

Commodified Bodies- A Study of Portrayal of Goan Women by Bollywood

Smitha Bhandare Kamat

Smitha Bhandare Kamat- Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, S.S.Dempo College of Commerce and Economics, Panjim-Goa 403001, India

Abstract: Purpose is to study the stereotypical projection of Goan women by Bollywood over the decades. Women of Goan origin have in the past till date found space in Hindi Cinema right from 'Julie' in the seventies to 'Finding Fanny' in 2014. The Study attempts to see whether the Goan woman is more in line with 'Commodified Bodies' or much beyond it.

Objectives: (1) to understand the concept of Commodified Bodies in the context of Bollywood in general and Goan women in particular. (2) To understand the Goan perspective in this regard.

Design/methodology/approach: Apart from a review of secondary data, a survey of the local community is undertaken to get an insight of their perception of the same. Simple Percentage Method, with Bar Chart Analysis is undertaken.

Respondents: 30 respondents were picked up at random (Convenience Sampling was adopted).

Research limitations: The survey was restricted to the city of Panjim and the suburbs and as such the findings cannot be generalized.

Findings: Adult Goans and Teenage Goans differ in their views w.r.t commodifying the body. What was once viewed as objectification of the body by one set of generation seems to have more acceptances by the younger generation. Although, adult women and teenaged girls are comparatively not comfortable as their counterparts with the commodification of Goan women by Bollywood.

Originality/value: This study attempts to fill the gap of a very under-researched area namely Goan woman projected in Bollywood Cinema.

Keywords: Goan women projected in Bollywood Cinema, Commodified Bodies.

1. INTRODUCTION

'Goa is one destination where fun never sets!!!' is by and large the universal claim by all and sundry. 'Fun' here is indeed a very subjective expression and far from being sporadic. Consistently it has two versions. One which points towards the naive exhilaration experienced in the arms of picturesque image of the State. The famed sunny beaches, the tall white churches, the serene temples, the undulating fields, the Gothic architecture, the Indo-Lusio culture and much more such pleasant aesthetic rendezvous. Apart from an idealistic sugar and spice tourist portfolio, Goa has another version, the feral side which attracts much media and visitor's attention. A side where 'fun' means drugs, booze, sex, casinos and the dark underbelly of the State. Over the decades, Goa has proved an ideal destination for the spiritualists and the religious minded alike, as also the naturalists, adventurers, exhibitionists, party animals and drug addicts. It balances this conflicting image with unbelievable equilibrium and propels the tourism industry forward. And in this drive ahead the role of media in general and Bollywood in particular cannot be undermined. And the projection of the women in Goa has raised many a sensitive gender issues. Is this a valid assertion? This study is an attempt to examine the same.

Bollywood a powerful medium has been instrumental if not the main thrust in building the State's image. Is it an image that more often than not is skewed, prejudiced and stereotypical in nature? A closer look at any of the Bollywood films

depicting Goa - be it Julie of the seventies, Sagar of the eighties, Dil Chahata hai of the nineties or Finding Fanny which was released not over a year ago lays stress on -1. The natural beauty. 2. Women and culture. The natural exquisiteness of this State (which is blessed more than generously by mother nature) is pertinently over projected in the Hindi cine blitz. The fact that Goa is stripped of its finery, the virgin white shores are more than concretized and the mounting garbage has changed the pictographic tourist centric landscape has conveniently escaped the Bollywood's creative minds. Except of course, for a few documentary films, the mainstream cinema still adheres to the syrupy, idealistic depiction of the State.

Again, the Hindi cine world for some strange reason overplays the culture card. It finds the catholic community the element of focal interest, where Michael, Tony or Anthony are the proverbial drunkards always in a state of stupor. They can merrily download barrels of beer, Feni or Urrack the local concoction. While the girls be they Julie, Anna or Fanny are bold and don't shy in taking initiative to entice men. In other words, they are easy and available at the drop of the hat. Goans are also projected as good for nothings except to open pubs, sell liquor, party all night and speak 'Hinglish'. A comical combination of select Konkanni, Hindi and English words. Time and again the women folk seem to revel in plunging necklines and micro minis, while the men roam the streets in vests, Bermudas topped with a tweed hat. This portrayal is miles from reality. Unfortunately this stereotypical projection is overemphasized to the extent it is predictable. Essentially, Bollywood for reasons best known to the industry indulges in it's pet exercise of a peculiar skewed depiction of Goa and Goan woman in particular. Thus, nurturing a deviant belief that gets deeply ingrained in the minds and hearts of probably every domestic tourist setting foot here. A belief that is tantamount to Goa, nevertheless an intimidating fact which comes as no surprise to the host community. There have been intermittent remonstrations, demonstrations, protests in the past eventually the locals now shrug it off and move on with life. The Study attempts to take a look at all these myriad yet conventional interpretations and projection of this exotic State and its people, particularly the women folk.

Statement of the Problem:

The study will be first of its kind, keeping in mind the fact that projection of Goan women in Bollywood is a topic that at the most is passionately discussed and deliberated over a cup of tea. No serious study was/is undertaken. Innumerable films revolving around Goa and the Goan women in particular- be it Julie, Bobby, Trikal, Finding Fanny etc needs to be scrutinized objectively to get an insight about commodification of the bodies of these protagonists representing Goa. The study intends to do the same.

Objectives of the Study:

- To understand the concept of Commodified Bodies in the context of Bollywood in general and Goan women in particular.
- To understand the Goan perspective in this regard.

Scope of the Study: The Study makes an attempt to get an insight of the Goan women being commodified by Bollywood, more over what is the Goan perspective in this regard.

Design/methodology/approach: Apart from a review of secondary data, a survey of the local community is undertaken to get an insight of their perception of the same. Simple Percentage Method, with Bar Chart Analysis is undertaken.

Respondents: 30 respondents were picked up at random (Convenience Sampling adopted).

Limitations of the Study: The survey was restricted to the city of Panjim and the suburbs and as such the findings cannot be generalized.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Goa has fascinated Bollywood Writers, Directors, Producers and the audience as well. Its exceptional beauty, its unique culture and it's warm hearted people have a charm of its own. Many a films can be traced to Goa. List of best films linked to Goa, include Jaal (1952), Johar Mehmood in Goa (1965), Saat Hindustani (1969), Bombay to Goa (1972), Bobby (1973), Julie (1975), Ek duuje Ke Liye (1981), Pukar (1983), Trikal (1985) and Saagar (1985). There is also Jalwa (1987), Goonj (1989), Kabhi Haan Kabhi Na (1993), Khamoshi-The Musical (1996), Josh (2000), Musafir (2004), Dhoom (2004), My Brother Nikhil (2005), Shabd (2005), and Holiday (2006), **Noronha Frederick (2007)**. Most of the above mentioned films have invariably got the women of Goa involved, many a time playing the protagonist. More recently, Deepika Padukone, playing the lead role in Finding Fanny objected to objectification of the body. In this

regard, **De Shobhaa (2014)**, in her article in the Week on Finding Fanny... and a cleavage too states, '*It would be wonderful if even a portion of the current Bollywood outrage over an exposed cleavage could be channelled into a more substantive and meaningful dialogue involving the representation of women in cinema*'. Research too supplements this sad fact. Research facts released by the Geena Davis Institute on Women in Media supported by UN Women and The Rockefeller Foundation, claimed Indian films top the list in objectifying women on screen. A sample survey showed Indian films have largely depicted the women in sexualised roles **Srivasta Priyanka (2014)**. **Bedi Shibani (2014)** observes that from Bobby to Saagar to Julie to any movie set in Goa or with Goans, it has to have that one girl who wears mini-skirts/skirts, has an anglicised way of talking and is open about her sexuality or at least the idea of equal participation without trembling with coyness, feigned or real. **Dubey Bharati (2007)**, opines that there have been films in the recent past that have gone back to either distorting or stereotyping the Christian community. In other words, a hit formula is followed time and again in plots such as Julie which portrayed a Christian girl involved in pre-marital sex. There have been instances in the past when Christian girls were portrayed as being 'advanced'. Wearing a frock or drinking does not tantamount to someone not having character. Time and again Goan related films have indulged in stereotypical projection of man and women. In Deepa Gahlot in Frederick Noronha's writeup- 'The Goa's film Connection', comments "*Hindi films have had many characters with (Goan) names like Pinto, Braganza, Fernandes, Gonsalves, D'Costa and D'Silva; lots of Monicas, Rosies, Michaels and Monas. Two films with Goan heroines named 'Julie' have been made, and the legendary Bobby was also a Braganza from Goa. One of Amitabh Bachchan's most loved characters (Amar Akbar Anthony) was called Anthony Gonsalves.*" But critics suggests that some films showed Goa as a stereotype. In the very same write up journalist Jerry Pinto observes "*Hindi cinema represents Goans as people on the margins of society*". **Noronha Frederick (2007)**.

But, there are others who hold a different view. Like the Goan film critic Sachin Chatte who believes that –'*It is a misconception that every woman in a Hindi movie who wears a skirt is Goan, but this idée fixe exists in the minds of many. It's a myth that Bollywood stereotypes Goa, and this stereotype doesn't originate from Bollywood but from the very people who buy into the myth without evidence*'. He also believes that Bollywood has evolved and changed considerably. But some people, have unevolved themselves and have failed to observe that the world outside does not always conform to their suspicions and prejudices **Chatte Sachin (2014)**.

Nonetheless, Bollywood has a powerful role in shaping mindsets and behaviors in India. **Tulshyan Ruchika (2014)** argues, '*.. it's much more than just an entertainment industry. Movies have reflected the aspirations of many Indians for decades. Often, celebrities are revered in a manner akin to religious fervor. Rather than inspiring social change for women to be truly sexually empowered women are stereotyped as one image and that image is of perfection. Robert Trapp (2009) too observes consumer advertising negatively objectifies women, conforming to a misogynist perception of women as commodifiable sex objects That image does not allow women to be viewed as diverse, individual women. It is interesting to note that the androgynous ideal of female body originally surfaced in the western culture during the 1960s as women sought to distance themselves from the domesticating roles of wife and mother Austin Reshma (2012). The change in the West and the parameters defining 'beauty' or objectifying beauty crept into other parts of the world. Influenced by international standards of beauty, the well rounded, voluptuous heroines that characterized Hindi films through the 1980s have been replaced by thin beauties.*' (**Derne 133**). Thus, the role models for women shown by media give precedence to physical criteria over intellectual ones. The images shown of women encourage other women in practice to perceive normal bodies and normal physical functions as problems **Julia Wood (2011)**.

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986(Act No. 60 of 1986) ;Section 2(c) prohibits indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner. Indecent representation of women means the depiction in any, in manner of the figure of a woman, her form or body or any part thereof in such a way as to have effect of being indecent, or derogatory to or denigrating, women, or is likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals. Nonetheless, women continue to be portrayed in poor light. The recent addition of 'Item Numbers', to Bollywood films, warrants much debate and deliberation. As far as Goan women projection by Hindi films is concerned, the locals here in Goa have in the past taken offence. They have protested against the depiction of Goan women in poor light. Some women's group protested and put up a banner outside INOX which said, "Bollywood b**bs coconut size, brains peanut size", which was far more offensive than anything Goan that Bollywood has portrayed in its chequered history, **Chatte Sachin (2014)**. Hence, media needs to become a potent

instrument of social change need to show a balanced representation and diversity of girls /women on screen; as well as in print, in voice (radio or music) and online /digital media **Shaarma Bhumika (2013)**

3. ANALYSIS

Demographic Profile Of Respondents:

Thirty locals were picked up at random in the Capital City of Panjim and the suburbs. Convenience Sampling was adopted. In order to get equal representation of the sexes the following lots were made.

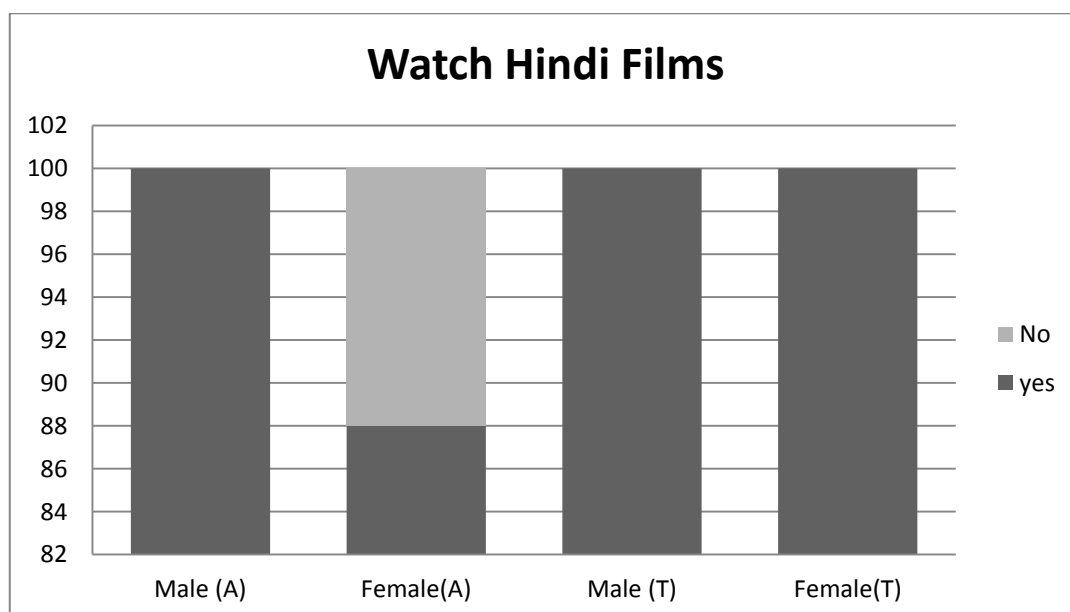
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS			
Category	Age	No	Profession
Adult Male	18 years and above	8	4-professionals/2-service/ 1- self employed/1-unemployed
Adult Female	18 years and above	8	5-service/2-home maker/ 1-retired
Teenage Male	13 years to 17 years	7	6-students/1- service
Teenage Female	13 years to 17 years	7	5-students/2- service

1. Do you watch Hindi Films (Bollywood):

Details	Male		Female		Male		Female		Grand	
	Adults (8)		Adults (8)		Teens (7)		Teens (7)		Total (30)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	8	100	7	88	7	100	7	100	29	97
No	0	0	1	12	0	0	0	0	1	3
Total	8	100	8	100	7	100	7	100	30	100

Source: Primary

When the respondents were asked if they are film buffs, 100 percent of the adult as well as teenage males responded in positive. While only 88 percent of adult females could take time off to watch movies unlike the young girls who seem to love films.



Source: Primary

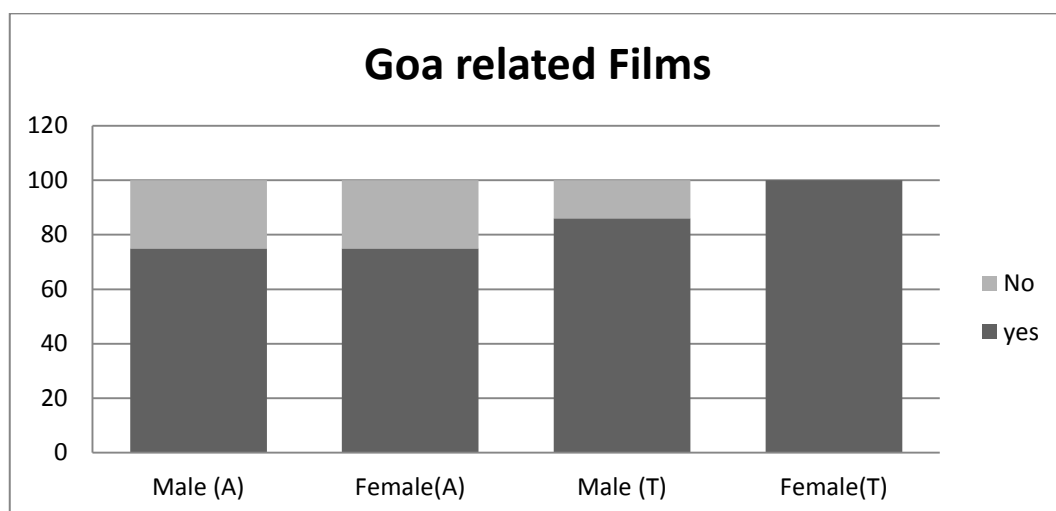
The above chart shows the overwhelming hold Bollywood has on the people. And if time could permit, adult women too would have loved to watch movies. Undoubtedly, Bollywood is one of the most popular mode of entertainment.

2. Have you watched the following: a) Julie b) Dil Chahata hai c) Finding Fanny d) Bobby e) Pukar f) Khabi ha Khabi Na g) Josh h) Kamoshi I) any other Goa related:

Details	Male		Female		Male		Female		Grand	
	Adults (8)		Adults (8)		Teens (7)		Teens (7)		Total (30)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	6	75	6	75	6	86	6	100	29	97
No	2	25	2	25	1	14	1	0	1	3
Total	8	100	8	100	7	100	7	100	30	100

Source: Primary

Teenaged females, (a whopping cent percent), seems to have made it a point to watch Goa related films, as compared to their counterparts i.e 86%. While 75% of both male and female adults have watched Bollywood films concerning Goa and Goans.



Source: Primary

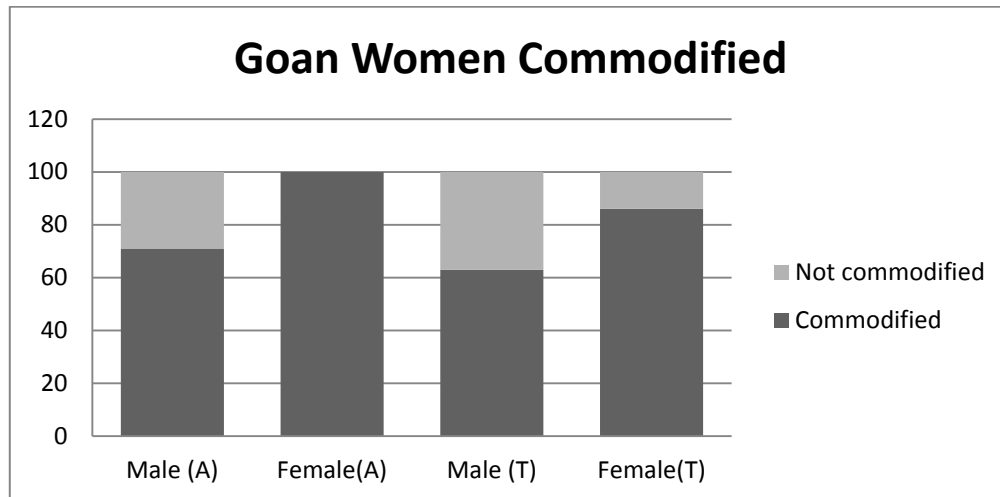
The above chart depicts that youngsters seem to show more interest in Goa and Goan related films as compared to the earlier generation. More particularly, young girls are fascinated by such movies.

• **Are Goan women in Bollywood- a) Commodified b) Not Commodified:**

Details	Male		Female		Male		Female		Grand	
	Adults (8)		Adults (8)		Teens (7)		Teens (7)		Total (30)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Commodified	6	71	8	100	4	63	6	86	24	97
Not Commodified	2	29	0	0	3	37	1	14	6	3
Total	8	100	8	100	7	100	7	100	30	100

Source: Primary

When respondents were asked as to whether Goan women are projected as sex objects. The views of one generation differ from the other. What was once objected seems to have more acceptances. For instance 71% of male adult opine that Goan women are objectified against 63% of teenage male. While, 100% adult female agree that Goan women are indeed objectified just as 86% of young girls feel so.



Source: Primary

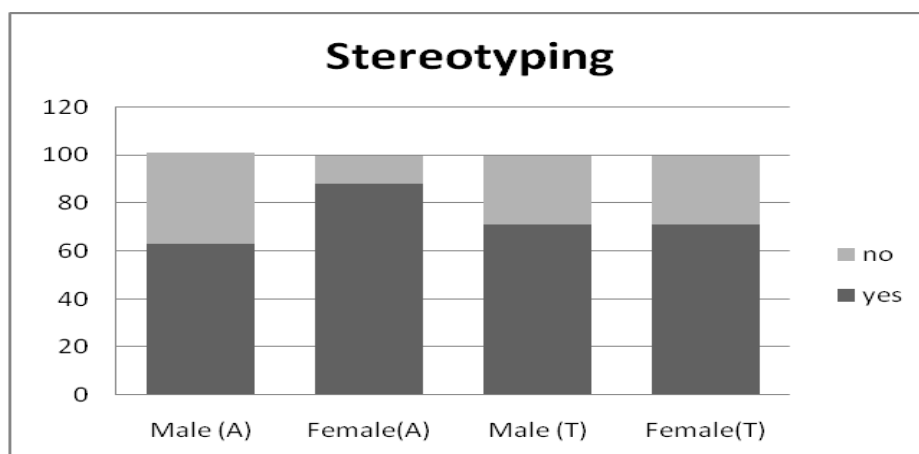
With regard to the above chart, women both young and old seem to opine that projection of Goan women is more of commodification than expression of talent. What was once objectional to members of society seems to have greater acceptance as of today. Be it sense of dressing, dance or relation between the opposite sexes. Pre-marital affair, extra marital affairs, or even working in pubs etc are acceptable then it was in the past.

• **Are these films Stereotyping women in general and Goan community in particular :**

Details	Male Adults (8)		Female Adults (8)		Male Teens (7)		Female Teens (7)		Grand Total (30)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	5	63	7	88	5	71	5	71	22	73
No	3	38	1	12	2	29	2	29	8	27
Total	8	100	8	100	7	100	7	100	30	100

Source: Primary

As for stereotyping the Goan women as illiterate, bold and available, sporting skimpy clothes etc is concerned, surprisingly, the teenage male as compared to the adult male agrees, at 71% and 63% respectively. 88% of the adult female and 71% of the teenage girls also agree in this regard.



Source: Primary

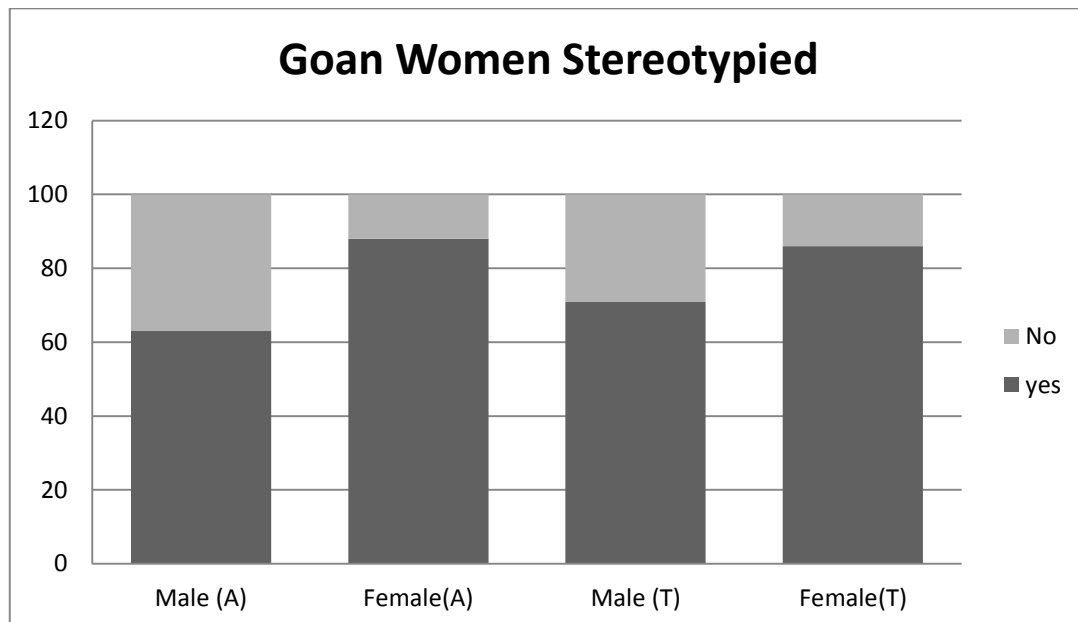
With reference to the above chart. It is obvious that adult female respondents firmly believe that Goan women are stuck with their pathetic projection by Bollywood. While 71% of the youngsters irrespective of gender also agree.

• **Do you object to such objectification of Goan women:**

Details	Male Adults (8)		Female Adults (8)		Male Teens (7)		Female Teens (7)		Grand Total (30)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	5	63	7	88	5	71	6	86	23	77
No	3	37	1	12	2	29	1	14	7	23
Total	8	100	8	100	7	100	7	100	30	100

Source: Primary

Young male seem to take more offense i.e 71% object to the projection of Goan women in poor light against 63% of adult male. The women irrespective of age too don't approve of such projection.



Source: Primary

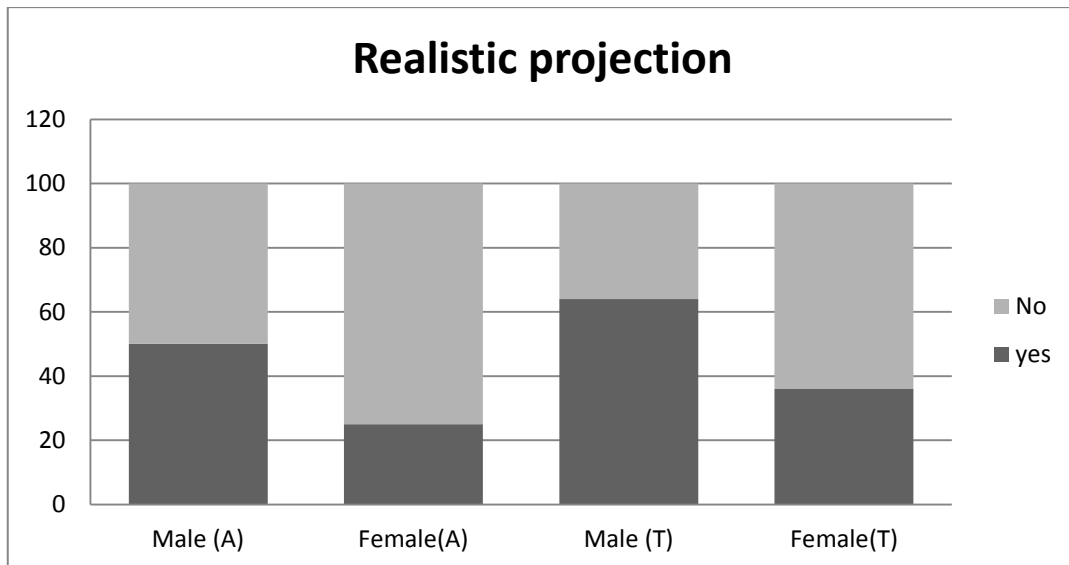
With respect to the above chart, on an average 87% of the female respondents object to the stereotypical projection of women. The men comparatively seem not to give much importance to this aspect.

• **Is it realistic projection:**

Details	Male Adults (8)		Female Adults (8)		Male Teens (7)		Female Teens (7)		Grand Total (30)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	4	50	2	25	4	64	3	36	16	53
No	4	50	6	75	3	36	4	64	14	47
Total	8	100	8	100	7	100	7	100	30	100

Source: Primary

The views of the young male and female seem to be conflicting. 64% of the young male opine that the projection of the women is realistic while only 36% of young female agree.



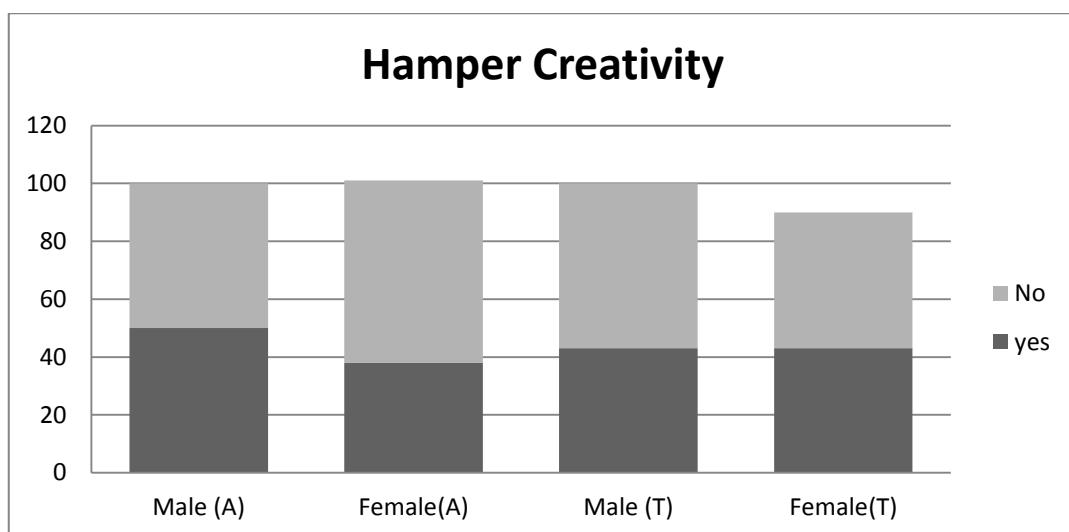
With reference to above chart, it throws light to the conflicting views of the members of society. The adult male appear to be undecided, the adult women are very certain the reel projection is far from reality, while the youngster too gave opposing response.

• **Protesting against such depiction will hamper creativity and freedom of expression**

Details	Male Adults (8)		Female Adults (8)		Male Teens (7)		Female Teens (7)		Grand Total (30)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	4	50	3	38	3	43	3	43	13	40
No	4	50	5	62	4	57	4	57	17	60
Total	8	100	8	100	7	100	7	100	30	100

Source: Primary

In the light of protest and objection to the projection of Goan women by Bollywood, and its impact on creativity and freedom of expression, the respondents by and large (50%to 62%) believe it will not. 62% female adult respondents staunchly believe protest will not hamper creativity.



Source: Primary

The above chart depicts the fact that all respondents irrespective of age and gender believe that healthy protest and dialogue will not have an impact on the qualitative aspect of the movies, rather it will trigger a research environment before projection of Goan women is out on the celluloid.

4. CONCLUSION

- 1) Innumerable movies including international ones have been produced, and directed in Goa. Films revolving around Goa took particular interest in its social culture, natural landscape and more often about the Goan women. Be it Julie, Trikal, Bobby or the recent Finding Fanny.
- 2) Goans are great fans of Bollywood and irrespective of age and gender flock to the theatres. Young teenage girls seem to watch more films than any other class of viewers.
- 3) There is a general perception that Bollywood has been instrumental in projecting , Goa as a land of vices and the women here are stereotyped as easy and available.
- 4) The films have projected the local women and those especially belonging to the Christian community in a stereotypical and commodified manner.
- 5) Though the films over the years have objectified women, however the perception of viewing the same seems to have undergone a change. Sense of dressing, dancing and having affairs which was once considered scandalous if not blasphemous has witnessed more acceptance with the new generation.
- 6) As compared to men the women irrespective of their age, believe Goan women are projected in poor light and this biased projection is far from reality. It may be interesting to note that Goan women have made a mark for themselves in various fields, a fact that is ignored by the reel world. The women of this soil have carved a niche not just at State/national level but at international level as well.
- 7) Though protest and rallies have been undertaken to object to the blatant skewed projection of the women of Goan origin, the local populace believe it will not hamper the creative or violate the right of free expression. Their only worry is in the name of creativity women should not be degraded.
- 8) By and large though Goa and its women folk are given step- motherly treatment by Bollywood, nonetheless this has not adversely impacted the fascination Goans have for Bollywood.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. What is wanting at this point of time is a serious awareness drive about the genuine state of affairs of this beautiful land. Bollywood has to shoulder the onus of projecting an authentic Goa and its people in a proper light.
2. If not an in depth qualitative research at least a basic understanding of this destination needs to be put in by Bollywood wizards, in order to end the skewed, stereotypical projection of the State and its womenfolk.
3. Moreover, a deliberate effort in this direction is solicited from the government both at state as well the centre. Goa, being a popular tourist destination, building a right image and a brand is important. And in this regard a holistic and moreover a realistic plan needs to be drawn up.
4. A society that pays scant attention to its women is lost in time. Bollywood should not hurt the sentiments of these women, because Goa has produced some of the finest women- Reita Faria (Ms. World 1966), Kishore Amonkar (Classical singer), Hema Serdesai (Bollywood Singer), Evana Furtado (Chess child protégé) and many more.
5. Bollywood should attempt to show more female protagonists films. To undo the past errors, maybe a couple of films dedicated to the brainy and bold women in Goa could do.
6. Many Goan films are entering the fray and have won National awards e.g. Nachuya Kumpasar etc. But, these are more in tune with regional and parallel cinema. Commercial films a la Bollywood are still a far away dream. Goa being a permanent venue for IFFI (International Film Festival of India) does not seem to be enough. Much more is warranted in this area of filmdom.

7. The bottom line is- A vigilant government is appreciated but an equally alert public is warranted who can differentiate the wheat from the chaff. Time to shed gullibility and move with the times and in this regard if the role of social media is undermined it would be an understatement of this study.

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