

Gender Stereotyping - Hindi TV Shows vs. Advertisements

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Abstract

Gender stereotyping means assuming generalisations regarding behaviour, qualities, roles, characteristics, work and attitudes based on gender. In patriarchal societies, gender stereotyping can be seen in almost each and every field of life. The society generally judge people based on their gender. This mindset has been continuing since long. Mythologies, literature, films, TV shows and advertisements play a very important role in shaping the mindset of people. These mediums can affect the opinions and attitudes of its audience. These can reflect the present conditions of our society as well as help in reforming the society by presenting to them a broader perspective about anything. Visual media like films and TV shows can play a quite important role in reforming the society's habitual gender stereotyping. But most of the TV shows present a wrong notion regarding image of women and in a way support and promote gender stereotypes. Since most of its audience are women and girls, it can really have negative impacts on their mindset. Instead of encouraging them to be empowered, these TV shows are promoting traditional values and present the image of an ideal woman that the female viewers try to imitate in some part of their life. However, various brands have started to promote their products while simultaneously showing the power and potential of women through the advertisements. Their taglines and concepts promote the image of empowered woman who are strong enough to speak her mind and follow her heart. This paper discuss about some of the TV shows and advertisements to analyse the contrasting images of women presented in them.

Key Words- Advertisements, TV shows, Gender stereotypes, Women, Empower, Traditional

timid and obedient damsel in distress. She is

Introduction: In today's world, television has become essential in everyone's life. People watch various programmes for entertainment, leisure, information, interest, pleasure and fun. The largest parts of viewers of television are women. And to target them, most of the channels play TV serials around the clock to keep them hooked to the television. These shows comprises of drama, romance, thrill, suspense and lots of melodramatic scenes. Most of the story lines are built around a female protagonist- an ideal, innocent, faithful, weak,

tortured sometimes by her own family, sometimes by her love interest or husband and mostly by her in-laws. She endures all these sufferings patiently and wins the heart of everyone in the course of the story. It presents a wrong notion regarding the image and ideals of women in women. When they see such characteristics of the female protagonists being admired by other characters, they tend to epitomise these characteristics. Instead of

encouraging them to be empowered, these TV shows are promoting traditional values and present the image of an ideal woman that the female viewers try to imitate in some part of their life. On the contrary, various brands are now-a-days starting to create a sort of awareness about empowering women.

TV shows and Gender Stereotypes: Most of the TV serials focus on the saas-bahu sagas. The female protagonist sacrifices everything- her dreams, her goals, her aspirations, and her happiness- to keep her husband and in-laws happy and content. They are generally portrayed as some meek, docile and obedient beings which no strong voice or opinions. They lack the power to make decisions on their own. Though writers and producers are trying to bring up new themes and story lines in the beginning, after a point of time surrendering to the TRP rates tend to digress towards the same saas-bahu melodrama. This paper discusses three such shows namely- *Diya Aur Baati Hum*, *Mann Kee Awaaz*, *Pratigya*, *Na Anna Is Desh Meri Laado*. These shows had a very promising look at the beginning to promote women empowerment but soon followed the popular road. *Diya Aur Baati Hum* unravelled the journey of Sandhya who aspired to become an IPS Officer but due to unforeseen circumstances gets married to a school dropout. The original storyline was that she will achieve her dreams as her husband will support her. But as the TRPs went high the story line got digressive and the regular saas-bahu drama started and after lot of time passed and when her in-laws agreed she went to pursue her goals. Instead of being portrayed as a strong, progressive and career oriented character, she was soon started to be portrayed as a dutiful, loving and docile character. Similar was the

case of the protagonist Pratigya from the Show *Mann Kee Awaaz*. *Pratigya*, a woman who would go to any length to fight for her rights and the show canvassed that very brilliantly in the beginning episodes where she was forced to marry a guy who was almost incompatible with her progressive outlook. But as the show progressed she fell in love with her husband and tried to adjust with his surroundings that somehow made her character a little weaker. *Na Anna Is Desh Meri Laado* started with the fight between a dominant and manipulative matriarch Ammaji who ruled over a village and supported various crimes against women and Sia, a progressive doctor who rebelled against all those evil practices that made women oppressed. The show started as an opposition to the practice of female foeticide and the savage treatment of women. As the show progressed, Sia fell in love and married Ammaji's son and she moulded herself accordingly.

Advertisements: On the contrary to these TV shows, the advertisements are heading towards bring a change in the mentality of our society. Many brands are taking up the theme of women empowerment while advertising their products. It looks appealing to the viewer's eyes and with the twists and turn that the advertisers are adding to the advertisements; it attracts the attention of the audience and hence plays a vital role in promoting women empowerment. It can be seen as a small step towards ending gender stereotypes. One such brand that has created beautiful ads advocating for women's rights is the clothing brand *BIBA*. It has launched a series of ads that promotes gender equality. Having the tagline 'Change is Beautiful', it has given each ad a new sub-tag that focuses on one aspect of gender issues. For instance, one of its ads is titled 'BIBA-Change the Convention'

where a young girl is getting ready for meeting her prospective groom for marriage and she asks her father how can she know in one meeting that whether they are made for each other or not; her father while talking asks the mother of the prospective boy when can he and his daughter visit the boy's home to see whether the boy is able to manage the household chores or not and says "Meri beti sirf noodles pe zinda to nehi reh sakti na" (my daughter cannot spend all her life eating noodles). This ad deconstructs the prevalent ritual of the groom's family visiting the girl's house to ensure whether she is able to manage the household responsibilities or not and calls for the change in this age-old convention. The next one titled 'BIBA-Change the Conversation' focuses on the age-old Dowry system that has been prevalent in our society even in the 21st century and calls for a change where the groom's parents offer to give dowry as they ask for the hands of the girl in marriage. Another one 'BIBA-Change for Progress', tries to deconstruct the mentality that people have towards the further education of girls. Generally after a girl completes her graduation, everybody starts asking her about her future plans hinting directly towards marriage but here in the ad, a group of cousins are having fun at a family gathering and an elderly uncle of theirs comes to them and asks the same question to a boy instead of a girl- "What will you gain after studying so much, after all you will have to settle down and run the family in the future?" that left him startled. The ad ends with a question- Why ask a woman what you wouldn't ask a man? 'BIBA-Change the Perspective' shows a modern strong ambitious girl who wants to focus on her career instead of marrying someone and settling down and she makes her mom realize the importance of being

self-reliant and independent and simultaneously motivates her mother to start her own work and become independent. Similarly, the watch brand *TITAN* created a series of ads for its range named RAGA whose taglines were "TITAN RAGA- Break the Bias", "TITAN RAGA-Her Life Her Choices" and "TITAN RAGA- Mom by Choice". The first one urged people to change the way they look at a woman's success. The second one celebrates the modern, progressive, confident and passionate woman who is strong enough to make her choices in life and stand by them. The last one presents the idea that motherhood isn't everything for a woman and just to become a mother she doesn't need to sacrifice all her dreams, aspirations and career goals or the way she wants to live her life; it should be her choice to decide when she wants to become a mother. Samsung in one of its ads shows that if the daughters are given the same opportunities as the sons in a family, they can soar high in the sky and bring pride and fame to their family. An ad from OPPO urges girls to chase their dreams instead of chasing their beloveds, who most of the times give preference to their own career than love.

Conclusion: Where on one hand the TV shows are creating gender stereotypes, advertisements are trying to break these stereotypes based on gender. "The perspective about a 'good girl' still needs to change. The mindless television shows needs to be stopped" (Sarkar). The 'misogynistic attitude towards women that these TV shows encourage should be stopped, and then only we can expect some changes in our society. The visual media can play very important role in influencing people. Though advertisements are starting to do their part, still many of them still limit the attitudes and

portray them within the boundaries set by the society. The TV shows and the advertisements should come out with more creative ways to show the society the importance of empowering

its women, and then we can expect to see the change in the mentality of the society.

References:

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