

Nation-Building: Role of Media and Films

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Abstract

Indian cinema not only plays a significant role in integrating society but also imparts human values on people such as honesty, hard work, sympathy, charity, brotherhood. Almost all movies have stories in which goodness is rewarded and wickedness is punished. The Indian film industry is also a big source of revenues also from the 30s, right through the 90s; Indian cinema had developed in focusing different aspects of Indian life. It has not only presented but tackled many sensitive issues like freedom to unemployment, from dowry to women's emancipation, from poverty to exploitation, from social conflict to national integration and so on. With the transformation of the society, the issue confronting it kept on changing and so also themes adopted for film making. After India gained independence in 1947 it had to create its own nation self-consciousness from the thin air. The popular Hindi cinema played an important role in nation-building. In this article the researcher examined how Bollywood cinema supported and strengthened the community spirit and nation building.

KEYWORDS – Media, Films, Nation Building, Bollywood and National Integration

Introduction

The nation is and has always been a major theme in popular Hindi cinema. In fact from 1950 onwards popular Hindi cinema has played a significant role in stimulating a sense of 'unity in diversity' and reinforcing nationalism in India. It shaped the collective consciousness of Indians and helped them in imagining India as their nation. Perhaps no other cultural medium in the post-independence era portrays the peculiarly 'all-inclusive' pluralistic image of the Indian nation as effectively as by the popular Hindi cinema. Time and again Hindi filmmakers have produced films to efface all regional, linguistic, religious, caste and class based distinctions and to engender a national identity. These films based on the theme of the nation edify Indians about their heroic past, cultural heritage, great men and glories which constitute "the social capital upon which one bases a national idea".

India is the biggest film producing country in the world with a yearly 1000-1200 feature films. 150-200 are made in Bombay. The most populous city in India has always played a central role in the Indian subcontinent's history. Under the British rule it became the most important trading centre of the area. The relatively high standard of living attracts migrants from every part of the country, resulting in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic metropolis.

Bombay was traditionally a main centre of the Pharsi theatre that's historical and social dramas show inevitable resemblance with the Bollywood film genre. The early films' directors and actors came from this theatre culture like Dhundiraj Govind Phalke who created the first feature film, *Raja Harischandra* (1913). The plot is based on the Mahabharata creating the genre of the mythological film. He emphasized the importance of the cinema's national origin and character. In his writings Phalke draws

attention to the significance of using movies as an interpreter of the 'Swadeshi' giving political aspect to the Indian filmmaking.

From the 30s, right through the 90s, Indian cinema had developed in focusing different aspects of Indian life. It has not only presented but tackled many sensitive issues like freedom to unemployment, from dowry to women's emancipation, from poverty to exploitation, from social conflict to national integration and so on. With the transformation of the society, the issue confronting it kept on changing and so also themes adopted for film making.

Major influences that have shaped Indian Popular Cinema

The following six major influences that have shaped Indian popular cinema -

- The ancient epics of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* influenced the narratives of Indian cinema. Examples of this influence include the techniques of a side story, back-story and story within a story. Indian popular films often have plots that branch into sub-plots; such narrative dispersals can clearly be seen in the 1993 films *Khalnayak* and *Gardish*.
- Ancient Sanskrit drama, with its emphasis on spectacle, combined music, dance and gesture combined "to create a vibrant artistic unit with dance and mime being central to the dramatic experience". Sanskrit dramas were known as *natya* derived from the root word *nr̥it* (dance), featuring spectacular dance-dramas. The *Rasa* method of performance, dating to ancient times, is one of the fundamental features that differentiate Indian from Western cinema. In the *Rasa* method, empathetic "emotions are conveyed by the performer and thus felt by the audience," rather than "simply conveying emotion".
- Indian filmmakers, while enhancing the elements of fantasy so pervasive in Indian popular films, used song and music as a natural mode of articulation in a given situation in their films. There is a strong Indian tradition of narrating mythology, history, fairy stories and so on through song and dance." Indian filmmakers demonstrated how this creation intersected with people's day-to-day lives in complex and interesting ways."
- Western musical television, particularly MTV, had an increasing influence in the 1990s, as can be seen in the pace, camera angles, dance sequences and music of recent Indian films.

Issues focussed through films

It is worthy to mention some of the Indian films that have sensually touched the audience and the society through its messages. Indian cinema talked about upliftment of untouchables in 'Acchut Kanya' (1936); fought against marriage of young girls with old persons (Duniya Na Mane, 1937), highlighted the problem of alcohol in 'Brandi Chi Bath' (1939), raised the issue of dowry in 'Dahej' (1950). Films like 'Aurat', 'Do Bigha Zamin', 'Mother India' and 'Mujhe Jeene Do' focused on the socio-economic causes of the very Indian problem.

Movies like 'Rang De Basanti' encouraged people to take up things in their own hands, 'Taare Zameen Par' and 'Three Idiots' helped parents accept their children as they are; 'Swades' portrayed the problem of brain drain in the country, 'Aarakshan' was based on controversial policy of caste-based reservations in Indian Government

jobs and educational institutions and 'My brother Nikhil' dealt with the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS.

Human Values, Justice & Religion

Indian cinema not only plays a significant role in integrating society but also imparts human values on people such as honesty, hard work, sympathy, charity, brotherhood. Almost all movies have stories in which goodness is rewarded and wickedness is punished.

The hero is an embodiment of good qualities. He is respectful towards elders, adores his parents, helps others, stays away from drinking and gambling and is strong enough to beat a gang of bad guys. It is the hero who is admired by everybody and loved by the beautiful heroine.

There is justice and hope in every story in Indian cinema. This has great influence on people especially the young boys who want to become like the heroes. There are films on religious themes like Samporna Ramayan, Jai Santoshi Ma, Shiv Shakti, Nanak Nam Jahaz, and Veer Hanuman which touch the religious sentiments of people and give the message of truth and religious faith. Society owes a lot to cinema for inculcating such feelings among the people.

Contribution in Music & Art

Every Hindi movie has, on average six to ten songs sung by versatile male or female singers. The lyrics of these songs are written by well-established poets and lyricists. Famous music directors prepare tunes and background music of these songs. Band of expert instrumentalists play different instruments like sitar, tabla, bango, harmonium, flute, etc. as per requirement of the song before the song is finalised. These songs become very popular among people. They like to listen to these songs again and again on radio, TV, CD player, etc. Millions of cassettes/CDs are sold every month. Cinema, thus, is rendering a great service to the cause of music. India has a great tradition of classical, folk and general music. All these types of music are promoted by films. Cinema, therefore, serves our tradition of music.

Film-making is an art. In this sense, cinema encourages various arts-acting, singing, dialogue-writing, story-writing, directing, lyrics-writing, and composing and music directing. Bollywood is an industry and film-making is a business. Cinema provides employment to millions of people across the country. Apart from the actors, actresses, story-writers, lyricists, singers, musicians, there are distributors, CD-making companies, recording companies, instrument makers, cinema-houses and their staff, shopkeepers selling CDs, etc. designers of dresses, dress-makers, cameramen and several others related directly or indirectly with film-making who earn their livelihood through cinemas.

Contribution in Economic Development

As filmmaking is a business, the producers and others who are connected with the business earn crores of rupees every year. They pay huge amount of tax to the

government. Similarly, the actors and actresses who charge crores of rupees for acting in a film pay heavy amount of tax every year.

The entertainment tax charged by the government runs into several crores of rupees for one day. Cinema is thus a great source of capital for the government which is spent on various projects of development. Cinema thus participates in the country's development.

Films & Fashion

Cinema also promotes fashion. The latest designs in clothes; hairstyle and even bikes and cars are promoted by the heroes and heroines. This not only brings freshness and change in traditional designs but also sustains what is called the fashion boom. Many businesses like readymade garments, jewellery and saloons thrive on the fashion sustained by cinema.

Bollywood has produced some of the greatest movies in world cinema and they are proofs that we have motley of artists with brimming talent in India. Some of our greatest movies played a huge role in displaying diversity of India and its people. Movies like Sholay, Mother India etc played a significant role in upholding the name of our country in various international platforms and film festivals.

Now with ambassadors like Aamir Khan and Directors like Sanjay Leela Bhansali the legacy of Bollywood will go on. Dangal, Bajirao Mastani, Taare Zameen Par, 3 idiots etc are some examples of movies which we can be proud of. Shah Rukh Khan, one of the greatest actors the world has seen, has done terrific movies like Chak De India, Swades. SRK movies have a huge following outside the country. He is honoured with Knighthood from various countries.

Movies - Reflections of the Society and People

Movies are an integral part of Nation Building since we as an audience watch movies in theatres and multiplexes and thus contribute to Entertainment Industry. A plethora of Artists work for movies and related fields and they are the reason the Industry is thriving.

No brain Entertainers like Judwaa 2 and Class movies like Dangal become blockbusters. This diversity of spectators and their vivid tastes have done wonders for the Industry. Though many films flop in a year, films still have audience. Hence, movies play a major role in nation building.

Cinema plays a very important role in India. As we all know, the country is a melting pot of different regions, religious faiths, communities, castes and creeds. People speaking different languages and following different customs and traditions are all fond of Hindi movies.

Films Unites the Nation

There are movies in other languages which are watched by people knowing and speaking those languages, like Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati, Assamese, Tamil,

Kannada and Malayalam. But people prefer Hindi movies. In this way, cinema binds the people of different regions and communities together.

They serve the most important cause of national integration. As a matter of fact our Mumbai film industry called Bollywood is a unique example of secularism. Actors, singers, music directors, composers, producers, directors and other artists hailing from different parts of India work together while making a movie. As a matter of fact, Bollywood is like a mini secular India where people of different faiths live together and work together to achieve excellence in cinema. They regard one another for their act. What better example can there be for people at large to emulate Bollywood and root out communalism from the country?

Role of Films in the field of Entertainment

The most important contribution has of course been the entertainment. The emotional dramas with some of great screen plays have been blockbusters. Many a time's Indian cinema has remained a place where, as Manmohan Desai said, "people would forget their misery, a dream where there is no poverty and where the fate is kind..." For a society which is largely poor it remained a place where people could visit places from Kashmir or Ooty to US and Switzerland. Also for long, guests to a family were treated with a movie in a nearby theater which remains a common place today where friends want to hang out.

Conclusion

Films have played an important role in the integrity of the nation. It was the only platform where people could see different cultures. At times when politics was dividing the nation on regional basis Cinema showcased a superhit 'Sholay' , directed by a Sindhi, with music from someone of Tripura and main actors from Punjab, U.P, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Bengal, presenting the magic by a blend of talents from all across the country. Moreover, they have given the society the lectures on communal harmony cloaked under entertainment. Brothers separated by fate growing up in different religious families in Amar Akbar Anthony packed with high drama, or Hindu guy marrying a Muslim girl in Mani Ratnam's Bombay, there have been remarkable cinema challenging the communalism in the society. So finally we can conclude that media and films play important role in nation building as it almost covers all the areas of country which is integral in effecting any nation.

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