

LIBERALIZATION AND ITS EFFECT ON HINDI CINEMA

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Abstract: Since its advent in the beginning of last century, the Indian film industry, or “Bollywood,” has played an integral role in both the expression of social frustration, and the formation of national identity. After the 1991 liberalization of the Indian economy, Indians both at home and abroad were faced with a rapidly changing social structure as a changing economic system had its effect on societal norms. Here too film fulfilled its role as societal narrator and influencer, and significantly impacted the way in which modern Indians understand their position in a global context.

Index terms: linearization, bollywood, hindi film, globalization.

INTRODUCTION

Since its advent in the beginning of last century, the Indian film industry, or “Bollywood,” has played an integral role in both the expression of social frustration, and the formation of national identity. This was true in the 1930s when the caste system “became a central issue of cinematic exploration” and after the 1947 partition when “the important role that Indian film has played in building nationhood” became apparent. After the 1991 liberalization of the Indian economy, Indians both at home and abroad were faced with a rapidly changing social structure as a changing economic system had its effect on societal norms. Here too film fulfilled its role as societal narrator and influencer, and significantly impacted the way in which modern Indians understand their position in a global context. Through examining film’s role as a social commentator and agent, the issue of outlining a theoretical framework within which one measures changes within India and its Diaspora is a complex task. Is globalization adequate to describe India’s increasing interconnectedness with the world? Is the Liberalization moniker too direct? Can postmodernism be invoked in a way that provides an abstract perspective on the very concrete consequences of a changing India? For several Bollywood scholars, the globalization label is enough. However, to limit the discussion to the globalization paradigm is to leave the complexity of film’s role in society aside, in favor of a more expedient, and perhaps more palatable answer.

Soon after independence, India adopted the path of mixed economy. Our economists and planners were of the view that India can solve her twin problem of poverty and economic backwardness only with the help of regulated and controlled mixed economy but it could not be so. Mixed economy could achieve neither the

targets of economic development nor of social justice. Indian economy faced a major economic crisis in early 1991. This problem did not develop suddenly. It got accumulated over a long period. Indian economy witnessed a gap between public revenue and expenditure continuously for a number of years. This gap has been steadily growing with the passage of time. It was financed partly by borrowings from abroad and partly by issuing new currency notes. It caused internal imbalance in fiscal situation and external imbalance in payments situation. It pushed the economy into a deep economic crisis. This problem was sharply accentuated by the Gulf crisis in late 1990. During this tenure, there was also political instability in the country. As a result of all these developments, international confidence in the Indian economy started to shaken and credit rating of India in the international capital market declined steeply. These problems continuing for years, destroyed the capacity of Indian economy to bear internal and external shocks. To quote an example, the Indian economy faced heavy pressure of monetary inflation which touched a new height of 11.2% per annum. A matter of common concern was that the prices of food articles were showing a substantial rise. Mounting inflationary pressures also contributed to the situation which necessitated economic reforms.

This all created a panic situation for government of India. It was no how possible for the government to continue monetary and fiscal affairs in such a situation. It left the Government with no option but to resort to economic reform measures: Liberalization, privatization and globalization (Collectively known as LPG model or Economic Reforms) in India.

Economic Reforms (New Economic Policy) mean and include all economic changes made by Government of India since July, 1991 to pace the way of all around prosperity of Indian Economy. These changes have been made in Government policies regarding foreign investment, trade, industry, foreign exchange, fiscal affairs, etc. All these changes are called new economic policy.

According to C. Rangarajan, the then Governor of Reserve Bank of India,

"The new economic Policy comprises various policy measures and changes introduced since 1991. There is a common thread running through all these measures. The objective is simple and that is to improve the efficiency of the mechanism involving multitudes of controls, fragmented capacity and reduced competition even in the private sector".

Memorandum on Economic Policies stated,

"The thrust will be to increase the efficiency and international competitiveness of industrial production, to utilize foreign investment and technology to a much greater degree than that in the past, to improve the performance and rationalize the scope of public sector and to reform and modernize the financial sector so that it can more efficiently serve the needs of the economy.

Meaning of economic liberalization

Liberalization means the removal of unrequired controls and restrictions. Efforts are made to create an economic environment in which the industrial and business enterprises may work smoothly and contribute in the process of economic and social development. It is important that liberalization does not mean an uncontrolled economy. It only means the removal of obstacles and unnecessary restrictions in the way of development.

Economic reforms undertaken since July, 1991 are described as economic liberalization. Economic liberalization has two components:

- (a) Relaxing or removing counter-productive restrictions on the operation of market and economic transactions so as to permit freer operation of the market forces, and
- (b) Creating a stable macroeconomic policy environment conducive to the market forces.

Relaxation or removal of restrictions on economic transactions may involve: (i) procedural changes such as changing the procedure of licensing of imports, foreign investment and domestic investment, (ii) legislative changes such as the repeal of outdated legislation, bringing into existence various regulatory authorities such as SEBI, IRAI, TRAI, CERC, SERCs etc.

Both the procedural and legislative changes aim at bringing about major changes in the formal rules governing the interaction in the economic realm. Private entrepreneurs will have the flexibility to adjust their activities in response to market signals without seeking a license or a permission of concerned government agencies. The government and legislature are expected to provide supportive environment for the smooth and impartial functioning of market forces.

Economic liberalization involves a major shift in the development strategy. It takes away from minimizing the reliance on international division of labor towards progressive integration with the global economy and aggressive participation in it. It takes away from over extended and inefficient public sector in commercial activities towards the clearly focused public sector performing the core functions of defense, health and education. It takes away from the direct control regime of license-permit raj towards freer play of the functioning markets.

The new strategy is based on the diagnosis that persistent poverty has been the result of inadequate expansion of productive employment opportunities and unequal distribution of income and wealth. In its concept, economic liberalization imposes upon the markets and state to pay mutually reinforcing roles rather than the mutual suspicion that marked their interaction in the past.

Stabilization and structural adjustment are the two components of economic liberalization. Stabilization involves correcting the past fiscal of legacy and maintaining a macroeconomic environment that is conducive to the smooth and effective operation of domestic and international markets. It requires responsible monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policy to maintain a reasonably low rate of inflation and 'realistic' foreign exchange rate that is consistent with viable and healthy balance of payments.

The bureaucracy needs to change the mindset of 'controllers' to that of 'facilitators' for the smooth functioning of market. They are the implementers of the core functions of government. They have an important role in formulating and implementing the procedural and legislative changes that are integral to economic liberalization. Their dominant concern for non-transparent and procedure-orientation with complex procedures has to give a way to the result-orientation and accountability in their activities.

Freer domestic and international markets are expected to offer wider choices to general public with reference to the commodities and services they produce and buy, the saving and investment opportunities and the choice of occupations and professions. General public too, needs to get out of the 'over-dependency syndrome' of earlier period. We all have to realize that we need to rely on the informal institutions of civil society by starting with the extreme hypothesis that government is the source of problems rather than providing solutions to the problems.

Economic liberalization is not a solution for social and political problems. Economic liberalization creates an environment for freer operation of markets. Even though everybody may not be able to take the advantage of these opportunities. Simultaneously, there would always be those who would set the example for others to follow and also provide signals for opportunities which others are unable or unwilling to grasp. Consequently, economic liberalization process would be more successful if various segments of the society and polity realize and accept their implications. Persistence of economic scarcities makes the resolution of political and social conflicts more difficult.

Liberalization and socio-economic changes in India

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. One interesting feature over here is that the increase in female life expectancy is higher than male which is compatible with the rest of the world.

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 enabled services (IT and BPO) have been increased from 230,000 to nearly 2 million between 1998-99 and 2007 -2011. 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.

Bollywood and liberalization

Bollywood as a term has been roughly in vogue for the last four decades and is synonymous to the Hindi film industry of Mumbai, formerly Bombay. But not until recently the term Bollywood has become a global phenomenon with the hay days of the economic liberalization or globalization in India since 1991. But before we delve deep into Bollywood, it is imperative that we should throw light on the economic phenomena of globalization and its socio-cultural impact on India.

Hindi films, by the turn of the last decade of the previous century, have been an embodiment of these socio economic shifts. These shifts are in accord with the cultural shift that has been inflicted by the globalized order of things. Spectrum of the Indian market had changed overnight due to the flooding of a host of foreign products in the indigenous markets. If we consider the classical Marxist approach of the relation between an economy and its culture, economy of a state is its base and the culture that thrives there is the superstructure built on that base. So an economic implication on a nation inevitably influences the cultural practice of the societies of that nation who are exposed to that economic base.

In P. Joshi's 'Bollylite in America', Bollywood has been meant for a 'culture industry that remains constitutively international in production and global in consumption.' Popular for its Hollywood remakes and reformulation of popular Hollywood films, other regional language films (Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Bhojpuri, and Malayalam language) and even old films, the term Bollywood has come to represent both an acknowledgment of the debt the directors and technicians of the Hindi film industry owe to Hollywood for their creative ideas as well as a description which challenges the monopolistic hegemony of Hollywood across the globe. In this regard, Asish Rajadhyaksha presents a very interesting definition of Bollywood which enhances us to understand the industry in a better way than the usual consensus about Bollywood. According to him, Bollywoodization can be best understood as a "diffused cultural conglomeration involving range of distribution and consumption activities."

But this definition is prevalent only after it has incorporated the ethics and contradictory forces of globalization like privatization, and liberalization which changed the production and consumption of Mumbai films. The near universal legitimization of the term Bollywood (instead of Hindi cinema, Bombay cinema, Indian popular cinema, etc) is an index of larger social transformations taking place in India.

Changes in the film industry after liberalization

Used both pejoratively and with pride as shorthand for a film industry located in Mumbai, previously named Bombay, the term Bollywood has come to refer to the roughly 150 Hindi films that roll out each year from the city's studios. Well known for its frequent remaking and reformulating of Hollywood films, the label Bollywood has come to represent both an acknowledgment of the debt Mumbai filmmakers owes to Hollywood for creative ideas as well as a description that challenges the hegemony of Hollywood. According to Rajadhyaksha the "Bollywoodization" of Mumbai cinema must be understood as a "diffused cultural conglomeration involving range of distribution and consumption activities" signified by the complex and contradictory forces of globalization, privatization, and liberalization which has changed the production and consumption of Mumbai films. The near universal legitimation of the term Bollywood (instead of Hindi cinema, Bombay cinema, Indian popular cinema, etc.) is an index of larger social transformations taking place in India.

The Indian media scenario completely changed in 1991 with the arrival of international television. Hong Kong based Star TV, a subsidiary of News Corporation, and CNN started broadcasting into India using the ASIAST-1 satellite. The arrival of satellite-distributed television was followed by the rapid and dramatic expansion of cable television. The government's new "open skies policy" allowed for media audiences to have access not only to several Hindi and regional language channels but also to foreign entertainment programming including latest Hollywood films' Changes in the media landscape along with policy initiatives by the State precipitated a further series of changes which dramatically impacted the film industry. When the government granted "industry status" to films in 1998, the film industry was eligible for infrastructural and credit supports available to other industries as well as reduction in custom duties on cinematographic film, complete exemption on export profits, and tax incentives. At the same time as policy-shifts were liberalizing the industry, multiplexes began to replace single-screen theaters, especially in the metropolitan cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Chennai. By the late 1990s, the buzz word had become the "corporatization" of films: Web sites became increasingly important marketing sites for films and film studios; film music was strongly promoted (popular film songs could be downloaded as cell phone ringtones, for example); television and radio advertised aggressively; ticket prices went up; and stars made themselves available for press interviews, press appearances, and pre-release campaigns. The circulation of thousands of new media objects in the forms of print flyers, signage, mobile phones, music cassettes, and CDs, writes Sundaram, created a "visual frenzy" centered around Bollywood.

Films increasingly began to depict India's shifting relationship with the world economy through images of a hybrid relation between the national and global. Since the economic liberalization of the 1990s

an ever-increasing number of Indians have traveled abroad, often to visit their overseas family; this diaspora has come to represent an important part of the market for Mumbai film producers. The increasingly consumerist lifestyle of India's elites and wealthy Indians living in the West has led to frequent depiction in films of hugely extravagant interiors, lavish jewelry, designer clothes, shopping at malls, eating and drinking out at clubs and bars, and engaging in expensive sports such as skiing, water-gliding, and motor racing. The strategies adopted by the filmmakers to accommodate such expanding audience tastes and desires can be best described as taking global formats and visual styles, while "localizing, adapting, appropriating, and Indianizing" them. Such strategies, and the audience expectations that produced them, can be labeled as glocalization, and can contribute to a theoretical framework to better understand the global-local nexus among Bollywood audiences.

Changes in the exhibition and promotional system

With the policy shifts owing to the liberalization process, single screen theatre halls were started being replaced with the multiplexes, especially in the metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Delhi and Kolkata. With the sophisticated financial policies for films starting from its investment to its exhibition, the film industry became corporatized with

- a. development of websites for promotional activities of Bollywood films as well as the studios and the big production houses,
- b. aggressive marketing and promotional activities for film music, which was having a stiff competition with the newly found indie pop songs,
- c. incessant and aggressive campaigns of the newly released films in radio, television and other forms of media like mobile phones,
- d. increase in the ticket prices of the films in the multiplexes,
- e. the stars of the Hindi films started appearing in interviews, television shows and press meetings more than ever before,
- f. advertisements started endorsing the stars who became regular faces in the satellite television channels.

According to Ravi Sundaram, circulation of thousands of various media objects (both old and new) in the forms of print flyers, signage, mobile phones, music cassettes and CDs, created a 'visual frenzy' centered around Bollywood.

New challenges for Bollywood

It is true that the film industry turned into a new global Bollywood with a lot of economic and financial facilities only after the economic liberalization, but for the same open market policies cinema in India and all across the world started facing stiff challenges from other forms of media, especially television. Bollywood faced enormous pressure in every sense to maintain and attract the audiences to the film theatre from the tele-visual extravaganza. Previously the narratives were surrounded with the poverty stricken community and how a working class hero struggles to defeat the corrupt rich villains. It also accommodated the familial and community ties which proved to be more essential and core to the existence of the individual. But now Bollywood films increasingly began to depict India's shifting relationship with the world economy through images of a hybrid relation between the national and global - there was interestingly some conscious deletion on thematic grounds like 'jhoparpatti' (slums) and struggling protagonist in poverty and community feeling more than the feeling of a responsible citizen.

The new filmmaker of Bollywood started adopting thematic structures and narrative devices which are in accord with a broader audience who are exposed to international cinema, international sitcoms and a feeling of becoming a new global Indian under the happy charm of globalization - both economically and culturally. These strategies adopted by Bollywood to incorporate expanding audience tastes and desires can be best described as taking global formats equipped with updated visual styles, while localizing, adapting, appropriating, and 'Indianizing' theme. In this case, a term becomes central to the point of discussion - Glocalization, which is an amalgamation of globalization and localization. Structures of the newly evolved Bollywood films can be labeled as glocalization.

Conclusion

Globalization has embraced Bollywood cinema not to impose the global cultures in the Indian terrain neither to challenge the cultural archetypes, nor to question the nationalist feelings into jeopardy. On the contrary, the national image and the desire of the nation as an emerging global power under the umbrella of the United States is reconfigured and consolidated in a new way. Bollywood through its films have invested a vision of portraying itself to the world as a global superpower, not from the military point of view, but as a highly skilled and updated human resource tank whose representations are manifested through the protagonists and their friends inside, and mostly outside the country. But this is not the only agenda that Bollywood has – the cultural ramifications and re-endorsements of the familial emotions along with the Non-residential Indian community feelings are of prime importance. As Bourden points out, with the changes in media production, consumption, and exhibition, 'locality is produced as one's sense of difference from the global, but the new locality is no longer a spontaneous expression of given, long-held local traditions. Glocalization has helped Bollywood not only to link the spaces far and broad stretching to

different continents, but also to invent the localities which are hybrid in nature, but national in culture. An Indian audience in contemporary times aspires to be a global citizen, and Bollywood becomes a key cultural impetus through which global is constructed locally just as the local is constructed globally.

Methodology

The study will be historical analytical and textual. The research paper will be based on both primary and secondary sources- material available on the subject. Primary sources will include – Hindi films reports interview statement etc. Secondary sources will include Books, articles, published in edited volumes, research journals, news papers and magazine. Internet sources will also be used wherever necessary.

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