



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

English Literature

THE BETTER GHOST: WOMEN IN WHITE OR MEN IN BLACK

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ABSTRACT

Eerie atmosphere, silence of the dark night, thunderstorm, creaking doors, dim lights, then suddenly there is a shadow from behind with intense music. Well these are some of the core ingredient of the horror movies which we have seen since our childhood, one can understand that these are the sure shot formula for setting the stage for the big reveal i.e. the ghost. Now from here our topic of discussion starts which is the portrayal of women as ghost in Hindi cinema. Whenever we watch a Hindi movie more than often we encounter a female ghost wandering around, singing sweet melodies trying to charm the male counterpart and then ultimately killing them. A question always arises in mind as why always there is a female ghost who gets the responsibility of scaring the audience. For this we need to find the answer through our very own horror movies.

Horror movies are made to scare the audience, their sole purpose is to garner attention of the audience and create a sense of fear and terror among them. However it's particularly the female branch of the horror genre that appeals to the male audience. Colette Balmain, author of Introduction to Japanese Horror film explains the reason behind this, "the reason for the success and ubiquity of such female ghosts is a mixture of female desire and fear of such empowerment." It subverts the conventional view of women as a passive obedient creature and after death they emerge in a twisted malevolent form. Many bollywood movies cast beautiful actresses who play the role of the ghost wearing thin white saris who suddenly appear from behind swishing white curtains smiling seductively at the hero and then vanishing into thin air. Some of the movies have been discussed to understand the reason behind the obsession with female ghost.

Veerana: it was a 1988 erotic horror thriller movie directed by Ramsay Brothers where mahendra pratap and his younger brother sameer kill nikita a witch who used her charm to seduce and kill people. After many years she comes back from the dead and targets Mahendra Pratap's beautiful daughter Jasmine, who takes the revenge. It was a blend of sex and horror and appealed to the masses of that time. It was the highest revenue earner and their best till date.

Raaz: it was a 2002 supernatural flick directed by Vikram Bhatt that revolves around a married couple who go for a trip to save their failing marital life. Events take a turn when they stay in a mansion that is haunted by the spirit of a woman who supposedly had an affair with the hero and was ditched by him.

Bhool Bhulaiyya : A 2007 movie by Priyadarshan where an NRI and his wife decides to renovate their ancestral home paying no heed to the warnings about and then on investigation it is found that the angry spirit of Manjulika was terrorizing the people who was ill treated by the king of that palace.

Stree: A 2008 Amar Kaushik movie about a lady who haunts the men folk and abducts them at night. The back-story was that of a prostitute who worked in the village many years ago and was hanged with her real lover when the villagers come to know about it. The lady after her death haunts them and takes them away naked as a revenge for the disrespect she received from the society.

These were some of the few examples of the horror movies where a woman ghost seems to be angry with the society and takes revenge on them. Though the core concept was same but these were the hit movies of their time. It is an abiding rule of the cinema that ghost are always imagined as belonging to the women folk. Hindi movies are full of unhappy women who tend to wander at night with a repertoire of memorable

melodies. The late Lata Mangeshkar made her first mark with the very famous song *Ayega aanevala song from the movie Mahal (1948) filmed on Madhubala*. That song created a buzz during that time and has often been used in movies to create an eerie atmosphere. One can say that female ghost enjoy an advantage over male ghost .they are more popular scarier and tend to score heavily in terms of power, appearance and connection with the audience. In comparison to that there are only a handful of successful movies where ghost role has been played by men. Their appearances are rare and possibly because of the pre conceived notion that they are easier to hangout with. Taking examples from the movie *chamatkar* where the ghost was played by Naseeruddin Shah or the friendly Amitabh Bachchan in and as *Bhoothnath* or *Ajay Devgan* in the movie *Tarzan* :The wonder car, all these ghost were of friendly nature and were in their original form as compared with the female ghost who are loaded with ghastly makeup and some weird and frightening hairstyle. Male ghost find it difficult to connect with the audience. In India stories of encounters with ugly evil blood drinking chudail with her feet backward can be found in all parts. The most common versions are that of the ghost of women who died during pregnancy or child birth or were sexually assaulted by the predators and then they come back to avenge their death. There are innumerable sad chilling stories with photographs as well of the lady in black, white, grey or brown, but we hardly hear about a man in white black or grey. It is clear that the back stories of women ghost are more fascinating, compelling and chilling than that of the male ghost.

Horror movies cannot be handled by everyone, they were primarily watched by men who used to find the concept of female ghost scarier and appealing; creaking doors and monstrous creatures to attractive lady turning into creepy beings following in the darkness of the night, they have been entertaining us since the 90's. A good horror movie frightens and terrifies us, it is unsettling and riveting; despite some unbelievable plots there is something in them that connect us to them and that is possibly our notion regarding the female ghost that is running at the back our mind. According to us a lady that became a ghost might at some point had been the victim of the atrocities of the society which is to the point true in itself; so through the movies they are shown to be avenging the injustice done to them and in a way creating awareness regarding the happenings of the world without being preachy