

De-Stereotyping the Man-Woman Relationship in the Indian Hindi Film ‘Piku’

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Abstract: Cinema is one of the strongest mediums of Mass Communication which has the ability to influence the otherwise rigid Indian mind-set. The close study of a century years’ journey of India Hindi Cinema is the best way to understand the transition in Indian society in general and family in particular.

Shoojit Sircar directed film *Piku* (2015) is a milestone cinema in a way that it challenges the notion of patriarchy in a novel and subtle way. It redefines the relationship between man and woman. The relationship between man and woman presented in the film is so democratic and liberal that it breaks all stereotypes existing in the current Indian society and, interestingly, it does it so silently that even the chauvinistic section doesn’t realize and reciprocate. It also shows how women should now be accepted as an individual. It also clearly depicts that the gender-fix roles are now being challenged. The institution of marriage is being questioned for its relevance in women's life. The portrayal of a daughter taking care of her old-cynical father in the film interrogates the rotten patriarchal ideas.

The subtle mannerism of presentation of story adopted by the director Shoojit Sircar is praiseworthy but the credit must equally be given to the writer Juhi Chaturvedi. No loud words, no trauma, no crime, no revenge story, no morality packed preaching but even more than voicing exactly what the 21st century Indian women would like to listen. The mannerism, body language, action and reaction of the characters have done a great job for the director. The strength of cinema as a visual medium has been fully exploited by the director. This paper investigates the film for the challenges it presents against patriarchy and the de-stereotyping of the men-women relationship. It presents the women as a human being, as shown in *Piku*, free from all gender biased bondages. It takes forward the three stages (Showalter) – Faminine, Faminist, and female -to little further where women will be treated as an individual, as person.

Keywords: Patriarchy, stereotypes, feminist, man- women relationship, Indian Hindi Cinema, Family Dynamics



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Introduction

Indian cinema has always been a reflection of society, and it has always been the most significant medium through which the Indian culture, society, and values have been portrayed on the big screen. Indian cinema has been widely recognized as a platform that reflects the cultural and societal norms, especially the relationships between men and women. Hindi cinema, commonly referred to as Bollywood, has always been

dominated by male actors, directors, and producers. However, there has been a significant shift in recent years with more female-oriented films being produced and more female actors being given prominent roles. In this paper, we will analyze the man-woman relationship depicted in the movie *Piku*, released in 2015, directed by Shoojit Sircar.

The portrayal of man-women relationships in Indian Hindi cinema has been a topic of interest for decades. The Indian film industry, commonly known as Bollywood, is renowned for its representation of romance and relationships on the big screen. This paper aims to analyze the representation of man-women relationships in the movie *Piku*. Released in 2015, the film is directed by Shoojit Sircar and stars Deepika Padukone, Amitabh Bachchan, and Irrfan Khan. Through the analysis of the characters, plot, and themes, this paper aims to provide insights into the depiction of man-women relationships in Indian cinema.

Indian Hindi cinema has a history of portraying relationships through various genres, including drama, romance, and comedy. The portrayal of women in Bollywood has evolved over time, from the traditional roles of wife and mother to independent and empowered characters. However, the representation of man-women relationships has been a topic of debate in Indian cinema. Many critics have criticized the industry for perpetuating patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes. This has resulted in a significant shift in the representation of women in Indian cinema in recent years.

Piku (2015) is a comedy-drama film that revolves around the relationship between a single father, Bhaskor Banerjee, and his daughter, Piku. The film depicts the daily struggles of the father-daughter duo as they navigate their way through life. Piku, a successful architect, is portrayed as a strong and independent woman who is devoted to her father. Bhaskor, on the other hand, is an eccentric man who is obsessed with his health and bowel movements. The two are joined by Rana Chaudhary, a cab driver who is hired to drive them from Delhi to Kolkata. The movie received critical acclaim and was a commercial success, grossing over 1 billion rupees at the box office.

The film has lots of relationships in the plot, typical to Indian family. But the focus of research for this paper is limited to father-daughter and Piku and his friend Rana's equation.

Research Objective and methodology

The objective of the paper is to explore the man-woman relationship present in the film *Piku*. The objective is also to understand the family dynamics and gender equation in the film. It also aims to present the new approach towards love and romance in this cinema. The methodology for the research is a qualitative exploratory. It is based on close reading of this particular cinema and other cinema on similar themes. The reader response theory has been employed to analyse and achieve given objectives.

Analysis

Piku is a Hindi film that revolves around the relationship between a father-daughter duo, Bhaskor Banerjee (played by Amitabh Bachchan) and Piku (played by Deepika Padukone), and their house-help, Bhaskor's Man Friday (played by Irrfan Khan). The film addresses various social issues such as parental care, social stereotypes, and the importance of relationships, especially those between men and women. The analysis of the movie reflects these vividly.

Refreshing take on the traditional man-woman relationship

The movie portrays a refreshing take on the traditional man-woman relationship, where women are often depicted as submissive and dependent on men. Piku, the lead female character, is shown as an independent, strong-willed, and modern woman who is not afraid to speak her mind. She is shown as being financially independent and capable of making her own decisions. However, the movie also shows that despite her independence, Piku is still responsible for taking care of her aging father and fulfilling her duties as a daughter. On the other hand, the male lead, Rana (played by Irrfan Khan), is shown as a caring and supportive friend who respects Piku's independence and does not try to control or dominate her. The relationship between Piku

and Rana is portrayed as a mature and equal partnership, where both partners are shown as being equally responsible for each other's well-being.

In the Hindi film 'Piku', Bhaskor, the father of the titular character, has a complex relationship with his sister-in-law, Chhobi. Chhobi is the wife of Bhaskor's younger brother and is portrayed as a gentle and caring woman who has a good relationship with Piku. Bhaskor, on the other hand, is shown to have a strained relationship with Chhobi. He often belittles and criticizes her, and she is shown to be intimidated by his forceful personality. Bhaskor sees Chhobi as a meek and submissive woman who is not worthy of respect or attention. The movie also portrays the importance of communication in relationships, especially those between men and women. Piku is shown as being open and honest about her feelings and needs, and this helps her to maintain a healthy relationship with Rana. On the other hand, Bhaskor is shown as being closed off and unable to communicate effectively with his daughter, leading to a strained relationship between them.

Challenges traditional Gender Roles

The film challenges traditional gender roles by portraying Piku as a successful and independent woman who is not defined by her relationships with men. She is shown to be financially stable and has a successful career as an architect. However, the film also depicts the challenges that women face in balancing their careers with their family responsibilities. Piku is portrayed as a dutiful daughter who is devoted to her father and sacrifices her personal life for him. This reflects the societal pressure on women to prioritize family over career.

The film also challenges traditional gender roles by portraying Bhaskor as a single father who takes care of his daughter without the help of a woman. He is shown as a doting father who is devoted to his daughter and does not believe in the traditional roles of women as caretakers. This challenges the traditional patriarchal norms in Indian society that dictate that women should be the primary caregivers in the family.

The movie also challenges traditional gender roles by portraying the father-daughter relationship as an equal partnership, where both the father and daughter are shown as being dependent on each other. Bhaskor, the father, is shown as being dependent on his daughter for his daily needs, such as taking his medicines, cooking his meals, and taking care of his hygiene. In contrast, Piku is shown as being dependent on her father emotionally and as a support system.

De-stereotyping of Love and Relationships

The film portrays a unique relationship between Piku and her father. Bhaskor's obsession with his health and bowel movements is used as a metaphor for his fear of death and separation from his daughter. This reflects the complex emotional bonds between parents and children in Indian society. The film also portrays a romantic relationship between Piku and Rana. Unlike traditional Bollywood romances, their relationship is portrayed as realistic and grounded in reality. It is not depicted as a fairytale romance, but rather a realistic portrayal of a modern relationship.

The film challenges traditional notions of romance and relationships by portraying the love between Piku and Rana as a gradual and realistic process. This challenges the traditional Bollywood trope of instant and unrealistic romances. The film also defies traditional gender roles by portraying Piku as the initiator of the romantic relationship, which is not common in an Indian cinema.

In the Hindi film *Piku*, the relationship between Piku and Rana is a significant aspect of the film. Piku is the protagonist of the film, a successful architect who is also the primary caregiver for her aging father, Bhaskor. Rana, on the other hand, is a businessman who owns a taxi company and is hired to drive Piku and Bhaskor from Delhi to Kolkata.

Initially, Piku and Rana share a tense and uneasy relationship. Piku is shown to be irritable and impatient, often snapping at Rana for his inability to understand her father's needs. Rana, on the other hand, is patient and calm, constantly trying to defuse the tension between Piku and her father.

However, as the journey progresses, Piku and Rana's relationship evolves, and they develop a close friendship. They begin to share their personal experiences, and Rana becomes a confidante for Piku, listening to her

frustrations about her father and her own life. Rana also helps Piku confront her fears and insecurities and encourages her to pursue her dreams.

Another factor that brings Piku and Rana closer is their mutual attraction. Although they have different personalities and come from different backgrounds, they share a chemistry that is palpable on screen. Their banter and flirtation add a layer of romance to the film, and their interactions are often playful and fun.

The relationship between Piku and Rana is significant as it provides a refreshing perspective on love and relationships. The film portrays their relationship as one based on mutual respect and understanding rather than the conventional romantic love. The film also challenges the traditional gender roles by portraying Piku as an independent and strong-willed woman who is not defined by her relationships with men. Instead, she finds companionship and support in Rana, who respects her independence and encourages her to pursue her dreams.

Highlights marginalized social issues

The film also highlights social issues such as aging, mortality, and family dynamics through the relationship between the father-daughter duo, Bhaskor and Piku. The relationship between Bhaskor and Piku reflects the challenges faced by aging parents and their children. The film portrays the emotional struggles of both Father and daughter.

The film explores the themes of aging and mortality through Bhaskor's character. He is a senior citizen who is obsessed with his health and bowel movements, and he fears his own mortality. The film uses this fear to highlight the emotional struggles of aging parents and their children. Bhaskor's health issues and constant complaints become a source of stress and concern for Piku. She struggles to balance her career and personal life while taking care of her father's needs. This reflects the challenges faced by adult children who have to care for their aging parents and highlights the need for better healthcare and support systems for senior citizens in India.

The film explores the theme of family dynamics through the complex relationship between Bhaskor and Piku. Bhaskor is portrayed as an overbearing father who micromanages every aspect of Piku's life, including her career and personal choices. Piku, on the other hand, is portrayed as a dutiful daughter who is devoted to her father, but also struggles with her own aspirations and desires. This reflects the societal pressure on women to prioritize family over their personal goals and ambitions.

The film also explores the concept of family responsibility and the role of children in caring for their parents. *Piku* is shown to sacrifice her personal life and career for her father's needs, which highlights the burden that adult children often face in caring for their aging parents. The film challenges the traditional gender roles by portraying Bhaskor as a single father who is happily living with the daughter and not crying for son, and *Piku* as a successful and independent woman who is not defined by her relationships with men.

Conclusion

The movie *Piku* provides a refreshing take on the traditional man-woman relationship depicted in Indian cinema. It challenges traditional gender roles and portrays women as independent and strong-willed individuals capable of making their own decisions. It also portrays men as caring and supportive partners who respect their partner's independence and do not try to control or dominate them. The movie also emphasizes the importance of communication in relationships, especially those between men and women, and portrays the father-daughter relationship as an equal partnership. Overall, *Piku* is a movie that highlights the importance of healthy relationships between men and women and challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

In conclusion, the relationship between *Piku* and Rana in the film *Piku* is a significant aspect of the film. The film portrays their relationship as a friendship based on mutual respect and understanding, challenging the traditional gender roles in Indian cinema. Their relationship provides a cool perspective on love and relationships, and the film presents a realistic and grounded portrayal of companionship and support.

Overall, *Piku* highlights the film's exploration of family dynamics, gender roles, and patriarchy. The film confronts traditional gender norms and expectations and presents a nuanced portrayal of familial relationships. It sheds light on the struggles faced by women who do not conform to traditional gender roles and the impact of patriarchal expectations on family dynamics.

In conclusion, *Piku* is a thought-provoking film that explores several social issues such as aging, mortality, and family dynamics through the relationship between a father and his daughter. The film de-stereotypes the traditional gender roles and portrays a realistic and grounded portrayal of love and relationships. The true aspiration of 21st century women is not to engage in radical revolt & resistance against the idea of patriarchy but make peace with it by turning the table with independent identity.

The film *Piku* highlights the need for better support systems for senior citizens and the burden that adult children often face in caring for their aging parents. Overall, the film is a poignant portrayal of the complexities of family relationships and the challenges faced by modern families in India.

As far as feminist discourse is concerned, it takes forward the three stages (Showalter) – Faminine, Faminist, and female -to little further where woman is treated as an individual, as person. The de-gendering of the society everyone is looking for

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