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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## INDIAN CINEMA - SOCIO CULTURAL ASPECTS AS PER REPRESENTATION

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#### Abstract

Indian cinema functions as a potent mirror and shaper of society, reflecting shifting paradigms in gender, caste, and cultural identity. Over decades, it has evolved from traditional, often stereotypical depictions toward more inclusive, nuanced narratives, addressing issues like social inequality, women's empowerment, and religious diversity, while navigating the tension between tradition and modernity. Indian cinema functions as a potent mirror and shaper of society, reflecting shifting paradigms in gender, caste, and cultural identity. Over decades, it has evolved from traditional, often stereotypical depictions toward more inclusive, nuanced narratives, addressing issues like social inequality, women's empowerment, and religious diversity, while navigating the tension between tradition and modernity. Indian cinema, the largest film industry in the world, is not merely entertainment; it is a profound cultural text that maps the nation's sociological journey.

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#### Introduction:-

From the post-independence era to the contemporary streaming age, Indian films-ranging from Bollywood to regional cinema-have represented the diverse and often fractured identity of India. This paper examines the evolution of socio-cultural representations, analyzing how cinema has moved from reinforcing societal norms to challenging them, particularly in the spheres of gender, caste and religion.

#### Indian Cinema - Socio Culutral Aspects as Per Representation:-

- ❖ Historically, Indian cinema often confined female characters to domestic, sacrificial, or submissive roles. However, the 2010s marked a significant shift toward portraying women with agency, complexity, and independence. Breaking Stereotypes: Films like *Kahaani* (2012) and *Piku* (2015) showcased women driving the narrative without relying on male counterparts.
- ❖ Challenging Patriarchy: Contemporary films increasingly highlight women fighting societal norms, reflecting a transition from "helpless victims" to "self-reliant individuals". Marginalized Perspectives: Newer narratives are beginning to explore the experiences of women outside the upper-class, urban spectrum, bringing to light rural and intersectional challenges.
- ❖ Caste remains a deeply rooted, often underrepresented or misrepresented aspect of Indian society in mainstream cinema. The Upper-Caste Gaze: Historically mainstream cinema has been criticized for maintaining an upper-caste perspective, either rendering caste invisible or perpetuating stereotypes about marginalized communities.

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Confronting Reality: Recent years have seen a rise in nuanced portrayals of caste-based discrimination, such as Article 15(2019), which directly addresses caste hierarchy. Emerging Voices: Films are increasingly exploring the violence and systemic oppression associated with inter-caste marriages and the Dalit struggle. Indian cinema often attempts to reflect the country's secular fabric, though not without controversy.

- ❖ Communal Harmony: Movies such as PK (2014) and Bajrangi Bhaijaan (2015) have tackled religious diversity and promoted communal harmony. Representation of Minorities: While some films provide a space for diverse narratives, others have been critiqued for portraying minorities through stereotypical lenses.
- ❖ The rise of regional cinema (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi) has brought greater authenticity to the screen compared to the often-homogenized portrayal in mainstream Bollywood. These films offer a more nuanced look at local traditions, dialects, and social issues, allowing for a decentralized, more accurate representation of India's diverse cultural landscape.
- ❖ Since the 2000s, Indian cinema has increasingly reflected the influence of globalization, focusing on urban, westernized lifestyles, material prosperity, and the diaspora. This shift has created a dual representation, where traditional values coexist, often uneasily, with consumerist, cosmopolitan lifestyles. Rise of Content-Driven Cinema: The shift towards independent filmmakers and OTT platforms reducing the monopoly of formulaic cinema.
- ❖ Gender Empowerment: Evolution from the damsel-in-distress to female protagonists with agency (Queen, Piku, Kahaani). Caste Realism: Confronting caste-based discrimination directly in films like Article 15 (2019) and Sairat (2016).
- ❖ LGBTQ Plus Representation: Increased visibility of queer stories (Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan, Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga). Religion and Tolerance: Sensitivity in addressing communal harmony (PK, Bajrangi Bhaijaan).
- ❖ Reinforcement of Stereotypes: Despite progress, mainstream cinema often continues to objectify women and perpetuate, rather than dismantle, certain stereotypes. Upper-Caste Gaze: Critiques of the industry's continued reliance on upper-caste perspectives, even when discussing marginalized issues. Market Forces: The pressure of commercial success causing filmmakers to prioritize box office over meaningful social discourse. Censorship: The role of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) in limiting the depiction of sensitive political or social topics.

### **Conclusion:-**

A Comparative Study of Films from Different Decades in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has provided valuable insights into the dynamic and evolving nature of Indian cinema's portrayal of socio-cultural aspects. By conducting a cross-decade analysis of films, the study shed light on the changes and continuities in how Indian cinema represents gender roles, caste, religion, class, and regional identities. Over the years, Indian cinema has emerged as a powerful tool for reflecting and shaping societal values and norms. In the early 2000s, films often perpetuated traditional stereotypes and reinforced patriarchal attitudes.

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