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## **Indian Cinema as a Compelling Tool for Social Change**

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**Abstract:** Instead of portraying unrealistic and impractical stories, modern cinema concentrates on realistic issues and matters. It also plays a significant role in highlighting certain fundamental social and political issues, which not only entertain the public but also educate and shape public opinion, serving as a powerful tool for mass enlightenment and socio-political transformation. In addition to technological advancements, character portrayals, gender roles, and themes have all seen significant change in movies. Over the years, films have offered viewers valuable amusement. Attending the cinema is seen as a social activity in India. Movie attendance in theatres is impacted by new technology. OTT (over-the-top) streaming services and social media have emerged as substitute platforms for viewing films. The internet has made online streaming available, which has changed the way people attend theatres. The paper attempts to address how Indian cinema has evolved in terms of themes and narratives. It also conducts a more thorough analytical analysis to ascertain public opinion regarding contemporary cinema and its influence on society, particularly with regard to its potential as a potent instrument for social awareness and change. Additionally, an effort is made to comprehend the ways in which Indian films have sparked a variety of shifts in lifestyle and mental processes.

**Keywords:** Cinema, Indian, social, issues, movie

**Introduction:** One of the major and fastest-growing industries in India is the media and entertainment business. PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) studies indicate that the Indian media sector is projected to be valued at Rs. 4.3 trillion by 2026. Cinema will virtually make up 9% of the whole media business by this year, according to a 2022 analysis from the Indian Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF). India has a long and rich history in film industry. These theatres have served as venues for pleasure and celebration throughout the years. It has generated great performers in several languages across India's many states. Star films are lavishly honoured, and the protagonists have influenced popular culture. According to Panbu Selvan, P., & Brindha

‘The heroes, as sources of inspiration, build their images and affect an individual’s life such that the society and its culture is influenced as a whole’(128) Humans are very conditioned to think that everything works out for the best and that everything will come together in the end, and almost all Bollywood films portray this idea. Even if the trip for the good characters is demanding and challenging, it always ends with a happy ending, which manipulates people's perceptions and leads them to assume that all will work out in the end. Similar to this, there are many areas in people's life where they have a tendency to think they can mimic the events in films and attempt to imitate the personalities that are portrayed in them.



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In the 1930s, when India was going through social and economic reforms along with the independence movement, social issues like untouchability and famer sufferings came to light through more meaningful cinema. These themes appeared in films like Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957) and Bimal Roy's *Do Bhiga Zameen* (1953) (Murthy C.S.H.N, 2011). With the backing of state money, this alternative cinema, while concurrent and distinct from stereotype films, made a deep dive into problems that were more socially conscious and politically charged starting in 1970

**Diversity in Indian Cinema:** India is very diverse in terms of the cultural characteristics that its people possess due to its large population. Every member of the population, whether they are an individual or a group at large, has internalised a unique set of values and customs. Bollywood films are an excellent way to learn about India's rich cultural diversity. 2014 saw the premiere of the film *Dedh Ishqiya*, which depicted the culture of Lucknow, the city of nawabs. One may see the traditional portrayal of exquisite portrayal of Bengali culture in films like *Gunday* (released in 2014), *Kahaani* (2012), and *Piku* (2015). These films have shown Kolkata's unusual architecture. The way that actresses wear white saris with red borders in a distinctively Bengali manner informs us about the clothing style that is exclusive to Bengalis and distinctive in its own right. In the 2002 film *Devdas*, the holiday of Durga Pooja is shown as a celebration observed in Kolkata. In 2014, the film *Khoobsurat* showcased Rajasthan's captivating forts and popular tourist destinations.

According to Mittal (2013), Bollywood films in particular are a significant tool for marketing a number of travel destinations, including the USA, Europe, New Zealand, Scotland, Spain, and London. It also discussed the increasing amount of tourists taking place beyond the Indian border. The growth of outbound travel to these countries has been largely attributed to the role that films have played. Bollywood films have a big impact on the audience. The report also specifically mentions the film *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, which presents Spain as a gorgeous European nation. Due to the film's enormous success, an increasing number of Indians are visiting Spain to visit the locations portrayed in the film. The research's conclusions also show that a growing proportion of Indians—more than ever in recent years—choose to travel abroad rather than domestically.

**Social Issues:** Nobody can dispute that films are works of art and, above all, a source of entertainment. Despite this, many films are being produced by directors that highlight significant issues that women face in their daily lives or that are focused on women and show how strong women are in today's society and how they have overcome oppression and exploitation to become strong, independent individuals who are able to fight against all forms of injustice. These films have played a significant role in altering society's perception of women. In addition to storylines or issues pertaining to women's empowerment, films these days are also centered on specific topics that heavily centre on challenges that women encounter on a daily basis. The movie *No One Killed Jessica* was based on the true incident of Jessica Lal, a barmaid in an exclusive Delhi restaurant. The film was a superb production that showed all the flaws in the legal system as well as the corruption in government circles.



**Social attire:** In India, joint families have been the norm for a very long time. However, as modernity and globalization gained traction, individuals began to adopt the notion of nuclear families in place of joint families. In his book, Sinha discusses a study by Orenstein and Micklin (1960) that found that, although the size of Indian family households were constant between 1911 and 1951, the Joint Family culture broke down after this time. Joint families began to give way to nuclear families (Sinha, 1993). The institutions that make up society, such as marriage, the family, and so on, serve as its governing body. In any culture, marriage is a fundamental building block. Despite India's diverse cultural heritage, marriage is a universal aspect of all Indian societies. In India, arranged weddings have long been customary. In an arranged marriage, the couple's parents or other family members choose and organize the marriage for the right person. The most prevalent element in Bollywood is love. In Bollywood, romantic connections are shown. It is shown that planned marriages are frequently difficult and founded on force and authority. Love marriages are sometimes portrayed as superior to arranged marriages.

Bollywood has negative effects as well; it promotes body shaming, which is the ridiculing of those who are overweight or skinny. Bollywood actively promotes the notion that light complexion is preferable than dark skin, as shown by the fair main characters in the majority of its productions. With the rise of modernity and globalization, western clothing has become a staple of Indian fashion. Sarees and salwar suits are traditional Indian attire. Bollywood portrays women wearing salwar suits as naive and simple-minded. Known as 'Behen ji' a lot, the one wearing a western attire is contemporary. Sonam Kapoor's primary character *Aisha (2010)* is a self-described event planner who accidentally becomes a matchmaker for a naive rural girl. She then changes the rustic girl into a contemporary woman with short hair and a western-style dress. She strives to make her fit into the contemporary girl's environment. Bollywood depicts girls as 'Behen Ji' sorts, dressed traditionally. Consequently, we may observe the impact in rural India as well, where females are increasingly dressing more in Western attire to look current.

**Language as a status:** Bollywood portrays non-English speaking Indians as ignorant, simple-minded, and a source of comedic material. The character of Sridevi, a small business owner who is illiterate in English, appears in the film *English Vinglish*. The importance of English is so great that, in the movie, her own daughter feels ashamed that her mother can't speak the language and is thus treated with disrespect and looked down upon as a result. Later in the film, when Sridevi goes to live with her sister in the United States to study English, her daughter and husband begin to appreciate her and realize that what they did was wrong. Given that English is a widely spoken language and has gained popularity, those who speak it are highly valued. In contemporary Indian society, speaking Hindi is frowned upon and is now seen as a status symbol. Instead, people are evaluated on their command of the English language.

**Gender Reflections:** Filmmakers of today have also produced documentaries that showcase the way of life of women who work in specific professions. Strong female protagonists and the real-life experiences of fashion models and actresses—popularly referred to as "heroines"—were prominently featured in films such as *Fashion* and *Heroine*. There were two prominent female characters in the movie *Fashion*, Meghna (Priyanka Chopra) and Shonali (Kangana Ranaut). The



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film masterfully revealed the inner suffering of a fashion model, whose life may appear glamorous and exciting from the outside, but that is only one side of the tale. The second, more depressing, nasty, and realistic side of the tale was shown in the film. The movie did a passable job of portraying the actual life experiences of fashion models, who must battle relentlessly to be the best in their field. It showed the profession to be a place of tremendous competitiveness, envy, and pretence.

**Exploring Specially abilities :** The film *Taare Zameen Par* (2007), which was directed by the incredibly gifted Amir Khan and was written by Amole Gupte and Deepa Bhattia and based on the medical condition of dyslexia, was an immediate hit at the box office. The film was effective in highlighting the traumas experienced by a dyslexic boy (played by child actor Darsheel Safary), who is punished harshly by both parents and the school because, up to the age of eight, he is unable to read and write and is mistaken for being lethargic. The film transmits a powerful message about this mental illness and how love, care, and more attention can help the patient recover and thrive. It also sends a message about how these patients may be exceptionally gifted and that people with disabilities shouldn't be stigmatized for having mental illnesses.

**LGBTQ Rights:** The year 2005 with the movie *My Brother Nikhil* marked the debut of the popular term 'Gay Love' or same gender love, in a motion picture. The film presented homosexuality as a developing topic from a rights-based, global perspective. The Goan way of life, which combines "traditional" Indian customs with contemporary standards that the Portuguese introduced to the region under British control in India, is the focal point of the movie. The film also deftly but forcefully addresses the less talked-about taboo subjects of AIDS, HIV transmission, and sexual safety. Even though the movie didn't perform well at the box office, its concept helped raise important issues that mainstream cinema was unable to address, making it a revolution for the country.

The study in this paper may not cover all social concerns, including but not limited to illiteracy, gender prejudice, the right to equality, the Indian political system, same-gender relationships, crime against women, female infanticide, stigma associated with mental health and awareness, environmental safety, and many more.

The box office may not accurately reflect and quantify the opinions of the audience. According to history, several films that were a box office failure ended up becoming cult favourites. Therefore, qualitative reviews would provide a deeper insight of the commercial success of films, particularly those in the parallel cinema genre.

**Conclusion:** The research does a good job of showing how realistic film impacts and changes societal norms and shapes society while also drawing feedback from the same audience. People's impressions and attitudes regarding the societal challenges that our society faces are influenced by how those topics are depicted through method acting to a great extent, if not entirely. A few films, like *Rang De Basanti*, succeeded in enlightening the public and bringing attention to the injustice surrounding the real-life death of supermodel Jessica Lal. Hollywood films are just as important in

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leaving a lasting imprint on the minds of the younger generation as Bollywood films. It is abundantly evident from the aforementioned sections that people's minds and cognitive processes are influenced by movies. It isn't only that the younger generation is more vulnerable to it; the movies are influencing India as a whole. People's behavior patterns are altering as a result of the effect that movies have on society.

It's not true that watching Bollywood films has a bad influence on Indian culture. The purpose of the article, however, was to show how Bollywood introduces subtle alterations into Indian society. It is up to the reader's judgment to determine whether the changes are good or bad. In conclusion, it can be claimed that the profound influence that the films have had has resulted in significant changes that are being seen in Indian culture. The one constant rule of nature is change.

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