

A STUDY OF THE FUTURE SCOPE OF OTT PLATFORMS TO EMPOWER INDIAN WOMEN DRAMATISTS

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Abstract

The entertainment industry is revolutionized in the past decade by offering diverse content and global audience reach through over-the-top (OTT) platforms. Though, it has been seen that this field is male dominated still women are advancing and impacting the field. This paper focuses and examines the future scope of the OTT for the Indian women writers. The impact of feminist perceptions and perspective will be analyzed in depth. Indian women writers have focused plethora of subjects through their writings mainly addressing societal issues and challenging stereotypes. This paper adopts qualitative approach and examines the opportunities and challenges faced by women writers while leveraging OTT platforms to amplify their voices and narratives. Few case studies will be analyzed to understand the changing dynamics of content creation, distribution and receptions in the digital age. Further, it investigates the role of OTT platforms in aiding inclusion, and campaign of gender equality in the Indian entertainment industry. This paper offers insights into how Indian women dramatists can harness the potential of OTT platforms to advance their careers, broaden their audience base, and contribute to the cultural landscape by analyzing industry trends, audience preferences, and emerging technologies. In conclusion, a detailed discussion on the implications for industry stakeholders, policymakers, and academia in fostering an enabling environment for the growth and empowerment of Indian women dramatists in the digital age will be offered.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Indian Writers, OTT Platforms, Opportunities, Challenges, and equality.

INTRODUCTION

The theatrical landscape in India has long served as a vibrant canvas for cultural expression, societal critique, and artistic innovation. Over the centuries, Indian theatre has evolved, reflecting the intricate tapestry of the nation's history, values, and aspirations. Amidst this rich tapestry, the role of women in Indian theatre has undergone a transformation, mirroring the broader shifts in societal attitudes and gender dynamics. This paper attempts to delve into the multifaceted journey of women in Indian theatre, tracing their emergence from the shadows of patriarchy to the forefront of artistic expression. This research aims to unravel the historical underpinnings, the milestones achieved, and the challenges encountered by women dramatists and directors in carving out their space in the theatrical realm.

From the early days of Indian feminism, catalyzed by the visionary efforts of reformers like Ram Mohan Roy, to the contemporary era marked by the digital revolution and the rise of OTT platforms, this exploration seeks to illuminate the evolution of women's participation in theatre. It seeks to examine the intersections between feminism, theatre, and technology, probing how these forces have shaped and reshaped the narratives of women in Indian theatre. The introduction of Gandhiji's noncooperation movement and his espousal of the Ardhgini concept laid the groundwork for redefining gender roles and empowering women to step into the public sphere. The ensuing feminist movements, spearheaded by luminaries like Sarojini Naidu, ignited a fervor for women's rights and social reform, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable theatrical landscape.

Feminist theatre emerged as a potent vehicle for challenging entrenched patriarchal ideologies and amplifying women's voices. From its nascent roots in the experimental theatre movement of the 1960s to its contemporary manifestations on digital platforms, feminist theatre has served as a catalyst for social change and artistic innovation. Through groundbreaking productions and daring narratives, women dramatists have pushed the boundaries of representation and redefined the contours of Indian theatre. As the digital age dawns upon us, the advent of OTT platforms has opened new vistas of opportunity for women in Indian theatre. These platforms offer unprecedented avenues for creative expression, democratizing access to audiences and providing a platform for diverse narratives. This research endeavors to explore the potential of OTT platforms in amplifying women's voices, fostering inclusivity, and reshaping the future of Indian theatre.

In navigating this exploration, this paper embark on a journey through the annals of Indian theatrical history, tracing the footsteps of trailblazing women who have defied convention, challenged norms, and transformed the cultural landscape. By examining the past, present, and future of women in Indian theatre, this paper aspire to shed light on the enduring power of artistic expression to inspire change, foster empowerment, and pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable society. A feminist theatre, at its core, believes in harnessing the power of the stage as a catalyst for enlightenment, societal critique, and personal expression. It serves as a platform for women to articulate their experiences, challenge prevailing norms, and advocate for gender equality. Rooted in the nexus of art, activism, and social relevance, feminist theatre transcends mere entertainment, aiming instead to effect positive change in women's lives and broader society.

Historically, women's access to the theatrical domain has been limited, with the stage remaining largely inaccessible to them. However, over the past few decades, there has been a significant shift, marked by the emergence of prominent female directors and playwrights in Indian theatre. Names like Chama Ahuja, Usha Ganguli, Neelam Mansingh Chandra, and Rani Balbir Kaur have risen to prominence, challenging stereotypes and reshaping the theatrical landscape. The surge of interest and organizational support for women in theatre has led to an explosion of female-written plays, reflecting a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. While not all contemporary playwrights explicitly identify as feminists, there is a discernible correlation between the increase in female-authored works and the feminist renaissance of the 1970s and 1980s.

In recent years, a new generation of female playwrights has emerged, pushing the boundaries of storytelling and representation. Figures like Manjula Padmanabhan, Deepika Arwind, Swar Thounaojam, and Mallika Taneja have garnered acclaim for their bold and thought-provoking works, addressing issues ranging from sexual violence to societal expectations with unflinching honesty. Despite the progress made, challenges persist, with women playwrights still underrepresented in managerial roles and facing barriers to recognition and visibility. Organizations like the International Centre for Women Playwrights (ICWP) play a crucial role in supporting and amplifying the voices of women playwrights worldwide, fostering a community of solidarity and empowerment.

As this paper contemplates the future of women in theatre, it is essential to consider the evolving landscape of entertainment media, including cinema and OTT platforms. While theatre has a rich and storied history dating back to ancient times, cinema emerged as a dominant form of storytelling in the nineteenth century, eventually paving the way for the digital revolution and the rise of OTT platforms. The evolution of cinema in India has been marked by technological advancements, aesthetic innovations, and shifts in storytelling paradigms. Filmmakers like Anurag Kashyap have demonstrated that cinema can serve as a powerful medium for social commentary and artistic expression, challenging conventional narratives and pushing the boundaries of storytelling.

Similarly, OTT platforms have democratized access to content, providing a platform for diverse voices and narratives. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, there is immense potential for women dramatists and directors to leverage these platforms to reach wider audiences, tell their stories, and effect meaningful change. In conclusion, the future prospects for women in Indian theatre are promising yet complex, shaped by a dynamic interplay of historical legacies, social movements, and technological advancements. As this paper navigates this ever-changing landscape, it is essential to remain vigilant in challenging gender norms, advocating for inclusivity, and fostering a supportive environment for women storytellers to thrive and flourish. In discussing feminist theatre, this paper delves into a realm where the stage becomes more than just a platform for entertainment—it becomes a catalyst for enlightenment, societal critique, and personal expression. Here, women have the space to articulate their experiences, challenge prevailing norms, and advocate for gender equality. Rooted in the fusion of art, activism, and social relevance, feminist theatre aims to effect positive change not only in women's lives but also in broader society.

Historically, women faced significant barriers to entry into the theatrical domain, with the stage remaining largely inaccessible to them. However, in recent decades, witnessed a notable shift, marked by the emergence of prominent female directors and playwrights in Indian theatre. Figures like Chama Ahuja, Usha Ganguli, Neelam Mansingh Chandra, and Rani Balbir Kaur have risen to prominence, reshaping the theatrical landscape and challenging stereotypes along the way. This surge in interest and support for women in theatre has led to an explosion of female-written plays, offering a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. While not all contemporary playwrights explicitly identify as feminists, there's a clear correlation between the increase in female-authored works and the feminist renaissance of the 1970s and 1980s.

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