle is a graduate, on the other hand Debraj is in a asylum due to his almost complete incapability to remember his past and even how to speak, a result of Alzheimer's.

In this case it is important to point out, that both the characters are disabled owing to different

reasons. But, nonetheless, it is the 8 year old's helplessness that has been cashed on in the film. And Michelle being patronized by Debraj, an eccentric man himself. The urge to fit the child into the normative system is so high, that irrational methods of discipline and teaching have been promoted. At the end again, it is Michelle who assumes the role of a care giver, to Debraj who has lost control over his mind and body.

Female behavior that in any way threatens or tries to threaten established system has been considered erratic. Thus, there is a need to discipline the erratic and unruly female. This idea seems to be the driving logic in *Black*. The uncontrollable female, a child here, is brought to line by the strong older male. There is little mercy or consideration that her disability prevents hers from conforming to the established standards of society. On the contrary, she is a threat to the order and her place in it, especially as a female. Her disability (blind and deaf) had prevented her from being automatically inducted into the system and learn ways of 'appropriate behaviour'. Thus, the need for a superior authority to induct her into the system. Michelle's introduction in the film almost presents her as a child with some form of mental illness, focusing away from her actual disabilities, that is treated by Debraj's training. The mad woman metaphor is projected on this young female child who exudes fear in minds of those in power. This 'madness' is ultimately contained and the threat contained.

Case 3: (Barfi 2012)



Written and directed by Anurag Basu, the film *Barfi* was a comedy-drama, with central focus on the life of a deaf boy Murphy "Barfi" Johnson (Ranbir Kapoor) and his association with two women. The role of Jhilmil (who is autistic) played by Priyanka Chopra is a praise worthy performance, but it is most certainly not the central character of the film. Jhilmil comes to focus when Murphy needs to raise money for his father's treatment and after a failed attempt at bank robbery, he decides to kidnap his childhood friend. Jhilmil is shown yet again as a powerless woman who is also duped by her father in a bid to acquire the wealth that her grandfather left for her. Before Murphy could kidnap, she is already kidnapped. He somehow rescues Jhilmil and when he does get the ransom, she is of no use to him since his father has already passed away. Dejected, Barfi tries to leave Jhilmil at the village of her caretaker, since she is of no use to her. Jhilmil on the other finds comfort in him and refuses to leave him and they relocate to Kolkata, where Barfi takes on the responsibility as a caregiver for Jhilmil. Jhilmil is the subject of amusement and is a subject of abuse by her family for her wealth. She is kidnapped yet again, her death fabricated to amass the wealth. Later, again she is reunited with Murphy, both are happily married. As the film culminates, Murphy is in his deathbed Jhilmil too dies with him in the hospital.

Jhilmil disability owing to autism is shown as an amusement throughout the film. Whereas, Murphy, though deaf is portrayed as the hero who can have relationships with two women. He is the rescuer and comforter. Whereas both Jhilmil and Shruti Ghosh (Ileana D'Cruz) are the helpless, damsels in distress and need of support from Murphy. Here also the woman's (Jhilmil) behaviour results in embarrassing situations or situations that put her in danger often requiring the help of the hero or the hero rescuing her. While her 'cute' amuse the hero and the audience the part that she is a woman, an individual is avoided in the narrative. It is only in her love for the hero that we see her exploring different emotions.

The film portrays two disabled characters-a man and a woman. While the hero despite her disability is perfectly able to live an independent life, the women's very existence seems to be dependent on

the hero. While women without any disability seemingly cannot live a life independent of her male counterpart, to have a disabled character live an independent life seems beyond the narrative of cinema.

Case 4: (*Margarita with a Straw* 2014)



Margarita with a Straw was directed by Shonali Bose, starring Kalki Koechlin as Laila (a teenager with cerebral palsy), Sayani Gupta as Khanum (a blind girl) and Revathi (Laila's mother). The film focuses on Laila, a coming of age story of a teenager who despite having cerebral palsy, goes through life like any other teenager. She is studying in Delhi University, composer for the college band, aspiring writer, falling in love and getting rejected. She moves to Manhattan with her orthodox Maharashtrian mother Shubhangini (Revathi) after receiving a scholarship. Herein, she falls in love with Khanum who is fiercely independent and has embraced her disability positively. Initially, Laila, is confused about her own sexuality, but soon has clarity. Laila eventually, tells her mother about her sexuality and her relationship with Khanum, which is vehemently disapproved by Shubhangini. As the wheels turn, Shubhangini is detected is colon cancer and both Laila and Shubhangini reconcile. Laila assumes the role of the caregiver for her mother. The film ends showing Laila as grown up woman enjoying her time by the countryside.

This film, delves deep on the themes of inclusion, self-acceptance and human sexuality. An approach that is starkly different from other films that Bollywood churns out.

Point to Note

In the context of the films taken for analysis: *Sadma*, *Black* and *Barfi* though made in different times, by renowned filmmakers, follows a set pattern of representing the women characters with disability. The understanding of a woman as a coy, naive, submissive individual is a hallmark of Bollywood films and the approach is no different, in the above mentioned films as well. Disabled or not disabled women are represented in the same manner. The leading lady ought to be demure, homely and the debauch women will be the item girls, who satisfy the lust of male gaze. Taking cue from Goffman's framing theory, it can be seen that the films work within a set frame. In essence, framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience (called "the frame") influences the choices people make about how to process that information. This is very apt for the most preferred form of mass media i.e. cinema. The narrative of the film flows in such a manner creating vivid imagery borrowed from the preconceived narrative about disability that has social acceptance. Thereby, setting the agenda, wherein people perceive disability within the stereotypes that are preexisting. Thus, the audience is unable to distinguish the dual stereotyping that takes place, within the film.

Contrariwise, the film *Margarita with a Straw*, brings in a breadth of fresh air in the representation of women and disability, in the Indian film sphere. An all-women centric film that takes the bold step of delving into spaces that has not been touched previously. Themes like individuality, decision making capacity, inclusiveness, love from a woman's perspective and most importantly sexuality. Woman's sexuality is never a concern in the Indian society, which is also reflected in the films. Thereby, disabled women, love and sexuality certainly is an issue that does not concern the masses. But, this film does bring it to limelight in a subtle and yet fierce manner. Inclusiveness, the need to be self-reliant are also topics that *Margarita with a Straw*, has upheld creatively, issues that people with disability are battling on a day to day basis. A disabled person may

be in need of help but certainly not pity. *Margarita with a Straw* strolls past pity and feebleness to portray women with strong mind and character. Another important aspect of the film is the exploration of relationships among the women characters-in each other's companionship they grow.

Also, it is worthy of mention that *Margarita with a Straw* is directed by a female director, whereas, *Sadma*, *Barfi* and *Black* by male directors. This, potentially is an important element owing to which a different imagery on women and disability is reflected in Shonali Bose's, *Margarita with a Straw*. It can be argued that perhaps woman's sensitivity to the ways of society or simply just a woman's perspective, enables them to tell a tale with different sensibility. Women filmmakers in India have shown that they are more sensitive to the varied facets of a woman's life experience, and do not shy away from depicting these in their films.

Disabled women are often framed in a set roles/way by focusing on certain traits and overlooking many others. The characters are often black and white with no shades of gray. The characterization is also often flat. The framing is spatial as well as temporal. These mental images frames transcend spatial boundaries to the temporal. *Margarita with a Straw* breaks free of this framing to portray free-willed women despite their disabilities.

Conclusion

Cinema is interpreted differently by different people. For some it is the most preferred and the cherished medium of entertainment, while for some it is merely a medium that disseminates information via motion pictures. While there are others who believe that cinema is a medium that echoes the true mood and the changing situation or the reality of the society. Cinema, echoes the reality of the society and what we see in movies essentially transpires, otherwise where do these films get their stimulus from?

A cursory glimpse on the history on Hindi cinema and the varying trends of society and cinema leads one to accept as true, that Bollywood has evolved over time in terms of representation of women. Globalization and westernisation have had a

colossal impact on the content of the films, the locales where they are shot. But a microscopic examination of the films divulge that undeniably there has been progress, but only in terms of technical expedients, locations, costumes etc. Conversely, women are still portrayed in the archaic frame of femininity. Heroines are westernized, as is everything in their

vicinity. This in turn has turned the woman into a commodity that is made into a spectacle for branding and marketing of the film. Portraying a woman with disability and building rounded narrative is a challenge that Bollywood films seem to have some time to traverse. However, a film like *Margarita with a Straw* can be a model to guide.

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