Political Socialization through Hindi Cinema: Truth or Post-truth?

• **Fiza Darakshan**   • **Aastha**   • **Shivangi**   • **Smita Ranjan**

Corresponding Author   :   Fiza Darakshan

Abstract : *Hindi Cinema, often referred to as Bollywood is usually seen through the lens of money-making and glamorization. But, gradually with its evolution, this static nature has experienced credible changes, with the lines between information and entertainment getting blurred and films now challenging the rigid social structure and touching upon the social and political life of individuals. Politics and cinema share an inextricable relationship, with cinema being the most significant agent of political socialization. Films are now repeatedly made in the light of the political happenings and according to specific political preferences, which in turn affects the psychological attitude, shape the behavioral pattern of the public and eventually leads to the establishment of a post-truth society.*

Keywords: *Post-truth, psychological tool, Political Socialization*

Fiza Darakshan
Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science,
Patna Women's College (Autonomous),
Bailey Road, Patna – 800 001, Bihar, India
E-mail: fabfiza@gmail.com

Aastha
M.A. II year, Political Science, Session: 2021-2023,
Patna Women's College (Autonomous),
Patna University, Patna, Bihar, India

Shivangi
M.A. II year, Political Science, Session: 2021-2023,
Patna Women's College (Autonomous),
Patna University, Patna, Bihar, India

Smita Ranjan
M.A. II year, Political Science, Session: 2021-2023,
Patna Women's College (Autonomous),
Patna University, Patna, Bihar, India

Introduction:

'Every film is a political act, it's how you see the world' — Mira Nair

India was reborn on August 14th, 1947 as a nation marked by the scars of political chains of around 200 years of social wounds that tarnished the glory of the very golden bird, the economic unrest as a result of multiple exploitation and drain of wealth. The nation was in need of transition, and it had to begin with the understanding of the basic challenges of society. Cinema became a potential channel of communication of social problems within and outside its reign to political system and vice versa.

The Hindi cinema nurtured its cradle hood in the colonial era and was nothing more than the adoption of great playwrights and literature. With time, as India started its journey of self-sufficiency and sovereignty, cinema had a vital role to play, and it did shape the history of its time. Hindi cinema moved on from showing colonial atrocities to addressing the struggle within the nation as soon as we hit Independence. The 70s-80s saw a complete revitalization of Cinema with greater technology coming in which eventually attracted a number of middle-class audiences. Issues of labor laws and *Gunda Raj* in industries dominated the big screen, so much so that industrial lobbies

relied on censor boards to undo the loss. The era of the 90s and 2000s was a mixed period. It saw the emergence of crude entertainment with no strings attached to what was happening around us. But, with time the cinema started to exhibit the changing nature of society as it got innately connected to the political sphere (Vardhan, 2018). India's Hindi cinema draws bold and direct links between its art and electoral politics and the Bollywood bears a testament to this. Movies or cinema as we say, has been successful in serving a larger audience, and its impact has been widespread because one cannot just sense but see things happening. Eventually, Cinema turned out to be one of the most important social tools of our times, be it addressing discrimination, cruelty, sabotagement, or any socio-cultural improvement, movies became a go-to-choice. Like any other resource, humans started using rather started exploiting cinemas for all sorts of accomplishments whether personal or partisan. Even though exploitation remained a reality, every era had its share of 'individuals' who really tried and even tried today hard to uphold its true essence and maintain emotional neutrality and focus on all dimensions.

Today, the magical silver screen and its content is increasingly being politicized to cater to the ideological needs of different political parties which eventually contribute to political socialization. Citizens gain political knowledge, develop partisan affiliations, and acquire a more compelling sense of civic duty as a result of political campaign messages which are often led by film stars. Popular culture is a potent agent of political socialization which is transparent, but mainstream film has political implications which are far from obvious. In an age where film stars are quite vocal about their religious affiliations, politics and popular culture have become inextricably interlinked.

In 2016, the Oxford Dictionaries declared "post-truth" as the "Word of the Year" and defined it as "a term relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." The idea of post-truth has become even more important in describing today's political life in particular and social life in general (Martin, 2019). The primary appeal of popular culture is emotions. The problem arises when specific incidents are depicted in a distorted and skewed way, which is a drawback of this collective brainwashing, even though movies based on true events frequently prove informative and enlightening. Cinema often presents polished content in order to satisfy their commercial desires. The media does have an upper hand in political socialization as it is a major source for disseminating the political party's propagandistic, biased, and hateful agendas against their country's minorities and they have been successful to a greater extent.

British historian Alex von Tunzelmann in her book, Reel History: The World According to Movies, writes that a "lot of people can and do believe some of the things they see in the movies" (Singh, 2020). Hindi Cinema has had its journey of evolution. In the present day, we have a plethora of issues being addressed but Real Cinema are few, yet they are a reflection of what we are. We, as responsible citizens, must be involved in a proper dialogue by analyzing the events unfolding in the country, rather than accepting what is being shown or said. Thus, we must learn from the current situation in the country where violence based on religion is a daily affair and must aim at restoring the lost glory of the nation called – "HINDUSTAN".

Literature Review:

Literature has proved its importance in every field of education, primarily in research works. Alimpan Banerjee (2019) in his article argues that cinema is often used as a tool to disseminate a political narrative which compels society to confirm or deviate from the prevalent norm. The writer of the article argues that individuals tend to adopt a common ideology, a common belief system and a common attitude towards a political subject. This is what he calls the phenomenon of 'Group Think' which is often associated with Cinema. He argues that the cinematic universe tends to influence the political behavior of the public by circulating political ideas and pressurizing them to see their political decisions in the light of cinema. Anand Vardhan (2018) argues that the idea of politics has established its stronghold in the alleys of Bollywood. Hindi filmmakers and actors have been successfully trying to show the political world and the reality of that world. This has resulted in the release of a plethora of films having a political undertone which eventually shapes political socialization. However,

the over romanticization of the films has reduced their seriousness and solemnity. Husaina Hussain (2020) opines that the representation of minorities in Hindi films is also a grave matter which needs immediate attention. The whitewashed content of the minority community often leads to societal imbalance which fuels grave issues brewing in the society.She has put forward her idea by providing significant examples such as the depiction of Marathas in Tanhaji in white costumes which is a sign of peace. On the contrary, the Muslims were shown in black dresses. Priya Singh (2020) argues that the misinterpretation of the historical facts in Hindi Cinema is a serious issue to look upon. She argues that several movies, in an attempt to garner the support of audience and create a magic on the box office forgets the historical background and present a glamorous and romantic interpretation of the historical narratives which misleads the audience.

Statement of the Problem: It's no wonder that when Hindi films became one of the most important expressions of Indian political socialization in the 20th century, they couldn't escape the narrative landscape of democratic politics. If not for anything else, the inextricable links between politics and its cast of characters with everyday India make it too visible to escape the attention of Bollywood's sense of histrionic-laden storytelling and contemporary commentary. In seven decades since Independence, the Hindi silver screen's encounters with political churning in the country ranged from fleeting glimpses to intense themes. The subjects undertaken in the cinema are flawed or distorted which leads to an imbalance in political socialization.

The whole purpose of the research undertaken is to document the impact of Hindi Cinema, as an agent of Political socialization, particularly, in the post-truth society of India, owing to the contributions made by Hindi cinema. Moreover, an attempt is made to understand how Hindi movies have initiated various changes with regards to thought processes on one hand and lifestyle on the other. Society for a long has been guided by emotions and continues to do so in the post-truth society. Having been guided by emotions, individuals find it difficult to observe the actual truth. This research thus aims at providing a fresh perspective aiming to reveal the detailed nuances of Hindi Cinema and society.

Objectives:

I. To assess the intensity of political socialization through Hindi cinema.
II. To study the psychological aspect of using movies as a tool to deliver a political message.
III. To analyze the degree of change in Political culture due to the influence of politics on Indian cinema.
IV. To examine how the depiction of some skewed and whitewashed content in favor of a political party sometimes lead to societal imbalance.

Hypotheses:

I. Indian cinema has shaped identity-based politics in recent years.
II. The intertwining of politics and cinema creates a prejudiced society structured on a post-truth premise.

Methodology:

The research project will be based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data will include the questionnaire-based assessment as well as an interview with people belonging to different social, economic, and political classes. The sampling method will be incidental-cum-purposive, and the sample size will be 50. It will be based on quantitative analysis.

Area of the Study:

The universe of the study will be Kankarbagh and the colonies near Shastri Nagar, Patna. Moreover, Patna women's college will also be our area of study.

Empirical Analysis:

1. Do you agree that Hindi movies are often utilized as a psychological tool to convey political messages?
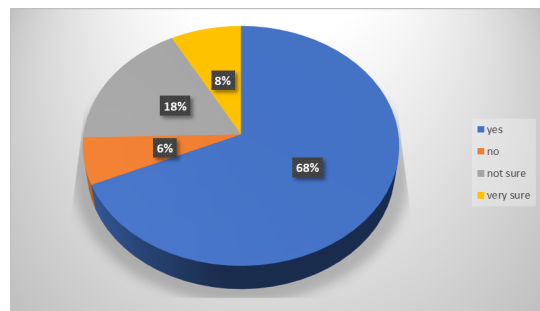
Out of the total 50 respondents, 68.3% agreed that Hindi movies were utilized as a

psychological tool to convey political messages but 6.3% of them did not agree with this. 17.5% were not sure and there was greater uncertainty in their responses. However, 7.9% were very sure of the fact that Hindi movies are utilized as a psychological tool ta o convey political agreement.

2. Is Hindi cinema responsible for the creation of the post truth society based on artificial truth?
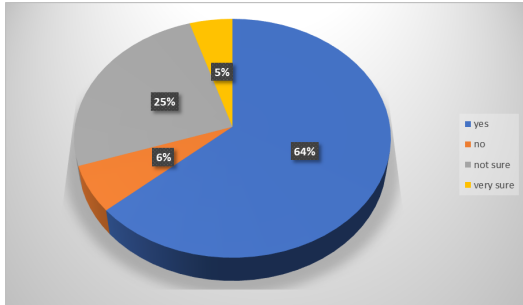

63.5% of the total 50 respondents agreed to this but 6.3% did not agree. A total of 25.4% were not sure if the creation of a post-truth society is because of Hindi Cinema but 4.8% were very sure of this fact.

3. Do political parties sponsor cinemas that indirectly further their interests and ideology?
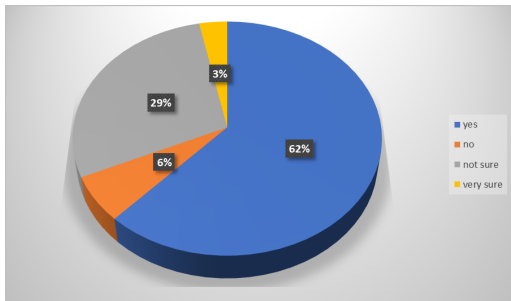
61.9% answered in a yes while 6.3% of the responses were negative in nature. 28.6%of them were not sure if cinemas are sponsored by political parties that indirectly further their interests and ideology while 3.2% of them were very sure.

4. Has the depiction of politics increased in Indian cinema over the last four decades?
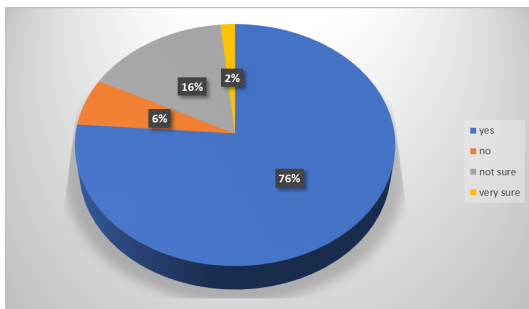
A large number of respondents answered yes but 6.3% of them did not agree with this. 15.9%

were not sure about the fact that the depiction of politics has increased in Indian Cinema in the last four decades but 1.6% of them were very sure.

5. Does the influence of Hindi cinema in Political Socialization determine the voting behavior of an individual?
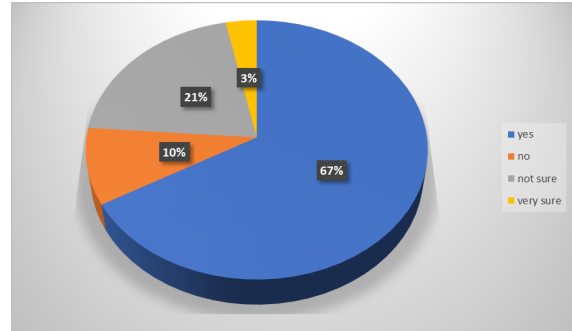
66.7% agreed to this while 9.5% did not agree. 20.6% were not sure if the influence of Hindi cinema in political socialization determines the voting behavior of individuals but 3.2% of the respondents were very sure.

Summary:

The cinematic universe has been appealing to audiences since its inception. It has been a potent tool to provide a heavy dose of entertainment and information. With changing scenarios in the ever-changing society, the subjects of cinema have also seen a major change, the most important being the depiction of politics. This is a never-ending cycle that ultimately affects the process of political socialization in the long run. This leads to the creation of a post-truth society where individuals tend to believe the distorted truths that are presented to them. The cinema attacks their conscience and forces them to believe in matters that are often not there. This improper projection often creates imbalances in society and has shaped identity-based politics in recent years.

Actors joining politics after their film career-ends has recently been a typical occurrence because celebrities' charismatic personalities are praised both on and off the screen. Due to their massive fan following, politics have benefited from this. In recent years, political movies have also been released right before the general election. Besides cinema, the advent of the Over-the-Top (OTT) platform, and various web series have also been represented in the political landscape.

Hindi cinema portrays manufactured truth in the post-truth society and frequently uses it as a psychological tool to spread political propaganda. The influence of how politics is portrayed in Hindi films on a person's voting behavior has quadrupled. As a result, political opinions are formed with bias based on post-truth presumptions.

Findings:

I. Cinema has always played a very important role in our lives. Specifically, Hindi Cinema or Bollywood has been the most popular of all, deriving great support from the people. It was found in our research that Hindi Cinema has often been used as a psychological tool to convey a message which usually has a political undertone. The political narratives displayed on the silver screen appeal to the inner conscience of an individual which in turn affects their psychological status.

II. With the popularity of Hindi cinema, the idea of a post-truth society has gained greater significance. The films, based on different genre call out to our emotions and inner sentiments which makes individual a post- truth species and compels them to see things not as they are but as they want them to see. Thus, Hindi cinema has definitely played a significant role in the creation of a post-truth society.

III. The amalgamation of politics with any sub-field is bound to cause many consequences and the fusion between politics and cinema can prove fatal and as a result identity-based politics has increased in recent years. This fusion establishes a post-truth society based on preconceptions and prejudices. It restricts individuals to see the real truth but the artificial or human-made truths.

IV. Political socialization is one of the remarkable driving forces of the society. It is a process in which a list of agents play a major role such as family, peer groups, religious institutions etc. But out of all these, Hindi cinema plays a quintessential role and thus, is one of the most potent tools of political socialization.

V. The distorted and skewed content of a wide variety of films which are shown on the screen inevitably contributes to tensions in society. It leads to the imbalance and destroys the equilibrium of the societal order to some extent.

VI. Different political parties are committed to different ideologies. Their working mechanisms, their election manifesto and everything that they are associated with, are indirectly influences that ideology. Keeping this in mind, the political parties uses Hindi cinema as an instrument for their own benefit and hence, many political parties support and sponsor movies that further their interests and ideologies.

VII. Advancement in science and technology has made it possible for the audience to consume content by remaining confined to their own spaces. The arrival of different Over-the-top platforms (OTT) and the presence of a wide variety of content enriches audiences and helps in broadening their imaginative capabilities and widens the perspective of the viewers.

Recommendations:

I. The Election Commission in association with the Central Board of Film Certification must see that films and their trailers with a political undertone are not released during any State assembly or Lok Sabha elections.

II. The Election Commission must regulate the conduct of political parties looking for the support of individuals associated with the film industry. The fielding of successful actors and filmmakers for garnering votes must be controlled.

III. With time, entertainment media has not only remained limited to silver screens. It has spread its fangs to social media too. The biased film reviews of different self-proclaimed film critiques misleads and the individuals, which eventually affects their political behavior.

IV. Movies which acquaint the audience with a good social and political message must receive appreciation by the government. They must be freed from any tax not because they further the

ideology of any single political party but because of their content and idea.

V. The Central Board of Film Certification must strictly review the content of movies and the Over-the-top platforms keeping in mind the age bar. This will ensure healthy socialization and good growth of not just individuals but the country as a whole. The restrictions that are often imposed are rendered useless because of their bad implementation. Thus, the need of the hour is to carry out these restrictions with immediate effect and with greater sincerity.

VI. The Election Commission must conduct awareness camps in order to aware the citizens of the influence of Hindi Cinema and OTT on their voting behavior. It must encourage them to take part in the political affairs without any biasness or misconceptions.

Conclusion:

Throughout history, entertainment media has reflected the phenomenon unfolding in society, either positively or negatively. Cinema as a part of entertainment not only rejuvenates the mind but also profoundly shapes one's political views. The idea that modern political discourse might be compared to film has been a recurring theme in political socialization. Our study aims to determine if political socialization in Hindi cinema is influenced by post-truth politics or truth politics.

People's capacity to distinguish between true facts and entertaining fiction has declined in a time of constant misinformation and the spread of lies through the use of entertainment media, social media, print media, and electronic media, with few notable exceptions, this has resulted in the formation of a post-truth society. Striking a balance between truth and post-truth politics is urgently needed in order to realize Democracy's true ambitions. This would lead to formation of an unbiased and unprejudiced political opinion throughout the course of the Political Socialization of an individual.

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