

The Impact of Hindi Cinema as a Powerful Catalyst for Social Transformation: A Pragmatic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, cinema has undergone significant changes. It has transcended its traditional role as a mere source of moving images and has evolved into a platform for showcasing socially responsible films that wield substantial influence over millions. The film industry, albeit gradually, is directing its attention towards addressing social issues, aiming to raise awareness among audiences. However, a notable portion of content creators still adheres to conventional formulas, potentially impacting viewers negatively.

Contemporary cinema has shifted its focus towards realistic narratives, tackling practical issues. It now plays a pivotal role in addressing fundamental social and political concerns, serving not only as entertainment but also as a means of educating and shaping public opinions. This transformation marks cinema as a

potent instrument in driving socio-political change and fostering mass enlightenment.

This research paper aims to explore the profound impact of Indian cinema on its audience by examining films that evoke joy and sorrow. The objective is to commend the social consciousness embedded in movies, shedding light on the evolving landscape of the entertainment industry. The paper also reviews the impact through a case study of movie "Tarpan." This paper delves into the transformation of Indian cinema, scrutinizing its evolving narratives and themes. Through an in-depth analysis, it seeks to uncover the perspectives of the general populace regarding contemporary cinema and its societal impact, particularly its role as a robust tool for fostering social awareness and instigating social change.

KEYWORDS: Tarpan, Social Issues, Contemporary cinema, Social change, Indian politics, Social taboos, Social Awareness

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian film industry stands as a formidable and influential means to address various social issues through visual storytelling. Its inception in 1913 marked a significant avenue for expressing social sentiments and conditions, providing both a medium for entertainment and a platform for social commentary (Gupta and Gupta, 2013). Exploring the dynamic relationship between cinema and society adds an intriguing dimension to the

discourse, raising questions about whether movies shape society or society shapes the content of films (Bhugra, 2006).

Indian cinema has undertaken diverse genres in its quest to discern the most effective approach for engaging audiences and achieving success at the box office. From traditional narratives to comedy, suspense, and horror, filmmakers have experimented with a spectrum of storytelling techniques. Notably, the emergence of realistic cinema, a departure

from fanciful narratives, has played a pivotal role in resonating with audiences. Themes such as gender disparities, female abortions, class structures, dowry values, and the portrayal of sensitive issues like AIDS and internal health problems have found resonance in this new cinematic wave.

However, the success of these films and their impact on social communication remain uncertain, as there exists a potential disparity between the followership prospects of artistic imagery and its real-world implications. The intricate interplay between cinematic representation and societal dynamics adds layers of complexity to the examination of how movies contribute to or reflect the prevailing social milieu.

Change is a fundamental aspect of life, and Indian cinema has seamlessly mirrored the evolving narratives of society. Contrasting mainstream cinema from earlier decades with contemporary films reveals substantial differences. The transformation extends beyond technical advancements, encompassing shifts in themes, issues, and storylines. While realistic films existed in the 60s and 70s, they were often labeled as Art or Parallel Cinema.

In the past, mainstream cinema was characterized by simple, predictable, and unrealistic stories resembling fairy tales, laden with endless melodious songs. Movies like "Ashique," "Hum Aapke Hain Koun," and "Maine Pyar Kiya" in the late 80s and early 90s were blockbuster family dramas but lacked a connection to real-life complexities.

During those times, films relied on popular songs, star casts, and dialogues to capture audiences' attention, lacking substantial messages or social awareness. However, as society underwent changes, contemporary cinema started addressing critical issues such as government corruption, police misconduct, sexual

abuse, gender bias, dirty politics, and gang warfare. Today's filmmakers are more inclined to tackle burning societal concerns, experimenting with new concepts and themes to reflect the multifaceted nature of the world we live in.

2. REVIEW OF SELECTED MOVIE "TARPAN" AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The movie, *Tarpan* which means The Absolution, has number of progressive elements and is at the same ground to attack on social injustice and inequality which the progressive writers used to attack on. The movie is the joint venture of National Film Development Board and Doordarshan and was released in 1995. As the name suggests, the movie has the absolution as its principle theme. The movie is based on four interrelated stories and sets in a fictitious village in Rajasthan where four sins of villagers led the village toward a curse that no girl child in the village managed to survive after the age of seven. These four sinners emancipated in order to let the village out of the jaw of curse. The village has two classes i.e. Thakur or the upper class and the shepherds or the lower class. The movie, particularly attacks the social inequality where the upper caste has full domination over lower caste. The movie speaks out the prolonged gap between the two classes. In the first story of the movie, the protagonist Shavitri who is daughter of a shepherd, falls in love with son of a Thakur, Sukhpal. Despite having caste difference both love each other so passionately and later on, somehow managed to marry each other. But in the house of Thakurs, Shavitri was jeered and tortured by her mother-in-law and the Thakur community in account of her belongingness to lower caste. And consequently, Shavitri was thrown in to well by her mother-in-law deliberately in

order to maintain social values and to remarry hisson to a girl of her own community. The story criticizes the orthodox customs of Indiansocieties where inter-caste marriages are considered as worse, dangerous and unadvisableform of marriage that cost the lives many times. The second story portraits the hegemonicnature of the upper caste over the lowers. One who is in majority must be sensitive towardthe minority. In the story, all the fertile land of the village is forcefully occupied by theThakurs in which the shepherds are forbade to enter with their goats. The story highlights thefamous maxim of Lord Axon, "Power corrupts but absolute power corrupts absolutely." Thestory criticized the power that the dominant or prevalent authority has in its possession andthe misuse of that power against the marginalized.

The third story shares the bitter truth of the lower caste communities. The story talksabout two problems i.e. livelihood and beauty, which are encountered by Dalits in particular.In the story, Dhanno, belongs to lower caste, makes to work so hard by the upper castelandlord in order to earn livelihood. His wife Sumitra, his ill mother and his younger brotherdependent on Dhanno, the only working son in the family. In spite of working too hard,Dhanno could not able to fulfill even the basic needs of the family. This shows the truepicture of laborers. The condition of the workers can be understand with the dialogue ofLakhan Thakur:

"These shepherds are like animals which do not work without stick." (01:26:05)

The dialogue portraits the clear picture of the code of conduct of the upper castecommunity with workers like Dhanno. His wife Sumitra decides to help her husband to earnmore livelihood so that Dhanno might able to afford the treatment of his ill mother. ButSumitra's beauty gets lusty attention of upper caste landlord who

entrap her with baits likeclothes, wheat, and other domestic goods. Accepting the destiny, Sumitra compromises withher conscience unwillingly. Here raises a question of beauty of Dalit woman that isconsidered as a curse. Notable Dalit thinkers PramanshiJaideva and Sanjay Paswan alsoaddress the same issue, thus write:

"Beauty is a curse when it blesses one of Dalit, who have a saying: Ifshe's beautiful, she'ssomeone else's wife; mine's is ugly.' A goodlooking woman is the target of all men's desire" (p.110).

As the story develops, Dhanno comes to know about the illicit and forcefulrelationship of the landlord with his wife. But he is murdered by the same upper castelandlord in order to save himself of defamation in village. And the illicit girl child is also notaccepted by the landlord later on. This portion of the story reflects the condition of womanespecially in the lower caste. The fourth and last story depicts about the misuse of duties andresponsibility of the authority i.e. gram panchayat and sarpanch. In the story the power ismisused by the Sarpanch in the well fare of his own community and to suppress the lowercaste community where otherwise the authority must do equal justice to all who fall in thevicinity of the authority.

The list is of these kind of movies is endless but the basic fact remains that contemporary cinema has changed drastically and its just not the film making style or technique which has changed but rather its concept, storyline or the issues which the films nowadays deal with have also remarkably changed.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To make a study about the journey of Indian Cinema regarding the slow yet powerful changes related to the various aspects of Film Making
2. To bring before a major fact as to how the present cinema is a blend of entertainment, education and creating awareness through dissemination of information.
3. Undertaking a primary research-based investigation to assess the extent of transformation in Indian Cinema concerning its concepts, storylines, and thematic content. The study aims to scrutinize the profound impact of these changes on the perspectives of millions of viewers, delving into the role of cinema as a catalyst for social change.

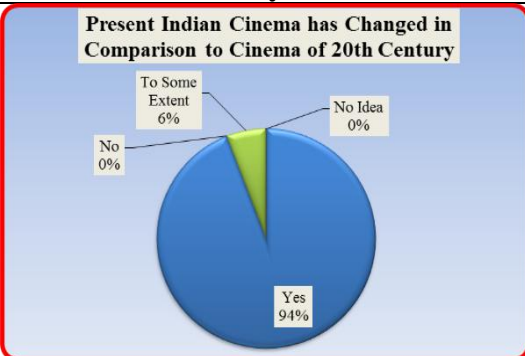
4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Considering the study's focus, a decision was made to conduct a review of contemporary films that have stood out, examining the prominent issues they address and how they have fundamentally reshaped the overall landscape of Indian cinema in the 21st century. To gain deeper insights into the substantial transformations across various facets of present-day Indian cinema and to analyze the impact of the depicted issues on viewers, a primary research initiative took the form of a survey. This survey targeted a sample population of 50 individuals from Jaipur, Rajasthan, aged between 18 and 35, who are avid movie enthusiasts.

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS:

1. Present Indian Cinema has changed in comparison to Cinema of 20th century

Response to the question, “Do you agree with the statement that the present Indian cinema has changed a lot in comparison to cinema of 20th century?”

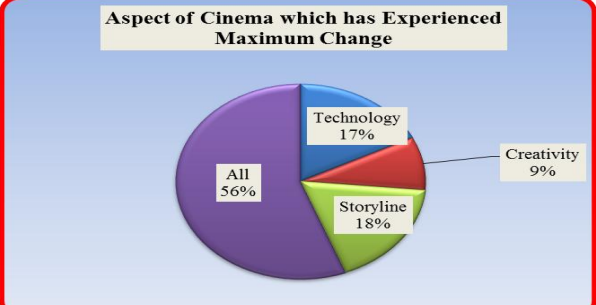
Table 1: Present Indian Cinema has Changed in Comparison to Cinema of 20th Century		Figure 1: Present Indian Cinema has Changed in Comparison to Cinema of 20th Century
Opinion	No. of Respondents	
Yes	32	
No	0	
To Some Extent	2	
No Idea	0	

- 94.11% of the Cinema Viewer’s were strongly of the opinion that the Present Indian Cinema has changed drastically in comparison to cinema of 20th century.
- 5.88 % of the viewers were of the opinion that present cinema to some extent has been successful in influencing the mindset of the masses and acting as agents of Social Change.

- A major result of the survey was that none of the sample population were of the opinion that present cinema has not changed in relation to cinema of yesteryears.

2. Area of cinema which has experienced the maximum change

Response to the question, “If yes then which aspect of cinema has experienced the maximum change?”

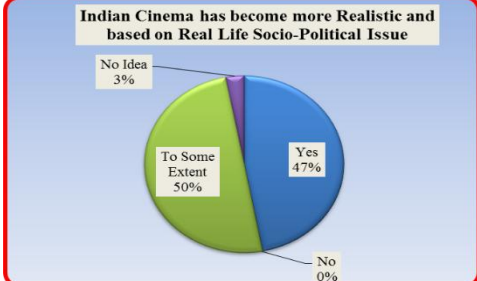
Table 2: Aspect of Cinema which has Experienced Maximum Change		Figure 2: Aspect of Cinema which has Experienced Maximum Change	
Opinion	No. of Respondents	Aspect of Cinema which has Experienced Maximum Change	
Technology	6		
Creativity	3		
Storyline	6		
All	19		

- Majority 55.88% of the viewers were of the opinion that all the aspects of film making has changed, whether its Technology or Creativity or Storyline.
- There was an equal number of viewers ,ie 17.64% each whose response was in favour of the fact that both Technology and Storyline of cinemas has experienced a change to the maximum extent.

- Least number of viewers, i.e. 8.82% expressed their opinion that the present cinema has developed in terms of its Creativity.

3) Contemporary Indian cinema has become more Realistic and based on Real life Socio-Political Issues

Response to the question, “ Do you feel that the contemporary Indian cinema has become more Realistic and based on real life Socio-Political Issues?

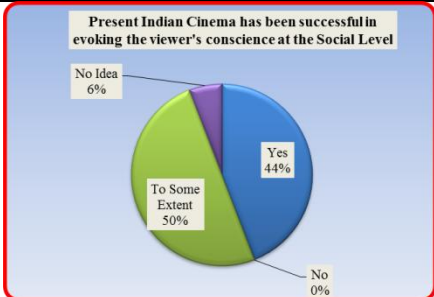
Table 3: Indian Cinema has become more Realistic and based on Real Life Socio-Political Issue		Figure 3: Indian Cinema has become more Realistic and based on Real Life Socio-Political Issue	
Opinion	No. of Respondents	Indian Cinema has become more Realistic and based on Real Life Socio-Political Issue	
Yes	16		
No	0		
To Some Extent	17		
No Idea	1		

- 50% of the viewers expressed their opinion in favour of the fact that they agree to some extent that present Indian Cinema has become more Realistic and based on Real Life Socio-Political Issues.
- 47.05% of the viewers strongly supported the statement that present Indian Cinema is quite different in comparison to earlier movies in regard to the issues and concepts showcased in it. Very less

number of viewers, ie 2.94% of the viewers had no idea about the asked question

4) The present Indian Cinema has been successful in influencing the masses and evoking the viewers conscience at the social level

Response to the question, “Do you feel that the present Indian cinema has been successful in influencing the masses and evoking the viewer’s conscience at the social level?

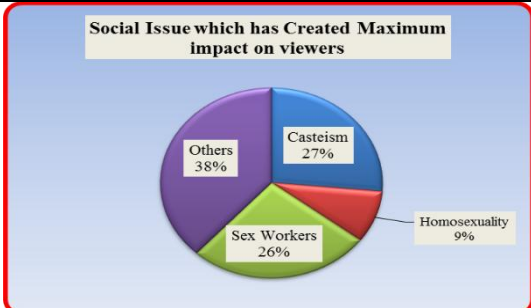
Table 4: Present Indian Cinema has been successful in evoking the viewer's conscience at the Social Level		Figure 4: Present Indian Cinema has been successful in evoking the viewer's conscience at the Social Level	
Opinion	No. of Respondents		
Yes	15		
No	0		
To Some Extent	17		
No Idea	2		

- Maximum number of viewers, i.e. 50% of them expressed their opinion that they felt that Indian Cinema to some extent by being more factual and issue-based influences and evokes the viewer's conscience to a great extent.
- 44.11% of the viewers felt that cinema has played a major role in influencing the masses and evoking the viewer's conscience at the social level.

- Least number of viewers gave the answer that they had no idea about the question as they were not so sure whether cinema is actually an instrumental role in this direction. 5.88% of the viewers belonged to this category

5) Social Issue which has created maximum Impact on Viewers

Response to the question, "If yes, then which of the following social issues has created the maximum impact on you?"

Table 5: Social Issue which has Created Maximum impact on viewers		Figure 5: Social Issue which has Created Maximum impact on viewers	
Opinion	No. of Respondents		
Casteism	9		
Homosexuality	3		
Sex Workers	9		
Others	13		

- Maximum viewers, i.e., 38.23% were of the opinion that besides the three given social issues there were a wide range of other social issues being highlighted by Indian Cinema which were also creating an equal and strong impact on the viewer's psychology and their actions.
- An equal 26.47 % of the viewers thought that highlighting the life style, pains and sorrows of sex

- 8.82% of the people supported homosexuality as the most important social issue which has created maximum impact on viewers.

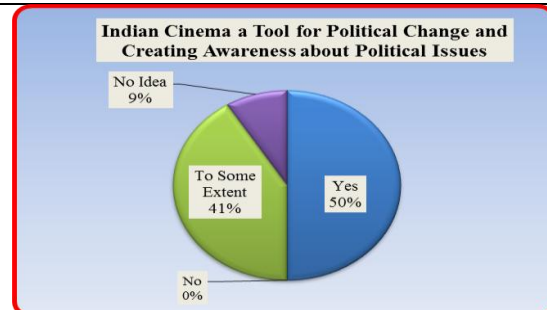
6) Cinema a tool for Political Change or creating awareness about Political Issues

Response to the question, “Can cinema be a tool for Political Change or creating awareness about Political Issues and Govt. Policies?”

Table 6: Indian Cinema a Tool for Political Change and Creating Awareness about Political Issues

Opinion	No. of Respondents
Yes	17
No	0
To Some Extent	14
No Idea	3

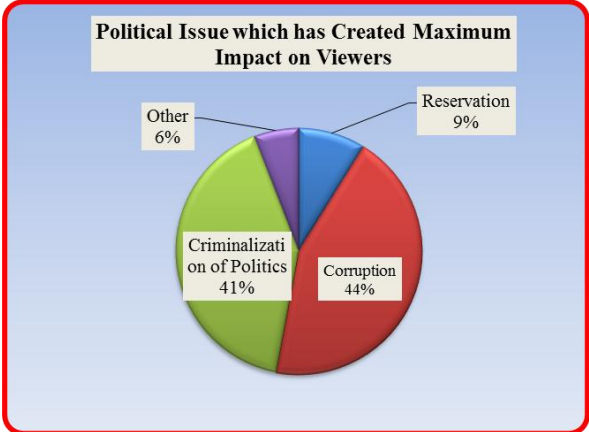
Figure 6: Indian Cinema a Tool for Political Change and Creating Awareness about Political Issues



- The study brought before a major fact that majority of the 50% of viewers thought that Indian Cinema is nowadays becoming a major tool for creating consciousness about some of the most important Political Issues and Government Policies. A good section of the masses who were unaware of the dark side of Indian Politics and the hypocrisy of politicians have to a great extent been exposed to the blatant truth behind the Government Policies.
- 41.17% of viewers thought that Indian cinema nowadays is based on various types of political issues and as a result to some extent it educates and the influences the opinions of the masses at large about Indian Politics and Politicians
- None of the viewers believed that Indian cinema does not influence the masses at all
- 8.82% of the viewers did not have any idea about the question

7) Political Issue which has created maximum impact on the viewers

Response to the question, “If Yes then which Political Issue has created the maximum impact on the viewers?”

Table 7: Political Issue which has Created Maximum Impact on Viewers		Figure 7: Political Issue which has Created Maximum Impact on Viewers
Opinion	No. of Respondents	
Reservation	3	
Corruption	15	
Criminalization of Politics	14	
Other	2	

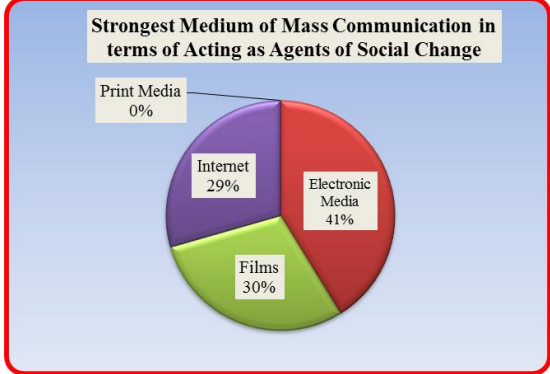
- 44.11% of the viewers who were convinced by the fact that present Indian Cinema is tremendously influencing the masses by dealing with various political issues, felt that out of all political issues, Corruption was the most dominant issue around which the plots of most of the movies revolve. The feedback was that movies like Rann which showed the relation between media and corrupt politicians. Lage Raho Munnabhai which brought before the concept of lost ideals of country’s leaders and had a strong message of how to overcome the problem, created a long lasting impact on the viewers mind and compelled them to think in the direction of Corruption emerging as a very threatening issue in Indian Political System.
- 41.17% of the viewers were in favour of Criminalisation of Politics as the most important Political Issue which has created the maximum impact on viewers. No matter whether its Sarkar Raj, Gulaal, Rajniti, or Satta , most of the movies highlighted the strong relation between crime and politics

and its dirty game. The common perception in India is that politics has become the final destination regarding the career of a veteran criminal.

- 8.82% of the viewers pointed out towards Reservation as the most important issue which has created the maximum impact on cinema viewers.
- Maximum percentage of sample respondents were in favour of these three issues as the important ones in terms of its impact on viewers, leaving out 5.88% whose answer was that besides these there are some other issues too which has got strongest impact on viewers.

8) Strongest medium of Mass Communication in terms of acting as Agents of Social Change

Response to the question, “ Which of the following medium of Mass Communication is now the strongest in terms of acting as agents of Social change?”

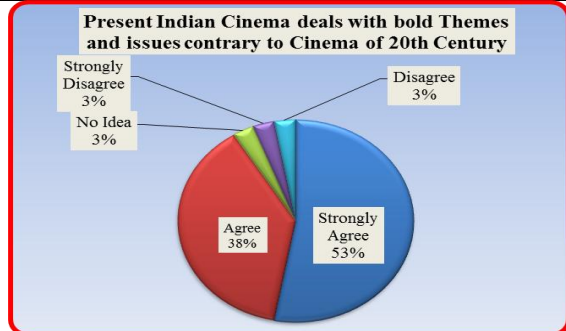
Table 8: Strongest Medium of Mass Communication in terms of Acting as Agents of Social Change		Figure 8: Strongest Medium of Mass Communication in terms of Acting as Agents of Social Change
Opinion	No. of Respondents	
Print Media	0	
Electronic Media	14	
Films	10	
Internet	10	

- Maximum number of sample respondents, i.e. 41.17% of them considered Electronic Media as the strongest medium of mass communication in terms of acting as agents of Social Change.
- An equal percentage of 29.41% of sample population supported Films and Internet as Strong Tools of Social Change.

- The survey revealed that people did not consider Print Media as a major agent of Social Change

9) Present Indian Cinema deals with bold themes and issues contrary to cinema of 20th century

Response to the question, “Do you feel that Indian cinema today deals with certain bold themes and issues which cinema of few years back couldn’t have imagined of showcasing?”

Table 9: Present Indian Cinema deals with bold Themes and issues contrary to Cinema of 20th Century		Figure 9: Present Indian Cinema deals with bold Themes and issues contrary to Cinema of 20th Century
Opinion	No. of Respondents	
Strongly Agree	18	
Agree	13	
No Idea	1	
Strongly Disagree	1	
Disagree	1	

- The results of the survey positively supported the topic of the research as 52.94% of the surveyed people strongly agreed to the statement that the contemporary Indian cinema has greatly transformed itself specially in regard to its themes and storyline .

- The second highest percentage , i.e. 38.23% of people agreed to the fact that present Indian cinema is based on certain bold issues and themes which may be very hard to believe but they are the harsh realities of life.
- Least equal number of people, i.e. 2.94% were of the opinion that

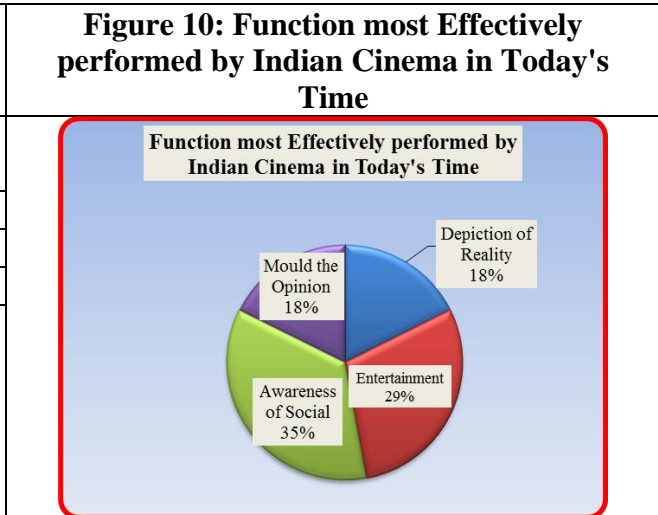
either they didn't have any idea about the question or they strongly disagreed or disagreed on it .

10) Function most effectively performed by Indian Cinema in today's times

Response to the question, "Tick any one function which according to you is most effectively performed by Indian Cinema in today's times."

Table 10: Function most Effectively performed by Indian Cinema in Today's Time

Opinion	No. of Respondents
Depiction of Reality	6
Entertainment	10
Awareness of Social	12
Mould the Opinion	6



- The survey revealed that majority of the people, i.e. 35.29% agreed that present day cinema is playing a very constructive role by bringing before certain facts of society in its original and truthful manner .
- 29.41% of the people considered entertainment as the most important function of present Indian Cinema.
- Depiction of Reality and Moulding the Opinion of the masses about certain facts and issues concerning society and politics was given the same percentage of importance, i.e. 17.64% in terms of functions most effectively performed by contemporary Indian cinema.

audience. In today's era, viewers gravitate towards films that resonate with their lived experiences, reflecting a preference for narratives grounded in reality and those that prompt contemplation or encourage a shift in perspective on societal issues. This paper conducts a thorough examination of select films and filmmakers who have departed from the conventional entertainment-centric approach, using cinema as a potent tool to illuminate pressing social concerns that may have escaped public awareness.

The case study of movie "Tarpan" talks about one of the absolute institutions of Indian society i.e.Caste. The ideology that progressive writers' movement follows, is anti-religion and anticaste.When juxtapose, it may be seemed that the movies is the mouth piece of the writersassociated to Progressive Writers' Association. Various progressive writers have pointed outthe very institution in their writings in order to abolish the caste system from the society.

To conclude, the film paints a fine painting of vivid colors of the society. It

6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Indian cinema has undergone a significant transformation, aligning itself with the evolving tastes and preferences of the

notifies the people to have common and necessary goodness for all, to have unbiased treatment for all and humanistic acknowledgment to all because these are very necessary for real progress and to be better than yesterday.

Highlighting films such as "Tarpan", the paper underscores the potential of cinema as a robust instrument for mass enlightenment and social awareness. It delves into the work of contemporary filmmakers who delve deep into the fabric of societal issues, presenting the unvarnished truth in their narratives. The result is a collection of impactful,

realistic, and issue-oriented movies that resonate with audiences due to their substantial content.

Undoubtedly, as film-making techniques have advanced, so too have the conceptualization, storytelling, and character portrayal in Indian cinema. It can be asserted that contemporary Indian cinema has embraced an issue-based approach, paving the way for upcoming talented filmmakers who will likely contribute to the industry with fresh perspectives, innovative concepts, and diverse themes in the years to come.

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