

CHANGING DYNAMICS OF HINDI CINEMA AFTER LIBERLIZATION

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Abstract: Cinema is a medium of mass consumption which plays a key role in molding opinions, constructing images and reinforcing cultural values. Films reach a wider audience than literature as they move across the barriers of class, literacy, religion and even language. This is the medium of mass consumption, which has penetrated successfully, huge diversity of the country. In this sense the popular culture, which has native in nature, has become a mass culture. Not only do they reflect reality, they also construct reality.

Key words: cinema, liberalisation, hindi film.

INTRODUCTION

Cinema is a medium of mass consumption which plays a key role in molding opinions, constructing images and reinforcing cultural values. Films reach a wider audience than literature as they move across the barriers of class, literacy, religion and even language. This is the medium of mass consumption, which has penetrated successfully, huge diversity of the country. In this sense the popular culture, which has native in nature, has become a mass culture. Not only do they reflect reality, they also construct reality. This realism might be understood, first and foremost as a specific relationship between media text and their viewer. As Prof. F. Kazmi has argued,

“Conventional cinema draws its raw material from existing social realities and constructed a world which, in its essential elements, bore a striking resemblance to the one patronized and legitimized by the dominant political discourse.”

‘Bollywood’ films are Hindi language commercial films made in Mumbai film industry, India. Bollywood is the largest film industry in India as well as in the world in terms of its number of audience and forth largest in the world in terms of its number of production per annum. Despite its popularity in India, South Asia, Arab world, Caribbean and several countries in Africa; Bollywood films were often criticized by film makers and intellectual audiences in India for their repetitive and unrealistic story line and melodramatic acting style. With few exceptions, the majority of the Bollywood films between 1947 and 1991 were based on either of these two themes: love or revenge. This repetitive trend started to change slowly from 1992 and currently Bollywood is making movies on diverse socio-economic-political topics

India started its economic liberalization process from 1991. Liberalization process initiated structural reform policies in the forms of privatization, deregulation and trade liberalization. Several economic and demographic factors started to change significantly in the post liberalization period. Therefore, it is natural to ask whether the changing economic and demographic factors in India are reflected in the post liberalization Bollywood films. Whether the changing characteristic of Bollywood movies is a reflection of changing Indian economic and social life.

Despite of its growing nature in terms of number of production, employment and audience this industry didn't get any support from state or central government. Bollywood received its formal industry status in 1998 by the initiative work of cultural minister Ms. Sushama Swaraj. Until 2000 Bollywood films were dependent on private money lenders and mafias for their finance. In 2000, the industrial development bank of India (IDBI) started to provide loan for film production. Over time a diverse group of industries become interested to invest money in film production.

India's liberalization and socio-economic changes

Post-independence Indian economic policy was based on protectionist economic policy, central planning and import substitution industrialization. India started to face balance of payment crisis from 1980 and this crisis mounted up in 1991. India's existing foreign exchange reserve was not enough to pay her import bills and India requested International Monetary Fund (IMF) for \$2.2 billion emergency loan by providing 67 tons of India's gold reserve as collateral. India managed to secure her severe balance of payments crisis with her bailout deal with IMF and the deal required India to start structural changes of her economy. The structural reform policies include privatization, deregulation and trade liberalization.

India's liberalization policy brings several positive economic and demographic changes in India. Probably most significant changes realized in GNI growth and GNI per capita growth, share of export and import, private domestic and foreign investment and growth of information technology sector. Several demographic variables have been changed significantly like literacy rate, life expectancy at birth, ratio of female enrollment in education, labor force participation rate of female have been increased and fertility rate, life time risk of maternal death, child mortality have been decreased in this period.

Adult literacy rate and literacy rate of adult youth (age between 15 and 24) have increased between 1980 – 1991 and 1992 – 2010. One interesting feature is that female literacy has been increased by twenty six percentage point compare to only sixteen percentage point increase of male adult youth. This shows the acceptance of importance of education of women in society and a sign of women empowerment. There are several other demographic

changes that reflect steady improvement towards women empowerment, like increase in female-male ratio in primary, secondary and tertiary education, decrease in fertility rate and increase in female participation in labor force. Growth initiated through liberalization policy brings some positive changes in health. The change in life expectancy at birth between 1980 – 1991 and 1992 – 2009. One interesting feature over here is that the increase in female life expectancy is higher than male which is compatible with the Liberalization policy probably brings highest opportunities and significant changes in the lifestyle of middle class educated youth specialized in advanced technology, engineering and management. Increase in private investment (both domestic and foreign) and deregulation policy lead an increase in private sector job opportunities in cities like Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Gurgaon, Mumbai, Chennai, Mangalore, Indore, NOIDA in one hand and decrease and attractiveness of public sector jobs on the other hand. For example, direct employment in information technology and information technology enablers services (IT and BPO) have been increased from 230,000 to nearly 2 million between 1998-99 and 2007 -08. Large number of educated youth (both male and female) are migrating from their home towns to these cities and starting to live their life outside their family. This is a very new phenomenon of Indian family dynamics. Before liberalization most of the people work in their home towns and live with their parents - even with their extended family. This situation generally didn't change for male even after marriage, who lived together with his family and spouse. Female lived with her parents before marriage and lived with her husband and in-laws after marriage. Living outside family brings changes in food habit, degree of domestic work, clothing style, acceptance of different culture and above all the definition on personal and social freedom.

The nature of demand and supply of Bollywood films are also affected by liberalization policy. Before, liberalization Bollywood made majority of its movies on two repetitive themes and targeted mainly the audience with no or little education. This scenario started to change slowly but gradually after liberalization. Steady growth of income, literacy rate, percentage and number of young adult with tertiary education, acceptance of gender equality, changed dynamics of intra-family relation start to create a steady demand for diverse socio – political – economic issues in mainstream Bollywood movies. The middle class educated group has the access of internet and the private television channel like HBO, AXN, Star Movies, which provide them the opportunity of watching Hollywood movies. The competition with Hollywood movies added with the steady demand for diverse topic creates a new challenge for Bollywood film makers. On the other hand, there were several new directors, producers and actors start their career in Bollywood, who are educated, socially aware and eager to bring new ideas in mainstream Bollywood movies. Changed demand added with new ideas from supply side start to make changes in the nature of Bollywood films.

Major socio-economic issues and themes of bollywood movies:

To examine the extent of development goals have been discussed in Bollywood movies, I choose some elements. The first element is poverty and inequality. I take poverty and inequality for two reasons. First, 'End poverty and hunger' is the first goal of United Nation Millennium Development Goal. Second, it is very important to know

how many movies are addressing this important issue for a country where 42% people live at abject poverty. The second element is gender equality. Gender equality is the third millennium goal. In this issue India has two clear division – women from high and high middle income educated family has access to tertiary education and leadership and face less sex related discrimination, whereas women from low and low middle income family face sex related discrimination in education, health care, property ownership. The third element of the index is democracy and freedom. Freedom of speech, right to protest non-violent, existence of free and fair media are important for the efficient functioning of the government on one hand. On the other hand, economic, political, social and individual freedom are interlinked and extremely important for the process of development. The fourth element is education and health and major development goals of United Nation. The fifth and last one is global partnership. Here I consider two issues. India is an extremely diverse country with respect of religion, ethnicity and language. Therefore, it is important to know the relationship between various religious and ethnic group within India, which is crucial of India's unity and development. The second issue is India's relationship with her neighbor countries – specially Pakistan because of her long dispute on Kashmir issue.

Poverty and class discrimination:

Poverty and class discrimination was a popular subtopic in Bollywood film for long period of time. During the 1950s to late 1960s, the agrarian theme towards building a community – village and nation – dominated the cinematic representations. This is when the conflicts between rural and urban, and rich and poor were popularly depicted in Hindi cinema, in which the rural and the poor were morally privileged. The essay discusses the classic film Mother India in detail. In the iconic story of Radha the film epitomises the strength of India's hard-working, courageous, and morally and ethically upright toiling masses. In doing so, the film depicts the utopia of Nehruvian dream of progress but not at the cost of dishonoring or disgracing what it transforms.

The mood of the representations of poverty in Hindi cinema shifted in the 1970s. This was a crucial period in Indian politics. The romantic ideas of progress of nation-building of the 1950s and 1960s had given way to multiple challenges to the authority of Indian state. Unemployment and inflation were on the rise and the Bombay film industry was acutely influenced by the wide-ranging political changes. It responded with what film historian Madhav Prasad calls “populist aesthetic of mobilisation”: a new phenomenon of films centred on the images of angry young man, anti-hero or proletariat hero.

As an example of this era I discuss the cult film Deewaar which portrays poverty as shame and humiliation as a precursor to anger and rage of the anti-hero. The character of adult Amitabh Bachchan is deeply and formatively affected by the humiliation that his mother experienced living on a pavement with two children and working as a menial laborer at a construction site.

The constitution of this fantasy became increasingly aggressive in the 1990s. A series of blockbuster films highly popular among the Anglo-American diaspora made in this period represented a new trend. The agrarian and rural themes disappeared from these post-liberalisation films and emerged two contradictory trends: one of them, termed as the “Bollywoodisation” of Indian popular cinema, depicted the grandiose urban life styles focused on the Anglo-American diaspora; the other portrayed the crime-ridden, rotting underbelly of urban India

Current theories on development and globalisation fail to take into account the powerful impact affective atmospheres have on shaping social and political reality. They also have not adequately explained the widespread dystopian utterances in rural India made in the background of, for example, a quarter million farmers committing suicides over a period of decade and half: “we are like the living dead”, “nothing can possibly change”, “how long should our lives be tied down to mud?” “our lives are wasted making dust and sifting mud”. My essay has used popular Hindi films to sense the contemporary culture and to show how the shifts in the way poverty situations are represented in the fantasy narratives of Bombay cinema hints at the historical change in public morality.

Portroyal of women:

India elected her first female prime minister Indira Gandhi as early as 1966, Indian Nation Congress in elected female president in 1939, women leadership in India’s freedom fighting movement was higher than Russia and China’s revolutionary movement, however majority of the Indian women did not get the opportunity of education, health service and decision making power . Most of the Bollywood movies in pre liberalization portray women as submissive and in a receiving end. Common features were - women might be educated but not participating in labor force and women’s decision making power in family was almost zero. The importance of women empowerment was not considered an important issue until recently. Bollywood quickly adapt the issue of gender equality and several important movies have been made on women’s empowerment. Damini (Lightning, 1993) is one of most important movie in post liberalization era which documents an ordinary woman’s protest against her family and husband to bring justice to a rape victim. Mrityudand (Death Penalty, 1997) is another movie which deals with women cooperation and protest against social corruption. Agni Sakshi (, 1996) and Daman: A Victim of Marital Violence (Suppression, 2001) both deal with domestic violence towards women. Probably the most revolutionary movie on women freedom is Astitva (Identity, 2000) that asks the question of women’s sexual right. Matrubhoomi: A Nation Without Women (Motherland, 2003) is based on the issue of sex selective abortion or ‘missing women’13 and its destructive consequences on society. Chak De! India (Come On! India, 2007) is a sport movie but considerable part of this movie argues against the gender discrimination in work place. Ayan Mukerji’s 2009 Wake Up Sid is the portrayal of thousand Indian young educated woman who leaves their hometown and family to start a career and independent life in other cities.

The Hindi movies have essentially been male-centric, leaving little space for the women to evolve as an independent character. Traditionally women have been reduced to a mere spectacle in the movies, pretty faces objectified for their beauty. The change is undoubtedly slow. The mainstream cinema show women as glam-dolls

whose sole ambition in life is to attract the attention of accomplished males. The examples are not difficult to find—Singham, Dabaang, Gajini, Agneepath etc. The male-centric movies fully exploit women's physical beauty and sensuality. Most of the talented actresses have to work within tighter limits, in smaller and more repetitive roles.

The picture of woman presented by the Hindi Cinema is changing in more than one sense. The women play the same role as wife, mother or beloved, but the way of presentation has changed a lot. The modern woman of Indian Cinema would no more tolerate an unfaithful husband (Arth) and would silently the image of the woman is changing in popular cinema. They are being projected as real and contemporary women. They are not projected as an ideal sati savitri wife, or an ideal, all sacrificing daughter-in-law. In number of films we find strong women characters trying to establish an identity of their own, be it as a single mother (Paa), a foul-mouthed journalist (No One Killed Jessica), lady vengeance (Kahaani, Ishqiya), a murderess (Saat Khoon Maaf), a career woman (Fashion, Corporate), a lovesick manipulator (Tanu Weds Manu) or a rebel survivor (That Girl in Yellow Boots). These are the new vamps, the anti-heroines—protagonists whose life does not depend on the presence of a 'hero'. Unwedded mothers are not thrown out of the house and humiliated but were accepted by their families and friends like in Kya Kehna (2000), Salam Namaste (2005), Paa (2009), etc.

Bollywood movies started to improve in the last decade or so in this regard. They don't always show girls in western dress as sluts, but the sluts invariably wear western clothes. Even if a heroine wears mini skirt, she often has to prove her Indianness. In Kuch Kuch Hota Hai Rani Mukherjee, a London returned girl in a micro-mini proves her Indianness by singing a devotional Hindi song. We have moved on since then. For example, in Dhoom (2004) Abhishek's wife (the character played by Rimi Sen) is shown sexy, dressed in skimpy western attire but is hardworking and loving and fortunately for her, she does not have to prove her Indianness by conducting poojas and dressing herself in sari. That was like a fresh air and broke the stereotype.

Democracy:

India is the largest democracy in the world; however corruptions, lack of law enforcement, police brutality are violating the right of people in a democratic country. Corruption was an old theme in Bollywood movies and most of the times it was associated with one underworld mafia and his gang in pre liberalization Bollywood movies. The portrayal of corruption has been changed in current Bollywood movies and recent movies bring issues like political corruption, judicial corruption, police corruption. Shool (, 1999) is based on the political corruption in the state of Bihar, India. Gangaajal (Holy Water, 2003) is based on real life incidence of Bhagalpur, Bihar where between 1979 and 1980 police blinded thirty one people under trail by pouring acid on their eyes. This movie shows the political and police corruption and police brutality. Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's film Rang De Basanti (Color of Sacrifice, 2006) is a beautiful blend of Sahid (Martyr) Bhagat Singh and his associates protest and sacrifice for India's freedom from British rule and five Delhi University's students' protest on corruption related to

MIG aircraft. This movie shows the similarity between police torture and violation of democratic rights in pre and post independent India.

Education and health:

Education became a subject in Bollywood movies in Satyen Bose's 1954 film Jagriti (The Awakening) that emphasized on teacher student relationship and unorthodox curriculum. In the post liberalization period there are several movies have been made on education and student's disability. Black a 2005 Bollywood movie deals with the problem of deaf and blind student. Aamir Khan's film Taare Zameen Par (Stars on Earth, 2007) introduces the issues like dyslexia, child depression, social and family taboo towards disable student, constitutional right of disable students and teacher student relationship. 2010 block buster hit movie 3 Idiots strongly argues against student suicide, family and institutional pressure on students, lack of encouragement to develop innovative ideas. Munna Bhai M.B.B.S (Brother Munna M.B.B.S, 2003) is a Bollywood comedy which appeals for compassionate behavior towards patients and criticizes the lengthy bureaucratic system in health care industry. My Brother ... Nikhil (2005) is a movie on AIDS/HIV awareness. This movie deals with the social and professional discrimination towards AIDS/HIV patients.

Global Partnership:

A huge number of Indians are fascinated by Bollywood movies as well as western population is also captivated by them. The viewers also include majority of Pakistanis who are attracted due to the fascinating stories and glamorous characters. In fact, people of Pakistan admire Indian movies and Bollywood stars much more than their own movies produced by Lollywood (local Pakistani cinema) stars. In spite of the religious, cultural and regional conflicts the Indian movies are popular in Pakistan.

Bollywood movies apparently open to us as typical love stories with melodious music and attractive dancing but they are not only restricted to it. The movies also highlight the controversial issues like religious conflict of Hindus and Muslims and also presented in the form of bilateral politics played out between the hostile states of Pakistan and India.

National Identity:

There were two key themes to movie-making in the 1990s. First, pitching to the non-resident Indians (NRIs) and creating cinema that they would consume. This meant the use of big stars and the depiction of extravagant romance, affluent lifestyles and shooting in fancy locations.

Not that filmmakers hadn't done it earlier. Manoj Kumar's *Purab Aur Paschim* (1970) and Dev Anand's *Des Pardes* (1978) were some of the earliest takes on the diaspora. But somehow, it never mattered as much as in the 1990s, when the work of three filmmakers—Sooraj Barjatya, Aditya Chopra and Karan Johar—brought in what film critic Anupama Chopra calls “a generational change”. Trade analyst Komal Nahta adds that it was just a matter of the business evolving. It took Barjatya's *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994), a grand family drama that became the first Indian film to cross Rs.100 crore worldwide, for filmmakers to realize that Indian audiences overseas were happy to watch traditional Indian films and weren't obsessed with Hollywood.

“It was a turnaround,” Nahta said. “Indians and Asians living abroad started identifying with our films because filmmakers like Johar and Chopra offered them a taste of India and Indian traditions and values set in a very modern style. There was a good mix of modernity and tradition so they couldn't complain that it didn't compare with Hollywood. The making technique was Hollywood-ish but the roots were very Indian”.

“DDLJ was probably the first contemporary film to give a benign view of the NRI,” Chopra said. “Shah Rukh Khan's NRI was more Indian than the Indians were. The argument was that the Indian values are movable, you don't have to live in India to be Indian”.

Family and Marriage:

The institutions of family and marriage are inextricably interwoven in Indian society. A family not only starts with but also extends through marriage. Moreover, the family, being the smallest and the most fundamental unit of Indian society, becomes the obvious institution to understand and represent the socio-cultural traits of Indian society. It can also be seen as a microcosm of Indian society. Perhaps for this very reason marriage is and has always been an appealing theme for film-makers and producers in India. Hindi cinema has been portraying the structure and functions of the Indian family (mainly the middle class family) since the 1930s. In fact, *Acchut Kanya* (Dir. Franz Osten, 1936) offers a critique of traditional family values and the rigid marriage practices of Indian society. *Acchut Kanya* is a tragic story of two lovers Pratap (Ashok Kumar) and Kasturi (Devika Rani), whose family and caste differences become the main cause of their separation, and they are forced to marry within their respective communities. Thus, the film explicates the traditional patriarchal and the endogamous nature of Indian society wherein an individual cannot marry a person of a different family status, caste, group or clan.

Besides being a subtle theme in Hindi films, family and marriage are the primary themes in a host of films produced in the post-independence era. These films not only portray the archetypal Indian middle class family, but also show concern over the decline of the traditional Indian joint family and of the values associated with it. These films show how the rise of urban culture has resulted in individualism and the decline of the joint family system prevalent in rural India. *Bawarchi* (1972) is a classic film that reinforces the values of the joint family system. It is a story of a professor, Raghu (Rajesh Khanna), who gives up his job to work for the revival of the joint family

system. His only aim is to restore the values of the joint family system. The film beautifully portrays how he works to reinstate the lost love and peace in the Sharma joint family.

In the 80s and 90s Raj Shree Productions produced a number of films based on the idealized conceptualization of the Indian family, including *Nadiya Ke Paar* (Dir. Govind Moonis, 1982), *Babul* (Dir. Govind Moonis, 1986), *Maine Pyar Kiya* (Dir. Sooraj R. Barjatya, 1989), *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun* (Dir. Sooraj R. Barjatya, 1994) and *Hum Saath Saath Hain* (Dir. Sooraj R. Barjatya, 1999). These films depict an ideal image of the Indian family, full of emotions, love, filial gratitude and mutual cooperation and understanding amongst family members. Also, these films promote the idea of a benevolent patriarchy. *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun* (1994) is one of the most successful films based on the themes of family and marriage. It broke all box-office records.

Indeed socio-cultural changes have been beautifully portrayed in contemporary Hindi cinema. Instead of sticking to the same old family and marriage formula stories which promulgate and assert the patriarchal system, contemporary films have been portraying the transformations which have come in the structure and function of such institutions. Moreover, with the growing significance of the globalized metropolitan audiences within the country and in the diaspora one can witness a significant effort on part of filmmakers to depict/construct a “modern” cosmopolitan Indian family.

Conclusion:

India took her liberalization policy in the year of 1991 and started to initiate several structural changes in favor of privatization of industries, deregulation from license policy, encouragement of private domestic and foreign investment and increased participation in international trade. In the post-liberalization period several economic and demographic variables started to change rapidly. For example, income and growth of income, literacy rate, ratio of female enrollment in education, female participation in labor force, life expectancy and mortality rate started to increase steadily in this period. These positive changes demands movies those consider a diverse range of social-political-economic issues. Changed industry status and investment of various industries in Bollywood film production added with changed demand encourage Bollywood to make movies with diverse topics. The changed dynamics of demand and supply leads to a significant increase in the choice of topics and the yearly ranking of Bollywood films.

Methodology

The study is historical, descriptive and analytical. The research paper based on both primary and secondary sources-material available on the subject. The primary sources is include the document of the governments, resolutions, declarations, statements, diplomatic briefings and organizational reports. The secondary sources of data are books, news reports, various journals, articles, magazines, news paper clippings and various academic papers. Internet sources will also be used.

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