A Study on the Relationship between the Evolution of Female Images in Indian Films and Social Change

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Abstract: *Indian films, as an important part of Indian culture, reflect the changes in Indian society and the evolution of women's status. This paper studies the relationship between the evolution of female images in Indian films and social changes, analyzes the changing trend and social background of female images in Indian films, and discusses the influence of films on social concepts and values. It is found that the female images in Indian films also show a diversified and positive trend with the change in Indian society and the promotion of women's status.*

Keywords: *Indian movies; Female image; Social change; Social concept*

1. Introduction

Indian film is an important part of Indian culture and one of the largest film industries in the world. Indian movies are not only the carrier of entertainment, but also an important window to reflect the changes and values of Indian society. Female images have always been a concern in Indian films, and their evolution is closely related to the changes in Indian society. This paper will study the relationship between the evolution of female images in Indian movies and social changes, and explore the influence of movies on social concepts and values.

2. The Evolution of Female Images in Indian Films

2.1 Female images in early Indian films

In Indian films, female images refer to films starring women. In the history of Indian film, the 1930s, and 1970s were the golden age of Indian film. The female images in Indian films are mostly independent, self-reliant, and virtuous women. They are portrayed as independent, strong, and virtuous, and they also show the discrimination and oppression of women in Indian society [1].

2.2 The influence of the women's liberation movement on women's image

In Indian films, the evolution of female images has gone through a long process. From the 1930s to the present, the evolution of female images in Indian films can be roughly divided into three stages. The first stage was from the 1980s to the 1930s, during which Indian films centered on religious theocracy. The first stage showed the low status of women. The second stage was from the 1930s to 1970s, and Indian films in this period showed the awakening and growth of women's consciousness and reflected the changes in Indian social ideology. The third stage was from the 1980s to the present, which was the fastest-developing stage of Indian films. The female images in Indian films began to break away from religious theocracy and feudal ideology, showing a diversified and positive trend. The representative films of this period include *The Last Man on Earth* and *Toilet-Ek Prem Katha*.

2.2.1 Women's Status from the 1980s to 1930s

India is a country ruled by a religious theocracy, and women have been oppressed and exploited in Indian society. Indian films show the low status of women at this stage. Before the 1930s, the performance of female images in Indian films was relatively simple, mainly centered on religious theocracy [2]. For example, the films such as *Kiss of God* and *Marta Harry* all show the bondage of religion to women. The heroines in *Kiss of God* and *Marta Harry* are devout believers. In these films, the female images are portrayed as victims of religious theocracy. Through this stage of the film, we can see the oppression of the Indian social hierarchy of women. At that time, Indian women lived at the

bottom of society and had almost no status at all.

2.2.2 Women's Consciousness Awakening from 1930s to 1970s

The films at this stage mainly reflect the awakening of women's consciousness. Women's roles at this stage were no longer the unimportant part to men. They began to have their consciousness and started to resist the traditional patriarchy. For example, the female images in films such as *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India*, *Toilet Heroes,* and *Sikhs* all have the consciousness of resisting men. At the same time, the role of women in the family had changed their image from the traditional wife and mother to a new woman with self-awareness. They are not weak women anymore. They can choose what kind of life they want to live according to their wishes and ideas. According to Nisha, the heroine in *Toilet Hero*, "What do I want? I want to do anything. "Under this background, women were not a needless part to men but a woman in the new era with independent consciousness, thought, and personality.

2.3 Diversity and Breakthrough of Female Images

2.3.1 The rise of the image of the housewife

Since the 1960s, the female images in Indian films have gradually got rid of the traditional mode, and women are no longer regarded as attached to men. They occupy an important position in the family. During this period, a new image of a housewife appeared in movies. These housewives take the responsibility of caring for their husbands and educating their children in family life but they have not lost their self-awareness. For example, the heroines in films such as *Mom* and *Love* are all housewives. On the one hand, the rise of these female images shows that the status of women is constantly improving. On the other hand, it also shows that Indian female consciousness has been further awakened. The image of the housewife has also made some breakthroughs and development from the traditional housewife to an independent woman in the new era. For example, the women in *Secret Superstar* and *Dangal* are all independent and self-reliant. These women do not depend on men and become an essential part of social development and change.

2.3.2 Breakthrough of female roles

The diversification and breakthrough of female images are reflected in the independence, freedom, and equality of female roles. In the aspect of female role independence, the female image in this period gradually got rid of the gender orientation of women in traditional society, and the female image was no longer the image of a good wife and mother in traditional society. Moreover, they appeared as an independent, strong, brave, and optimistic image. For example, in *Dangal*, Jita and her sister Sahana both appear as a strong female image. In terms of women's role freedom, women are no longer completely dependent on men to survive and they can realize their self-worth in their careers and pursue their dreams in life. For example, Insia, the heroine played by Zaira Wasim in *Secret Superstar*, is not only a musician but also an actress. She has more opportunities in her career and is no longer a good wife and mother in the traditional sense. In terms of women's equality, women were no longer attached to men in this period [3].

3. The Relationship between Female Images in Indian Films and Social Changes

3.1 The impact of movies on social concepts and values

Based on the evolution of female images in movies, the rise of Indian women's status is a long process and it is also a complicated and difficult process. In this process, Indian films have shaped and transformed female images, showing a diversified and positive trend. Before the new century, the female images in Indian films were mostly traditional and conservative. During this period, the female images in films were mostly shaped by men, and the heroine's position in the films was mostly humble. After the new century, Indian films began to break through the tradition, women began to appear in Indian films gradually and the image of the heroine in the films also showed a diversified trend. Jita, the heroine in *Dangal*, was discriminated against and ridiculed by her father at the beginning and finally succeeded by her efforts. Insia, the heroine in *Secret Superstar*, struggled hard to pursue her favorite music dream and finally succeeded. The film *Secret Superstar* is vivid, realistic, and inspiring, which causes the audience to think deeply about the status of women, the realization of women's self-worth, and the shaping of women's image. The film shows the low status of women in social reality by reflecting family conflicts between heroes and heroines. In the movies, the female images have changed from traditional to modern, from conservative to extrovert, from caring for their husbands and educating their children to

pursuing self-worth. It can be seen that Indian films have played an important role in reflecting social reality, spreading positive thoughts, and transmitting values.

3.2 The impact of social change on the image of women in movies

3.2.1 The breaking-down of the prejudices against women in traditional Indian society

In *Secret Superstar*, the mother is not a housewife in the traditional sense but a music teacher. In the film, the mother not only bravely pursues her musical dream but also encourages her daughter to pursue her dream bravely without being restricted by traditional ideas. In *3 Idiots*, the heroine Pia is a woman who dares to challenge traditional ideas. In Pia's view, everyone has their own values and should not be bound by traditional ideas. It can be seen that women in movies are no longer the symbols of decoration and birth in traditional society. They have their independent personality and pursuit, and their career and goals. Therefore, the continuous evolution of female images in the film has broken the prejudice against female roles in traditional society and changed the audience's views on female roles [4].

3.2.2 The fighting for women's equal rights

In the process of social change in India, women have gradually gained equal rights and status in various fields and become an important force in social progress. In *Secret Superstar*, Insia won the support of her family and friends with her talents and dreams and strived for equal rights for her family through her efforts. In Dangal, Aamir Hussain Khan plays a male wrestling coach but his actions for women's equal rights have touched many audiences. With the influence of social changes on Indian films, more and more Indian films have appeared in the role image of fighting for equal rights for women, which also reflects the continuous development and progress of Indian society.

3.2.3 The change in the audience's stereotype of female roles

With the development of society, the female images in Indian films began to break the stereotype. In *Dangal*, the female wrestler played by the heroine has become a highlight in the film, and her spirit of hard work, tenacity, and strong is very touching. In traditional Indian society, women's status is relatively low and women are always regarded as an extra part of men. The female wrestler played by Fatima Sana Shaikh broke the audience's stereotype of female roles, and she proved with her actions that women can also become indispensable members of national competitive competitions. According to the constant changes and development of female roles in Indian films, women began to gain equal rights and status. Breaking the stereotype of Indian female roles promoted the continuous development of Indian society [5]. At the same time, it also reflects the gradual improvement of women's status in Indian society.

3.3 The interactive relationship between movies and social change

From the birth and development of Indian films to the present prosperity, Indian films are constantly developing and changing under the background of social changes. In India, the film is closely linked with social change. Whether it is political change, economic development, or cultural innovation, it will have a certain impact on film. Between film and social change, three factors have played an important role in the film. The first one is the cultural environment. India is a traditionally religious country, and religious thoughts have a profound influence on people's behavior. Social changes will inevitably influence the ideas and values of religious culture. The second is economic conditions. India's economic level has developed rapidly, and people's living standards have improved, thus giving them more money and time to watch movies. The third is science and technology. India has a low level of science and technology so people may have some difficulties in learning new things. Therefore, as an easy-to-understand and vivid art form, movies are easy for the audience to accept and understand. According to the changes in female images in Indian films, we can see that Indian society has undergone tremendous changes and development, and this series of changes are all produced in the process of social change in India. In this social background, movies have played an important role in promoting social change and changing people's ideas. The change in women's status and consciousness reflected by the female images in the films is the epitome of social change and development in India.

4. Conclusion

The evolution of female images in Indian films is closely related to social changes. As an important cultural medium, the film has a far-reaching impact on social concepts and values. By studying the relationship between the evolution of female images in Indian movies and social changes, we can better

understand the role and influence of movies on society and provide a reference for promoting social progress and realizing women's rights and interests. At the same time, it is necessary to further deepen the study of female images in Indian films, explore more influencing factors and mechanisms, and provide more theoretical support and practical guidance for the interactive relationship between film creation and social change.

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