Why do we need to discuss this :-

- **Movies reflect society.** When we see movies of a particular time, we get to know the society at that time. **Movies have a stake in social change as well.** During Indian freedom struggle, movies did their bit to spread the spirit of nationalism among common people.
- With changing times, movies too undergone a lot of changes. But the progress in portrayal of women in Indian cinema has not caught the progress of our society yet.
- As there are more movie lovers in India than the rest of the world, the impact of movies on Indian society is huge.
- **India is still a patriarchal society, so does the Indian film industry.** Though times are changing, men’s ideals and their fantasies are still taking up most of the space in Indian cinema. Some of these things are regressive and derogatory towards women.
- And it is true that the number of movies that have meaningful roles for women is increasing. Hence it is important to discuss how far have we come and what issues need to be addressed in the portrayal of women in Indian cinema.

Timeline :-

- **Raja Harishchandra (1913)** was the first full-length Indian feature film, in which the heroine character is played by a male actor. It was inevitable because there were no female actresses at that time.
- **Mother India (1957)** is the first Indian cinema in which female actor is in the lead role.
- Roughly upto the 1980s, lead actresses have significant roles. Movies at that time used to have wonderful stories which totally reflected the society. But at the same time, filmmakers used to add ‘vamp’ characters in the movies to provide sexually explicit or demeaning musical entertainment. This culture has not changed even now. Producers are adding item songs to gain commercial success.
- Since 1980s, the role of lead actress started reducing to just an add-on to the hero-centric film. Most of the mainstream movies are following this trend.
- In recent times, many lead actresses are doing strong roles. As more and more women is joining in the film industry as directors, producers, actresses etc., the situation of female characters portrayal is improving.

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Issues that need to be addressed :-

- Most of the mainstream movies are male-centric. Lead actresses are treated as glam
In many movies of present times, female characters are needlessly sexualized. Along with that, adding vulgar lyrics and dances in the name of item songs is very derogatory towards women and is impacting youth in a bad way. Item songs teach people that it’s okay to tease women, it’s okay to look at them voyeuristically and it’s okay to ask sexual favors from women.

Indian film industry topped in objectification of women according to first-ever UN sponsored global study (2014) of female characters in popular films across the world.

Lead actors are always shown as saviors. Women are shown as either helpless victims or cunning villains. In general, hero is the one who solves everyone’s including heroine’s problems.

Movies depict actresses as unrealistically beautiful. This causes a lot of trauma and insecurity issues not just for the female audience but also for the actresses.

Stalking and eve-teasing are depicted as love in Indian movies. In many mainstream movies, female characters falls in love with these abusers. Due to this, several young men are harassing women in the name of love. In 2015, an Indian man in Australia was accused of stalking, and after analyzing the incidents, the court came to a conclusion that his obsession with Bollywood films is the cause of his behaviour.

Positive side :-

- Times are changing for the better. As more and more women is joining in the film industry as directors, producers, actresses etc., we are witnessing strong female characters in movies.
- ‘Good girl’ image was forced on earlier lead female roles. Heroines were portrayed as submissive, prefers to be homemaker, not career oriented and bears the brunt of abusive husband silently. Now the female characters in movies are more realistic and are many actresses are not doing such kind of meaningless roles.

Conclusion :-

Indian film industry have come so far yet have a long way to go to escape from the clutches of men-oriented movies and to make story-oriented movies. Let’s clap for the positive changes in the portrayal of women characters and let’s work on making it even better.

Afterwords :- What is your opinion on this topic? Have we missed any point? Express your thoughts in the comment section below. Subscribe to our blog to get notifications as soon as
Portrayal of women in Indian cinema

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