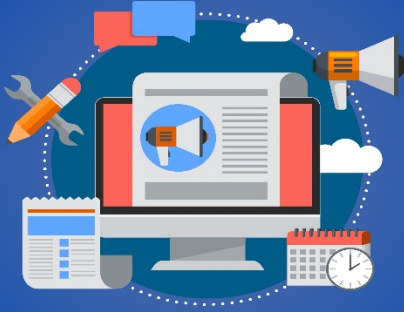


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## ***Ki & Ka* Movie: A Catalyst to Change Mindsets**

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### **Abstract:**

The aim of this research paper is to analyse the Kareena Kapoor and Arjun Kapoor starrer Hindi movie *Ki & Ka* as a female-centric or women-oriented movie. Over the years, Bollywood has been flooded with movies which have promoted the trend of projecting female actors in the leading and dominant roles as opposed to the traditional practice of relegating them to the background and playing second fiddle to the male protagonist. *Ki & Ka* movie is another bold step towards this direction of social transformation as it addresses many rational and progressive issues such as feminism, women empowerment, gender equality and women emancipation in the modern era. The objective of the paper is also to show how Hindi cinema aptly mirrors the modern Indian society which has shed its patriarchal notions in welcoming a super-woman who is not a dependent weakling and who has her own say in her life regarding her dreams, ambitions and desires.

**Keywords:** Bollywood, social transformation, woman empowerment, gender equality, women emancipation.

### **Introduction:**

Indian Cinema came into being in 1913, with the release of Dada saheb Phalke's feature film 'Raja Harishchandra'. Since then, Bollywood or the Hindi commercial cinema has depicted whatever our society feels on the one hand and has exercised a deep impact in generating social awareness along with entertaining and teaching the masses on the other hand. Hindi movies have always left an indelible mark on the minds of viewers and shaped and sharpened their sensitivity regarding their culture. In her book, *Bollywood* Tejaswini Ganti writes, "...Hindi films, though comprising approximately 20 percent of total production, are the

ones that circulate nationally and internationally, dominate the discourse about Indian cinema, and are regarded as the standard or archetype to follow or oppose.”

The modern Indian cinema is fast changing as the modern filmmakers have started realizing their responsibility towards society and as such their attitude towards women actors is changing too and they are no longer consigned to mediocre or side roles. While assertiveness of any kind by women characters of yesteryears was looked down upon by the Indian audience, now we find that strong women who express themselves without any inhibitions, have largely replaced the earlier marginalised and stigmatised female characters. Hindi movies have begun to showcase womanhood in new light nowadays.

### **Research Methodology**

The content of the movie *Ki & Ka* has been thoroughly analysed following the observation method in order to study the ways in which this movie has successfully showcased the issues relating to gender-based role-reversal in an expressive yet effectual way. Many observations from the secondary sources in the form of books, research articles etc. have also been assimilated in this paper.

### ***Ki & Ka* movie: The New Generation Saga**

Shattering the stereotype, stock characterization and categorization of female actors as either ‘The Vamp’ or the ‘Damsel in Distress’, we find in *Ki & Ka* the new generation strong, powerful and liberated woman entrepreneur who makes clear her stand about marriage in the very opening scene of the movie, where she is attending the marriage ceremony of her friend. She (Kia), declares that marriage is just the death of an aspiring woman, her dreams, her career, as she becomes just the “khamba” (pillar)-support system for her husband and family. She dreads this loss of identity and self by getting married until she meets Kabir, a sensitive guy who has a different take on marriage and roles of husband and wife. Defying the macho code, he freely cries in public whenever he gets sentimental about his mother. The only son of a booming builder and industrialist, Mr. Bansal, Kabir is an IIMB topper of his batch, but he is least interested in taking over his father's business or any other business for that matter. He wants to be a homemaker like his mother. He doesn't want to join the rat race of ambition like his father and lose the essence of beautiful relationships and family life. His mother is his ideal who sacrificed her interests and selflessly devoted all her time and life towards her family. Kabir considers his mother a great artist as to him home-making is no mean job. It takes a lot from a person to be a perfect home-maker. Kia is quite startled to hear Kabir's emotional

outburst and at first finds him a weird and intriguing person. She herself is a modern go-getter, superwoman kind of a person, who has all her goals of life clearly marked out. She is a marketing manager who sees herself as vice president and ultimately as CEO at her workplace. Her approach is in total contrast to the laidback approach of Kabir as she has a fixed, clear strategy to climb the ladder of success. These are the first instances of role reversal that we find in the movie *Ki & Ka*.

Kia articulates the society's hackneyed approach when she tells Kabir that she has never met a “man” who had his mother as a role model, instead of father. Kia is an independent woman who doesn't need a male support to survive. She can't retain permanent relationships with her boyfriends as they feel insecure and can't handle her ambitious nature. According to her, they fall short of her standards and can't keep up with her. Contrary to the traditional notion of women in love with the idea of motherhood, Kia detests marriage and motherhood as she feels it will limit her career growth. About marriage she says, “However evolved a man is, somewhere a woman's career gets compromised.”

Another new, unconventional trend that the film has promoted is the woman marrying a three years younger man and living a happy, contented life. It topples the age-old, accepted domestic set up of an older husband and young wife in Indian society. Later, when Kia introduces Kabir to her mother, she remarks jokingly that he wants to be her (Kia's) ‘wife’ and stay at home. Her mother explains a very valid point that Kia must really be in love with this guy as she is ready to forego the financial and social security by marrying a jobless and penniless man; things which are the top considerations for any practical girl while getting married.

The movie again successfully breaks the glass ceiling where the taboo subjects of female sexuality and gratification of the woman's carnal desire are concerned. The female characters loudly voice their sexual desires without getting their ‘moral’ characters subjected to scrutiny and falling into an eventual, arbitrary categorization into the ‘virgin’ or ‘slut’ paradigm. In her supporting role as Kia's mother, Swaroop Sampat is quite progressive and open-minded. She is an independent social worker with a modern outlook who feels that her daughter and Kabir should have sex before marriage; for her it is not something taboo. Acknowledging sexual desire in Indian women, Navpreet Kour asks, “What has caused this seismic shift in the way sexual desire in women is portrayed in Hindi cinema? Changing social norms, a generation of

young, edgy directors who are willing to push the envelope, to take risks in terms of how their female protagonists are depicted, to show that yes, women can experience desire too, desire so overwhelming that they can disregard prescribed societal norms of mandating virginity as a given for a 'good Indian girl'."

"...It would be natural then, that onscreen, where films reflect reality, Indian women are less apologetic about expressing their sexual needs with as much authority as men do. In this new, burgeoning expression of female sexuality, there is another vital shift in how women are being depicted in our movies. They're no longer mere addendums to the scenery in which the male protagonists bash up the baddies and turn to for the occasional romantic interlude. They're real women, living, breathing, desiring, willing to take on the consequences of their desire, willing to face censure and uncertainty for their desire.

And in that, in their acknowledgement and vicariously, in the audience acknowledging their desire, is where we are maturing as a society-with Indian women moving away from considering themselves as mere receptacles of sexual desire and emerging as willing, equal partners in the fulfilment of desire." (Kour 92-93)

Kabir's father is the typical patriarch who is outraged at the prospect of Kabir and Kia's marriage as he feels Kabir is acting as a 'parasite' by not taking the responsibility of the household and planning to stay as a home-maker. He ridicules his son by calling him a 'Namard'-(impotent), who just wants to live off the hard-earned money of his wife instead of protecting and providing for her. Thus, imitating the prevalent theme of father-son rift in Bollywood, here we have two males in the movie who are constantly at loggerheads due to their differing outlook and ideologies. One is an industrialist tycoon, an epitome of professional success, a role model for upcoming business-persons like Kia and another an idealist who doesn't want his father's business or money and whose only aim in life is to be like his mother: an 'artist', i.e., a housewife.

After marriage they defy the set convention once again as the husband wears the 'mangalsutra' (sacred ornament worn around the neck by Hindu wives), instead of the wife and assumes the role of a homemaker from the day one as he takes over the kitchen, does the dusting, grocery shopping and all other household chores

Commenting on this blooming trend of role-reversal in Bollywood, Ritika Puri says: “In the present era, the roles of reel life run parallel to the roles women get to play in the society at particular points in time. Therefore, if we compare and analyse the journey of women in Indian cinema today, there is no doubt in the fact that the Indian woman has come a long way not only in reel life, but also in real life. Movies now portray live-in relationships, girlfriends and boyfriends, pre-marital sex, corruption, people following live and let live policy in life and family, liberal parents, colleges are depicted like dating parties and professors like friends. Of course, one must admit that it is all exaggerated and blown up, sometimes even in epic proportions, but the core idea comes from the society itself.

...Women are depicted as strong, smart, beautiful, decision makers and at the same time they also act as super moms for their children. Women are shown working and independent. The film ‘*Ki & Ka*’ is a recent example of this scenario where household chores are accepted by a man while the woman is working and breadwinner.” (Puri 36).

Initially Kia is proud of her husband and tells her colleagues that her husband is an artist who beautifully takes care of his household. But later on, she starts feeling jealous and insecure when Kabir becomes an overnight celebrity through his Tv interview. He enjoys being in the limelight through advertisements, interviews etc. and Kia feels estranged and starts taunting and abusing him. In her character the wife's stereotypical qualities of being sweet, shy, soft, sacrificial and nurturer are replaced by unreasonable anger, jealousy and crankiness. On the other hand, the husband is shown as quiet and non-reactive which is a unique take on relationships. The penultimate scene of the film delivers the message that while it takes a man of great courage to take the backseat, stay at home to take care of the home and kids, it takes a woman of greater courage to love and respect such a man. While some critics have ridiculed the unconventional approach of the movie in challenging the gender-based division of labour in a marriage, terming it a “utopian couple in a utopian world”, this movie has successfully presented the shifting paradigms of a woman’s position in the family and in the patriarchal superstructure.

### **Conclusion:**

Thus, we see that the Hindi Indian cinema has come a long way from projecting the Heroine only as an entertainment and glamour tool who just provides light, de-stressing moments through songs and romantic rendezvous. There are some ‘real’ movies that are trying

to bring out the true spunk and character of the real Indian woman and the Indian audience on the other hand are also undergoing a gradual metamorphosis in their acceptance of the earlier 'frowned upon' issues through the cinematic medium.

"...It is imperative to remove structural inequalities of a patriarchal society for women's empowerment. Awareness on gender rights, gender sensitisation will go a long way in removing gender bias from society. Through some may argue that films are a medium of entertainment, not preaching and all films need not carry heavy social message, yet to some extent films do have an impact on masses. A beginning has been made in the domain of mainstream films to ponder, analyse gender-specific issues with mass acceptance and this approach should be carried forward. This is not to say that women centric films or issues were not taken up in earlier years or decades, but probably they were confined to one particular genre of movies. Yes, today we can say that Hindi cinema has come of age in terms of representation of gender issues, but it still has a long way to go. If cinema is reflection of a society, it can equally be a medium of much-needed societal reforms. Even creating an awareness on these critical issues will go a long way in making these derogatory practices to women unacceptable in a truly civilised society. (Chibber 51)

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