



INDIAN CINEMA: A PATH TO THE SOCIAL WELFARE

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ABSTRACT

Cinema, also called a movie, film, motion picture or photoplay, is a series of still images which, when shown on a screen, creates the illusion of moving images due to the Phi phenomenon. Films are cultural artifacts created by specific cultures. They reflect those cultures, and, in turn, affect them. Film is considered to be an important art form, a source of popular entertainment, and a powerful medium for educating or indoctrinating citizens. The visual basis of film gives it a universal power of communication. Cinema has truly played a major role in changing our society. Patriotic movies make us remember to love our nation. Good comedic movies have treated many patients through laugh therapy. Adventurous movies have given us a sense of adventure to explore new possibilities. There are many more! In our society there are many practices and traditions which are based on ignorance and which have withheld the progress of our society. Rigidity of *caste system*, *untouchability*, *dowry system* have done enormous harm to our society. Cinema can do a lot to eradicate these evils. They can be used for promoting *national integration*, *intercaste marriages*, *family planning*, *eradication of illiteracy*, etc. Such themes can help the transformation of our society. The cinema can be used as an instrument to help people to get rid of obscurantism and also to guide them along the right path. It can help in removing ignorance from our society.

Key words: Caste system, untouchability, Vested Interest, communalism, Foeticide , Infanticide, Honor-Killing, Rigidity, Humanity, Films , Society.

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*"Zindagi jeene ke do hi tarikke hote hai...
Ek jo ho raha hai hone do, bardasht karte
jao, ya phir zimmedari uthao use
Badalneki."*

By Daljit Singh (DJ) in "Rang De Basanti"

We know that literature is the reflection of our society. But films or movies are more related to the society as they are portraying it visually. Since its beginning with the film 'Raja Harish Chandra' (1913), the cinema has remained the most powerful media for mass communication in India. Cinema has the ability to combine entertainment with communication of ideas. It has the potential appeal

for its audience. It certainly leaves other media far behind in making such an appeal. As in literature, cinema has produced much which touches the innermost layers of the man. It mirrors the episodes in such a manner that leaves an impact on the coming generations. Cinema presents an image of the society in which it is born and the hopes, aspirations, frustration and contradictions present in any given social order. The areas of films are very wide and the patterns or types of films are gradually changing throughout the generation in India. If we look into our very own Hindi film industry or "Bollywood" we can see the gradual change in it. The world of films are

the mixture of fiction and real world now but if we look into the films of two decades ago, we can see those are more fictitious than present day. The films of earlier days basically pay attention to the world of romance and family drama. But now-a-days it has changed to a world of reality, new films directors came with new thoughts and stories, and that makes the difference. Now the films are gradually changed into a path to Social Welfare. The new film directors and producers think about the need of these types of films. As it is the postmodern world, the problem of life and society are gradually increasing but we are not able to take any proper step to remove these problems. These films show us the right path to raise voice and fight against it. If we look into some of the main diseases of our society, we can see the followings – *Religious Conflict, Political Vested Interest, Rigidity in Castism, Girl Child Killing, Honor Killing* etc. Now we can look into some of the films that make differences by showing an exact path to a brighter future against these evils of society and they became a path to social welfare.

“*Ms. And Mrs. Iyer*”, a film by director *Aparna Sen*, is one of the most prominent films on communal conflict. The film shows us the communal feeling among the Hindus and Muslims towards each other. In one of the scene of this film an old Muslim couple was killed by some Hindu hooligans. This is really a brutal incident, but by this incident we can feel the real message of the film. This film is all about communal conflict but it is about to convey a message to the people to unite against this evil practise of society in the name of religion. Nobody can be benefitted by these types of practises. This movie leads us towards the social welfare, an Indian society with great harmony among the people of different religions. Here the director not only indicates Hindus or Muslims but all religions of India and world. The main female actor of this movie *Mrs. Iyer's (Konkona Sen Sharma)* is one of the most important characters. By this character, director shows us the Indian rigidity on religions and caste system. Though the lady is from a good and highly educated family, she has started behaving differently with *Raja (Rahul Bose)*, the male lead when she knew that he is a Muslim. This film shows us the path to behave like human being with people irrespective of

caste and religion. But at last we can see that humanity wins over religious hatred as the lady (*Mrs. Iyer*) developed a soft corner for the guy, *Raja (Rahul Bose)* and behaved normally. So this film really shows us a brighter path towards *social welfare*. We can also see the differences of thought between the younger and older people here, when the older Muslim couple was taken away from bus, the younger people are screaming and one mentally deterred young boy was continuously hitting a man who told the hooligans about the old Muslim couple.

“*Rang De Basanti*”, a path breaking movie in Indian film industry directed by *Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra*. It features an ensemble cast comprising *Aamir Khan, Siddharth Narayan, Soha Ali Khan, Kunal Kapoor, Madhavan, Sharman Joshi, Atul Kulkarni* and British actress *Alice Patten* in the lead roles. The film was well received by critics and audiences for its production values and had a noticeable influence on Indian society. This film is an entertaining mix of romance, history and social commentary. This film is one of the great example of comparison between the colonial and independent India. India was ruled almost 200 years by the Britishers and after the independence, we, the common people are also in the same condition, then the rulers are the Britishers and now the politicians and capitalists. In term of social welfare, we can say that, this movie can be the pioneer to stop these evils of so called educated and developed society. This movie shows the people (the young generation) the real and naked condition of Indian politics and Capitalism. This can help them to fight against these evils of society. The religious harmony is another important factor in the film. The character *Aslam or Asfaqulla Khan* is one of the main characters in the film, enacted by *Kunal Kapoor*. He was treated and threatened by some Hindu staunch believer as *Pakistani* as he is a Muslim, but the director shows us great thing here, the harmony and friendship between *Aslam* and his friends. When *Laxman Pandey (Atul Kulkarni)* was going to fight with *Aslam*, but *Dj (Aamir Khan)* and *Karan (Siddharath)* came to protect *Aslam* and was ready to fight with *Laxman*. This incident was so striking that with one scene we can get the message of harmony and religious brotherhood. It shows that Friendship and humanity is above everything else. This movie gave

the common people a ray of hope to come up against these evils and vices of our present Indian society. The most remarkable factor of this film is that the movie is right appropriate in this post-modern age in India. This movie is striking also for its lesson about the sacrifices of our great freedom fighters (*Chandrashekhhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Ashfaqullah Khan, Rajguru, Ramprasad Bismil, Durgawati Devi*) to the young guns of our Indian society and asked to develop patriotism like these greats. We knew these heroic sacrifices by our books only but we can never feel it perfectly until we see it visually. This film is a great inspiration to fight against the present days "*Britishers (Corrupt Politicians and Capitalists)*". This movie's dialogue gave us a lot of hope of a brighter future society.

"Koi bhi desh perfect nahi hota use behtar bana padtahi"

-Flight Lt. Ajay Rathod (*R. Madhavan*)

"Matrubhoomi: A Nation Without Women" is another Indian film that shows us a path to social welfare as it is a satire on our society over the girl child killing and female marginalization. It is written and directed by *Manish Jha*. The film examines the impact of female foeticide and female infanticide on the gender balance and consequently the stability and attitudes of society. The film's storyline bears some resemblance to real life instances of gender imbalance and economics resulting in fraternal polyandry and bride buying in some parts of India. The most important thing of this film is that it depicts a future dystopia in an Indian village populated exclusively by males due to female infanticide over the years. In the very beginning of the film, we can see a brutal incident in a remote village in Bihar, a new born *baby Girl* was killed by her father(?) by drowning her in vat of milk. As a normal human being we can't even imagine such type of incident. The most pathetic thing is the cause of this brutal murder. The cause is that the father wants a *baby Boy*. And the irony is that the whole incident is called as a social ceremony. The director of the film shows an unimaginative but a reality in future by presenting a village without women. That's why he presents a society somewhere around 2050 A.D. This unchecked

trend of killing newborn girl, leads to the village being populated solely by males. The film shows us the result of this brutality against the women and that leads the men's frustration and killing each other. In the film we saw that a girl, *Kalki (Tulip Joshi)* living some distance from the village and literally buys her from her father. She is then married to all five sons of a person of the village. Each night of the week, she is forced to sleep with one of the sons, and the father also gets his weekly night with her. Of all the men in the boorish lot, only the youngest son treats her with respect and tenderness. The director shows us the real crisis of society if this evil practise of girl child killing will go on. But by the good character of the youngest son, director shows us a ray of hope. He wants to convey the message that humanity can be found everywhere. Again we can see the brutality and frustration of men, the younger brother is killed by the elder brothers. The most pathetic incident was when an escape attempt with a sympathetic domestic servant goes lethally awry, she becomes a pawn of revenge in an intercommunity conflict and an unwilling object of sexual release for even more men. She is chained to a post in the cow shed and gang raped mercilessly night after night. But the striking point of this movie is the ending, it ends on a *violent but hopeful* note, as she (*Kalki*) bears a *baby girl* while the men of the village kill each other off over rights to her and her child.

As per director, *Manish Jha*, "*I wanted to examine the emotional and psychological impact of a society without women,*" ... "*It is a very extreme situation ... a whole nation without women.*"

One of the most important movie on social issue is "*Manjhi- The Mountain Man*" by *Ketan Mehta* in the recent times. The film is a biopic on *Dashrath Manjhi*, *Manjhi*, widely known as the "*Mountain Man*", was a poor labourer in *Gehlore* village, near *Gaya* in *Bihar*, India, who carved a path 9.1 metres (30 ft) wide and 110 metres (360 ft) long through a hill 7.6 metres (25 ft) using only a hammer and chisel. It is a tale of romance and revenge, determination and grit, often compared to the Mughul Emperor *Shah Jahan's* love for his wife *Mumtaz Mahal*. But unlike *Shah Jahan*, *Dashrath* was a mere casual labourer who was often scoffed at as '*pagla*', an obstinate fool. The dedication and the love for his wife is a great

aspect that is portrayed in the movie, but if we look into its social perspective, its scope is also great. This movie is a perfect blending of socio-cultural-political and personal crisis. The film shows the situation of Dalits and their status in a society, their suffering and struggle against the poverty, casteism, and untouchability. Though they are Hindus but they are not allowed to enter in the Temple. The screenplay brilliantly captures the socio-political scenario that includes the *feudal castesystem*, the *careless and corrupt functioning of the bureaucrats* and the *callous government*. In the opening of the film, we can see that some dalits are celebrating as Government passed the bill against untouchability and announced that everybody is same. But the upper caste people are protecting themselves to enter in the temple. In the next scene of the film we can see that *Dasrath* came from Dhanbad and came to know that there is no touchability and untouchability prevail in term of Government, he directly hug the upper caste *Mukhiya (Head of the Village)*. At first *Mukhiya* did not recognise him that he is that *Dasrath* from lower caste, and then when he knew that he is from lower caste, he and his people brutally torture him and hit him. By this the director portrait the real situation of a village, though the bill was passed against untouchability by the Government. The people of so called *Upper Caste* can't even think of *Equality* between upper and lower caste people. They thought that it's a mistake by the Government. Another pathetic situation is that when one of the worker in the Brick Field of *Raub*, *Mukhiya's son (PankajTripathi)* fell into the fire but *Raub* forced the other worker not to pour water there as his business may be effected by that. So by this incident we can easily feel the barbarism of the upper caste people towards the lower caste dalits. Then with great pain *Dasrath* asked God-

*"E ka khela hai re? (What game is this?)
Aur kitna satayega re?" (How much more
will you torture us?)*

Actually this is not the question to God but its the question to the people of our society by the director. In the other sense this film is a pure piece of inspiration for the people of our society. One person makes an impossible work possible by his only inspiration *Phaguniya (Radhika Apte)* and dedication.

At the later part of the movie, we can see that *Dasrath* want to make the road for the people of *Gehloreas* all will be benefitted by this road. It is really a great film of inspiration of social welfare. This is the lesson for each and everyone of our society. We can learn – "*If there is a will, there is way*", by this character of *Dasrath Majhi*. His love for his wife and his village made him to do such an impossible stuff. This film is surely tells the society to raise voice against these vices like *Casteism*, and *untouchability*. We can also see that the women of lower castes work with their husband and they are equally treated by them, they never told them not to go outside, they have respect and love for them. But in the contrary we can see that the upper caste *Raub* never respect a woman and he raped them and killed them. It is the shame for the upper caste people that their mentality is much lower and inhuman than the lower caste people. This film is really inspirational one and its dialogue is also create great inspiration to all the present and future generation. On a lighter note, after *Dasrath* completed his project, he is asked,

*"What message would you like to give the
future generation?"*

He promptly responds with,

*"Bhagwan ke bharsepe mat raho, kya pata
who aapke bharse mein baitha hai?"
("Don't depend on god to complete your
task, who knows, he may be depending on
you to complete the task").*

It simply elicits chuckles.

Now one of the most burning social issues is the case of *Honor Killing*. Many films of India are portraying this evil practise and show the people its dangerous results and naked characteristics. An honor killing is the homicide of a member of a family by other members, due to the perpetrators' belief that the victim has brought shame or dishonor upon the family, or has violated the principles of a community or a religion, usually for reasons such as refusing to enter an arranged marriage, being in a relationship that is disapproved by their family, having sex outside marriage, becoming the victim of rape, dressing in ways which are deemed inappropriate, or engaging in homosexual relations. Honor killings have been reported in northern regions of India, mainly in the Indian states of *Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and*

Uttar Pradesh, as a result of people marrying without their family's acceptance, and sometimes for marrying outside their caste or religion. In contrast, honor killings are rare to nonexistent in South India and the western Indian states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. In some other parts of India, notably West Bengal, honor killings completely ceased about a century ago, largely due to the activism and influence of reformists such as Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Vidyasagar and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Haryana is notorious for incidents of honor killings, mainly in the upper caste of society, among *rajputs* and *jaats*. Honor killings have been described as "chillingly common in villages of Haryana dominated by the lawless 'khappanchayats' (caste councils of village elders)". In India one of the most famous and controversial honor-killing case is "Manoj-Babli honour killing case". The killing was ordered by a *khappanchayat* (*khap*), a religious castebased council among *Jatts*, in their Karora village in Kaithal district, Haryana. A number of Indian films loosely based on this case. A very recent film, "Guddu-Rangeela" directed by Subhash Kapoor, has incorporated the Manoj-Babli honour killing case in the storyline. It stars Arshad Warsi, Amit Sadh and Ronit Roy in lead roles. In this film Rangeela (Arshad Warsi) and Babli (Shriswara) love each other and they eloped and married but the *Khap* did not allow it and they decided to punish them as they are from same caste. The *Khap* did not allow the inter-caste marriage there in that village. This case leads to the court and court gave them police protection but they are attacked by the *Billu Pahalwan* (Ronit Roy) as the member of *Khap*. The irony of this evil practise is that it is called as a social ceremony with the support of all even his/her family members. This is so brutal that we the people with human heart can't even imagine about it.

Another film, "NH-10", directed by Navdeep Singh, one of the most talked about film on Honor-Killing in the year 2015. It stars Anushka Sharma and Neil Bhoopalam in lead roles. Part of the story is also loosely adapted on 2007 Manoj-Babli honour killing case. The film's title refers to the 403 km long National Highway 10 in India. In this movie there is scene where some people inhumanly beating and going to kill a young girl and boy and then we can find

that one of the men among them was the brother of that girl whom they are beating. The man, *Satbir* (Darshan Kumar) was killing his own sister because she loves a boy who is from their own caste. Can we imagine this? But it is happening in this 21st century also and in the very near of megacity like Gurgaun. If we look into the real dictator of this Honor -Killing, we can find that the older woman of the family is the main antagonist. (How can a woman tells to kill a girl in this way without any fault?)

These two movies show the real naked situation of society and tell us to raise voice against such types of vices of society. These types of films are actually "a protest against such inhuman traditions and practices".

The cinema exercises a great influence on the mind of the people. It has a great educative value. It can achieve splendid results in the field of expansion of education. Cinema or films have the power to influence the thinking of the people. They have changed the society and social trends. They have introduced new fashions in society. They may be described as trend-setters. They can create a direct impact on our social life. Films can go a long way towards arousing national consciousness and also in utilising the energies of the youth in social reconstruction and nation-building by a skilful adaptation of good moral, social and educative themes, and by introduction of popular sentiments, films can, to a great extent, formulate and guide public opinion.

Note: Translations of some movie dialogues are made by me (Author).

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