

PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN MEGNHNA GULZAR MOVIES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Films have always played an important role in bringing about change in society, and in today's time, the portrayal of women in films, web series, and television has become a topic of special discussion. The way women are portrayed in the media today reflects the role of women in society. If we talk about the early period of cinema, then women were portrayed as mothers, daughters, widows, and dance girls, but now the scenario has changed in modern Indian cinema. Society has also experienced a shift towards a more permissive stance about dating, premarital sexual relations, and gender equality (Datta, 2007). Contemporary films mirror these alterations. There is a growing trend in which films are increasingly featuring women as the central characters rather than merely serving as a supporting role for the male protagonist. A film, often known as a motion picture, is a sequence of static or dynamic visuals. The cinema is a mechanical apparatus that serves the dual purpose of educating and entertaining individuals. Hindi cinema has played a significant role in promoting Indian culture within India and has been instrumental in advancing India's cultural heritage through its diverse range of films. This research paper deals with the representation of female characters in Meghna Gulzar's Hindi films. In this paper, the content analysis method has been adopted for the study, in which a systematic study of a particular community group or institution is done to analyse the problem.

KEYWORDS: Cinema, Content Analysis, Meghna Gulzar, Movies, Portrayal of Women.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cinema is a psychological book. It reflects the psychology and emotions of a particular class and a large section of the society is influenced by cinema. There are a lot of milestones in Indian cinema who have created history after creating masterpieces in their era and contributing many films to Indian cinema. In today's era, Hindi cinema is working to change the thinking towards women in India. There was a time when no female actress was found to work in India's first film. Today, after almost 110 years, stories of successful women are being heard in India. There was a time when women were shown only as caretakers of the house or as helpless and weak etc. but today the dedication of women towards the country and family is being portrayed in front of people through films and it is not unfair to say this. It will be said that cinema has played an important role in women empowerment by becoming the voice of women. In this research paper, we have taken two women-centric films of Meghna Gulzar which are based on the real story. Meghna Gulzar is a director of Hindi cinema and she is based on the subjects happening in reality.

Films made on real subjects generally fall into two distinct categories, which are accurate representation and historical fiction. Some accurate productions include biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs. These films usually serve to make people aware of real events and create a positive image in society, and these films often present the main characters in the context of great historical events. Many films based on true stories recreate past events by involving large casts, large-scale action, and elaborate settings and costumes as an attempt to rewrite history. In this research paper, we have taken two films Raazi 2018 and Chhappak 2020 which are based on the real life of women in which the struggle of women towards the country and justice in the society has been depicted successfully.

A. Indian Cinema's and Gender Representation: Indian cinema has a long history of depicting women in conventional ways, frequently limited to their traditional roles as devout wives, selfless mothers, or alluring temptresses. But over time, there have been some noticeable changes to the terrain. Academics that have studied the changing portrayal of women in Indian cinema, such as Nandini Ramnath (2013) and Ranjani Mazumdar (2007), have documented the transition from stereotyped characters to more nuanced and powerful representations. Scholarly investigation of the representation of women in Indian cinema has lasted for many years. The cinema industry has been essential in defining and reflecting societal standards, owing to its potent ability as a vehicle of cultural expression. In addition to influencing public

opinion, how women are portrayed on television also reflects how gender roles are evolving within the larger framework of Indian society.

- B. Contemporary Patterns in Indian Film:** There has been a noticeable trend in Indian cinema in recent years towards more complex representations of women. With their stories that subvert conventional gender conventions, filmmakers like Zoya Akhtar, Anurag Kashyap, and Meghna Gulzar have been at the vanguard of this shift. As seen in movies like "Raazi" and "Talvar" the rise of strong, autonomous female characters points to a break from stereotypes and reflects changing attitudes in society.
- C. Film Studies from a Feminist Angle:** Scholars of feminist film theory have scrutinised how women are portrayed in movies, emphasising how the business frequently propagates ideas that are patriarchal. Laura Mulvey developed the "male gaze" theory in 1975, and it is still relevant today. It examines how women are frequently objectified and presented as passive objects of desire in the media. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988) and Bell Hooks' (1992) writings discuss intersectionality and the necessity for various representations, which further advances the feminist discourse.
- D. The Cinematic Contributions of Meghna Gulzar:** As a director, Meghna Gulzar has a distinct place in the larger Indian film industry. Her films are notable for their careful storytelling and thought-provoking stories, which offer a fascinating perspective on how women are portrayed. Because there haven't been many studies done on Gulzar's work, this one is especially important for understanding her unique cinematic language and how it affects gender representation.
- E. Current Deficits and Requirement for Content Analysis:** Although previous research notes the evolving patterns of women's representation in Indian cinema, there is a conspicuous lack of thorough examinations that concentrate on Meghna Gulzar's body of work. By conducting a thorough content analysis and examining recurrent themes, character dynamics, and narrative decisions in her films, this study seeks to close this knowledge gap and shed light on the complex representation of women in her cinematic universe.

This study aims to enhance our comprehension of the changing roles and stories surrounding women in modern Bollywood films by placing it within the larger conversation on gender representation in Indian cinema and highlighting Meghna Gulzar's contributions.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Pandey (2014)** investigated that cinema and film are the most common form of mass communication which plays an important role in forming opinions, creating images and strengthening cultural values and works to change the mentality of a person. In this research paper, Delhi, Delhi NCR and The portrayal of women in Indian films has been described using the survey method in Uttar Pradesh. In this research paper, the interrelationship between films and women from ancient times to modern times has been seen. Qualitative and quantitative methods have been used in doing this research. According to this research, after the advent of cinema, the role of women was shown in the films as per the customs and traditions. If they were not shown like this then they were considered uncultured. In films like Dahej, Devi Aur Pati Parmeshwar, Gauri, submissive wives were shown. She was shown as the one who takes care of the family, but with time there was a change and films started being made according to women's culture, then when a woman in modern clothes was shown, she was shown to be arrogant, but in today's films, women are shown as independent. And she can wear any outfit and act. In today's time, women-oriented films are being produced in India and they do not need male superstars to take their films to the hearts of people. In today's time, Hindi Women are getting as much rights in cinema as men.
- **Negi (2017)** showed that extinct village in Hindi cinema has been described. Hindi cinema has been seen presenting various subjects for the last 100 years. At the time of independence, the era of cinema was of struggle. Cinema played an important role in the independence of the country. Hindi cinema. It is a tool of social change but this statement is far from the contemporary cinema because today the major subjects have disappeared from the cinema. In the first phase, it has been seen showing the country's struggles, difficulties and the struggle of the common man in the right tone. In ancient times, rural areas have been an integral part of Hindi cinema, but in modern times, the rural level has been lost in cinema. In Hindi cinema, Bimal Roy's film Do Bigha Zameen beautifully showed the perspective of rural people and farmers. Rural areas were also seen in the film Mother India. Aanchal was described, Shyam Benegal also described the rural reality in his films Mathan and Ankur, all these were classic films after this but with the changing times, films like Swadesh, Pradesh also started being made and the times kept changing but these films kept the reality in their mind. I could not fully connect, in today's time this

statement is going to change soon that cinema is the mirror of the society because today's directors are making films on any subject and their films do not have any message for the society nor Those films are not for education nor for information, in today's time Indian cinema needs to establish indigenous method so that a good country can be built.

- **Bajwa (2021)** showed thematic and cinematic analysis of films based on women in a male-dominated society has been done. In this research paper, the author has described about director Deepa Mehta's films like Fire, Earth and Water. In this film, the director has shown which Thus, women have not only conquered the world but have also sidelined the male-dominated patriarchy. Deepa Mehta: In India, films are made on issues related to women and present the status of women to the society through cinema. In this research, Regarding cinematography in films, it is said that different types of camera angles and shots have been taken by the cinematographer of the film to show the scene such as long shot, close-up, extreme close up, medium shot along with different types of angles in the film like Many angles like low angle, over the shoulder angle, Dutch angle have been used and through thematic analysis of all three films, they have described the meanings of the films in this research paper, how these films show the role of women in the patriarchal society. Deepa Mehta has a great vision for women as a director. Today, Deepa Mehta's films open the eyes of the patriarchal society which looks at women from an old perspective, which makes her different from other women directors.
- **Anurata (2021)** showed the portrayal of women in Bollywood has been described. It has shown the role of women from classical Bollywood to present Bollywood. In this research paper, under qualitative and quantitative research, survey was conducted in Delhi, Delhi NCR and Uttar Pradesh. Through the survey method, it can be understood that in the early cinema, women were portrayed as per the Indian customs and when a woman was shown in modern clothes, she was shown to be arrogant, but with the change of time, cinema also started treating women. The situation changed and today not only male-oriented but also female-oriented films are watched.
- **Jiebo Luo (2022)** measured the female representation impact in films over time published by Association for Computing Machinery, New York United States. Researcher used the Bechdel Wallace Test, by using Internet Movie data base and found that screen play writers play an important role in improving the female representation. Thy asserted that the

percentage of female film maker is low. In their finding they pointed About 55.01% of the movies in our dataset pass the Bechdel test.

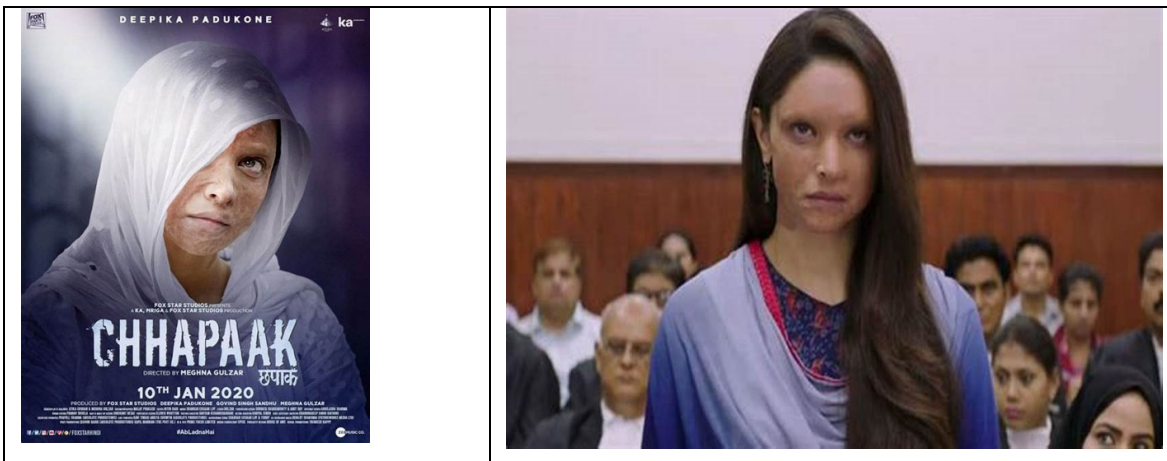
A. Brief Story of Movies chosen for Research:

a. Raazi (2018):



Raazi is based on the life of an Indian spy, Sehmat. The role is played by Alia Bhatt, and the film is directed by Meghna Gulzar. ‘Raazi’ revolves around Sehmat being married to a Pakistani officer. The film is mainly an adaptation of HarinderSikka’s 2008 novel titled ‘Calling Sehmat’. The critically acclaimed spy thriller is based on a true story. The movie has brilliantly showcased the central theme of love for the country and the love that gradually develops in the protagonist, Sehmat, for her Pakistani husband. While the movie completely focuses on Sehmat’s devotion to her nation, there is an untold love story that has been revealed in the novel. Raazi bagged the best film at the 2019 Filmfare Awards, and Meghna got the best director award for it.

b. Chhappaak (2020):



This movie is directed by Meghna Gulzar. The movie is based on the true event of an acid attack. In this movie, the lead role is played by Deepika Padukone. This film is based on a girl suffering from an acid attack on whom a boy, along with his sister, throws acid, and then a beautiful face gets disfigured. Malti fights to get the acid banned, and a case is also going on.

It happens that Malti does not get a job anywhere, then a reporter helps her and gives her the number of a person who runs an NGO for the people suffering from acid attacks. Malti starts working on it. She gets a lot of support from the lawyer. And she wins the case, and for the first time, a person who throws acid on a person gets the 10th sentence in the country. In this film, Malti is seen working in an NGO, and after that, Malti gets a job in a news channel. She gets an opportunity and moves forward in her life.

III. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- A. To analyze the way women are presented in these films.
- B. To find out the role of women towards the society through these films.
- C. To explore the total number of women Played a role in these movies
- D. To evaluate the total time provided to the contents.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The representation of women in the films of renowned Hindi filmmaker Meghna Gulzar is investigated in this research study using a content analysis methodology. The goal of the research is to investigate how the female characters in her films have changed over time, looking at the complex ways in which they have shaped public opinions and reinforced or challenged traditional gender norms. This study attempts to throw light on the trends, themes, and significance of Gulzar's depiction of women through a methodical examination of a few chosen movies, offering insights into the cultural and societal ramifications of her cinematic storylines.

The purpose of this research paper is to systematically study and understand the portrayal of female characters in two selected Hindi films directed by Meghna Gulzar. Through the use of content analysis as a methodological framework, this research paper will do this. The objective of this study is to provide a full knowledge of the manner in which women are portrayed in Gulzar's film

narratives, with a particular focus on the systematic, objective, and quantitative components of content analysis. In order to provide a detailed investigation into the manner in which women are portrayed in Meghna Gulzar's directorial work, the data for this study is gathered directly from the primary sources, which are the films that have been selected.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

The table 1 Shows Raazi and Chhappak movies length are (1 hour 34 minutes 52 Sec and 1 hour 43 minutes 57 Sec). These are women-centred films because the space for women in this film is above one and a half hours. Both films belong to a real-life story.

Table 1: Frame of the Movies

Year	Name of the Movies	Length of the Movies	Women Centric Movies	Total Space of Movies
2018	Raazi	02:17:16	YES	1 hour 34 minutes 52 Sec
2020	Chhappak	02:00:44	YES	1 hour 43 minute 57 sec

Source: Compiled by Author

Table 2 shows that 4-4 songs in Raazi and Chhappak are both women-centered movies because in both movies, the total timing of the women-pictured songs is above 6 minutes, and in these movies, one song is also a background song, which comes in at the end with numbering.

Table 2: Total Length Women Pictured Song

Name of the Movies	Total Songs in Movies	Total Length of the Songs in Movies	Total Space of Women in Songs
Raazi	4	10 m 54 sec	6 m 54 sec
Chhappak	4	10 m 54 sec	5 m 51 sec

Source: Compiled by Author

Table 3 shows the different characters of women on screen. All the movies are based on women's stories. In Raazi, Alia Bhat played the lead role as Sehmata Khan, Soni Razdan as Teji Khan, and Amruta Khanvikar as Munira Syed played a primary role in this movie, and some female characters like Kanika Dang (Suriya Siddiqui), Saloni (Nurse), and Pallavi Batra (Mitali) played secondary roles in the movie. In the Chhappak movie, Deepika Padukone played a lead role as Malti, and Madhurjeet Sargi Played a role as a lawyer, Geeta Agarwal played a role as a malti

mother, and Sharvari Deshpande (reporter) played a primary role in this movie, or some women like Nandita Yadav (Judge in Session Court), Basha Samboli and Shristi Washwani (BabluSisiter), Voilet Nasir (Rajesh Mother), **Vaibhavi Upadhyaya** (Lawyer Assistant), and Payal Nair (Shiraz) played a secondary role in this movie.

Table 3: Role of women characters

Name of the Movies	Women are in Leading Role	Women are in Primary Role	Women are in Secondary Role	Total
Raazi	1	2	3	6
Chhappak	1	3	6	10

Source: Compiled by Author

The table 4 shows the different types of characters in these movies. Raazi Sehmata Khan is a daughter and wife in this movie, and Soni Razdan is a mother and wife in this movie. Munira Syed is the wife in this movie. Suriya Siddiqui is the mother and wife in this movie, and Saloni (the nurse) plays a working woman.

Table 4: Types of Women Character

Particulars	Raazi	Chhappak
Wife	1	
Daughter		1
Wife+Daughter	1	
Wife + Mother	2	2
Social Activist		
Singer		
Working Woman	1	3
Reporter		1
Patriot	0	
Criminal		1
Other	1	2
Total	6	10

Source: Compiled by Author

Mitali plays the second role of Sehmat in this movie. In the Chhapak movie Malti as a daughter and Madhurjeet Sargi as a working woman, Geeta Agarwal played the roles of mother and wife, and Alka played the role of reporter in this movie, or some women like Nandita Yadav as a working woman, Basha Samboli is a criminal, and Shristi Washwani plays Sister, Vanilet Nasir as a wife and mother, Vaibhavi Upadhyaya as a working woman, and Payal Nair as an aunt.

Table 5: Art of Living of Women Character in Cinema

Names of the Movies	Before Positive/ after Negative	Before Negative/ after Positive	Positive + Negative	Positive	Negative	Not Mentioned	Total
Raazi				6			6
Chhappak				8	2		10

Source: Compiled by Author

The table 5 shows the art of living for female characters. Fourteen female characters are positive from start to finish, and two are negative. Raazi Sehmat Khan is a positive character who transfers information from Pakistan to India as an IB officer, and she saves the nation from a terrorist attack. Soni Razdan is a positive and sober character. Munira Syed is a positive and innocent character. Suriya Siddiqui is a positive character in this movie, and Saloni is a helpful character in this movie. Mitali is a positive character because she is a friend of Sehmat in India.

In the Chhapak movie, Malti is a positive character, and she is the strongest character in this movie. She fought for an acid ban in India. Madhurjeet Sargi has a positive character. Geeta Aggarwal has a positive character. Alka is a positive character. Nandita Yadav is a positive character. Basha Samboli and Shristi Washwani are negative characters because they support the accusation of acid attack; Villet Nasir is a positive character; **Vaibhavi Upadhyaya is a positive character**; Payal Nair is a positive character; and she puts positive efforts into her life.

Table 6: Types of Costume used by the women character

Name of the Movies	Traditional	Non Traditional	Taditional + Non Traditional	Total
Raazi	4	1	1	6
Chhappak	5	0	5	10

Source: Compiled by Author

The table 6 depicts the types of costumes, i.e., traditional, non-traditional, and traditional + nontraditional. In Raazi, four women characters are traditional, one woman character is non-traditional, and one woman character is both traditional and non-traditional. In Chhappak, five characters are traditional; in this movie, they wear saris and suits, and some characters are traditional and non-traditional; some are working women, and they wear both formal and casual dresses.

Table 7: Economic Status of women Character

Name of the Movies	Rich	Poor	Before Poor + After Rich	Before Rich + After Poor	Middle Class	Total
Raazi	3	0	0	0	3	6
Chhappak	2	3	0	0	5	10

Source: Compiled by Author

Table 7 defines the economic status of female characters. In Raazi, Sehmat belongs to a middle-class family. Sehmat's father is an IB agent. In this movie, Sehmat's mother also belongs to a middle-class family. Muniara belongs to a rich family in this movie. Suriya belongs to a rich family, and she lived a very high-class life. Saloni belongs to a middle-class family because she is a nurse in this movie. Mitali is a Sehmat friend, and she belongs to a middle-class family. ChhappakMalti belongs to a poor family; that's why she survives a lot of issues in her life, and Malti's mother also belongs to a poor family.

Malti Aunt belongs to a rich family, and she helps the Malti family in hard times. Rajesh mother belongs to a poor family; Malti lawyer and assistant belong to a middle-class family; and Judge belongs to a rich family; Alka belongs to a middle-class family; and Bablu sisters belong to a middle-class family.

Table 8: Types of Song Pictured on Woman Character

Name of the Movies	Inspired	Casual	Romantic	Sad	Drama	Patriotic	Theme	Other	Total
Raazi	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	4
Chhappak	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	4

Source: Compiled by Author

The table 8 shows the different types of songs pictured in these movies. In Raazi, two songs are patriotic, one is theme-based, and one is set in a wedding scene. In the film Chhappak, four songs are featured: one is sad about the life of an acid survivor, one is romantic, one is based on the movie's theme, and the final song is also sad.

VI. CONCLUSION

This research paper examines two films directed by Meghna Gulzar. The experiences of women in real life served as inspiration for both films. We have categorised women's characters into three groups. The categories are as follows: main lead role, primary role, and subsidiary role. Meghna Gulzar has depicted the societal role of women and their contributions to both themselves and the country in her films. This research paper examines the films Raazi and Chhappak, both of which centre around female characters. Raazi features six female characters, while Chhappak includes 10 female characters. The movie Raazi is centred around espionage. The plot is set in 1971 and revolves around a woman, the daughter of an IB agent, who marries in Pakistan and shares crucial intelligence with the IB, ultimately aiding India in winning the war. The female characters in this are adherents of Islam. The film Raazi features iconic dialogues, such as "Mulke ke samne mujhe apna aap nazar nahi aata." I am the nation itself; I am India. This dialogue conveys the sentiment towards the country.

Additional conversation aids in disseminating such narratives to the general audience. Many people in our history did not receive any awards or medals. We don't even know their name. They are not recognised by them. They only leave their memory on the flag of the nation. In the movie Chhappak, a girl who knows the attacker suffers severe facial disfigurement as a result of her rejection of him. The film depicts the actress engaging in combat against acid. The action was taken to halt the sale of acid throughout the country. There are around 10 female characters in the story; two of them are the sisters of the acid attack victim. They are depicted assisting the victim of the acid assault. After sustaining facial injuries, the girl struggles to find employment and eventually joins an agency dedicated to combating acid attacks.

The film Chhappak features various renowned dialogues, one of which is "It would have been so much better if acid wasn't sold; it wasn't available, so it wouldn't be sold." Following the conversation, they submitted a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in court to advocate for a nationwide ban on acid, which raised awareness of acid attacks. There is another well-known dialogue: "He

has changed my face, not my mind." This emphasises the significance of the mind over the physical appearance of an individual, highlighting that the essence of the mind remains constant. The female characters in this film play a significant role and have a good impact on society.

Ultimately, Meghna Gulzar's works demonstrate a notable civic duty linked to filmmaking. The director adeptly manoeuvres through the world of film and remains dedicated to depicting the diverse facets of society. Although Gulzar's work acknowledges the use of stereotypes, it calls for a nuanced approach and suggests that actors other than well-known character actors can portray negative roles.

The author staunchly opposes censorship, asserting that limiting artistic freedom would hinder the potential for creative exploration. Instead, the focus is on responsible filmmaking decisions, especially in cases where depictions of violence contribute meaningfully to the narrative and provide insights into the aggressor's motivations. Meghna Gulzar's films transcend mere entertainment; they serve as a platform to educate the audience about societal issues and propose constructive solutions. The broader responsibilities of the film industry, as a representative of the masses, extend beyond entertainment to encompass social awareness, cultural transmission, and cohesion among diverse sectors of society. While acknowledging that art reflects real life, the passage emphasises that the ultimate task is not just to scrutinise the society reflected in the cinematic mirror but, more importantly, to actively engage in the process of bettering society itself. Meghna Gulzar's films, within this context, emerge as a thought-provoking medium that not only mirrors the realities of life but also encourages contemplation and positive societal change.

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