

# PRIORITIZING STALKING AS POPULAR CULTURE IN REGIONAL FILMS

**M. Samandha Smith**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication  
Sathyabama University, Chennai -119, Tamil Nadu, India*

**Abstract:** India is a vast diverse country that commonly personifies every natural being as a woman. But the status of a woman in such a country which is rapidly progressing is under threat. The recent Rohtak's gang rape is a heinous sexual offence happened in Haryana is a copycat crime of Nirbhaya, that has its root to the constant stalking to the victim by the accused previously. In India, commonly, woman in most regional films are portrayed as a sacred slave and a passive acceptor of whatever comes by her way in the form of love wooing. A filmmaker prominently focuses on stalking to show what exists in real; this reinforces the thoughts of an audience, therefore increases violence against women in reality. Henceforth, the present study focuses on the content in regional films of Dhanush (Bollywood and Kollywood) that prioritizes stalking as the key factor of the film. The overall aim of this study is to find out the passive violence thrust in the name of stalking on the female protagonist character in the media texts of the selected regional films. The study ends with the recommendations of mainstream discussions around stalking which needs a systematic check in media text, further this may create a limelight on the issues that focuses on the sexual assault awareness and curb the suppressive thoughts and gender bias to create a well balanced society on gender concerns. As said by the former Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women". The media in the resurgent India needs to rethink what popular culture it communicates.

**Keywords:** Stalking, Bollywood Films, Kollywood, Acid-Attack, Woman Status, Eve-Teasing.

**Introduction:** Filmmaking is a huge business in India, the Indian Cinema has completed its 100<sup>th</sup> year recently, surpassing a century it is the fastest growing industry that adapts the recent technologies available and also experiments newer version. Indian film industry produces 1500 to 2000 films every year in more than 20 languages; this is the largest film industry in the world.

According to IHS market survey, the Indian film industry is the prolific industry ranks third position in the world having \$ 1.9 Billion dollar marketing among the top 20 international Box office markets. Further Indians are the highest movie ticket buyers with the rate of 2.7 Billion sales annually. The Indian film industry earning is largely contributed by Bollywood, with the dominant income of 43 percent and the rest of 57 percent is contributed by the regional cinemas. Bollywood or Kollywood had reinforced certain behaviors in the audience mind which had a created a huge impact over the society. According to Dictionary.com stalking is the act of harassing a person illegally, aggressively or in a threatening manner. This term is interpreted has love in Bollywood / Kollywood while in the rest of the world it means stalking.

Silently stalking has been made a natural act in the Indian films but the consequences are very worse in real. The society is to be blamed always, but who shapes this society in a very repugnant manner. The increased fearlessness of stalkers and their violent malice behavior have their roots in the Indian Cinema. The recent gruesome cases happening in India lead to a threatening situation for the women status.

The common structure in the Bollywood or Kollywood love genre films are as following, the protagonist introduced, he sees the heroine, develops a crush on the girl, pursues her, the girl rejects him, if she says 'No' then it means 'Yes', this is a common taboo in Indian Cinema where a girls' No is Yes, now the Hero is persuaded by his friends through a common factor "Don't give up, keep trying until she is yours because this is true love". This persuasion fascinates the girl and finally the hero gets the heroine, then she is madly in love with hero. This behavior has been accepted, admired by the audience and followed in real but these practices leads to the punishable offence under section 354D of Indian Penal Code Stalking (1) and 'Eve teasing' (Sexual Harassment). Though severe acts proposed against Stalking, there are gruesome crimes happening in the name of stalking.

Social misconstructions will lead to repugnant consequences such as the recent gang rape in Haryana's Rohtak on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017, a 20-year old woman was gang raped by the main accused who had stalked her with the demands to marry him and shattered her skull and inserted sharp objects in her private parts. This is one of the most violent cases resulted from the vengeance of stalking which is a popular culture that is been glorified and rewarded in the Indian Cinema. If a girl did not reciprocate, the boy decides to end her life, it looks cinematic but this is the real trend in Indian cinemas where there is one song to abuse women for being a heart-breaker. Mostly the drunken hero, called a "soup boy" which was used by the famous star Dhanush in his viral "Kolaveri song" from **Three** movie. Added "Adida Avala" (Hit her, Kick her, Kill her) song from Mayakkam Enna movie shows his likeness towards misogyny. The researcher has identified Stalking has the obnoxious trend influencing Indian men and created has cultural background in wooing women; therefore stalking has to be seen has a threat to the status of Indian women. Thus the researcher attempts to do a content study on Ranjhana and Three of Dhanush from Bollywood and Kollywood respectively.

#### **Objectives:**

- To examine how stalking is prioritized in Dhanush films as popular culture
- To determine whether prioritizing of stalking have an impact on women status
- To analyze how stalking leads to serious threat in real incidents

**Analysis of the Films:** The researcher has chosen Ranjhana and Three of Actor Dhanush films from Bollywood and Kollywood for analyzing the prioritizing of stalking as popular culture. This paper focuses on qualitative analysis of the selected films and show how stalking is prioritized in Dhanush films using coding sheets. Content analysis is used as a method to analyze the films Ranjhana and Three of Dhanush films from Bollywood and Kollywood respectively. These films are based on Romance and love is their content outline. This method is used to analyze films chosen from Dhanush starred Bollywood and Kollywood films. The stalking characters in the films were keenly observed by the researcher. Two coders, one male and one female, both of age 20 years viewed the entire film and coded by observing the stalking characters in the films – their social status, their traits etc.

According to the Sociologist Eoin Deverean (Stewart, Kowaltzke and Stewart, 2007) as quoted by N. Nazini (2016) states that codes identified can be used as one way to analyze representation in films and the content it communicates. The representation of stalking by Romeos in films Ranjhana and Three are analyzed by looking at the codes of outlook and character traits.

#### **Categorization to Do Content Analysis, The Researcher Has Used Four Codes:**

- (a) Social Status (Good Education, Career, Family Background)
- (b) Symbolism of Virtues (Truth, Respectful)
- (c) Domestic Violence (Inflicts pain, Abusive)
- (d) Accepts 'No'
- (e) None of these

The researcher divided the perspective response into two categories: 'Yes' or 'No'. If the content in the stalking scenes reflected positive perspective, the response was coded as Yes, whereas the negative perspective coded as No. The stalking scenes of the entire film were taken as coding units. The tables in the results and discussions are the coding sheets of the coders responded with Y for Yes and N for No for the given codes. Content analysis of the actor Dhanush films Ranjhana and Three of Bollywood and Kollywood respectively are given below:

**Ranjhanaa (2013):** This film directed by Anand L. Rai. The stalker Kundan Shankar (Dhanush) has obsessive one-sided love on ZoyaHaider (SonamKapoor) from a neighbourhood. He wants to pursue the fair-skinned, beautiful north Indian girl by undertaking repeated acts of harassment and threatening to slit his wrist, in a scene he moves further and warns her if she doesn't reciprocate his love, he either kills himself or Zoya. Later Kundan comes to know that Zoya loves Akram (Sikh) says the truth to Zoya family members and he is beaten to death. Later, Zoya keeps silent for the revengeful plot against Kundan in political matters, at the end; as usual she forgives and reciprocates his love at his deathbed.

**Three (2012):** Ram (Dhanush) and Janani (SruthiHasan) are school goers, Ram from a well-versed family and Janani from middle class family, both goes to different school. Ram like umpteen stalkers across India troubles the girl by following her wherever she goes along with his friends. He also joins in the tuition center where

Janani studies just to stalk her. His only aim is to marry the pretty girl. As usual the girls' mind is mesmerized with his troublesome acts in the name of love and she is ready to betray her family's trust for him. At last they are married but he suicides himself due to his Bipolar disorder. Dhanush has made stalking into an art in cinemas. The stereotype of repeatedly troubling women in different films with different heroine has been used commonly in his films.

### Results and Discussions:

**Table I**

Film Name	Social Status
Raanjhana	N
Three	Y

In Table I, the two different films of Dhanush were collected randomly under the genre of love and romance. The coders after watching the stalking scenes shown in the film they marked the perspective through Y or N for the stalker hero social status. Kundan in Raanjhana is lower in social status while with minimal or no education and without good career. Ram in Three is from a good family background and high in social status.

**Table II**

Film Name	Symbolism of Virtues (Truth, Respectful)
Raanjhana	N
Three	N

In Table II, which is about the symbolism of virtues the Kundan in Raanjhana without any virtue publicly, behaves in an abusive manner. Ram in three though raised by high status parents sings about the girl whom he pursues that the white girl has black heart along with his friends without any virtue

**Table III**

Film Name	Domestic Violence (Inflicts Pain, Abusive)
Raanjhana	Y
Three	Y

In Table III the Hero of both the films were analyzed and Kundan in Raanjhana inflicts pain and abuses severely in the name of wooing her. This shows, if the girl turns the boy down then he can react with violence. Ram in three abuses Janani through a song that is verbally abusive.

**Table IV**

Film Name	Accepts 'No'
Raanjhana	Y
Three	Y

In Table IV Kundan never accepts No has an answer, he is obsessed with so called love he is not in a position to accept No from Zoya. Ram in three never accepts No therefore the film depicts stalking as playful and acceptable way to pursue her even when the girl says 'No'.

From the above tables it is clearly pointed that whether Bollywood or Kollywood when it comes to glorifying stalking both the industry extends the same measure. Therefore this shows that the industry prioritizes stalking in their films to high extent, especially when it comes to Dhanush, with minimal physical attributes has been repeatedly doing the same acts of troubling the most desired girl and made this stalking stereotype into the mainstream.

**Stalking Impact in Women Status:** Every film that glorifies women stalking gives a clear tagline saying 'Never give up on true love'. This has been a pivotal factor in the minds of the male moviemakers who stop with only mentoring that boy falling in love is quite natural but the other side of the girls' view not to reciprocate to those feelings is not showcased. This is stated clearly with these stalker prone movies where the characters of these films never accept 'No' as an answer. Reinforcing stalking in the minds of the Indian men through stalker

encouraging Indian cinema is the immediate threat to the women status that has been unspoken for years. (Iswarya v. 2016) this Stalking is a very practical term in Indian cinema which means love.

According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory one can impersonate the behavior of a model through the observational learning and can be anyone we look up to. This proves that the audience tend to get a vicarious reinforcement when he looks at the models who are been rewarded for their behavior – which is the acceptance of love by the girl after extensive harassment. Young men can get carried away by this misconstruction of reward in films influencing them that any man with whatever social background can win the girls heart by mere coercing. This may create Indian men as a by-product of the film fanaticism. This popular media encourages the idea that women would finally give up for a perseverant man who never accepts No as an answer, such a trend leads to repugnant consequences of harassing and even acid-attacks in real.

#### **Real Incidents – Consequences of Stalking:**

- In 2014, at Murisdabad, West Bengal a 19 year old girl named Pinky, a school student was stalked by a boy who showed interest to marry her, as she refused this proposal, the boy roamed about in her streets, and the boy's mother had vengeance over Pinky so she threw acid on her face for rejecting her son.
- Gulnaaz, A 19-year-old girl at Utrakhhand stalked by her college mate. She rejected his proposal therefore he threw acid over her face.
- Sabnam, a 19 year old girl from Bardaman, West Bengal is an acid attack victim. In the year 2014 she rejected the alliance and so the guy came to her house and threw acid over her.
- In 2012, Rina a 19-year girl from Uttarpradesh was travelling in her bike to write her board examination, a boy came and threw acid on her; he was the one who stalked her before a year. These real incidents are just a tip of the iceberg that arises from the consequences of the girl's rejection in stalking. Indian Cinema naturally shows as if the girls are stalked eventually falls in love with the stalker but the ultimate truth is that most girls being stalked end-up being an acid attack victim or psychologically affected persons. This shows that the more Bollywood or Kollywood encourages stalkers Saga where the Romeos cannot accept 'No' for an answer, the consequences prevail. For a nation, which is so obsessed in Cinema, it is the sole responsibility of the film medium to concentrate on the media texts it delivers and the impact of reinforcement it creates on the minds of the Indian men.

**Conclusion:** From the analysis of actor Dhanush movies Raanjhana and Three it shows that stalking is celebrated as a normal way to woo a girl and the violence to make her accept is all the more encouraged openly in Indian cinemas. Dhanush with limited physical features often wins the heart of a rich, fair-skinned, slim girl through repeated stalking. The entire Indian Cinema revolves around stalking as an act of romance. The movies have silently created this vicious circle; it reflects society and also influences the source which devastates the status of women.

These two movies Raanjhana and Three of Dhanush are just a sample of wide population of films that praises stalking as usual. This shows that the Indian Cinema influences the audience brains in imaging stalking as a normal behavior. In most Indian states, there is restriction in counter-gender interaction, lack of sex-education, lack of opposite gender understanding therefore men are forced to learn cues from popular media about how to interact with women. Therefore the boys who stalk does not place himself in the position of a villain who assaults her rather imitates as the righteous hero who does a deserved act of wooing her. This shows how films manipulate the minds towards stalking.

Dominating a woman is considered as bravery in India, this is how a social set-up exists and this is reflected in the films as well. A woman has to be focused as more as real human beings with rational minds in more number of films. The researcher suggests that an open platform to give sex education may reduce the unanswered quest to know more about the opposite gender and it may result in gender sensitization and avoid domestic violence on women.

The challenge of a researcher is to simultaneously analyze the other 'star' films which also highlight stalking as romantic. This also calls for the understanding of the film context to avoid such behavior in order to make the girl accept and most research has to be done in this area to stress the individuality of woman, and curb the constant portrayal of women as passive characters who accept abuse in the name of stalking. The threat for the status of women in this resurgent India is showcased through the real incidents as stated by researcher previously in the brutal murder cases of Nirbhaya, Swathi and Rohtak gang rape in major cities is just a subset of the consequences of stalking that is encouraged by the Indian films. As said by Dr. Ambedhkar "A women's

status describes a society's development". The recent factual data of women abuse in the name of stalking is at the increase rate. This shows that only through weeding out the threat in women status in India can only be the real development.

The approach of this research is to recommend the Indian censor board to give A-certificate for the films that encourages stalking has a normal behavior and inspires domestic violence on women. Further the researcher suggests the Indian cinema to stop adapting such a menace behavior and consider it has a criminal act.

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