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## Women empowerment and Indian Cinema

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### Abstract

‘Empowerment’ may be described as a process which helps people to assert their control over the factors which affect their lives. Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent discussion in matters that affect them. In the past few years, Bollywood has churned out many women. In a situation when education fails to teach modern ideas of women empowerment, cinema has successfully brought about a change in the mindset orthodox. Bollywood’s women-centric films make society aware of how girls want to live their life. In recent time, Bollywood has become more sensitive towards all social issues particularly about women’s empowerment. Well-known actors, singers and film makers have all fronted or run campaigns to fight social ills faced by women. Modern films represent women as more independent, confident and career oriented. These films portray women both as victimized and empowered ones. This paper deals with the fast changing role of women represented in Indian Cinema.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, films and women, Bollywood, society, gender

### Introduction

“There is no limit to what we, as women can accomplish.”

Michelle Obama

Cinema is a medium of entertainment. Indian cinema also portrayed various women characters that were powerful enough to inspire the whole society. We see now Bollywood become more sensitive towards burning issues especially about empowerment of women. Women empowerment is a hot topic in India and Indian cinema is also buying into that trends. In Bollywood female actresses played numerous memorable roles in previous decades too. There are so many examples of heroines that showed women empowerment such as Nargis Dutt, the most leading star of 1950s, who played the role of a working lady such as a lawyer in *Awara*, a school teacher in *Shree 420*, and she played her most memorable role as a helpless farmer in *Mother India*.

For decades, Hindi Cinema has been a mirror reflecting the times and scenarios the nation has gone through. From playing decorative objects in movies, if not victims or martyrs to becoming a strong face, women have come a long way in our movies. The Hindi film actresses have graduated from being the *abla naari* to the woman of substance and strength that stands for her rights, raises her voice against injustice, fights for her dignity and self respect and also rebels when she has to. Here I bring some films that shows women as heroes-

1. **Mother India (1957):** It was a classic film of Indian Cinema. It is considered one of the most impressive movie of Nargis Dutt. In this movie she played the role of Radha, a poor villager, who fights for her sons. In her village, she is considered God like figure and justice. For her principles she killed her immoral son and showed her empowerment.
2. **Arth (1982):** Directed by Mahesh Bhatt, this movie is a strong appeal of women empowerment. He is known for portraying strong female characters on big screen. Shabana Azmi played a wonderful role and earned National Award for her performance. Having been deceived by her husband, (Pooja) decided to take strong step in search of self identity. She decides to live her life in her own way.

3. **Bandit Queen (1994):** It is a biography based on an Indian dacoit, Phoolan Devi's life. She faces sexual discrimination in the society because she belongs to lower class. She fights against to her by men. At last, she became a strong woman and became the member of Parliament.



4. **Chandani Bar (2001):** This movie also shows different lives of women who are caught in the web of underworld, prostitution, crime and bar dancers. Tabu in this movie plays the leading role of Mumtaz, a leading character in the film. She works hard to give the best future to her children and make situations better for herself.
5. **Chak De! India (2007):** This movie was special in Indian Cinema because it was the first movie to be based on a team of Hockey players that were all women. This movie showed the society a bunch of unstoppable girls chasing their dreams. The movie is the perfect example of feminism. Through Sah Rukh Khan it shows how a man thinks equally for women.
6. **No One Killed Jessica (2011):** It is based on the Jessica Lal's murder case. In this movie Vidhya Balan plays the role of Jessica's elder sister who fights for the wealthy and influential man who shot her sister. The film shows the women empowerment by a common woman, who can rise above all odds and fights for justice.
7. **English Vinglish (2012):** The story of this movie revolved around Shashi, the role played by Sri Devi who is home maker and incapable of speaking English. She is not only a perfect house wife but also a good mother. Shashi accepts the patriarchal society set up. But she always feels humiliated by her family side because her lacking proficiency in English but later her life is twisted. She turns to be a woman respected by both herself and her family because she acquires the knowledge of English and makes herself strong in the society.
8. **Marry Com (2014):** This movie is based on the real life of the Indian Boxer. Priyanka Chopra played the role beautifully on the screen. The movie is noteworthy as it has pictuarized the hardship of Marry Kom. Even After her marriage and two children Kom continues her successful journey of her career and shows her empowerment by getting Gold Medal for India.
9. **Mardaani (2014):** Another movie of Indian Cinema that shows women empowerment is Mardaani. This is the story of Shivani Roy. The role played by Rani

Mukherji, who fights against child trafficking and drugs. It shows how the lady officer fights for the city.

10. **Queen (2014):** Beautiful story of the character Rani played by Kangna Ranaut. Rani breaks the news by (Vijay) the role played by Rajkumar Rao that he is not interested in marrying her before a day of their marriage but after this heart breaking news Rani takes a strong step to empower herself and goes for honeymoon alone where she meets new friends and discovers the new world and Get ready to take control of her life.



11. **Piku (2015):** The Bollywood has given another blockbuster hit that is based on the condition of many working women of today. In this movie Deepika Padukone shows the ups and downs of a young independent woman. She is tossed between her personal and professional life.
12. **Pink (2016):** In Indian Cinema Pink is the another movie that is full of women empowerment. By the dialogue of this movie Amitabh Bacchan told the Nation the power of Woman's decision. When a woman says 'No' it means 'No'. Through this movie Bollywood gives the message 'no one have rite to take the decision against woman's will'.
13. **Lipistic Under My Burkha (2017):** This movie is based on the lives of four different women. It is a modern age movie, a fearlessly feminist film. It holds a mirror by presenting the needs of freedom for women. This movie is openly expresses the dreams, desire and seeks the freedom from social, cultural, economical, and patriarchal clutches.
14. **Saand Ki Aankh (2019):** Latest movie of Indian Cinema that shows the women empowerment in the last phase of two old women Chandro Tomar by Bhoomi Pednekar and Prakashni Tomar by Taapsee Pannu. It is one of the best inspiring movies in bollywood. In this movie shooter dadi inspires not only their grand - daughters but also the whole society by giving the message how they fight with the orthodox mentality of men from their own house.

So above are various examples of bollywood movies that show women empowerment by giving a message that women are capable enough to protest herself and they have no need a male to rescue her from danger and console her in their grief. Many directors of bollywood through the different actresses has given a number of examples of equality of men and women. The role played by women in Indian Cinema serves the purpose of a role model for other

women in society. Through their movies they have allowed to common women to relate themselves with these characters.



These empowered women represent the image of new woman that is no longer submissive but assertive and thus try to form new equations of equality. They are seekers of their dreams in their ways and are hungry of freedom from social, cultural, economical and bodily clutches. They listen their “inner voice” and bring forth the socially taboo subject of sex and assert themselves covertly or overtly. Their background of – village or city – is no more hindrance to their empowerment.

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