

5th Chidananda Dasgupta Memorial Competition for Film Criticism 2024 :

Certificate of Merit

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***Animal* Reinforces the Patriarchy in India**



The movie *Animal* (Hindi), released in theaters in December 2023, deals with significant issues such as male dominance, domestic violence, masculine and gangster crime. The movie directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga associated with writing and edited by him through the criminal misogynistic perspective. His previous movies male-led were contradictory and problematic such as *Arjun Reddy* (Telegu, 2017) & *Kabir Singh* (Hindi, 2019) depicted protagonists as angry young men, and misogyny through the male perspective (Pandey, 2023).

The criminal protagonist is taken aback when he sees a female character (Gitanjali), who has ended her engagement to marry him. The protagonist has been stereotypically represented as a strong brother, dominant & masculine husband, hyper-angry and powerful son, criminal gangster, murderer, & amoral human. That has become problematic narration in general to society & especially for women. Therefore, Sandeep Reddy

Venga's selection of stories & way of story narration have quite Brahmanical perspectives, His protagonists are misogynistic, criminal, discriminatory, and exploitative to the female characters in the cinema. It looks at how women are represented, the power dynamics between genders, and the overall impact on cultural perceptions of gender roles.

**An Overview of the Plot**

Indian films often focus on gender representation, stereotypes, agency, and power dynamics. The depiction of assault within the context of the film involves assailants employing a combination of sexual, physical, and verbal aggression, while female characters are portrayed as actively resisting the assault. The stereotypical and exaggerated portrayal of these female characters in Hindi cinema depicting instances of sexual assault raises concerns regarding the potential reinforcement of inappropriate perceptions

concerning the purpose of female bodies in the context of such assaults (Manohar & Kline, 2014). The misogynist protagonist Ranvijay Singh played by Ranbir Kapoor, Grew up in an elite upper-caste & higher-class business family.

Ranvijay adores his dad Balbir Singh played by Anil Kapoor as the richest businessmen in the country. As a father, he couldn't spend enough time with his family, especially with his children. The consequences are that Ranvijay is using violence to resolve every issue. He has become a criminal, killer, and gangster to protect the family. The character is gradually misogynist and criminal with the kind support of spectators. Audiences are consciously or unconsciously accepted to sexist and criminal protagonists on the screen.

Sandeep Reddy Venga's protagonist is angry, short temper and criminal with tortures or exploits females according to the Brahmanical values in daily life. Ranvijay is never one thing to suite for the protagonist, He has two sisters, and there is never a bond between younger brother and sisters. He killed his sister's husband. Sandeep Reddy Venga's mother, sisters, and girlfriend's characters are massively coming out through Manu's societal norms. These female characters are massively stereotypical and portrayed within the boundary of Brahmanical patriarchal laws. The movie *Animal* depicts the mother as a survivor, she provides coffee, and food to dominant male members as the ideal mother/wife. Moreover, Ranvijay has misbehaved with his girlfriend (Gitanjali) treating her as edible.

As a girlfriend, Gitanjali has been represented stereotypically through the

Brahmanical male perspective. From the beginning of the movie, she is portrayed as a victim as a girlfriend, and after intermission sifted into the mode of lifetime victimization as wife & mother. Gitanjali is the main character of Ranvijay's other girlfriend Triptii Dimri played as Zoya.

### **Toxic Masculinity**

Sandeep Reddy Venga has utilized the women characters to glorify the Brahmanical patriarchy through the female bodies from male lenses. It has two girlfriends to bearing sexual violence and domestic violence as well as these female characters is enjoying the trauma of victimization. Spectators are enjoining the scopophilia with the male character; director has sharply successfully achieved spectator's supports to criminal, immoral protagonist. Zoya's characters is misleading the female agency, she had intercourse with married man who is sexist & misogynist. Without considering wife, the man can make extra marital affairs and connecting physical at time several women. According to Hindu marriage act one cannot marry or extra marital affair without divorce (Diwan, 1955). It has great attempt to normalize the Brahmanical patriarchal values and attempts to glorify the male dominant societal norms through the musical, criminal or dramatically entertainment. From the initial to end the movie revolve around the girls, gun, Goli, bikes, bullets, blood, victim, gender-based violence, toxic masculinity, sexual assault and that has male mind has considers females are used for men.

Moreover, Sandeep Reddy Venga's *Animal* is not problematic narration; his previous work like *Arjun Redy* (2017) and

*Kabir Singh* (2019) were contradictory movies. His perspective of presenting women on the screen is prejudicial about the women. It's matter as director what kind of stories you are telling and how you are presenting the protagonists or antagonists on the silver screen. Arjun Reddy, depicted as a youthful surgeon grappling with alcohol dependency and intense anger, undergoes a downward spiral upon discovering his girlfriend's impending marriage to another man. It has created issues for his girlfriend's future life as well as himself. Discover the gripping story of *Kabir Singh*, a medical student whose life spirals out of control. The protagonist represented as alcoholic, hyper temper, Drugs or smoker, arrogant, immoral, low broker, and irresponsible person. Both movies are popular, and *Animal* is considered as hit movie in Indian subcontinent. It has created social tension or inequality, maybe symbolically the portrayal of characters akin to him, characterized by abhorrent traits like misogyny and heightened aggression, is poised to receive adoration from vast audiences.

In a particular scene from the film *Animal*, Ranvijay forcibly removes the hook of Getanjali's bra and repeatedly strikes her with it as she vocalizes distress and pain. Following this violent act, he seeks to absolve his actions by applying ice to her bruised back, and she subsequently acquiesces once more. This sequence in the film endeavors to normalize the notion that women in romantic relationships should accept and endure the psychological instability of their male counterparts, presenting it as a permissible aspect within the dynamics of love. These kinds of sense and sequences have offered a

loaded box to younger spectators. This is problematic or misportrayed by the Brahminical male approach (Kamble & Biswal, 2022). Member of Parliament Ranjeet Ranjan raised the issue that such negative roles and violence are never acceptable. She said, "There are some films *Kabir Singh*, *Pushpa*, and now *Animal*, which show a lot of violence and disrespect to women. My daughter and her college friends are exiting from the middle of the show. The majority of youngsters consider these characters as a role model for them. Movies like *Animal* have massive negative impacts on society. The movie justifies the violence and absence of law and order. How is the censor board allowing movies that are a disease to our society?" (Joy, 2023). In another, Gitanjali challenges him about the atrocities he has committed. He responds, urging her to think from a perspective akin to a man's, 'Yeh chest' (Pointing towards her chest) *Aaisa Nahi, Mere Jaisa Hai*'. And down there is something like I've got. Oppressors enjoy the societal advantage of upper-caste men like Vanga, benefiting from a structure that condones and praises such actions. The prevailing social order, favoring men, often overlooks or accepts displays of power dynamics, fostering toxic masculinity. This societal setup rarely acknowledges discomfort, especially among men witnessing such behavior, as they benefit from patriarchy. Furthermore, it perpetuates harmful narratives by belittling the pain experienced by menstruating women, reinforcing toxic patriarchal beliefs surrounding female pain.

It is pertinent to analyze two specific scenes in the film '*Animal*,' seemingly crafted

to confront critics of Vanga's prior works. In one instance, Gitanjali reproaches Ranvijay for smoking following multiple surgeries, to which he retorts by threatening physical violence, stating, 'I'll slap you so hard like I slap those men.' This particular dialogue appears to exert a persuasive influence on viewers, potentially normalizing both physical and verbal abuse within marital or relationship dynamics. Subsequently, Gitanjali's anger dissipates as Ranvijay placates her by inserting ear pods containing a recording of their intimate moments, insinuating that female fury is volatile and easily assuaged by such gestures. The problem with the film is not the harrowing display of violence, but rather its justification and validation of the protagonist's anger, gender-based violence, and mass murder. Furthermore, the protagonist faces no consequences for his actions and instead gains an invigorated audience.

### **Intersectionality**

In the film, the character Abrar ul Haque, portrayed by Bobby Deol, is the antagonist and has three wives. He gets married for the third time, being a Muslim. The protagonist of the film has a criminal past while the antagonist is portrayed as a highly sexist, inhumane, and misogynistic character who also eats raw beef. The director has depicted his character as an angry monster and interestingly his anger towards his wives more than his enemy. Bobby Deol's portrayal of Abrar in the film exemplifies an escalated level of problematic content as he gathers three of his wives in his quarters, forcibly undresses one, physically assaults another, and coerces himself upon his most recent

spouse. This particular scene stands out as one of the most troubling instances within Indian cinema in the past decade. It not only normalizes and implicitly endorses the concept of marital rape but also fails to establish any form of accountability for the perpetrator's actions. Abrar, depicted as a horrifying character who perpetrates heinous acts with impunity, remains unjudged by the film's narrative, instead positioning him as a formidable antagonist to the hero, romanticizing their conflict. The use of an emotional song as a backdrop to their confrontation aims to evoke empathy for these estranged brothers, diverting attention from the underlying toxic masculinity prevalent throughout the narrative. The portrayal of the character Abrar ul Haque exhibits stereotypical biases often associated with Islamophobia. Notably, the depiction of three female characters falls into stereotyped or metonymic representations, viewed through a lens of non-Muslim and superior perspectives. The wives of Abrar are predominantly depicted as victims of sexual assault and physical torment, mirroring real-life instances of double exploitation faced by Muslim women, perpetuating the Brahminical imagination on screen as well.

### **Concussion:**

The excessive duration, nonlinear narrative, and explicit portrayal of various forms of violence (physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual) bear resemblance to Gaspar Noé's 'Irreversible' and Sergio Leone's 'Once Upon a Time in America.' These films notably employ elaborate and disturbing rape scenes as a narrative tool, catering to voyeuristic tendencies (Pandey, 2023). Criticism is

directed towards the film for seemingly endorsing and legitimizing the protagonist's youthful indiscretions and misogynistic tendencies without holding him accountable for his actions. Moreover, it attempts to glorify male dominance through the male perspective. The film in question presents a protagonist whose misogyny is not only justified but also validated, without any mention of the repercussions of his actions. Furthermore, the narrative seeks to glorify male dominance through a singularly male perspective. The aforementioned themes are presented with a sense of confidence, indicating a deliberate attempt to promote male superiority while neglecting the impact of such a portrayal on society and its values.

Sandeep Reddy Vanga's monstrous attack on feminism, workerism, and liberalism with monstrous rage and unabashed violence and gore are wickedly entertaining. The movie *Animal* is a celebration of violence and uncontrollable rage from start to finish, and the director smartly creates an emotional core for this rage to radiate by giving it reason, character, and the necessary push to make it real.

Title: *Animal*

Director: Sandeep Reddy Vanga

Producer: Gulshan Kumar & Others

Year: 2023

Length: 204 Minutes

Original language: Hindi (subtitles available)

Genre: Crime, Action & Drama

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