

Human Rights Perspective and Public Awareness: The Medium of Hindi Films**Mr. Kaushik Mishra**, PhD Research Scholar

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Pondicherry Central University, Puducherry. E mail: kaushikmishra28@gmail.com**Key Words:** - Indian film, human rights perspective, education**Abstract**

Everybody has the right to live equally and peacefully and human rights protect people and their basic needs for this. But people can use their rights only if they possess certain degree of knowledge about it. Film is the effective and powerful medium of communication. It can equally reach to all sections of the society such as rich, poor, literate, illiterate. It can play an important role for public awareness about human rights. The present paper aims at the study of Indian Hindi film till 1990, how it portrays human rights perspective to its audience and provides effective education as well as how film is acting as a change agent for the audience on the basis of human rights. This paper studies how effectively the medium of film is portraying the issue of human rights and how it is disseminating the information and promoting awareness among the public. The basic aim of this study is to find out how different genres of film deals with same content and how their attempt for awareness or effectiveness is different from one another. It tries to analyze which genre of film effectively disseminated information or awareness to the audience about human rights perspective and how the film medium deals with every evil practices of society and portrays it. The content analysis in qualitative methodology has been used in this study. This study is based on Hindi films which were shown before 1990. It deals with how film acts as an effective medium for providing useful information and education to its audience on human rights perspective

Introduction

Establishing law and rules will not guarantee that people will reap benefit out of it or people will follow it. It is necessary that people should have information about that law and its benefits. So awareness among people is very important thing for the implementation of any law or rules. Communication tools are playing very important role for the awareness. In our country twenty years ago generally people didn't know about Human Rights but now the condition is different. It's true that people don't know all about this but at least, today everybody has some level of awareness about human rights. There is no doubt that the manifesto of human rights was issued in 10th December 1948 but it became famous from last twenty years due to evolution in communication process. Industrialization and technological advancement has built up a new era for human development. Communication mediums are becoming very powerful in our society. We can't deny the contribution of communication medium for the awareness of human rights among people. Film is also the powerful medium of communication. Hindi films are playing an important role for promoting awareness among people about human rights.

In this study we will discuss how effectively the medium of film is portraying the issue of human rights and how it is disseminating the information and awareness among public.

This study is based on the following important research questions:-

- How different genres of film deals with same content and how their awareness or effectiveness is different from one another?
- Which genre of film effectively disseminated information or awareness to the audience in human rights perspective?
- And how the film medium deals with every evil practices of society and portrays it?

This study was based on, Hindi films which were shown before 1990. Both primary and secondary data has been utilized for this study.

Human right perspective: The medium of films

Cinema can become a strong medium for awareness of human rights as it is an art which uses new ways to express the experience of human being. The language of film is different from other mediums. It is different from the print medium and from the language of literature. In literature, words are the only basics which have the power to express. The reader has to go in the world of dreams for feeling the expression of words. But film has visuals with dialogues. So people can easily understand the message of it.

Why the medium of films

Movies are considered to be one of the most popular medium of Mass Communication in India (Raina131-141Gargan11-12) and Indian motion picture industry is among the worlds largest, with a combined output of between seven hundred and eight hundred films a year. Movies, in as many as fifteen different languages, are produced in a number of regional centres, including Madras, Bombay, Hyderabad, and Calcutta. The largest percentage of the annual national output is represented by films in Hindi, the most widely understood language in the subcontinent; to the extent that a pan-Indian film style may be said to exist, the commercial Hindi cinema defines that style. Hindi film stars and music are famous throughout India and much of south-eastern and western Asia, and have influenced mass culture as far away as parts of Europe and Africa.

Today, India's mammoth film industry produces more movies than any other country in the world and employs over two million people. In 2001, India's entertainment industry (which includes film, music, television, radio and live entertainment) was one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy, experiencing over a 30% growth. Cable television generated the most revenue, followed by television broadcasting, film and television production. The film industry, on an average, produces approximately 1,000 movies annually, sells about six billion tickets and grosses more than \$72 billion globally. So we can say it is an effective tool of communication. India is a big country with more than hundred and twenty crore population and there is a lot of social, cultural, economical, religious, and educational differences. But movies are the medium of communication which is equally effective on every part of society .It reaches to every part of our country. People from Villages, small towns, cities, metro cities or any sector of country are touched by movies. The language of movies is also very easy because it has visual and voice which any literate or illiterate can understand equally. Movies have big number of audiences so it can easily spread awareness among people about human rights.

Historical Background of Films in India

The history of Indian cinema starts by silent movies .In these movies there is no dialogue and drama, like film maker was using the silent video of Ganga River in Allahabad or flood scenes of Bihar or the division of Bengal etc. On July 7, 1896, India's first cinematographic film was shown in Mumbai and first Indian-produced feature film, Raja Harishchandra (King Harishchandra) was released in 1913. In the beginning films were mostly based on religious stories .Falke made more than hundred small and big films. After 1921 film makers started making films on comedy but at that time the only aim of making film was entertainment. So they were not raising the social issues in films. "Siraj-1926" and "Typist Girl" are two famous silent movies in this era.

Sound in Indian films appeared in 1927: just four years after the premiere of the world's first sound feature (the American the Jazz Singer). But "Alam Aara" is first commercial Hindi movie with dialogue in the

history of Indian cinema. It was released in 1931. This is the period when people of our country were fighting for freedom with British government. It was also the most filmed theme at that time.

Before Independence Babyhood of Bollywood and Human right issues

The concept of human rights was formally declared in 1948 but Indian film makers started making films on this issue much before, like in 1932 'Chandi Das' and in 1936 'Achoot Kanya' came in view. These films were made by 'New Theatre' and 'Bombay Talkies' on the subject of untouchability. This is also a part of human rights. Untouchability is the part of our old Indian society which deals with the differentiation on the basis of cast.

In 1925 a film released by Maharashtra Film Company named 'Sahukari Pash' made by Babu Panter, bravely portrays the cruel character of moneylender and exploitation of the farmers. In this film the filmmaker also raised the question of illiteracy in India which is also related with human rights. J.P. Vadia and Homi Vadia made a film on Hindu Muslim Unity named 'Jai Bharat'. In 1940 a film 'Achhut' was released which was based on caste system. In 1939 a film 'Jeevan Maran' came which was made by New Theatre. In this film T.B (Tuberculosis) was the main subject as at that time people used to think that T.B can be transmitted through human touch. It was terminal disease at that point of time. How the society behaves with a patient who is suffering from T.B was also the subject film making.

Prabhat Film Company made a film 'Duniya Na Mane' in 1937. The central theme of this film was incompatible marriage. It was a very common problem of our society at that time. Film maker raised a question through this film to the society. In this film a young girl got married with an old man. Film maker nicely portrayed the problems coming out of that. V. Shantaram made a film 'Padosi' in 1938 based on communal riots. During that period our country was suffering with that problem. By the film he tried to send the message of communal peace in the society. In 1946 Mohammad Abbas made a film 'Dharti Ke Lal' based on famine in Bengal. By this film the filmmaker tried to send a message among people that famine is not done by god rather man is responsible for all these conditions. In this film the people from villages migrated to Kolkata with much struggle. Filmmaker tried to show the reality of shining cities. In this film the film maker raised many issues directly or indirectly related to human rights.

It is necessary to discuss about 'Nicha Nagar' by Chetan Anand in 1946. It was based on the struggle between exploiters and exploited. In this film the film maker closely delineates the difference of life style between rich and poor. The hero of the film used to live in a filthy slum. Through that character the filmmaker represents the life and struggles of the people living in slum. The filmmaker discussed about the human rights issue of urban poor people. Udai Shanker made a film 'Kalpana' in 1948. It was also based on social prejudices. So we can say before independence our film makers started making films on human right issues.

Independent Country, Independent view: New Era of Hindi films and Human Right

After independence new era came in Indian films. In 1946 Hindi film 'Do Bigha Jameen' hit screens. Bimol Roy made this film on the problems of farmers and why farmers were forced to leave the house. In this movie small Bengali landowner and his young son were in danger when their two-acre farmland was taken over by a local Zamindar (Feudal lord) for the failure on part of the former to pay the mounting debt. They move to Calcutta where the father tries to make out a living as a rickshaw puller while his wife joins him but later falls ill. They were on the verge of losing their ancestral home. By this movie, the filmmaker wants to point out the danger of industrialization and its impact on the lives of people leaving in rural areas.

Bimol Roy is the person of progressive ideas. All his films are directly or indirectly promote the awareness about human rights among people. In movie 'Parineeta' and 'Biraj Bahu', he raised the question of spoliation of women in our society. In his film 'Naukar', unemployment was the main theme. In 'Sujata' untouchability was the subject. He discussed about social and political hypocrisy of our society in his film 'Parakh'. And 'Bandini' is the story of a village girl, who is effected by national movement which is based on prison life. Bimol Roy made the films not only for entertainment but he also raised many social issues with them. He used this as a medium for promoting awareness against social evils.

Mahboob Khan made a famous film 'Mother India' in 1957. This was one of the few classics of the fifties that gave the woman and the mother the title of hero. The movie is also among few movies in classic Indian cinema where you don't get the regular Bollywood dancing and romance scenes until the end of the movie. Mother India is a true legend...Based in rural India as a metaphor of an independent nation rising on its own after the collapse of the British Empire in the Indian subcontinent, Indian mother (Sardar Akhtar) suffers monumentally on behalf of her two sons, much to the disinterest of the rural community where she lives. In the remake, the mother (now played by Nargis) likewise suffers, but her plight now affects her entire village, even inspiring her neighbours to shed their own selfishness. The ending, however, is still tragic, with the long-suffering heroine being forced to kill one of her own offspring to uphold the family's honor.

'Mother India' was one of the first Indian movies to be nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign film but it lost to another movie since America was more interested in movies from Europe...But Mother India could have won if it wasn't beaten at the third poll. This is an ultimate classic and a salute to the mother who has raised her children under difficult circumstances. Thanks to Mehboob Khan for giving us a look into the life of a rural country standing on its own in the face of becoming independent. That is the time when Satyajit Ray and Ritwik ghatak started to write new chapter of regional films.

Rajendra Singh Bedi made 'Garam Kot' in 1955 and in 1957 a film came 'Do Ankhe Aur Barah Hath'. The later one is based on rehabilitation of prisoners. In this film the filmmaker expressed the thought that prisoners are also human being if we believe in them and if they get another chance they can change. In 1956 Raj Kapoor made a film 'Jagte Raho'. It is one of the most amazing classics of Indian cinema. It is sad, comic, tragic, humorous, authentic, educative and entertaining. This magnificent social drama relates to the story of one poor and innocent peasant who comes to the big city of Bombay in hopes of improving his life. However, while looking for some water to quench his thirst, he was constantly branded as a thief by the citizens of the city and chased like a criminal. Looking for a hideout, still thirsty and hungry, he enters an apartment building, running from one flat to another, and ironically, every flat he hides in, he meets different "elite" citizens, all of them can be easily called thieves.

The film shows the double standards of our society, the cruelty and the corruptness, but not in a stereotypical way. It was natural and real. This naive peasant represents the simple common man who becomes a victim for no fault of his own, not only in India but in the entire world. He encounters different sorts of thefts and crimes committed by those so-called "respectable" citizens of the city, those who call him a thief and chase him just because he yearns for a few drops of water so that they can hide their own misdemeanours, which was so unbelievable yet so true.

In 1961 Baldev Raj Chopra made a film 'Dharm Putra' on communal peace. By this movie filmmaker wanted to send a message on society that humanity is greater than religion. This film was based on Hindu-Muslim unity. The basic story of this film is also related with Human rights. Guru Dutta made 'Sahib Bibi

Aur Ghulam' in the year 1962. This film was based on the painful life of a house wife who doesn't have her individual identity. By this movie filmmaker wanted to express the pain of Indian women. He raises a question on this social system where people are thinking that the world of women is limited in house.

Hindi "New Cinema" after seventy and Issues of Human Right

In this decade Shyam Benegal made a lot of famous films. It was called new wave cinema by a group of film writers. 'Ankur'(1974), 'Nishant'(1975), 'Manthan'(1976), 'Bhoomika'(1977), came in that age. 'Ankur'(1974), the subject of this film is the sexual harassment of a maid by landlord. This is the story based on Feudal oppression. 'Nishant'(1975) is also related to exploitation by landlord and peoples struggle against exploitation. 'Bhoomika' is the story of a women who wanted freedom. It is the story based on dilemma between men and women. In 1976 a film came 'Mrigya' based on the life of aboriginal and their exploitation. In Ankur the son of landlord raped his maid and in the story of Nishant the brothers of landlord kidnapped and raped wife of village school master. School master collected the villagers against oppression of landlord and at last landlord and his brother were killed by them.

'Manthan' is the film which is based on cooperative movement of our country. In the story of this movie filmmaker want to say how we can fight against corruption. This film raised the problem and also gave practical solution to the problem. 'Bhoomika' is the story of women who is not satisfied with her husband that directly or indirectly speaks about human rights and raising the issue related to this.

After Eighty Changes in Hindi films and Human Right Issues

In this decade also many films came related to the different issues of human rights. 'Akrosh' by Govind Nihalani released in 1980 is based on the struggle of Aboriginal people; how powerful people of the country are using them to fulfil their need of Luxurious life. After 'Akrosh' Nihalani made 'Aardhasatya' in 1983, 'Party' in 1985, 'Aghaat' in 1988 and Saeed Mirza made "Mohan joshi Hajir Hoon" in 1984, "Saleem langde Par Mat Ro" in 1989. The stories of all these films were basically related to the issues of human rights.

Film director Ketan Mehta made a film 'Bhawani Bhawai' the story of the film was based on the lower cast untouchable people of Gujarat. This film tried to express the pain of untouchable people. In 1986 Ketan Mehta made a film 'Mirch Masala' in 1986 the story of women who stood against the exploitation of a officer. This is a story of a lady who boldly faced tyrannical officer and gives him a good lesson. 'Saleem Langde Par Mat Roo'(1989) made by Saied Mirja is based on the story of the minority class people and their pain. This film discussed the basic reasons of communal thinking and deals with social conditions of minority and their basic need and problem.

'Paar' is the film by Gautam Ghosh. The story of this film is based on a dalit family and their problems. This film explains social persecution of dalit or lower cast peoples of our country. After this the other important films which were related to this issues were 'Damul' (1984) by Prakash Jha 'Sparsh' (1979), 'Katha'(1982) by Sai Paranjape, 'Ak Pal' and 'Rudali' by Kalpana Lajmi And 'Salam Bombay' by Meera Nayar in (1988). May be the treatment of all these movies were different but the base was same in all films that directly or indirectly speaks about the human right issues and promoting awareness among people about that.

Discussion

The United Nations charter is said to be the first document for the establishment of human rights at the International level. But the credit for acceptance as a fundamental right goes to 1215 Magna carta. In this context, the United Nations was founded in 1920. But even though Second World War was fought among the countries. U.N. dropped atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th and 8th August. After this the protection of Human Rights was focused in 1945. In this conference it was said that the citizen of all the countries of the world should be given equal rights, respect and honour. In the consequences of all this efforts, on 24th October 1945 an organization in the name of U.N.O was constituted for the establishment of peace and protection of Human right at world level. A Human Rights commission was constituted in 1946 under the chairmanship of Eleanor Roosevelt. Human right was universally declared on December 10th 1948 and it was decided to celebrate 10th December as human rights day in whole world.

Discrimination in the name of castes is a better truth of Indian society. Both, Article-2 and Article-15 of Human right and Indian constitution respectively are conformable of equalities of freedom and full right for all the people without any discrimination on the cast, colour, Language, religion and politics basis. These subjects were important from beginning itself and in the early stage of 1936 Himansu Rai made a film 'Achhut Kanya' and letters in 1940 a film 'Achhut' came at the same subject. By making a film 'Sujata' in 1959 Bimol Roy draws the attention of the people on this sensitive issue that discriminates on the basis of cast. Another side 'Jar' and 'Bhawani Bhawai' like film brought the full Hindu society in dock due to misbehaviour and discrimination among the people in the name of casts.

Thus Article-18 of human right and Article-25 of our constitutions both are conformable of freedom of business and religion but before and after Independence of our country the religious extremism and communal riots were the big problem: As a result humanity shamed several time. Hindi film Industries were playing an important role to keep the communal harmony and religious unity, for example in 1940 V.Shantaram made a film 'Padoshi' and J.P.Vadia made movie named 'Jai Bharat' in 1939. Hindi films used to promote or encourage the mutual brotherhood in the society from the initial stage. In 1962 B.R.Chopra directed the film 'Dharmyug' which were based on the unity of the Hindu and Muslim community. In 1989 Saeed Mirza made a film 'Saleem Langade Pe Mat Ro' which shows the clear faces of those who were taken advantage of religious differences. Thus Hindi films were trying to establish the unity and peaceful atmosphere on serious social issues.

Article-26 of Human Right and Article-45 of our constitution both are focusing on compulsory education. Illiteracy is the main cause of all the problems. Hindi films are trying to focus on the encouragement of literacy awareness and taking people out of literacy marsh. In 1925 Babulal Painter made a film in the name 'Sahukari Pash' which was based on the exploitation of illiterate farmers by the money lender. 'Do Bigha Jameen' directed by Bimol Roy in 1947 which was also based on the exploitation and oppression of the illiterate farmers by land lord. Article-22 of Human Rights of social protection to the people and simultaneously Article-23,24 and 25 provides the right of getting work, employment and to grab the opportunity freely. Indian constitution also provides fundamental right to the people to safeguard their interests. Hindi films also were paying attention on such issue like human exploitation and discrimination. In 1946 film 'Nicha Nagar' directed by Chetan Anand or in 1976 and 1980 the films 'Mrigya' and 'Akrosh' respectively were based on the exploitation of tribal's. These films give the inspiration to the people to raise the voice against exploitation.

One side Article-2 of Human Right talks about the religious and cast equalities and other side this is against the gender discrimination. UNO is working according to Article 1(13) of UNO Charter; it was prime objective to promote the Human Rights and fundamental freedom without any discrimination based on caste, language and gender. Like other member country of UNO, Indian constitution also gives equal rights to women as men. All the 395 article of Indian constitution from its enforcement on 26 Jan 1950 gives the equal right to women as men. Indian constitution provides the rights and protection to the women for their development keeping the following three points into consideration:

- The constitution intends to root out the discrimination between men and women.
- The constitution perceives that women are traditionally tortured and weak. There for constitution gives the right to the government to make the special provision in interest of women.
- The constitution experts are working for the empowerment of women from all weak sectors.

Hindi film industry is also serious and sensitive for the women's problem from the beginning itself. 'Parineeta' and 'Biraj Bahu' in 1957, draw the attention of the country towards the deteriorating condition of women in our society and in the same year, film 'Mother India' directed by Mahboob Khan, show the great character of the Indian women. In 1962, Guru Dutt made film "Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam" keeping the central theme 'Plight of the women in Indian Society'. These, whether the actress of Bimol Roy's film 'Bandini' or Shyam Benegal film 'Ankur'(1974) and 'Nishant'(1975) are based on the theme of character of sexually abused women. All these films force to think against the injustice and oppressions to women in the society. Shyam Benegal's movie 'Bhumik', which came in 1977, advocates giving the equal right to the women as men. In 1986, Ketan Mehta directed a film 'Mirch Masala' keeping the central theme on changing role of women in modern society, where the film actress fights against exploitation and corruption and illustrates the picture of women empowerment in changing society. Thus we can say that Hindi films have given more importance to several Human right issues from initial time and played an important role in the awareness to human right.

Conclusion

Films are the medium of awareness so it is the responsibility of filmmakers to raise social issues in their films. The concept of human rights is day by day getting famous in the world and western film makers are adopting it in the subject of their films. By the base of present study we can say that in our country the tradition of making film related to the subject of human right is not new. It is oldest than our independence. But commercialization of film industry is changing the mind of our film makers and they are giving priority to profit making at the place of social responsibility. So these days' mostly Indian films are targeted for youth and cinemas glorify violence, crime, vulgarity only to cater the needs of that segment. The content of Hindi films are being fallen down compared to past trends in moral values, social, culture, traditional...etc. Now it is high time to rethink to boost the human values and social responsibilities in Hindi cinema. Because the present condition of our country is serious. Here the level of education is low. Films are equally effective for both literate and illiterate people. So it can play an effective role for awareness about human rights among people.

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