

Evolution of Indian Cinema in the 20th Century

Tanduru Cherisma*

Student, Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, India

Abstract: One of the most effective ways of promoting Social Awareness through mass communication is Cinema. From the conception of Indian Cinema, people have always been socially impacted. There are numerous films that have inspired, motivated, and even changed the mentality of the society on issues of social discrimination, casteism, untouchability, women empowerment, national integration etc. In the previous generations, Indian films mainly focused on Family relations, True Friendships, values and ethics which were the essence of life for that generation. However, there were a few poignant films on issues like corruption, bureaucracy, untouchability and Women Empowerment. The current generation is facing a whole lot of new age issues sprouting from Globalization, Western influences, and Rapid development of Technology etc. Now, Cinema explores more on the negative effects of drugs, human trafficking, hygiene & sanitation, Cyber Crime, LGBTQ ,erectile dysfunction, etc. which were undeniably considered taboo in the previous generation. In this research paper, efforts are made to observe, analyze and compare the role of Cinema then, now and also scope of the same in future generations.

Keywords: Archtypal, bollywood, experimental cinema, female foeticide, infidelity, indian cinema ,lgbt community, mass communication, progressive mentality, present generation, social awareness, sexual hypocrisy.

1. Introduction

Cinema is an efficacious asset of social change. Cinema plays a crucial role in influencing people and manipulating their perspective about social issues. There are many Indian films that have broken the social norms and have inculcated change in the society. People have started taking inspiration from Indian cinema and are taking a step forward to fight against social evils. Some Indian films impart a completely new direction to the life of viewers. Films of the current as well as the previous generation have had a dynamic impact on the social, educational, political and moral aspects of life. In the previous generation, as there was no internet, films were the only source of entertainment.

2. Content

With the commencement of Indian Cinema, the filmmakers depicted stories more about daily life situations, entertainment and comedy so that people could relate to them. People in the older generation gave more importance to ethics, values, sacrifice, genuine relationships and the same was reflected on

the large canvas. V. Shantaram, the pioneer of Hindi cinema touched people's hearts with some films that were not only iconic but also path breaking. Dharmatma was based on the life of Eknath, a 16th century saint and poet, who was extremely critical of the caste system and the practice of untouchability. Another film, Do Aankhen Barah Haath is a film that highlighted a jail guard's endeavor to reform 12 prisoners. These movies acted as a benchmark for other upcoming directors. After a few years, when the Indian Cinema had established its place in the hearts of the people, the film makers started taking risks. They started directing movies that not only had entertainment in them but also focused on creating social awareness among the public. Themes like sexual hypocrisy, honor killing, inter caste marriage, infidelity, etc were explored and this kick-started an era of bold, experimental cinema. Indian audience started witnessing a period of change when films were made on thought provoking issues and this led to a more intellectual and mature society. Movies like Rand de Basanthi, which focused on public activism on matters of public interest, explored the world of dyslexia and brought to light on how the education system should look beyond high grades and should focus on what a kid wants to do. Another archtypal movie Swades focuses on the issue of brain drain and Indians moving abroad for greener pastures. The story revolves around the life of an NRI who works for NASA and how his visit to a village changes his life along with hundreds of other villagers. The movie inspired a lot of NRIs to come back to the roots and work for the country.

Apart from these themes, there were other path breaking movies on women empowerment like Mother India, Damini etc where the woman was showcased as a central figure sacrificing her life for her family, or fighting back the advances of a male antagonist. Those were rare cases, but generally it catered to the patriarchal society that we live in. Matrabhumi is a movie based on the social issue of female foeticide, showcases the future of the country if we keep killing the girl child. There are still many places where a boy's birth is rejoiced while a girl child is killed. The movie portrays the glimpse of the cruel society and leaves a message of saving a girl child. Indian Cinema has made a colossal progress over a period of time. With equal opportunities and rights to both genders, nuclear family system, increasing exposure to social media, and a glorious period where more women entered the film making space, cinema has

*Corresponding author: saleema.chesha@gmail.com

risen to a different level altogether. The present generation woman breaks free from the stereotypical woman and fights for her rights. This wave has changed the way Indian audience looks at women centric movies. Another paradigm shift witnessed in Indian cinema is influence of technology that gave rise to a whole different trend with graphics and animation forming a crux of cinema. Young directors are experimenting with new age themes in movies like Vicky Donor, Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan, Shivaay and Dear Zindagi, where issues like Sperm donation, LGBTQ, human trafficking, sexual abuse, and mental health are being explored at depth. Some movies also reflect youth of current generation who are susceptible to alcohol, sex, drugs etc. The darker side of this kind of cinema is using cuss words which has become a new trend. Another bad influence on current generation is lack of ethical values where polygamy, women objectification etc are treated casually as a result younger generation are getting influenced by them and the thin line between ethics and unethical thoughts are getting blurred in their minds.

3. Discussion

From then to now, Bollywood has had positive as well as

negative impacts on the society. Progressive mentality among the society has seen an escalation. Industries like Fashion, VFX, and makeup have been benefitted over the time. Spreading social awareness through films share similarity in both the generations. However Indian Cinema in current generation covered topics that were considered a taboo in the older generations. Nevertheless there are multiple social issues that are untouched by Indian cinema. There's a scope to cover these topics in the future generations.

4. Conclusion

This paper presented an overview of Evolution of Indian cinema in the 20th century.

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