

An Exploration of the Impact of Male Gaze on the Feminine Identity and Sexuality in Sri Lankan Cinema: A Case Study of Asoka Handagama's Selected Works

NKHT Sankalpani* and HAMA Hapugoda
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka
*hashinisankalpani@gmail.com

The voyeuristic and scopophilic representation of women in media shapes the feminine identity and sexuality of different cultures and societies. This research aims at examining the portrayal of female identity and sexuality specifically in Sri Lankan cinema by referring to the selected works of the veteran filmmaker, Asoka Handagama. The award winning movies, "Thani Thatuwen Piyambanna" (Flying with One Wing, 2002), "Aksharaya" (A Letter of Fire, 2005), "Aege Aesa Aga" (Let Her Cry, 2016) and "Asandhimitta" (2019) which feature significant female characters and their plight in the patriarchal society are selected as the sample of the research. The insights of Simon de Beauvoir, Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Laura Mulvey laid the basis for critical exploration of women's representation in media which has been highly discussed in the feminist works. Thus, the researchers have deployed the Male gaze Theory, influenced by Laura Mulvey along with the Lacanian and Freudian concepts of gaze as the theoretical approach of the study. Qualitative approach was utilized in conducting the research and textual analysis of the selected movies and interviews focusing the director, critics and academics were the major tools of primary data collection. Research publications, sources from the internet and newspaper articles were the major secondary data collection methods. Even though the Male Gaze Theory illustrates that women are always projected as passive objects in cinema, the findings of the research depict that the selected sample represent the female figure as an assertive and emphatic entity regardless of the persistent patriarchal norms. The findings of the study will open new avenues for future researchers.

Keywords: *Feminine Identity, Gaze, Male Gaze Theory, Sexuality, Cinema*