Review Article

Portrayal and Perception of Male Chauvinism and Gender Superiority in Hindi Cinema: A Case Study of the Film 'Animal'

Noveena Chakravorty, Sudipta Bera

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, School of Media and Communication Adamas University

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The article discovers the portrayal of male chauvinism and gender superiority in contemporary Hindi cinema, with a specific focus on the prominent film "Animal." The objective of the analysis is to expose the subtle manner in which gender dynamics are portrayed, highlighting how patriarchal ideals and stereotypes are upheld in the Hindi films' narrative. This paper critically examines the film's narrative choices, characterizations, and societal implications, addressing the extent to which it reinforces or challenges prevailing gender norms. The directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, sparked considerable controversy for its representation of a toxic character that glorifies toxic masculinity and chauvinistic behavior. The study deals with a case study of the "Animal," directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, which is analyzed for its potential evolution or continuity of gender portrayals in Hindi cinema. Released in 2023, this film presents an opportunity to explore whether the industry has progressed in its representation of gender dynamics or if persisting patterns of male chauvinism and gender superiority prevail. The research paper shall explore the sociocultural impact of these films' media analysis (Eminent digital media reviewers), investigating their potential influence on shaping perceptions of masculinity and femininity in the audience. By examining character motivations, power dynamics, and the broader context of the stories, the study aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of how Hindi cinema reflects and influences societal attitudes toward gender roles (Sanchari Mukhopadhyay, 2021). The main aim of the study how digital news media comprehend the narrative of the 'Alpha Male' angle.

INTRODUCTION

Hindi cinema, often regarded as the heartbeat of Indian popular culture, mirrors the intricacies of societal norms and values. At the intersection of art and influence, mainstream Hindi cinema narratives not only entertain but subtly contribute to constructing cultural identities and people's opinions. Cinema serves as an escape from reality, offering viewers an alternative world. As a popular medium, mainstream Bollywood (Hindi Cinema) movies significantly influence societal perceptions, particularly regarding gender superiority. In a nation where tradition and modernity walk hand in hand, it is important to understand the emotions of the people attached to these norms and values. Hindi cinema has been a source of influence, and despite the industry's evolution, certain underlying threads persistently weave through its fabric, threading the narrative with gendered nuances. Male chauvinism, often disguised in the garb of tradition and notions of gender superiority subtly embedded in storytelling, warrants a meticulous examination (NIMMS & Anoushuka.,2020)

The representation of gender in mainstream Hindi cinema has been a subject of ongoing scrutiny, in particular, the way it tends to support gender stereotypes and male chauvinism. As one of India's most influential cultural mediums, Bollywood holds considerable power in shaping societal norms and values through its narratives. Despite the industry's evolution over time,

certain entrenched ideologies exist, subtly reinforcing notions of gender superiority and traditional roles. The industry continues to prioritize male-centric narratives and perpetuate patriarchal ideologies, thereby reinforcing existing power structures and marginalizing women both on and off-screen.

Since its beginning, Hindi cinema has undergone significant transformations in its portrayal of women, although underlying sexism remains prevalent. Initially characterized by overt misogyny, in older movies, female characters typically played roles such as mothers, romantic interests, or wives of the male protagonists, mostly as supporting characters to the lead. These women were often portrayed as providing moments of respite amidst the challenges faced by the heroes. Those who deviated from societal norms were typically depicted as mistresses or club dancers, often associated with habits like smoking or drinking or expressing overt sexuality. Costume choices further reinforced these distinctions, with 'good' women dressed in traditional attire, while 'not-so-good' women were depicted in more revealing clothing. Women in Bollywood are often depicted according to archetypal gender roles, with 'good' women portrayed as domestic, virtuous, and submissive, while 'unacceptable and villainous' characters challenge societal norms and face condemnation. These representations not only reinforce gender stereotypes but also perpetuate a culture of objectification and victim-blaming. (Banerjee, July 8, 2021)

Hindi cinema has witnessed a shift towards more nuanced portrayals of gender, though underlying biases remained constant. In contrast, efforts have been made to introduce more 'realistic' female characters in films like Jab We Met (2007), Kahaani (2012), Barfi (2012), Queen (2013), Piku (2015), Hichki (2018), Mardaani (2019), Gangubaai (2022), etc. Films like this have portrayed strong characters. In many films where female characters are portrayed as independent or empowered, they are often subjected to objectification or victimization, serving to highlight the supposed superiority of male characters. Still today, mainstream blockbusters like "Kabir Singh" and "Animal" have sparked debates about the portrayal of gender dynamics in Bollywood, highlighting both progress and areas for improvement.

One of the recurring tropes in Hindi cinema is the glorification of masculinity, wherein male characters exhibit traits such as dominance, aggression, and machismo, which are celebrated as symbols of strength and authority. This portrayal not only reinforces gender stereotypes but also contributes to the normalization of male chauvinism, where women are expected to conform to subservient roles and defer to the authority of men.

In the realm of Hindi cinema, the objectification of women is an unfortunately common occurrence, often reducing them to mere objects for the male gaze. This trend is evident in numerous questionable films where female bodies are exploited for entertainment purposes. Whether through provocative item songs or sexist dialogues, many Hindi films perpetuate the objectification of women, relegating them to secondary roles and reinforcing harmful stereotypes. This prevalent use of female-centric objectification in Hindi cinema not only reflects broader societal attitudes but also perpetuates gender inequality and shows the superiority of male chauvinism in the industry.

The portrayal of male dominance and patriarchy in Hindi cinema has persisted over decades, influencing societal perceptions and reinforcing gender stereotypes. Despite some progress, Indian films continue to reflect a patriarchal society where men hold primary power and dominate various aspects of life. This dominance is evident in the portrayal of relationships, storyline narratives, music industry dynamics, and even behind-the-scenes practices like the casting couch. Female representation in cinema remains limited, with actresses facing disparities in pay and opportunities compared to their male counterparts. While there have been instances of women-centric films, they are still outnumbered by male-centric narratives. Overall, the Indian film industry needs to actively challenge and dismantle the pervasive culture of male chauvinism, portraying women as strong, independent, and equal members of society.

Hindi cinema stands as a powerful reflection of Indian society, portraying its norms, values, and evolving dynamics. In contrast, it has made strides in presenting more nuanced portrayals of gender, but underlying biases persist, perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing male chauvinism. Despite some progress with films showcasing empowered female characters, the industry still predominantly glorifies masculinity and objectifies women. It is imperative for Bollywood to continue challenging entrenched patriarchal ideologies and promoting gender equality through its narratives, thereby contributing positively to societal perceptions and values.

Hindi cinema showcases male characters who embody traits of dominance, strength, and assertiveness, often at the expense of female characters who are relegated to supporting roles and are always playing the victim character. These portrayals, often termed the "alpha male" archetype, depict men as the epitome of masculinity, who have very little emotion and are not at all sensitive.

The alpha male characters are typically shown as successful, powerful, and commanding, garnering respect and admiration from other characters. However, critics argue that these portrayals can reinforce harmful stereotypes about gender roles, portraying women as submissive and dependent on men for validation.

The glorification of the alpha male can contribute to a culture of toxic masculinity, where men feel pressured to conform to rigid and often harmful notions of manhood.

This can have negative effects on society, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and others in terms of gender roles and relationships.

The alpha male characters are a classic symbol of heroism, and their dominating behavior is loved and applauded, making them a big hit at the box office.

Portrayal of Male Chauvinism in Hindi Cinema

In recent years, Hindi cinema has significantly transformed its portrayal of manhood, reflecting the evolving societal norms and values. Traditionally, Bollywood has depicted men as strong, macho figures, often embodying characteristics such as bravery, masculinity, and dominance. However, contemporary filmmakers are increasingly challenging these stereotypes, presenting a more nuanced and diverse representation of masculinity.

Let's explore some notable films that have contributed to this shift in the portrayal of manhood in Hindi cinema.

One film that stands out in its exploration of modern manhood is "Dear Zindagi" (2016), directed by Gauri Shinde. The protagonist, Shah Rukh Khan, portrays a therapist who helps a young woman navigate her emotional struggles. His character defies conventional notions of masculinity by embracing vulnerability, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Through his portrayal, the film challenges the idea that strength is synonymous with physical power, highlighting the importance of mental and emotional well-being(*Tere Shendurnikar Nidhi 2012*)

Another significant film in this regard is "Kapoor & Sons" (2016), directed by Shakun Batra. The story revolves around a dysfunctional family grappling with secrets and conflicts. The male characters, portrayed by actors like Sidharth Malhotra and Fawad Khan, break away from the typical Bollywood hero mold. They are depicted as flawed individuals who struggle with insecurities, jealousy, and unresolved issues from their past. By portraying vulnerability and emotional complexity, the film offers a more realistic depiction of manhood that is relatable and human.

Similarly, "Tamasha" (2015), directed by Imtiaz Ali, explores the journey of self-discovery and personal transformation. The protagonist, played by Ranbir Kapoor, embarks on a soul-searching adventure, questioning societal expectations and pursuing his true passion. His character challenges the conventional path laid out for him, rejecting the pressure to conform to traditional masculine roles. Through his portrayal, the film celebrates individuality, creativity, and the courage to pursue one's dreams, irrespective of societal judgments.

In "Gully Boy" (2019), directed by Zoya Akhtar, the protagonist, played by Ranveer Singh, defies the odds to pursue his passion for rap music. Set against the backdrop of Mumbai's hip-hop scene, the film portrays the struggles of a young man from the slums who dares to dream big. His journey is marked by resilience, determination, and a refusal to be confined by societal expectations. By celebrating his artistic expression and authenticity, the film challenges masculinity and social class stereotypes.

Another noteworthy film is "Article 15" (2019), directed by Anubhav Sinha, which addresses issues of caste discrimination and social injustice. The protagonist, played by Ayushmann Khurrana, is a principled police officer who confronts systemic corruption and prejudice in rural India. His character embodies integrity, empathy, and a sense of moral responsibility, challenging the notion that masculinity is synonymous with aggression or dominance. Through his portrayal, the film emphasizes the importance of using privilege and power to advocate for social change and equality.

"Udta Punjab" (2016), directed by Abhishek Chaubey, offers a stark portrayal of masculinity amidst the backdrop of Punjab's drug epidemic. The film features characters like Tommy Singh, played by Shahid Kapoor, a troubled musician battling addiction and inner demons. Through Tommy's journey, the film explores themes of vulnerability, redemption, and the destructive impact of societal pressures on masculinity. "Udta Punjab" challenges conventional notions of heroism and strength by depicting a flawed protagonist struggling with his identity.

Another path-breaking film is "Andhadhun" (2018), directed by Sriram Raghavan, which subverts traditional ideas of masculinity through its protagonist, Akash, played by Ayushmann Khurrana. Akash is a visually impaired pianist who becomes entangled in a web of deceit and intrigue. Despite his disability, Akash navigates the chaotic world around him with intelligence, resourcefulness, and a hint of ambiguity. His character defies stereotypes by showcasing vulnerability, adaptability, and an unconventional approach to solving problems, challenging the audience's perception of being a hero.

These films are a few examples of a significant departure from traditional portrayals of manhood in Hindi cinema, but still today, Bollywood does not fail to portray toxic male-dominating characters. Standing in the 21st century, people are still equally applauding these gender-biased films, and they are said to be blockbusters. Toxic masculinity, characterized by traits such as aggression, dominance, and suppression of emotions, has been a recurring theme in Hindi cinema for decades, and it continues to be there.

Films like "Kabir Singh" (2019) directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, this film stirred controversy for its portrayal of the dominating character, played by Shahid Kapoor, as an aggressive and possessive lover. Kabir Singh's behavior towards the female lead, played by Kiara Advani, including instances of physical and emotional abuse, has been widely criticized for romanticizing toxic masculinity. The film not only depicts toxic masculinity but also tries to portray an Alpha male character who is abusive and dominating and the use of violence has been on the major plot for the

film. Irrespective of all these, the film did a great job in the box office and is said to be one of the blockbusters of 2019. Many films have normalized and glorified these dominating male characters, and the most concerning point is that people love and appreciate these kinds of movies.

In Hindi cinema, certain films have left a lasting impact on audiences, not just for their storytelling but also for their portrayal of manhood. Films like KGF is a 2018 film directed by Prashanth Neel. It revolves around the life of a young man named Rocky, played by Yash, who rises from poverty to become a powerful underworld figure. The film is known for its portrayal of masculinity, depicting Rocky as a fearless and determined individual who stops at nothing to achieve his goals. Despite its focus on violence and power dynamics, the film also touches upon themes of loyalty, friendship, and the human cost of ambition.

Tere Naam (2003) is another film that has depicted toxicity in a different layer. "Tere Naam" is a romantic drama starring Salman Khan as Radhe, a troubled young man who falls in love with a simple girl named Nirjara, played by Bhumika Chawla. The film explores themes of love, redemption, and the impact of past traumas on one's present behavior. Salman Khan's portrayal of Radhe, who undergoes a transformation from a troubled loner to a devoted lover, resonated with audiences and critics alike.

One of the modern times films Pyaar Ka Punchnama (2011) Directed by Luv Ranjan, is a comedy-drama that offers a humorous take on relationships and the challenges faced by young men in love. The film follows the lives of three friends who find themselves in tumultuous relationships with their respective girlfriends. While the film has been criticized for its misogynistic undertones, it also sparked discussions about the complexities of modern relationships and the portrayal of male vulnerability.

One of the oldest yet timeless classic films, Gadar, is one of the biggest hits of Hindi cinema and glorifies the boldness of the male character. Directed by Anil Sharma and released in 2001, "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha" is a period drama set against the backdrop of the Partition of India. The film stars Sunny Deol as Tara Singh, a Sikh truck driver who falls in love with a Muslim woman, played by Ameesha Patel. "Gadar" is known for its patriotic themes, intense action sequences, and Sunny Deol's iconic portrayal of a man willing to go to any lengths for love and country.

Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani directed by Ayan Mukerji and released in 2013 is a coming-of-age romantic drama that follows the lives of four friends over a decade. The film stars Ranbir Kapoor as Bunny, a free-spirited young man who dreams of traveling the world. While initially focused on his ambitions, Bunny learns the value of relationships and personal growth. The film is praised for its realistic depiction of friendship, love, and self-discovery.

These films, each in their unique way, contribute to the portrayals of manhood in Hindi cinema. Whether through stories of love and redemption or tales of ambition and sacrifice, they offer audiences a glimpse into the diverse facets of masculinity, challenging stereotypes and sparking conversations about what it means to be a man in today's world.

The Film 'Animal' Structural Narrative and Commercial Acceptance

In 2023, the cinematic world was shaken by the release of "Animal," a film directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, renowned for his unorthodox storytelling methods. The structural narrative and commercial success of the film "Animal" have been both intriguing and dividing since its release. On the one hand, the film's storyline has sparked intense debate and critique, while on the other, it has managed to garner significant commercial success. "Animal" unfolds its narrative through a series of controversial events, drawing attention to themes such as toxic masculinity, violence, and infidelity, presenting a narrative that explores deep into the human psyche. At its core, the story revolves around Rannvijay, portrayed with raw intensity by Ranbir Kapoor, whose character is consumed by an insatiable hunger for his father's approval and affection. This sets the stage for a toxic journey fraught with internal and external conflict. (Desk, E. 2023)

The film is set against the backdrop of Rannvijay's damaged relationship with his father, Balbir Singh, portrayed by veteran actor Anil Kapoor. Balbir's indifference and dismissive attitude towards his son serve as catalysts for Rannvijay's descent into a dark and toxic world of violence and chaos. As Rannvijay deals with his unresolved issues and inner demons, the narrative takes viewers on a rollercoaster ride of emotions, punctuated by moments of intense conflict and introspection.

Throughout the film, director Sandeep Reddy Vanga explores the complexities of human relationships and the corrosive effects of toxic masculinity. Rannvijay's interactions with his love interest, Geetanjali, played with nuance by Rashmika Mandanna, have many questionable dialogues and have portrayed the dominance of the male protagonist. Their relationship is fraught with tension and volatility, mirroring the toxic dynamics that permeate Rannvijay's world. His quest for validation and acceptance leads him down a path of destruction, leaving a trail of chaos and devastation in his wake. The film challenges viewers to confront their own preconceptions about masculinity and morality, presenting a narrative that is as thought-provoking as it is intense.

In the end, "Animal" leaves viewers grappling with complex questions about identity, redemption, and the nature of humanity itself. It is a film that lingers in the mind long after the credits roll, challenging viewers to confront the darker aspects of themselves and the world around them. These elements have prompted discussions about the story's ethical implications and characters'

portrayal. Despite facing criticism for its problematic themes, the film has resonated with a substantial audience, contributing to its box office success. The commercial acceptance of "Animal" underscores the complexity of audience preferences and the film's ability to captivate viewers despite its controversial content. While some have loved its boldness and willingness to tackle taboo subjects, others have raised concerns about its glorification of harmful behavior.

In essence, the structural narrative of "Animal" has sparked significant discourse, challenging societal norms and values. Its commercial acceptance reflects the diverse tastes of audiences and the film's ability to engage viewers in thought-provoking discussions about morality and ethics in storytelling. "Animal" is more than just a film; it is a testament to the power of cinema to provoke thought, evoke emotion, and challenge the status quo. Its impact extends far beyond the confines of the screen, leaving an indelible mark on the audience.

Many people appreciate and love this film as its box office success reflects that films are said to be the mirror of society. And, whether one loves it or hates it, one can't deny its impact.

Director's Take on the Making of the Film 'Animal'

Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga has been actively defending his film "Animal" in various interviews, acknowledging both the love and criticism it has received from audiences. He believes the uniqueness of the film contributes to its polarizing reception. Vanga also reveals the profound impact of feedback from fellow industry professionals, such as actor Ranveer Singh and directors like Karan Johar, who engaged in a lengthy conversation about the film's nuances. Vanga stated that this validation from the people in the industry fuels Vanga's enthusiasm for his work.

Regarding the writing process, Vanga revealed that he begins with solo brainstorming sessions and revisits his work after a few days to ensure coherence. He explained that certain moments in the script energize him, driving the screenplay forward. Addressing questions about collaborating with actors, Vanga stated that while he approaches them with a prepared script, adjustments are made based on performances, locations, and interactions between cast members. He acknowledged that every film presents a unique learning experience, with "Animal" being particularly demanding in terms of energy.

Vanga also discussed the portrayal of troubled characters and the responsibility of filmmakers in depicting them. He highlighted the subjective nature of toxicity in storytelling and cited instances of criticism and debate surrounding his previous works, such as "Arjun Reddy" and "Kabir Singh."

On the topic of film length and business considerations, Vanga defended the duration of "Animal," asserting that his priority is to engage and stimulate audiences rather than conform to industry norms. Despite its extended runtime, he expressed confidence in the film's ability to captivate viewers.

Reflecting on the trajectory of Telugu cinema and the success of multilingual releases, Vanga emphasized the importance of storytelling conviction over language barriers. He underscored his commitment to authentic and compelling narratives rather than chasing commercial trends.

Regarding potential crossover universes between his films, Vanga expressed reluctance to force such connections for financial gain, emphasizing the importance of narrative integrity.

With the creative freedom afforded by his brother's involvement in production, Vanga emphasized the collaborative nature of their partnership and their aspirations for Bhadrakali Films. Known for his different filmmaking style, Vanga said he draws inspiration from acclaimed directors like David Fincher and Martin Scorsese when asked for his inspirations. He enjoys pushing boundaries in storytelling, character development, and editing techniques, welcoming debates and discussions that his films often spark among audiences and critics alike.

Vanga said that he equally appreciates the criticism and the love that the films he makes receive.

He also expressed his disappointment that the female lead protagonist, Rashmika Mandannan, has not been nominated for any awards. But also expressed his gratitude that Ranbir Kapoor won the award and that the movie has done a great job.

Most importantly, Vanga said it has created a talk in the town, and as a director, it is something that gets my job done.

Critical Reviews of Media Reports on the Portrayal of *'Alpha Male'* Representation

"Animal," directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga and featuring Ranbir Kapoor in the lead role, has received a spectrum of critical reviews. These analyses talk about various aspects of the film, including its portrayal of toxic masculinity, treatment of violence, and cinematic execution.

These are a detailed analysis of a few such reviews to understand the media's take on the Portrayal of Alpha Male characters. (Rahul Desai 2023)

Outlook India Review

Outlook India's review scrutinizes the film's portrayal of the 'Alpha Male' type, criticizing its depiction as regressive and disturbing. The reviewer questions the normalization of possessive behavior and domestic violence, expressing dismay at the audience's reactions to laughter and applause during such scenes. Additionally, the review disapproves of the film's justification of these elements as artistic expression, labeling it as attention-seeking and lacking genuine creativity (Outlook, 2023).

The Hindu Review

The review from The Hindu offers a critical assessment of 'Animal,' characterizing it as a missed opportunity to create a fresh, psychology-driven path for Hindi action movies. The reviewer critiques director Sandeep Reddy Vanga's liking for creating protagonists who embody toxic masculinity, likening them to "thick-headed creatures of privilege and entitlement" who could easily pass for monsters. (The Hindu 2023)

The central character, Ranvijay, portrayed by Ranbir Kapoor, is depicted as a rich Delhi brat with deep-seated daddy issues whose behavior is driven by a sense of entitlement and a thirst for revenge. The review draws parallels between 'Animal' and Vanga's previous films, 'Arjun Reddy' and 'Kabir Singh,' which were criticized for glamorizing misogyny and toxic masculinity. Ranvijay's actions, including his territorial behavior towards women and his resort to violence, are portrayed as extensions of this problematic cinematic landscape.

Despite attempts to provoke themes of toxic masculinity, the review criticizes the film's juvenile and self-aggrandizing approach to filmmaking, suggesting that it prioritizes commercial success and fan service over meaningful storytelling. The review also notes shortcomings in the portrayal of female characters, who are often relegated to supporting roles or subjected to violence without adequate exploration of their perspectives.

Indian Express Review

Indian Express offers a contrasting perspective, with Ram Gopal Varma defending "Animal" against accusations of violence and misogyny. Varma contends that the film's purpose is to provoke and startle audiences, denying criticism of its violent content as humorous. He emphasizes the film's success in initiating discussions and acknowledges its deliberate intent to unsettle viewers. However, Varma's defense fails to address deeper concerns regarding the film's portrayal of toxic masculinity and its impact on societal perceptions. (Indian Express, 2023)

The Guardian Review

The Guardian's review adds to the discourse by condemning "Animal" for its bombastic action and regressive protagonist portrayal. Vijay's violent actions are depicted as stemming from a desire for love and validation, perpetuating a cycle of bloodshed throughout the film. The review criticizes the film's reliance on shock tactics and its flirtation with right-wing iconography, dismissing its pretense of self-awareness as unpleasant. Overall, "Animal" is depicted as a disappointing and distasteful portrayal of its thematic elements. (The Guardian, 2023)

Additional Media Review and Reports

Expanding the analysis beyond the provided reviews, other critics have expressed similar sentiments regarding "Animal." The Times of India criticizes the film for its lack of nuance in character development, particularly regarding female characters who are relegated to supporting roles or subjected to violence without agency. Furthermore, the film's attempts at gritty realism fall short, with exaggerated action sequences failing to evoke genuine tension or emotional resonance.

Conversely, Film Companion talked about the performances of the cast, particularly Ranbir Kapoor's portrayal of a flawed and conflicted protagonist.

Acceptability and Disapproval of the Audiences of the Film

The film "Animal" reflects a wide range of viewpoints, highlighting both its strengths and weaknesses. While some commend the film's attempts to provoke discussion with questionable storytelling format, others criticize its aggressiveness, depiction of violence, and sensationalism. Ultimately, "Animal" underscores the complex interplay between cinematic representation, societal norms, and audience reception, inviting ongoing discourse and analysis within the realm of Indian cinema.

Audience Acceptability

• Some viewers appreciated the film's portrayal of intense action sequences and the adrenaline rush it provided.
• The unique storyline and the portrayal of masked characters intrigued many audiences, drawing them into the film's world.
• The pairing of popular actors Ranbir Kapoor and Rashmika Mandanna for the first time added to the film's appeal, attracting fans of both actors.

Disapproval from Certain Audiences

• There was disapproval from certain sections of the audience regarding the depiction of toxic masculinity and the glorification of alpha male characters.
• Some viewers criticized the objectification of women in the film, highlighting scenes where female characters were portrayed solely for their physical appearance.
• The normalization of cheating within the narrative was also a point of contention for some viewers, who found it morally questionable.
• The film faced backlash for perpetuating stereotypes and shaming certain characters, which led to discomfort among certain audience members.

Indecisive Responses

• Despite the criticisms, a segment of the audience found the film's portrayal of violence and action enjoyable. For them, it provided an escape and entertainment.
• The incorporation of multiple songs and energetic music added to the film's charm for some viewers, enhancing their overall experience.
• The length of the movie was noted as a mixed factor;

while some appreciated the extensive runtime, others felt it could have been more concise.

Factors Contributing to Audience Engagement

• The film's ability to evoke strong positive or negative emotions contributed to its discussion among audiences.
• The novelty of the storyline and the unconventional characters intrigued viewers, prompting discussions and debates.
• The presence of popular actors and the chemistry between the lead pair generated excitement and anticipation among fans, driving them to watch the film.

Box Office Success

• Despite the mixed reception from audiences, the film proved to be a box office success, grossing significant revenue.
• Its unique concept and star-studded cast contributed to its strong opening weekend performance, drawing in crowds eager to experience the film.
• Effective marketing strategies also bolstered The film's success, including promotional campaigns featuring the lead actors and showcasing key action sequences.
• Positive word-of-mouth from those who enjoyed the film's adrenaline-pumping action and unconventional storyline helped sustain its momentum at the box office.
• The film's commercial success further solidified its impact in the industry, demonstrating its ability to attract audiences and generate substantial revenue despite controversies and criticisms.

Audience Survey Report to Highlight the Common Perception About the Film 'Animal'

The movie "Animal" reviews paint a picture of disappointment and frustration among viewers. The film seems to have failed on multiple fronts, including its storyline, character development, and overall execution. Many viewers have criticized the film for its lack of logic, unnecessary violence, and portrayal of toxic masculinity.

The portrayal of women in the movie has also come under scrutiny, with reviewers pointing out instances where female characters are treated as objects or subjected to violence. The film's focus on promoting the concept of an "alpha male" has been criticized as misguided and poorly executed. Rashmika Mandana's character is portrayed as making a drastic decision to marry an "alpha male," implying that dominant men easily sway women. The film also includes scenes of violence against women, perpetuating the notion that they are inferior and can be used and discarded at will. Women are portrayed as lacking individuality and autonomy, often seen only in relation to men, which undermines their dignity.

Overall, the consensus among reviewers is that "Animal" falls short of expectations and fails to deliver a compelling or meaningful viewing experience. It appears that the film's attempts to shock and awe viewers with its violent and controversial content have backfired,
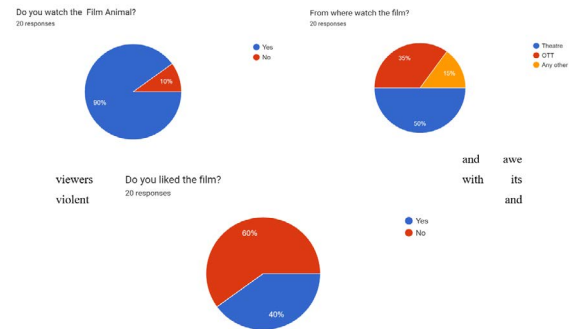

Figure 1:

leaving audiences dissatisfied and questioning the film's messaging and impact.

The film focused so much on unrealistic violence and glorified the toxic characters. Despite all its irrelevant content, some people loved the film, which also gives a view on how society accepts such trends and thinks it to be normal.

A Survey was also conducted to understand the viewpoint of the audience. The result according to the Survey report:

Despite facing criticism, the film has attracted a significant audience, with a majority choosing to watch it in theaters. However, the percentage of viewers who liked the film is lower than those who disliked it.

The other questions asked in the survey are:

• Do you believe the film "Animal" offers any commentary or critique on broader societal issues related to male chauvinism? If so, what do you think the filmmakers are trying to convey?
• Are there any areas where you think the film could have handled the portrayal of male chauvinism differently or more effectively?
• What is your overall impression of "Animal"?
• How do you think the female characters in the film respond to or are affected by male chauvinism?

The analysis of responses:

According to most of the viewers of the film "Animal," it appears to offer a troubling portrayal of male chauvinism, as respondents suggest. The film seems to glorify violent and abusive behavior while normalizing male dominance, upholding patriarchal values, and showcasing disturbing instances of violence against women. Female characters are depicted as facing derogatory remarks, physical violence, and abusive behavior from male characters, highlighting a world where male dominance is celebrated. While some appreciate aspects like the chemistry between characters and the music, overall impressions are negative, with many finding the film distasteful and disappointing. Suggestions for improvement include empowering female characters to challenge traditional gender roles and not

glorifying toxic behavior as "macho." The film's impact on society and its portrayal of female characters raise concerns about the messages it conveys.

Overall Impact on the Audiences

• Despite the polarizing reactions, the film's uniqueness and bold storytelling style ensured that it left a lasting impression on audiences.

• It sparked conversations about various social and cultural themes depicted in the movie, reflecting its ability to provoke thought and discussion.

• The success of the film, despite its controversies, indicated a diverse range of audience preferences and the willingness of viewers to engage with challenging narratives.

Factors that Affected the Hype of the Film 'Animal'

Several factors have led to the hype of the film "Animal." The film "Animal" may have sparked interest due to its uniqueness and twisted storyline. Films with distinctive or unconventional storylines often generate intrigue among audiences, leading to anticipation and hype. Whether it's a fresh take on a familiar genre or a completely original concept, a unique storyline can capture attention and generate buzz. This film had a very unique approach to showcasing the characters; it promised an audience a complete package of action, romance, and thrill. Other than its storyline, Vanga is well known for making movies that are questionable, criticized by a group of audience, and highly appreciated by others.

The Star cast was just the Cherry on the cake. The involvement of well-known actors and celebrities has significantly contributed to the hype surrounding a film. "Animal" featured popular and critically acclaimed actors like Ranbir Kapoor, Anil Kapoor, Rashmika Mandannan, Bobby Deol, etc., and their presence undoubtedly attracted attention from fans and the media alike.

Rashmika Mandannan and Ranbir Kapoor were a fresh pair seen on-screen for the first time, and people highly appreciated and showered love towards these characters. The film also got a really addictive and pleasing set of song albums that were already a hit even before the film was released.

Other than that, social media also helped create a lot of hype for the film; even the negative reviews have intrigued people to watch the movie. The negative publicity of the film has also helped it to create a hype in the industry and to become the talk of the town.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Hindi cinema, particularly Bollywood, plays a significant role in shaping societal perceptions and values, especially concerning gender dynamics. While there have been strides towards more nuanced portrayals of both men and women in recent years, stereotypical ideologies persist, reinforcing gender stereotypes and perpetuating toxic masculinity. Films like "Animal" have sparked intense debate due to their portrayal of alpha male characters and themes of violence and toxicity. While some audiences appreciate the film's unique storytelling and star-studded cast, others criticize its problematic themes and portrayal of gender dynamics. Despite the mixed reception, the commercial success of such films underscores the complexity of audience preferences and the power of cinema to provoke discussion and reflection on societal norms and values. Ultimately, the Indian film industry must continue to challenge and dismantle patriarchal ideologies, promoting more inclusive and empowering narratives for both men and women.

Irrespective of any gender biasedness, it is important to break through the mainstream style and give a fresh start to new ideologies. Here are few major extracts from the above study. They are:

• The film 'Animal' reveals intricate subtleties reflecting broader societal attitudes and norms.

• The film 'Animal' depicts gender superiority and male chauvinism through the narrative, dialogues, actions and attitudes of its male characters, presenting a unadulterated depiction of patriarchal values implanted within Indian society.

• This nuanced representation highlights the complications of circumnavigating gender expectations and the limitations faced by women in asserting their agency of societal norms.

• The response of female characters to male chauvinism varies in the film, with some stimulating norms while others adapt the necessity or societal pressure.

• Cinematic techniques such as dialogue delivery, lighting, and camera angles, are utilized to emphasize these themes, amplifying the impact on the audience.

• The presence of male chauvinism and gender dominance significantly impacts the narrative of 'Animal,' shaping character development and driving plot points.

• Personal reflections on the portrayal of male chauvinism and gender preeminence in 'Animal' vary among participants, with discomfort responses ranging from resonance to critique. While audiences perceived it as an accurate reflection of societal realities, others may view it as exaggerated or normalized, depending on their own involvements and viewpoints.

• In conclusion, 'Animal' offers a thought-provoking exploration of male chauvinism and gender superiority in Hindi cinema, contributing to ongoing conversations about gender dynamics and 'Alfa Male' representation in Indian society through the film.

REFERENCES

1. Mukhopadhyay, S., & Banerjee, D. (2021b). Bollywood, popular visual media, and Sexism in India: A Critical Glance back. *Journal of Psychosexual Health*, *3*(3), 256–261. https://doi.org/10.1177/26318318211027312

2. NIMMS, & Anoushuka. (2020). Depiction of male dominance and patriarchy in the Indian cinema. *International journal of creative research thoughts - Ijcrt (IJCRT.ORG)*, *8*(6). https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2006145.pdf

3. Gender reflections in mainstream Hindi cinema. (2012). *Global Media Journal – Indian Edition/ISSN 2249-5835*, *1*(3). https://www.caluniv.ac.in/global-mdia-journal/Students'%20Research/SR4%20NIDHI.pdf

4. Paunksnis, R. C., & Paunksnis, Š. (2020). Masculine anxiety and 'new Indian woman' in the films of Anurag Kashyap. *South Asian Popular Culture*, *18*(2), 149–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2020.1773656

5. Pandey, S. (2011). Interrogating Masculinity through the Child Figure in Bombay Cinema. *Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.31165/nk.2011.41.62

6. PINKVILLA. (2023, November 29). *Sandeep Reddy Vanga & Bhushan Kumar Interview on Animal, Ranbir Kapoor, SRK, Prabhas, & Allu Arjun* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4z_f9QywFGw

7. CNN-News18. (2023, November 29). *Exclusive: Sandeep Reddy Vanga & Bhushan Kumar talk about Animal I Animal to beat Tiger 3? | News18* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2QWTZsXGK8

8. CNN-News18. (2023b, November 29). *Exclusive: Sandeep Reddy Vanga & Bhushan Kumar talk about Animal I Animal to beat Tiger 3? | News18* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2QWTZsXGK8

9. Siddharth Kannan. (2024, February 5). *Sandeep Reddy Vanga: "I am shocked that Rashmika wasn't even nominated for Best Actress award!"* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9FpR1p1B2M

10. Connect FM Canada. (2023, December 19). *Sandeep Reddy vanga on blockbuster Animal, Unfair Criticism, Ranbir, Bobby and.. | Faridoon Shahryar* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXRDbrsvLmY

11. Chandrali Mukherjee, & Chandrali Mukherjee. (n.d.). *'Animal' Film Review: Spare Us This Beast*. Outlook India. https://www.outlookindia.com/culture-society/animal-film-review-spare-us-this-beast-weekender_story-336770

12. Mitra, S. (2023, December 1). *'Animal' movie review: Ranbir Kapoor suffers in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's twisted paean to masculinity*. The Hindu. https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/movies/animal-movie-review-ranbir-kapoor-suffers-in-sandeep-reddy-vangas-twisted-paean-to-masculinity/article67590960.ece

13. Etimes.In. (2023, December 18). "Animal" official account trolls a critic with the film's box office figures; netizens slam it and call it "manchild behaviour." *The Times of India*. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/animal-official-account-trolls-a-critic-with-the-films-box-office-figures-netizens-slam-it-and-call-it-manchild-behaviour/articleshow/106099458.cms?from=mdr

14. Desk, E. (2023, December 7). Ram Gopal Varma on critics calling Animal a violent and misogynistic film: 'I find it funny' *The Indian Express*. https://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/ram-gopal-varma-on-critics-calling-animal-a-violent-and-misogynistic-film-i-find-it-funny-9058498/

15. Le, P. (2023, December 2). Animal review – Ranbir Kapoor plays one of the vilest protagonists in cinema history. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/dec/02/animal-review-ranbir-kapoor-plays-one-of-the-vilest-protagonists-in-cinema-history

16. Rahul Desai, & Rahul Desai. (2023, December 1). *Animal Review: Revenge and Ranbir Kapoor make for an unpalatable dish*. Filmcompanion. https://www.filmcompanion.in/reviews/bollywood-review/animal-review-revenge-and-ranbir-kapoor-make-for-an-unpalatable-dish-sandeep-reddy-vanga