

# Entertainment vs. Edutainment: Bollywood Movies as Pedagogical Tools

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**Abstract-** Film as a popular media can play a substantial role in influencing the masses by not just bringing them face to face with the realities of life but also by making an impact on their way of thinking. Besides entertaining the masses, films have a strong potential to transform the society by educating and instructing the masses.

Indian cinema which is now a century old has recently undergone a change and is fast emerging as a delightful medium of instruction. Recently many films have been produced that aimed at exploiting and utilizing creativity for educating the people. Films as the most popular media can directly influence the masses by making them see the world around them in an artistic way and think positively and act proactively. According to experts, theatrical movies or educational videos can complement the text, lectures, and discussions.

The paper through examples drawn from the Bollywood movies, attempts to throw light on certain strategies that can be employed to make films an effective tool for classroom teaching.

**Key Words:** Bollywood, Cinema, Education, Pedagogy

## 1. Introduction

In the 21st century one of the important roles being played by various sources of media includes facilitating communication channels among the masses. Today we rely heavily on TV and Internet for remaining updated and informed. In such a scenario the responsibility of these sources gets doubled as their accountability towards the masses and society increases. Films as the most popular media can directly influence the masses by making them see the world around them in an artistic way and think positively and act proactively. According to experts, theatrical movies or educational videos can complement the text, lectures, and discussions. One of the basic rules of communication is redundancy that is, communicating the same point in a number of different ways. Movies provide a concrete way to present important information (Anderson, 1992), sometimes in a way that grabs the class by their collective lapels and gives them a good shaking!" Indian cinema which is now a century old has recently undergone a change and is fast emerging as a delightful medium of instruction. Recently many films have been

produced that aim at exploiting and utilizing creativity for educating the people. I have thus divided this role of media in using entertainment as a source of edutainment under three heads. As a pedagogical tool, films can be utilized in three ways for enhancing classroom learning:

- Films adaptations -- a tool for better comprehension
- Films on education and
- Education in films

### 1.1 Film Adaptations

In the first category are those movies which are adapted from the literary texts and are rich in visual content for that matter. Such movies can be used effectively not only in the literature and language classes but in other classes too. Besides making understanding of a novel easier for the literature students, such novels can also be used for discussion in a language class. After the movie, a follow up session on various aspects of the novel like plot, characterization, can also be used for developing analytical skills of the students. Further a presentation on movie review can also lead to honing of the competence in critical thinking and confidence building.

Recently many plays of Shakespeare have been adapted by the Bollywood as well as Hollywood producers, viz. She's the man adapted from Twelfth Night, Omkara from Othello, Issaq from Romeo and Juliet and so on. Besides these adaptations, a number of cinematic versions of various literary texts are also there which further help the students in understanding a literary text more effectively through visual presentation.

*Films contextualize books in a visible and audible atmosphere and invite us to discover the unsuspected ways of seeing and hearing things. A specific combination of images and sounds can provide insights into the nature of the deep-seated meanings that do not lend themselves easily to verbal exploration. The ideas mystified in symbols and the veiled references to different aspects of life that we once decoded in a particular way speak to us from a new perspective and we learn to appreciate a literary text on a different level, we begin to notice that many of its elements gain a new life when interpreted in the context of the new medium's specificity. (Marciniak, 63)*

## 1.2 Films on education

Next category of films with pedagogical significance includes movie with education as theme. Reflecting on the pedagogical significance of films in education Dr. Pietari Kaapa of the University of Nottingham has stated that, "cinema as both a popular form of entertainment and a means of artistic and political expression, is a crucial area of classroom teaching. The pedagogical potential of film provides an immediate and invigorating addition to established lesson plans, while the history of the medium and its contextual socio-cultural relevance function as sources of study in their own right."

Movies in this category serve to change the mindset of the people by making them think critically and form new assumptions about various systems of education. For example *Three Idiots* directed by Rajkumar Hirani and *Taare Zameen Par* by Aamir Khan. These movies are a message to the society regarding right ways of acquiring right education. These movies also reflect on our faulty examination system and teaching practices in an implicit manner. The movie *Three Idiots* tries to bring to the front the problems created by a severe focus on grades and book knowledge and essentially laments the restriction of freedom of thought and reflection that has become a hallmark of the educational system. On the other hand *Taare Zameen Par* is a story of millions of dyslexic students in the world and portrays the pathetic state of Indian education system that identifies intelligence with grades and as such looks down upon the students with average grades to be weak. Such movies besides playing an important role in transforming the society positively can also act as guiding lights to young minds feeling bogged down with the dilemma of opting between career and passion. Movies have the power to reach massive audiences, which is why they should, and do, matter so much to society. Whether they are stories of afar or just everyday existence, good movies are a way for people, particularly youth, to understand and relate to the world in constructive ways. And such movies with a lasting impact definitely make us think in a new way or expose us to a meaningful story, more so than merely entertain.

## 1.3 Education in films

In the third category we can consider the films that directly reflect instructional strategies and thus can contribute significantly as a pedagogical tool. To substantiate this point, the movie *English Vinglish* directed by Gauri Shinde can be taken up as an instance. This movie through a female's struggle to earn a position and reputation for herself and heighten her self esteem by learning to speak English conveys much more than a social message. The classroom setting in the movie and various lessons in English very covertly yet explicitly present a fine commentary on teaching and learning practices in a language classroom. Such movies can go a long way not only in motivating the students towards learning a

language but also in virtually learning a language through the lessons that form an essential part of the movie. The use of articles and modals are explained briefly yet creatively in the film through interactive tutorials. Even the method of evaluation gets featured in the movie through a spoken assignment where the candidate fares well and succeeds in getting not only the certificate but also her lost esteem. Through this journey of a language learner, one gets to learn a lot many things that will motivate as well as guide a student towards effective learning process.

## 3. CONCLUSION

To sum up, besides the educational utility of films in communicating a message through their themes and stories, their pedagogical significance also lies in teaching speaking techniques through dialogues as well as building analytical skills through a critical analysis of plot and characterization. The versatility of its use allows incorporating film in different types of learning sessions in the classroom. For example, Films can be used just for enjoyment, creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom, which can enhance motivation and as a pedagogical tool they can provide a stimulus for other activities, such as listening comprehension, debates on social issues, raising intercultural awareness, being used as a moving picture book or as a model of the spoken language.

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