



International Journal of Science, Architecture, Technology and Environment

Reimagining Women's Autonomy and Reproductive Rights: A Sociocultural Analysis through the Lens of the Bollywood Movie "Good Newwz"

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63680/ijstate0126066.064>

Film Information

Film Title: Good Newwz

Director: Raj Mehta

Year: 2019

Length: 132 minutes

Original Language: Hindi

Genre: Drama

ABSTRACT

"Good Newwz", the debut work by Raj Mehta, is about the struggle for conceiving a baby from the last nine years in traditional culture, despite the exoteric title. This moving film reflects upon the artificial reproductive technology through a feminist point of view, resolving the difficulties and unintended repercussions that couples face. The story centres on two sets of individuals who accidentally get embroiled in a mix up at a reproductive clinic. This leads to a sequence of unexpected occurrences that question society's conventions and beliefs, especially when viewed through a feminist lens. The plot of this movie works on several levels; in addition to discussing the new technologies that give millions of people in our society a chance to become parents, it also incorporates themes of chaos caused by the wrong implementation of these artificial reproductive technologies. It is a film that has the power to touch viewers' hearts and stick to them long after they leave the theatre, thanks to its multilayered narrative, ensemble cast, imaginative writing, intelligent humour, and well-nuanced characters that carry a very bold and strong message without compromising on entertainment. This review reflects upon some heartbreaking scenes that encourage viewers to think about a pain that a woman suffers from during her whole pregnancy journey. It also highlights the notion that a partner's care and support is quit vital to make the journey successful for a pregnant woman.

Keyword-: Artificial Reproductive Technology, Autonomy, Motherhood, Parents, Pregnancy, and Societal Norms.

1.Introduction

Technology has unquestionably had a revolutionary effect on many aspects of Indian society, including how people interact, live, and work. With the introduction of Artificial Reproductive Technology (ART), healthcare is one prominent area where technology improvements have had a significant impact (Patel, 2020). Modern reproductive technologies have revolutionized the field of fertility treatment, upending conventional wisdom and creating new opportunities for single people and couples wishing to start families as India moves closer to being a centre of innovation on a worldwide scale (Sama Resource Group for Women and Health, 2019). For those who are having difficulty conceiving naturally, artificial reproductive technology—which includes surrogacy, in vitro fertilization (IVF), and other assisted reproductive procedures—has emerged as a ray of hope. In addition to giving those struggling with infertility new options, the introduction of ART in India has catapulted the nation into the international limelight as a top location for high-quality reproductive healthcare (Sarojini, Marwah, & Sheno, 2011).

With the advent of new artificial reproductive technologies, the media is crucial in exposing the proper and improper usage of these tools through soap operas, commercials, and even motion pictures. This study focuses on the Bollywood film *“Good Newwz,”* which addressed this particular topic (Batra, 2019).

Description and Debate of the Movie

Through a feminist viewpoint, the film *“Good Newwz”* explores the complex world of artificial reproductive technology (ART), revealing the difficulties and unintended consequences that couples may encounter. *“Good Newwz”* is a lighthearted and imaginative Bollywood movie that examines the challenges of contemporary parenthood from a woman’s perspective. The Raj Mehta-directed movie entertains viewers while posing significant aspects like gender norms, social expectations, and the freedom to choose one’s own path in life.

Fundamentally, this movie presents a detailed examination of the expectations placed on the women’s characters in the context of reproductive treatments and highlights their tremendous influence. It addresses the weight of traditional gender roles and the societal obligations associated with parenting, emphasizing the emotional and physical toll these treatments can have on women (Pande, 2010).

The plot of this movie is about two couples who lead very different lives but are related by a common surname: Varun and Deepti Batra (played by Akshay Kumar and Kareena Kapoor Khan) and Honey and Monika Batra (played by Diljit Dosanjh and Kiara Advani). These couples are having difficulty becoming pregnant. Both of these couples opt to undergo in-vitro Fertilizer (IVF) treatment after numerous trials. These couples accidentally cross paths in an IVF clinic when their sperm exchanges by default. This movie explores their journey in great detail when an unplanned pregnancy results from an error at a fertility clinic.

As the female protagonists traverse the highs and lows of Artificial Reproductive Technology, the plot highlights their inner strength and tenacity. It looks at how they have battled societal norms and prejudices that define women primarily by their infertility, casting doubt on the idea that a woman’s value is inextricably linked to becoming a mother.

By highlighting the unintended effects of Artificial Reproductive Technology operations and the empowerment of women in the face of social expectations, *“Good Newwz”* is a potent story that mirrors the feminist viewpoint. Raising important issues of autonomy, choice, and women’s freedom from social

pressures, it promotes a more compassionate and inclusive views of the difficulties women have when using reproductive technologies.

In this movie, it was seen that Kareena Kapoor Khan was really worried about getting pregnant because of the pressures placed on her by society. She became upset when people kept asking her about it, but her husband seemed to be fine with it. Against the wishes of her spouse, she co-planned and carried out it with him. She made numerous attempts, but regrettably, she was unable to conceive. Her sister-in-law advised her to speak with a physician who oversees the “*Good Newwz*” IVF facility. Her spouse denied doing it, even though she was talking to him about it. He eventually agreed to undergo IVF therapy. However, during the entire process, something went wrong at this clinic, leading him to choose to abort his child because he was unwilling to carry a child born to a different man. How easily can a man decide whether he wants a child or not? Is the man the only one with the power to decide it? Carrying a child and holding all the pregnancy-related issues is the only duty of a woman in that case when she conceives a baby after a lot of struggles. Even she decided to take an IVF treatment just to give birth to a child.

A lady who has struggled greatly to conceive a child finds it too difficult to terminate. In this movie, Akhshay Kumar aspired to do something that is even too impossible to consider. From the perspective of a male, having a child is not a huge concern; however, from the perspective of a woman, carrying a child can cause bodily, psychological, and emotional harm that is out of your control. Kareena Kapoor Khan first denied not wanting to abort the child and stated she intended to give birth to it. Her spouse became agitated with her after making this decision and stopped providing for her, even though she required considerably more care and attention from him.

Examining the role reversal that takes place throughout the movie is one of its admirable features. The domain of pregnancy and childbirth, which has always been dominated by women, is thrust upon the male protagonists, Varun and Honey. This inversion of roles subverts assumptions and social norms, quietly reinforcing the idea that spouses should share equally in the responsibilities and obligations of motherhood. This movie showed that a mother’s role in raising a child does not end with conception; rather, it emphasized that the father of the child should also assume full responsibility for all of the child’s upbringing and care once they become parents. Given that a man does not carry a baby in the womb for nearly nine months, it is appropriate to argue that males should shoulder the additional responsibilities of both motherhood and childrearing not only in a special case like ART but in a normal case as well. Pregnancy makes it extremely challenging to carry a child inside the womb. A mother experiences it quite differently (Oakley, 1984).

An individual’s sense of identity and self-worth can be profoundly affected by infertility (Greil, A. L., 1997). Couples who switch sperm donors may experience more intense emotions as a result of worries about acceptability, attachment, or loss. It is critical to recognize and value each partner’s feelings and viewpoints during this process. It is necessary to give both people the space and support to voice their worries, anxieties, and hopes. Together, they must exercise patience, empathy, and understanding as they navigate this extremely delicate and personal choice. For the duration of the journey, it is equally crucial that the pair maintain their optimism and mutual support (Daniluk & Koert, 2012).

“*Good Newwz*” depicted the challenges experienced by both men and women to live up to society’s expectations while satirically addressing the issue of societal pressure surrounding pregnancy and parenthood. It drew attention to the ridiculousness of the stereotypes and judgement that infertile couples must deal with and emphasized the necessity of challenging these expectations (Van & Inhorn, 2002).

Additionally, “Good Newwz” discussed the delicate subject of reproductive choices and the difficulties women encountered in determining whether or not to have children. In her role as Deepti Batra, a driven professional whose desire to have a child conflicts with her ambition, Kareena Kapoor Khan gave a compelling performance. The movie emphasized how crucial it is to respect a woman’s independence and her freedom to make choices regarding her own body.

When a woman is pregnant and does not have the support of her spouse, the pregnancy journey becomes more challenging (Stapleton, et. al., 2012). In this movie, Kareena Kapoor Khan showed her feelings to her husband after becoming irate about his lack of support due to the mix-up of sperm. Even though it was not her fault, her spouse continued to treat her with this level of ignorance. When Kareena Kapoor Khan questioned, “*Kya tumhe attachment nahi hai is bachche se*” (Do not you have any attachment to this child), it was very painful for her to listen to her husband’s answer. He answered, “NO.” Without taking a minute, he further said, “*Tumhare pet me nine months rahega tumhe ho sakta hai attachment, but mujhe nahi hai, Paida hone ke baad bhi tum isko kisi ko de dongi to bhi mujhe koi farq nahi padta.*” (You will carry this child in your womb for nine months; you may be attached, but I do not. If you give this child after birth to someone else, it still does not matter to me.) It is very painful for a mother to get such a response from her spouse when she needs emotional, psychological, and physical support from her spouse.

Every woman has a different journey, and we should respect the decisions she makes at different points in her life. It is crucial to create an atmosphere that values compassion, understanding, and open-mindedness. By doing this, we may fight against the limitations imposed by gender norms and demolish the patriarchal systems that frequently restrict the agency of women (hooks, 2000).

After getting irritated with handling all the journey of being pregnant alone, Kareena Kapoor Khan expressed her feelings in front of her husband by saying, “*Pregnant hona ek bachche ko carry karna, Kaun si badi baat hai, bas thodi hi si taqleef hoti hai. Choti choti problems: nahate hue baal jhad jate hai, face par boils, body pe rashes, hazaro injections, bas. Kabhi bhi haste rote hue urine nikal jata hai kyunki bladder baby ke weight ki wajah se hold nahi kar pata hai. Fever, cold, cough, kuch bhi ho jaye medicines nahi le sakte nahi to baby par asar padega. Isme kaun si badi baat hai? Apni pasand ke kapde nahi pahan sakte kyunki body ko kuch fit nahi aata hai, apna favourite khana bhi nahi kha sakte kyunki allowed nahi hota. Depression and mood swings sab kuch chupchap sahna padta hai, taki baki sabka mood kharab na ho. Puri body pura system sab kuch sacrifice kar deti hai ek maa in 09 mahino mai aur delivery ke waqt jo pain hota hai wo to tum imagine bhi nahi kar sakte ho lekin sab kuch ek smile ke sath sah lete hai hum kyunki hame maloom hai jab pahli baar hum is bachche ko dekhege na it will all be worth it.*” (Be pregnant and carry a baby; it is not a big deal. One has to endure a little pain—minor problems—falling hair during a bath, facial boils, body rashes, endless injections—that’s all. Bladder cannot hold pee because of the baby’s weight. Fever, cold, cough—under any circumstances, we cannot take medicines because they will be harmful for babies. That is no big deal either. We cannot wear our favourite clothes because they do not fit, and we cannot eat our favourite food because it is not allowed. We endure it all, so no one gets upset. A mother sacrifices her body for those nine months, and you cannot even imagine the labour pain. But we take it all with a smile because we know that it will all be worth it after seeing the baby for the first time).

Respecting and maintaining a woman’s autonomy and ability to make decisions about her own body is vital for everyone. In order to create a more equal world, it is imperative that we challenge deeply rooted social conventions, support women in their decision-making, and defend their rights (Petchesky, R. P., 2003).

Conclusion

Although “*Good Newwz*” effectively tackles some significant female concerns, there are instances in which it falters. The movie’s overarching feminist message is weakened when the female characters—Monika Batra in particular—are occasionally reduced to portraying heightened stereotypes. Furthermore, the movie occasionally uses regressive stereotypes to make jokes, which can be considered offensive.

The ensemble cast gives outstanding performances, with Diljit Dosanjh and Akshay Kumar having particularly good comedic timing. Both Kiara Advani and Kareena Kapoor Khan convincingly capture the struggles of women while giving their characters nuance and realism.

“*Good Newwz*” is a delightful Bollywood film that effectively presents a feminist viewpoint on contemporary parenthood even after adopting IVF treatment. It provides a forum for discussing significant problems with gender roles, artificial reproductive options, and societal expectations. The movie eventually succeeds in bringing these crucial discussions to light, despite its occasional stumbles with caricatured images and overuse of stereotypes.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and publication of this article.

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