

**CENSORSHIP IN OTT PLATFORM**

*Author: Atharsh Raj, V year of B.Com.,LL.B.(Hons.) from SASTRA Deemed to be University*

**ABSTRACT**

Censorship in OTT platform is one of the topic that is currently discussed in the India with the Central government authorities. OTT Platform has made a huge revolution in Mass entertainment. Before 2022 there was no problem in censor cut for the content that are streamed in the OTT Platform. But recently in month of February 2022 the Government of India wants to take strict regulations regarding the censorship in OTT Platform as the content contains sexual scenes, over violence, using of abusive language and defaming the particular community or religion of the country. Filmmakers in India want to show case their talent by directing the Movies and Web Series in different genre such as Love, Action, Comedy, Horror, Thriller etc. But in some cases the movie or Web series contains with controversy content and some nudity & pornographic of women so that it shows women as Sex object. So Censorship should be allowed not only in theatrical Content but also for the content that are streaming in the OTT Platform.

**INTRODUCTION**

In old days people used to entertain themselves through watching street dramas, theatres, Newspaper & Magazine and hearing radio etc. But later advance technology have grown up in this modern century the people entertain themselves or develop their knowledge through many ways such as Mobile phone, Computer, Laptop, Internet, Play station, etc. Today people can literally enjoy or watch such other language content (which include Dramas, Movies and Web Series) through online platform. Such online platform here refer to OTT Platform which means Over-the-top. The OTT platform refers to the providing the a Movie content or TV shows & dramas to the customer through the internet. Basically OTT platform is based on the free subscription but it also charge some monthly or annual fee subscription for premium of the content that available in featuring app. The premium of the content is usually established by the OTT platform in which they have associated with the production house of the featured film. Here there are some examples of OTT platforms such as Hotstar, VOOT, Zee5, Sun Next, Netflix,

Amazon Prime etc. For example, Soorarai potru (2020) a tamil movie was a direct release in amazon prime on Nov 12 2020 on occasion of Diwali. The Producer of this movie has made this decision of premiering the movie in Amazon prime, an OTT platform rather than theatrical release because of Covid-19 Lockdown. This decision was considered to be wiser since there was no option of releasing it in theatre during Covid lockdown and the theatres were also closed during such pandemic situation. Fans who were eager to watch this movie must pay a subscription amount. This OTT platform made people more comfortable since because the people can entertain themselves from their Home or in own places. Even many low budget movies with good content are getting well appreciation from critics and public. Many movie producers are also benefited because they earn more profit in OTT platform rather than theatrical release. The only disadvantage of OTT Platform is that spoiling the theatrical experience of the movie because in India around 950+ movies released which includes all languages in India but Indian people love to celebrate the movies in theatres rather than watching it in small screen. Since OTT Platform was preferred by the people, people will start to reducing the time and money that spent in theatres so it leads to the downfall of theatrical experience day by day. So OTT Platform was considered as a big problem to the Theatre Owners and Distributers of the Movies as they can't earn money. But at the same time many producers who produce big budget movies are highly benefited since they entered into profitable zone before theatrical release. For example:- VIKRAM (2022), a Tamil movie released in Theatres on June 3 2022. The digital and satellite rights of this movie was given to Star Vijay Channel that includes the language of Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi, Telugu and Kannada. Before releasing this movie in theatre the producer has made an agreement of 112crores with Disney plus Hotstar to release the movie in OTT Platform after one month theatrical release. So producer covered 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the budget of the movie before release and entered the movie was entered into the profitable zone before releasing it in theatres. OTT Platform made a huge jackpot for producers to earn profit rather than theatrical release. Even Small Production company which produce small budget movies prefers OTT Platform for the Gain profit and also helps to reach the audience all over the place even in small town and villages. Thus OTT Platform made a Huge impact to sustain the growth of film industry in India.

**OTT PLATFORM**

The very first thing we should know about the history of OTT Platform. BIGFLIX was the first Indian OTT Platform that was launched by the Reliance entertainment in the year 2008. Later Digivive launched the first OTT Mobile App in India in 2010 which is known as nexGTV . Then later on the IPL matches where starting live streaming on Smart phones in period of 2013. After live streaming of IPL matches there made a huge impact for the development of OTT Platform in India. Amazon Prime was launched in the year 2016 and later Amazon prime music was also kaunched. Netflix an American streaming service come to India and was registered with limited liability partnership in 2017. Later Hotstar was launched in India and now it is considered as the most subscribed OTT Platform in India. There was a tough competition between Netflix and Amazon Prime & Hotstar as the viewers were preferred to watch the content according to their taste. EROS international launched an OTT Platform named as EROS Now which contains more number of TV show content, music tracks, films and dramas and 2019 the EROS Now was named as best OTT Platform in British Asian medium award. Many regional OTT Platform were launched according to the language such as Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Marathi and Malayalam etc. For example. The Sun Next which was launched by the Sun TV Network for the benefit of the viewers. Similarly AHA OTT Platform was launched for that telugu content. The technology that was used in the OTT Platform is Internet-based delivery System which means that someone need to access with an internet and compatible device which includes Smart TV, Mobile device & Computer & Laptop. The OTT Platform had a massive growth in India because the OTT Platforms makes money on the based on subscription-based video, advertising-based video and transaction-based video. Content was the major reason for the development for OTT Platform because the public prefer rather than TV or Theatrical content during this COVID period and OTT Platform is cheaper in rate rather than theatre ticket. OTT Platform gave chance to many upcoming artist to showcase their talent to this world since new Directors, actors & actress were able to give their best performance because the content that uploaded in OTT Platform can reach worldwide so that it gives a wider reach for the talent artist. More numbers of projects are offered to the artist compare to the TV content.

**CENSORSHIP**

The suppression speech or information of an individual or group is called as censorship. Censorship is done on the grounds of the content which is deemed to be damaging a person or particular community, sensitive topics or inconvenient. Mainly Central Governments, Corporate Firm and other regulating bodies can censor speech which can create problems to the society. Generally the censorship happens across a range of media, which includes Music, Film, speech, Arts, Press, Radio, Television and the internet for various reasons because to protect the children & to promote or restrict political or religious beliefs and to address issues like national security, pornography & hateful speech.

**LAW RELATED TO CENSORSHIP**

Before a movie starts there will be a certificate which is displayed in the movie known as Certification of Film that regulated under the Sec 5A. Censorship is mainly regulated under the law of Central Bureau of film certification (CBFC) which is established under the cinematographer act 1952. Under the Cinematograph act of 1952, the certification of a movie can be divided under 2 categories such as Unrestricted viewing “U” censored which means the movie content does not have any adultery content or over violence & also the movie can be enjoyed by all age group. Adult viewing “A” censored refers to that the movie content have adultery content, over violence, using of abusive language etc. If the movie is censored under this category then it's completely for 18+ age group and not for below 18+ age group. Under the act of 1982 again new two classifications were brought up by the act i.e “U/A” certificate which means the movie of the content can be enjoyed all age group except children who are below the age of 12. “S” certificate which is restricted film that are only for the audience of certain people such as doctor, engineer, scientists etc. Basically in India “S” censor certificate is not given for any of the movie. This “S” censor certificate is given mostly in foreign country movies.

**CENSORSHIP ROLE IN OTT PLATFORMS**

Censorship is mainly supported by adults who age are above 40 to 60. Even though the censorship is implied by the central authority there are some disputes arise with the movies the movies that may hurt some religious belief of Indian culture in movies like Amir Khan's PK (2014), Vishwaroopam (2013) , Padmavat (2018) etc. But in OTT Platform there are no such problem arise even after the censorship movies which explore about the society. For example if movie released in OTT platform there are no restrictions in censor cut or muting bad words or removing over violence scene. But later on there were numerous reasons that censorship was to be considered in OTT Platform because it may leads to a threat to youngsters. There was an allegation filed to dealing with the laws against the alleged streaming of over violence content and sexually explicit content because the content can also be watched by children under the age of 18, which exposes them to sexual activities, vulgarity and it is not good for the country because it can lead to the rape and other criminal activities. After Covid-19 lockdown, now people are preferring OTT content rather than television content since the content of the quality is really good but if it is controlled, the content will be preserved at a similar level as television content.

**CASE LAWS**

In the case of “ Gurdeepinder Singh Dhillon v. Union of India ”, the petition issued an notice in the High Court of Punjab and Haryana against the film maker in june 2020 to censor the web series “Paatal Lok” since the web series has maligning religious harmony and also to take legal action against Amazon Prime Video. The petitioner has also appealed to Prakash Javadekar (information and broadcasting minister) to ban the show. The petition was not only plea the court for censor cuts but also requested the judiciary to bring a strict rules and regulations for the content in OTT platforms.

**CONCLUSION**

OTT Platform is considered as one of the best achievement and advancement path for Film industry and also for entertaining the people. But the fact is that truth should not being

suppressed by censorship rather than that it should be revealed in a dignified way. Today the public are also looking for content that will expose social injustices, tackle political issues and offer justice that doesn't offend other classes of people. However, filmmakers must ensure that their work has the power to influence young generations' mindset and must be held liable for their social actions because filmmakers have the freedom of creativity and expressing their opinion on true incidents through movie or drama but not to force ideology through their content. So censorship should be considered as the mandatory one for the OTT platform.



**BRILLOPEDIA**