



Women In Indian Film: A Study on Diya Suriya Docu-Drama Short Film

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Abstract: The Indian film industry plays a colossal role in the world of cinema. There are no absolute limitations for its exploration. It is known that, the society being a male-dominant society, the space for women filmmakers has been explored to a minimum extent in recent decades. The refreshing paradigm in Indian cinema includes a set of women filmmakers who have been successful on the mainstream front. Across genres, notable women filmmakers have proved their mettle in the Indian film industry. Today, we also have women in cinema who are getting beyond being creative (as writers and directors) or being behind the camera. Women as filmmakers are not a new phenomenon, yet their presence is minimized; their capability to deliver is invariably in question. This study focuses on the women who work behind the scenes and analyzes the contribution of women filmmakers to the construction of a female gaze in Indian cinema. The aim of this study is to determine the women filmmakers in Indian cinema. Women are making strides in creative technical roles. The prime objective of this study is to analyze how women filmmakers have specific approaches behind the scenes in Indian films. The sociological approach employs in this study through the feministic art form, and the short film, which was directed by Diya Suriya, was selected by the researchers. The content analysis was used by the researchers in both qualitative and quantitative ways to find out the answer for the research questions: how women filmmakers contribute the roles behind the scenes in the Indian film industry. The docudrama short film “Leading Lighting” by Diya Suriya highlights the experiences of women gaffers in Bollywood, exploring their challenges and contributions, and was produced by her parents (actor Suriya & Jothika). Leading Light is a 13-minute docu-drama that highlights the journeys of women working behind the scenes with lighting equipment in film production. These women, often working in male-dominated spaces, share personal stories that capture the challenges, physical demands, and emotional toll of their profession. Further, the findings show that, even though the women are stronger, there is a male-dominant society that puts pressures on them.

Keywords: Indian Cinema, Male Dominance, Portrayal of Women Filmmakers.

1. Introduction

The importance of a role for women in the context of Tamil cinema has evolved and is moving towards a better place, just as much as it is in society. Women as actors and technicians, producers and investors for a film, are getting added to the existing single-digit number. And this evolution is a welcome change. Of course, there are things which get done because we are women and things which don't get done for the same reason. Indian cinema has witnessed several woman technicians, challenging gender biases in the film industry. These technicians, across fields of editing, cinematography and production design, have not only inspired several women to pursue careers in films but have also significantly contributed to several blockbusters. Education in film and visual communication and the technology gave a chance to the women to learn the filmmaking in institutions as professionals. Colleges and some universities created the environment for women to enter the field as directors with the high exposure level. Thus creates the chances for the women in filmmaking as well as to portray their own perceptions onscreen. In recent times there is an increase in women taking on technical roles like director and cinematographer in the Tamil film industry, the role of a light technician remains a position with virtually no female representation. Historically, there have been virtually no women light technicians in the Tamil film industry due to the physically demanding nature of the job and strong gender biases. The field is seen as high-risk and



male-dominated, a sentiment that has been reinforced by industry practices. While there are more women in other technical roles like cinematography and editing, light technicians remain an extreme example of gender disparity.

Objective of the study

This study tries to analyze how women filmmakers have shaped cinema from its earliest days till recently and to trace the importance of women filmmakers behind the scene.

2. Methodology

According to the above expectation, this study is tried to analyze the 'The role of Women in Indian Films Directed by Women' through a feministic reading by the work of Diya Suriya a docu-drama short film 'Leading Light'. The analysis of the above film is basically dealt with using auteur theory as a theoretical background and is qualitative in nature and relies primarily on secondary data, because the film is mainly based on the filmmaker's or director's consciousness, perception, and process with the sociological approach.

The prime objective of this study is to analyze how films of women directors are approached and their filmmaking on the portrayal of women. And the secondary objective is to investigate significant highlights that experience women gaffers in Bollywood, exploring their challenges and contributions in the film 'Leading Light' produced by Diya's parents. This study deals with the 'Leading Light,' a 13-minute docu-drama short film.

3. Discussion and Results

Reviewers review that prominent women technicians in Tamil cinema have overcome significant barriers to deliver innovative work in roles like cinematography, editing, and production. Their success stories highlight resilience, technical excellence, and a push for better representation. Sudha Kongara's Soorai Potru featured a 38% female crew, including an all-women editing team. Preetha Jayaraman, a trailblazing cinematographer in Tamil cinema, has shared insights into her 20-year journey in several interviews, highlighting her passion for imagery, persistence amid gender barriers, and technical evolution from film to digital. Historically, there have been virtually no women light technicians in the Tamil film industry due to the physically demanding nature of the job and strong gender biases. The field is seen as high-risk and male-dominated, a sentiment that has been reinforced by industry practices. While there are more women in other technical roles like cinematography and editing, light technicians remain an extreme example of gender disparity. While women remain rare in lighting, some have broken ground in other technical domains of Tamil cinema. Fouzia Fatima, Yamini Yagnamurthy, Preetha Jayaraman, Suhasini Maniratnam, and Hetal Dedhia. Richa Chadha recently co-started a workshop to train women for work in the lighting department.

The short film taken in this study features intimate interviews with pioneers such as Hetal Dedhia, Priyanka Singh, and Leena Gangurde, celebrating their achievements and work ethic. This short film was screened at Los Angeles' Regency Theatre. The screenings began on September 26 and continued until October 2. The young filmmaker Diya has made her directorial debut with the docu-drama short 'Leading Light,' produced under the family banner 2D Entertainment. The film spotlights the journeys of women gaffers in Bollywood. This was a promising start to Diya's career.

4. Conclusion

The above study shows how Diya Suriya turns director with Leading Light. The 13-minute documentary highlights the untold stories of women working behind the scenes as light women. The film has gained recognition with an Oscar-qualifying run at Los Angeles' Regency Theatre. Carrying forward her parents' creative legacy, Diya Suriya, daughter of Tamil actors Suriya and Jyotika has stepped behind the camera for her first film.



5. References

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