

Film Review of 'Heroic Saviours and Survivors': The Representation of Sex Trafficking in Popular Films in India

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Abstract : One of the most poignant forms of organized crime against women, which has rarely made it to the world of Indian cinema, is that of sex trafficking, i.e. the forcible involvement of women in the sex trade through fraud or coercion (Hughes, 2005). In the space of Indian cinema, much of the spotlight has been on the sensational drug trafficking and gang mafia of Bombay. During our research on sex trafficking, the rehabilitated women interviewed often expressed strong criticism about mass media's naive portrayal of prostitutes as money-minting, happy and sexually driven women. They argued that this unrealistic portrayal ignored the fact that this was not a reality for the majority of trafficked women. Given the gravity of sex trafficking as a human rights issue, it is, therefore, refreshing to see three recent films on sex trafficking in Indian Languages – Naa Bangaaru Talli (2014, Telugu), Mardaani (2014, Hindi) and Lakshmi (2014, Hindi). This paper reviews these three films to explore the portrayal of the everyday reality of trafficking for women. Film analysis was used to understand the representation of psychological issues in the media. The strength of these movies starts with their inspirations which are of true stories and that they are all aimed at bringing awareness about the issue of sex trafficking, which is a rising social evil in Indian society though none of the three films move to portray the next phase of rehabilitation and reintegration of victims, which is a very complex and important process in the life of a survivor. According to findings, survivors of sex trafficking find the rehabilitation and reintegration into society to be a slow and tough part of their life as they continuously face stigma and social exclusion and have to strive to live against all odds of non-acceptance starting from their family.

Keywords : film review, Indian films, sex trafficking, survivors

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