Use of Women's Beauty and Makeup in Battle: Unveiling Stereotypes and Strength

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ABSTRACT

Since the earliest writings of Bharatmuni's *Natyashastra*, an essential text in Indian aesthetics written more than two thousand years ago, women have been essentially connected with beauty and makeup. Shringararasa was mostly associated with women in the Rasa philosophy. This link has persisted and can even be seen in current Hollywood productions. It is interesting how beauty has been portrayed in two distinct manners throughout various historical works of literature, films, and books. On one hand, it has supported stereotypes like child marriage and placed restrictions on women's access to higher education and the workforce. On the other side, beauty has the ability to oppose patriarchy and, in a larger sense, be a tool for engaging in the struggle against oppression and lending support to diverse freedom movements. When faced with these obstacles, women stand out as heroes because they actively destroy patriarchal repressive institutions. Numerous narratives, motion pictures, and stage plays—both fiction and non-fiction—emphasize the extraordinary resilience of women and demonstrate how they employ cosmetics and beauty not just as a means of self-expression but also as instruments of adaptation in feminist movements and combat zones. These tales capture the essence of Goddess Durga, who stands for fortitude and tenacity. This paper analyses both perspectives of beauty, citing various texts, movies, novels, and other media as sources for its arguments. Let us continue the teachings of history, mythology, and film by traversing the complexity of beauty, strength, and resistance. Let us raise the voices of those who question conventions, celebrate diversity, and collaborate to create a society where every individual, regardless of gender, may thrive and contribute to the prosperity of a genuinely inclusive and just world.

Keywords: War, marriage, beauty, education, patriarchy.

Introduction

It is disheartening to witness the prevailing notion that women are mere objects of pleasure, contributing to the alarming prevalence of rape and dowry in India. Many such cases remain unsolved and unreported because women often choose to suffer in silence. Even when given the opportunity to speak, social expectations may force them to express gratitude for their limited freedoms, which are limited by social norms. Thus, it is important to address the deep-rooted social norms that encourage the objectification and abuse of women. Pressure on women to conform to certain beauty standards and behaviours only serves to perpetuate harmful stereotypes. Women seek a delicate balance between personal choices and societal

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expectations—a struggle that often goes unnoticed. More than one thousand four hundred and twenty-four jokes have been formed related to Arab women during the covid pandemic. Women were considered to be of a less feminine nature, annoying and ugly. ("Stereotyping Arab Women in Jokes Circulated on Social during the Coronavirus Crisis," 2022) .

 Faced with these challenges, it is women who emerge as heroes who actively dismantle oppressive structures within patriarchy. Various stories, films and dramas, both fictional and non-fictional, highlight the remarkable strength of women and show how they use beauty and makeup not only as tools of adaptation, but also as expressions of empowerment in both feminist movements and war situations. These stories embody Goddess Durga's spirit, symbolising strength and endurance.

In an androcentric society, women were invisible and frequently shielded from in their houses—and could only ensure both their authenticity and that of their offspring through marriage to an Citizen of Athens. The 430–354 BC Athenian philosopher Xenophon outlines what he believes to be an acceptable Athenian woman. His Economy is a Socratic discussion that mostly focuses on married couples' handling of agricultural and home upkeep. In contrast to the majority of Athenians, who considered a woman as nothing more than a tool for procreation, Xenophon believed that marriage was a partnership based on respect between men and women. Even with this more mutually beneficial approach, Xenophon emphasized the extremely different and unique roles that men and women play. (Davies, 2022) . The patriarchy employs the "label" of "bitch-goddess" to diminish the power of women who possess agency. Exceptionally empowered and autonomous women are referred to as "Bitch goddesses," and any behaviour that deviates from traditional gender norms is considered abnormal and rebellious. (M. K. S. S. Gunarathne, 2020). The historic evidence lies in the image of black women and labelled them as black women it has intended to make their survival more difficult than usual. Their image of a strong black woman has been in contradiction to what many scholars and researchers are studying. It uses war imagery, comparing strength to aspects of combat, to group these ideas into a theoretical framework. (M.Davis & K.Jones, 2021).

Women's Empowerment: A Historical Odyssey

The U.S. committee created the poster campaign for public information and its division of pictorial publicity, which featured some of the most famous advertising illustrators and magazine cartoonists of the era. Their skills were harnessed to create a revolutionary form of propaganda that incorporated various techniques, including manipulating gendered symbols to encourage women to be active participants in sending their husbands off to fight in the war and

supporting them as they returned home after the war. One of the unique aspects of this campaign is the use of the feminine figure, both as an expression of American patriotism and as a guardian angel. (Bivins, 2020)

The Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria has placed women—mothers, girls, and women in general—in a dangerous situation. The Boko Haram onslaught has caused some women to become prematurely widowed or childless, but it has also resulted in death, forced abduction, and allied assaults on both the main and sidelines of the war for other women. Women have frequently experienced physical abuse that effectively diminishes their humanity. This is demonstrated by the insurgents' use of women as suicide bombers, human shields, and sex slaves on the front lines of battle. The wave of female suicide bombs in Nigeria over the past few years has starkly illustrated how disposable women are in the context of the Boko Haram insurgency.(Okoli & Nnaemeka Azom, 2019)

In the annals of history, Rani Lakshmi Bai appears as a shrewd strategist who in 1857 brilliantly used Jhalkaribai to betray the British and organize an escape from the fortress. The use of makeup in this resistance movement emphasized its powerful role. Lakshmi Bai's legacy remains an inspiration, especially when it comes to breaking down barriers for women stuck in practices like sati.

Recognition of General Rose's competence is summarized in his confession: "; here lay a woman who was the only man among the rebels."

A parallel example of the symbolic power of defiance is the victory red lipstick launched by Elizabeth Arden in 1941. Representing the colour of the fight against oppression and discrimination, lipstick became a symbol of the fight against Nazism in the Second World War. It was believed that Hitler detested it.

Historical epics like the Mahabharata and the valour of characters like Arjuna and Draupadi offer insights into societal norms. Unfortunately, the misinterpretation of these epics has at times perpetuated social injustice. The narrative of Draupadi's cloth theft highlights the precarious position of women in society, viewed as the rightful property of men.

On the other hand, Shakuntala's story reveals the distortions of beauty and love, showcasing societal biases. The Greek play " Lysistrata" takes a comedic route to challenge norms, with the character Lysistrata rallying women across nations to sign a peace treaty, effectively challenging male dominance.

The Odyssey, as the narrative progresses, it becomes clear how powerful beauty is as a force that moulds destiny and seals the fates of people drawn to it.

Transitioning to the film industry, the character Razzi, played by Alia Bhatt, in the eponymous film employs her beauty and attire to clandestinely aid the nation. "Tiger Zinda Hai" features a heroine named Zoya who saves Indian and Pakistani nurses, showcasing unity as well as employing her beauty as a weapon against oppression.

While some films like "Chhapaak" realistically depict the hardships faced by women, others perpetuate harmful stereotypes. Recognizing and celebrating women's resilience in challenging norms is paramount. Through stories and performances, media plays a pivotal role in dismantling stereotypes and empowering women.

The Cultural Tapestry of Resistance

Diving deeper into the historical narratives, Rani Lakshmi Bai's defiance against the British serves as an emblematic example of the intersectionality of gender and colonial resistance. Her collaboration with Jhalkaribai, who shared her physical resemblance, showcased strategic brilliance and underlined the importance of unity among women in times of oppression. This collaboration, rooted in a shared cause, defied the conventional roles ascribed to women during that era. The symbolic significance of Lakshmi Bai's makeup during this resistance movement resonates with the transformative power of appearances. In a society where women's agency was often limited, the strategic use of makeup became a tool of subversion. It challenged expected norms and allowed women to navigate and influence the course of historical events.

The introduction of Elizabeth Arden lipstick Victory Red during World War II is another fascinating chapter in the story of women using beauty as a form of resistance. In addition to its cosmetic function, lipstick has become an expression of solidarity and defiance. Linking this to the struggle against Nazism highlights the potential of seemingly trivial choices to have profound political and social significance.

Revealing Social Norms Through Mythology

The cornerstone of Hindu mythology, the *Mahabharata* provides a rich tapestry for understanding social norms and the status of women. Draupadi's harrowing experience of having her cloth stolen in the royal court is emblematic of the challenges women faced. She is not merely an individual but a representation of the broader struggles women endured in a society where they were often considered as possessions.

The misinterpretation of ancient texts, as mentioned in your narrative, contributes to the perpetuation of social injustices. Dialogues misattributed to the Bhagavad Gita, prescribing rigid roles for women, exemplify how cultural narratives can be distorted to reinforce

patriarchal norms. The need to critically engage with these texts, recognizing their historical context, becomes imperative in dismantling stereotypes and promoting gender equality.

Shakuntala plight, as portrayed in the play, reflects the complexities of beauty and love. The narrative challenges the societal expectations placed on women, particularly when Shakuntala is blamed for the king's forgetfulness. This tale prompts reflection on how societal norms can unjustly burden women, holding them accountable for circumstances beyond their control.

Comedic Dissent: Lysistrata's Bold Satire

A major figure in the world of ancient Greek literature, Aristophanes lived during the crucial period of approximately 446 BC. to about 386 BC known as the most important writer of Old Comedy in ancient Athens, Aristophanes left an indelible mark on it. to the theatrical landscape of his time. Among his many works is the play "Lysistrata"; originally staged in 411 BC, it stands out as a comic masterpiece that brilliantly deals with the socio-political background of Athens after thes tragic Sicilian expedition.

The Sicilian Expedition, Athens' disastrous campaign in the ongoing Peloponnesian War against Sparta and its allies (a conflict that lasted from 431 to 404 BC), had a profound effect on the city-state. After that remarkable defeat, Aristophanes introduced the "Lysistrata; as satirical commentary that injects humour into the conversation to challenge social norms and provide a comedic lens through which to view the world. At its heart is the "Lysistrata; challenges the traditional roles of women as passive objects of desire. The main character, Lysistrata, comes up with a bold and unusual plan to end the Peloponnesian War. He proposes a sexual strike, urging women to withhold sexual privileges from their husbands until they agree to end the protracted conflict. This bold strategy is a source of comic brilliance and a powerful statement about women's agency and influence in a male-dominated society.

The elements of drama and comedy go beyond mere entertainment; they serve as a clever tool to make the public question the prevailing norms. Aristophanes uses satire to expose and mock the attitudes of men towards women, challenging the notion that women are passive and powerless. Lysistrata's call for a sexual strike forces the male characters to confront their dependence on women and their desires, showing that women have the power to influence and act outside the traditional boundaries of domestic life.

One striking example of the subversion of gender dynamics is evident in the playful manipulation of Myhrine and her husband. Through humour and wit, Myhrine takes responsibility for her own desires and reverses the typical power dynamics of a marital relationship. This comedic exploration of women's agency subtly challenges stereotypes and opens a space for dialogue about broader gender relations in Athenian society. Humour in the

text ;Lysistrata; not only provides light-hearted entertainment to the audience but also serves as a means of social commentary, offering a critique of the rigid gender roles and power structures prevalent in ancient Greece. With his comic genius, Aristophanes invites viewers to reflect on the absurdity of social norms and encourages alternative perspectives. Through laughter, the play acts as a catalyst for discussion about the limitations placed by women and potential opportunities for change in the existing power dynamics.

Finally, Lysistrata; pushes the boundaries of comedy and offers an in-depth exploration of social norms, gender roles and power dynamics in ancient Athens. Far from being a mere source of entertainment, the brilliance of play and comedy is an effective means of challenging prevailing attitudes and provoking dialogue on issues that resonate through the ages. ;Lysistrata; is a testament to the enduring power of humour to provoke thought, challenge norms, and spark conversations about the complexities of human relationships and social structures.

Tragedy: Use of Penelope's Beauty

Odyssey, Homer's timeless epic that delves into Odysseus' arduous journey during the Trojan War, while also exploring the challenges his wife Penelope faces in his absence. This enduring story not only tells the heroic deeds of Odysseus, but also illuminates the resilience and wit of Penelope, whose beauty becomes both a source of vulnerability and a catalyst for justice.

At the heart of the story is a persistent theme of loyalty and determination. As Odysseus faces countless trials on his way home, Penelope remains steadfast in her loyalty, resisting the advances of many suitors seeking her hand in marriage. Driven by their own desires and ambitions, the suitors compete for Penelope's favour, showering her with gifts, each trying to outdo the other to win her. Penelope, showing her intelligence and cunning, uses a strategic delay to prevent the suitors and advance payments He comes up with a clever plot and asks them to wait until he finishes weaving Odysseus and father Laertes. Cunningly, he reveals his progress during the night, delaying indefinitely. This clever trick not only shows the resourcefulness of Penelope, but also symbolizes the enduring power of femininity and intelligence in the face of adversity.

The turning point in Penelope's story is the archery contest, a battle of skill and strength that becomes the turning point of the epic. Penelope, in collaboration with her son Telemachus and faithful servant Eumaeus, sets the stage for a contest involving Odysseus' great bow. This challenge is a test of physical prowess and a symbolic battle that reveals Odysseus' true identity and serves as a judgment to the suitors he rejected.

When Odysseus wins an archery contest with the help of Telemachus and his faithful swineherd Eumaeus, the beauty that once captivated the suitors now becomes the catalyst for their downfall. The bow becomes a weapon of justice, and the arrows find their mark, bringing poetic revenge to those who tried to exploit the vulnerability of Penelope and take over Odysseus and his kingdom of Ithica.

Penelope's beauty, originally a source of vulnerability, becomes a symbol of strength and resilience. Her strategic delays, shrewd intelligence, and cooperation with her son and loyal subjects become instruments of justice that bring her home from opportunistic suitors. In this transformation, Penelope appears as an impressive figure, showing that beauty combined with intelligence and determination can be a force to shape destinies and correct the injustices of those who underestimate that power.

Finally, Odyssey not only celebrates the victory of Odysseus during his journey, but also emphasises Penelope's willpower and strength. Her beauty is not a passive quality, but becomes a dynamic force that plays a decisive role in the drama of justice and revenge. Through the trials of war, tests of loyalty, and strategic battles within the palace walls, Penelope's character is a testament to the enduring power of beauty and reason in the face of adversity.

Cinema as a Reflection of Social Dynamics

The intersection of beauty, power, and resistance finds resonance in the world of cinema. The character Razzi, portrayed by Alia Bhatt, exemplifies the strategic use of beauty in service to a nation. Her ability to seamlessly navigate familial roles while clandestinely aiding the nation illustrates the nuanced ways in which women deploy their agency.

Tiger Zinda Hai; in its portrayal of Zoya, further explores the relationship between beauty and power. Zoya's rescue of Indian and Pakistani sisters not only symbolizes unity but also underscores how beauty can be employed as a tool of provocation and empowerment. The cinematic realm becomes a canvas where societal norms are challenged, and women are depicted as active agents in shaping their destinies. However, the nuanced portrayal of these examples stands in stark contrast to films like "Chhapaak," which clearly present the harsh reality of sexual violence. Although these films are dark, they play an important role in drawing attention to the challenges women face. The multifaceted cinematic images of women and beauty emphasize the need for a nuanced understanding that departs from one-dimensional stereotypes.

A Touch of Beauty in A Complex Reality

The study of beauty in various narratives, from ancient epics to modern cinema, reveals a multifaceted dynamic. Beauty is not just a superficial quality, but a complex interplay of social expectations, power dynamics, and individual action.

The difficulties of Shakuntala, forgotten by a king who already has other wives, reflect the fragility of societal expectations of beauty and love. This leads us to wonder how these expectations, often perpetuated by cultural narratives, can lead to unfair consequences for women. On the other hand, the strategic use of beauty in resistance movements, as seen in the stories of Rani Lakshmi Bai and Razzi's character, emphasises women's agency even within restrictive social structures. As a reflection of social dynamics, the film world offers space for both nuanced explorations and simplistic stereotypes.

Recognizing and celebrating resilience

Recognizing and celebrating the resilience of women who challenge societal norms is essential to promoting positive change. The stories of Rani Lakshmi Bai, Draupadi, and fictional characters in plays and films are not only stories of individual courage but reflections of larger social dynamics.

In a contemporary context, the character Razzi's ability to use her beauty and silence to serve her people echoes real-life stories of women navigating complex roles, breaking down the barriers of patriarchal structures. These stories, whether rooted in history or creative imaginations, contribute to a collective narrative of women and empowerment.

The role of the media in shaping perceptions

The nation's main networks provided 169 unduplicated commercials with 227 female characters for observation. A naturalized reality distinct from the conventional ideal of beauty, the Filipino primetime commercials depict women's bodies as places of struggle, where problems are humanized, and where commercial products must be applied or used to correct her body's vulnerability to ugliness and disrepair.(Communication & 2019, 2019)

Though there have been some encouraging developments, there is still an underrepresentation of women and a distortion of femininity and masculinity in the media. Regarding the extent of the media's influence, results from three meta-analyses show a weak but steady correlation between watching a lot of television and expressing more gender stereotypes. In regards to the nature of these effects, analyses show a strong correlation between the use of screen media by young people and their attitudes toward gender roles in general, their viewpoints regarding the

significance of appearance for girls and women, their stereotyping of toys, activities, and jobs, and their endorsement of traditional sexual roles. We propose a number of strategies to further this discipline, such as adding more theories (e.g., stereotype threat), concentrating on boys and teenagers from ethnic minorities, and emphasizing developmental milestones. (Ward & Grower, 2020)

The influence of the media on society's perceptions cannot be overstated. Stories, whether told through ancient epics or modern cinema, play a central role in constructing social narratives. Media has the power to challenge stereotypes, redefine beauty standards and empower women by offering them diverse and nuanced roles.

Efforts to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes and provide platforms for women to share their stories are essential. The representation of women in the media should not be limited to narrow archetypes, but should reflect the diversity of experiences and the complexity of women and life. Not only creators, but also consumers need to critique media and demand stories that promote inclusion and empowerment.

Call to Action: Promoting Engagement

Creating an environment where women feel empowered to speak out against injustice and where their choices about appearance or lifestyle are respected requires a concerted societal effort. Educational initiatives that promote gender equality and critical thinking can be key steps in dismantling entrenched stereotypes.

Legal measures and community support systems are equally important to combat and prevent gender-based violence and discrimination. The priority should be implementing policies that protect women and women's rights and promote gender equality. In addition to legislation, the promotion of cultural changes, where participation and justice are first, requires continuous efforts at the level of society, institutions, and individuals.

Discussions and Conclusions

A complex tapestry emerges by examining the beauty and its complex relationship to social norms, power dynamics, and individual inaction. From historical figures like Rani Lakshmi Bai to fictional characters in plays and films, women have constantly challenged society's expectations and stereotypes. The multifaceted nature of beauty presented in mythology, literature, and cinema makes us think critically about social norms. Every individual, community and institution is responsible for challenging oppressive norms and paving the way to a more inclusive and just society.

Efforts to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and create platforms for women to share their stories are essential to promoting positive change. Recognizing and celebrating the resilience of women who challenge the norm is a tribute to their courage and a collective effort towards a more just future. The role of both traditional and digital media is central to this engagement journey. It acts as a mirror reflecting social attitudes and at the same time as a catalyst for change. By claiming and creating stories that empower women and challenge stereotypes, we help shape a fairer and more just world.

Going through the complexities of beauty, strength, and resistance, let's continue the lessons of history, mythology, and cinema. Let's amplify the voices of those who challenge norms, celebrate diversity, and work together for a society where every individual, regardless of gender, can thrive and contribute to the prosperity of a truly inclusive and just world.

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