

Delineation of Sports Women in Indian Cinema: Stories of Sweat, Tears and Triumph

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Abstract

Once upon a time sports and women were considered to be poles apart. Now days, women are coming up with flying colours in different sports. The sports films and especially women centric sport films have emerged as a new genre in Indian mainstream cinema. Indian Female led sports movies are challenging typecast of masculinity of sports. Anything what a man can do, woman can do it more perfectly if she gets an opportunity. There are so many living legends of women sportspersons who stirred Indian Cinema. The rise of sports women on cinema screen has changed the whole notion of sports and gender. Women have been marginalized since ancient time in every field. The women centric sports movies also highlighted the major practice of marginalization with portrayal of her story of sweat, tears and triumph. These movies have common themes of women's passion for sports and their battle against great odds to be capable to play. The present paper entitled 'Delineation of Sports Women in Indian Cinema: Stories of Sweat, Tears and Triumph' will focus on contribution of women centric sports cinema in giving exposure to women's sports and its influence on society.

Keywords: Sports, Women, Mainstream Indian Cinema, Gender Politics, Marginalization, Struggle, Success.

Introduction:

Cinema is not only a powerful medium of entertainment but also a revolutionary tool for social change. From romantic comedy to sports films and especially women centric sport films, change in the journey of mainstream Hindi cinema is positive and welcome. Films are believed to be the opium of the Indian masses as people rely on this medium to help them to escape to a world of fantasy. When it comes to delineation of women in sports study women centric sport films becomes essential.

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Leading Women Sports Films:

The movie *Chak De India* (2007) directed by Shimit Amin starring Shah Rukh Khan, Sagarika Ghatge and crew revolves around women's hockey. It tells fictional story about the Indian women's national field hockey team, which was inspired by the team's win at 2002 commonwealth games. Players face sexism, take Herculean efforts to change traditional mindset of their parents and this difficult road finally leads to international victory. The movie successfully busts a plethora of myths prevalent in India with regard to women and sports.

Mary Kom (2014) directed by Omung Kumar and produced by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and starring Priyanka Chopra is a biopic on the life of Olympic medal winner, young boxing champion –Mary Kom. A boxing aficionado, she faces a lot of discrimination because of her gender and the region she belonged to. Despite her father's disapproval, she pursues her dream of becoming a boxer by getting trained under a renowned boxing coach. The movie beautifully portrays her struggle to prove her mettle in boxing which is considered to be a male dominated sport in India. Her ambitious nature keeps her going. She has a supportive husband who encourages her to chase her dreams while he took the onus of looking after the kids on himself.

Cricket in India is highly in favour of men. Everyone knows Sachin Tendulkar but who remembers Anju Chopra? **Dil Bole Hadippa** (2009) directed by Anurag Singh is a light-hearted movie with a strong message of gender equality in the field of sports. Rani Mukherjee loves to play cricket and aspires to play cricket at national level. On finding out that it is a pipedream; she decides to dress up like a man to get herself enrolled in the team. Later, the protagonist manages to get on the national team and even wins a game.

Dangal (2016) is a film directed by Nitesh Tiwari and produced by Aamir Khan and the film is a record breaking commercial success, becoming the highest-grossing Indian film ever. Mahawir Singh Phogat, a former amateur wrestler was forced by his father to give up sport in order to obtain gainful employment. Dejected that he could not win a medal for his country, he vows that his unborn son will. Disappointed upon having daughters, he gives up hope. But when his older daughters Geeta and Babita come home after beating up two boys, he realises their potential to become wrestlers and begins coaching them. Epic dialogue of the film "mhari choriyan choron se kam hai ke?" gives a strong message for male-female equality in sports or we can say that sport is beyond gender.

Panga (2020) directed by Ashwiniy Iyer Tiwari starring Kangna Ranaut is an exhilarating ode to motherhood and chasing dreams. Jaya (Kangna) is thirty two, married and a mother of a seven- year- old used to play kabaddi before marriage. She decides to pursue her passion with support of her husband, son and colleague. As expected, movie ends with a big tournament an all-Asia competition and a climatic match: India versus Iran in which she wins laurels.

Anushka Sharma, in the avatar of a professional wrestler from Haryana, has done a commendable job in the movie **Sultan** (2016) directed by Ali Abbas Zafar and produced by

Aditya Chopra. Her immaculate ability to juggle between her household responsibilities and training as a wrestler received a lot of adulation from the audience. It was refreshing to find a father so overtly supportive of her daughter's ambitions. Her dream of winning the Olympic medal for India was very dear to him as well.

Saala khadoos (2016) directed by Sudha Kongara is the story of an aspiring woman boxer and her coach. The movie talks about the politics in boxing association due to which actual talented players are not allowed to emerge. It shows the petty jealousies and mind games that are a part of international tournaments and how a true sportsperson does not let any of this derail her.

Conclusion:

These movies reflect on the changing position of women in the Indian society. They have no qualms in professing how much they love their sports and are willing to make it an important part of their lives. Many times they are criticized and judged by their own family for nurturing such masculine interests. They break all barriers and show up for the national and international level game and become successful. These movies have common themes of women's passion for sports and their conflict against great odds to be capable to play. Struggles of sports person, the strategy of game, difficult time with supportive and many times with non-co-operating family, menstruation pain, pregnancy, post delivery comeback are physically and mentally challenging but our sports warriors are unstoppable.

These feminist sports films ask for right to play which was denied to women for centuries. Their stories are emotional, inspiring and cheering women to play sports. These movies are trying to catch spirit of womanhood. The leading protagonists make us care about what kind of space they can find for themselves in the world. Mainstream Hindi cinema has taken small initiative by promoting women sports on silver screen. But still there is a long way to go for women's sporting equality.

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