

Hindi Cinema as a Pseudo-Community Information Service for Women's Rights and Empowerment: A Study of Selected Films (2015–2025)

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ABSTRACT

Cinema increasingly extends beyond entertainment to function as an informal medium for communicating socially significant information and promoting public awareness. This study examines ten selected Hindi films released between 2015 and 2025 to analyse their representation of women's rights and empowerment and to explore their potential role as a Pseudo-Community Information Service (Pseudo-CIS). The study employs purposive sampling and descriptive and systematic content analysis. Five thematic categories are used for assessment: women rights, women empowerment, legal awareness, social awareness, and behavioural change. A Taxonomic Coverage Index (TCI) is applied to measure the extent to which information related to these categories is represented in each selected film.

The findings demonstrate that all the selected films contain substantial information concerning women's rights, empowerment, gender equality, dignity, self-reliance, social norms, legal awareness, and behavioural change. Among the selected films, Laapataa Ladies records the highest TCI score (90.91%), followed by Pink, Thappad, and Gangubai Kathiawadi (86.36% each). The study concludes that Hindi cinema can function as an accessible and engaging supplementary channel for disseminating socially relevant information and raising awareness about women's rights and empowerment. However, because cinema is primarily a creative and commercial medium, it should be regarded as a complementary rather than an authoritative or formal community information service.

KEYWORDS: Pseudo-CIS, Indian Cinema, Women Empowerment, Women rights, Gender equality.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this era of information technology and an information-driven society, the search for information is no longer confined to libraries, mass media, or government publicity channels. Moving beyond mere entertainment, cinema now presents information regarding social issues and human rights in an engaging and enjoyable manner, effectively

embedding these messages in the minds of the audience. In reality, the reasons behind this lie in the actors and actresses favored by the audience, as well as the film's core storyline, dialogue, music, and characters. Despite our country making significant strides in the field of information technology, women across various states continue to fall victim to the harsh realities of a patriarchal society. Although local administrations frequently attempt to empower women and safeguard their rights through various social programs, these initiatives often prove ineffective. Against this backdrop, authorities employ mediums such as street plays, folk music, and engaging posters to rise awareness about women's empowerment and rights among marginalized and uneducated communities—groups that include individuals prone to superstition or abusive behavior. Indian Hindi cinema also plays a significant role in this regard. Here, cinema assumes a unique guise to disseminate information aimed at raising social awareness; through a distinctive mode of expression, it penetrates the deep consciousness of the audience and the broader public. Now, it is necessary to explain what a 'Community Information Service' is. It is a local support system that provides people with the information needed to solve everyday problems and access government services. Title of the research paper “Indian Hindi Films on Women's Empowerment and Rights: An Analysis as a Pseudo-Community Information Service (2015–2025)”. Between 2015 and 2025, Indian cinema did not merely portray women in ordinary roles; rather, by taking a firm stand for women's rights, empowerment, awareness, self-reliance, and leadership—while simultaneously vehemently opposing the domination and hypocrisy directed at them—these films have brought the rebellious spirit of Goddess Durga (manifesting as ‘Trinayana’ and ‘Dashabhujā’) to life in new forms and styles. These films have voiced a powerful protest against a cruel and barbaric patriarchal society and condemned it in no uncertain terms. This study focuses on ten selected Hindi films: *Pink*, *Dangal*, *Lipstick under My Burkha*, *Raazi*, *Thappad*, *Sherni*, *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, *Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway*, *Laapataa Ladies*, and *Mrs.*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before preparing this research paper, a review of relevant research from the past years was conducted to avoid duplication of research.

Boyle (2015). In her research paper, she has portrayed the female characters of recent films as independent and active entities through the lens of 'feminist film theory'.

Naskar (2019). examined the role of information services and self-help organisations in the empowerment of women. The study emphasised the importance of access to relevant information in strengthening women's awareness, participation, self-reliance, and capacity for informed decision-making. It established a significant connection between information provision and the broader process of women's empowerment. The present study extends this information-centred perspective by examining Hindi cinema as an informal and supplementary medium through which information relating to women's rights, empowerment, legal awareness, and social issues may be communicated to wider audiences.

Khadilkar et al (2021). According to them, although the portrayal of female characters has improved over time, certain social biases still persist.

Thangam et al (2022). Their research paper discusses significant social messages—such as women's education, employment, self-confidence, and gender equality—within the context of how female characters are portrayed as empowered figures in Indian cinema.

Haris (2022). In his research paper, the researcher raised the issue of important social ills such as gender inequality.

Sharma. (2023). He has prioritized cinema as a medium to propagate the message of women's empowerment and social awareness.

Rai et al (2024). In this research paper, the researchers discuss topics such as social values, shame, pride, and gender-related social issues within the context of a comparative analysis of Hollywood and Bollywood films.

Gandi & Srinivasan (2025). Their research shows that in various films (such as 'Queen', 'Mimi', and 'Saand Ki Aankh'), female characters have moved beyond outdated limitations to embrace self-reliance, leadership, and the assertion of their rights.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- ✓ An Analysis of the Representation of Information Regarding Women's Empowerment and Rights in Indian Hindi Cinema (2015–2025).
- ✓ To evaluate how the public information service, which operates covertly, has become involved in disseminating awareness-raising information.
- ✓ To highlight the significance of how entertainment has transcended its traditional boundaries to become an extraordinary endeavor—deeply embedding the values of social awareness in the hearts and minds of a vast audience.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive and systematic content analysis method. Purposive sampling was used to select films released between 2015 and 2025. A mathematical index known as 'TCI' was utilized to determine the actual extent of CIS presence.

5. SCOPE & LIMITATION

The entire research paper selects Hindi films released between 2015 and 2025 that are informative regarding women's rights and empowerment. This research paper focuses on reviewing films rich in content regarding women's rights and empowerment from an entertainment perspective; specifically, it aims to explore the potential utility of these films as a form of implicit 'community information service' or a medium for raising public awareness about these issues.

6. BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS AND ENTERTAINING OBSERVATIONS OF SELECTED FILMS

Before a brief introduction to the film, it is necessary to mention the classification and approval of the film. The approval of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) is required for the release of the film. This central government agency issues a certificate according to the category of the film after the shooting of the film is completed. It is said that this certificate helps the audience in selecting the films according to the age group in the field of film entertainment.

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Table: 1. Types of certificates issued by CBFC

Sl no	Types of certificates	Certificate instructions
01	U (Universal)	Un-restricted
02	U/A 7 ⁺	Not for entertainment of children under 7 years of age.
03	U/A 13 ⁺	Not for entertainment of children under 13 years of age.
04	U/A 16 ⁺	Not for entertainment of children under 16 years of age.
05	A(Adult only)	Adult only
06	S (Special category)	For specific professionals, not for the general audience.

Now, let's look at the types of certificates approved for the films selected for the study.

Table: 2 Types of approved certificates issued by CBFC

Sl.no	Selected cinema	Types of approved certificate
01	Pink	U/A
02	Dangal	U
03	Lipstick Under My Burkha	A
04	Raazi	U/A
05	<i>Thappad</i>	U
06	Sherni	U
07	<i>Gangubai Kathiawadi</i>	U/A
08	Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway	U/A
09	Laapataa Ladies	U/A
10	Mrs	UA

From the above (Table - 2) it can be seen that the film “Lipstick under My Burkha” is for adults.

In the next step, let's give a brief introduction to the 10 selected films –

Table: 3 Relevant information about the selected film

Selected cinema	Year of Release	Director	Box office success	Women in leading roles
Pink	2016	<u>Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury</u>	₹157.32 crore	Minal Arora, Falak Ali, Andrea
Dangal	2016	Nitesh Tiwari	₹1,968–2,200 crore	Geeta Phogat & Babita Kumari
Lipstick Under My Burkha	2017	Alankrita Shrivastava	₹26.68 crore	Usha, Shireen , Leela, Rehana
Raazi	2018	<u>Meghna Gulzar</u>	₹190–207 crore	Sehmat Syed

Thappad	2020	Anubhav Sinha	₹44.54 crore	Amrita
Sherni	2021	Amit V. Masurkar		Vidya Vincent
Gangubai Kathiawadi	2022	Sanjay Leela Bhansali	₹209.77 crore	Gangubai Kathiawadi
Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway	2023	Ashima Chibber	₹36.53 crore	Debika Chatterjee
Laapataa Ladies	2024	Kiran Rao	₹25-26 crore	Phool Kumari, Jaya
Mrs	2025	Arati Kadav	₹35-50 crore	Richa Sharma

7. DATA ANALYSIS

For this study, 5 relevant taxon and their sub-indicators were selected from the 10 Indian Hindi films observed and selected. The main taxon and indicators are coded.

1. Women's Right (WR): Consent (WR-1), Equality (WR-2), Dignity (WR-3), Freedom (WR-4), and Justice (WR-5).
2. Women's Empowerment (WE): Education (WE-1), Skill (WR-2), Self-reliance (WE-3), Leadership (WE – 4), Decision –making (WR-5).
3. Legal Awareness (LA) : Legal Rights (LA – 1) , Violence (LA – 2), Justice (LA- 3) , Protection (LA – 4)
4. Social Awareness (SA): Gender Stereotype (SA – 1), Patriarchy (SA – 2), Social Norms (SA – 3), Equality (SA – 4).
5. Behavioral change (BC): Attitude (BC – 1), Self-efficacy (BC- 2), Role model (Bc-3), Participation (BC-4).

Here binary codes are used to clarify the presence or absence of taxon.

Binary coding 1 = Present

Binary coding 0 = Absent

Table: 4. Binary coding sheet

Indian Cinema	TAXON CODE					TAXON CODE					TAXON CODE					TAXON CODE					TAXON CODE					TOTAL SCORE
	WR					WE					LA					SA					BC					22
	INDICATOR CODE					INDICATOR CODE					INDICATOR CODE					INDICATOR CODE					INDICATOR CODE					TOTAL INDICATORS
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	Score obtained

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Pink	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	19
Dangal	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	17
Lipstick Under My Burkha	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16
Raazi	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	17
Thappad	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
Sherni	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16
Gangubai Kathiawadi	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	18
Laapataa Ladies	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	20
Mrs	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	15

Application of a mathematical method (TCI) to assess the suitability of the top 10 Hindi films selected for public information services on women's rights and empowerment.

$$\text{Formula: Taxonomic coverage index} = \frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$$

Cinema: Pink

$$\text{Taxonomic coverage index (Pink)} = \frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$$

Total score (WR+WE+LA+SA+BC= 19)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Taxonomic coverage index (Pink)} &= \frac{19}{22} \times 100 \\ &= 86.36\% \end{aligned}$$

Taxonomic coverage index = 86.36%

The amount of information related to women's rights and empowerment = 86.36

Cinema: Dangal

$$\text{Taxonomic coverage index (Dangal)} = \frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$$

Total score (WR+WE+LA+SA+BC= 17)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Taxonomic coverage index (Dangal)} &= \frac{17}{22} \times 100 \\ &= 77.27\% \end{aligned}$$

Taxonomic coverage index = 77.27%

The amount of information related to women's rights and empowerment = 77.27%

Cinema: Lipstick under My Burkha

$$\text{Taxonomic coverage index (Lipstick under My Burkha)} = \frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$$

Total score (WR+WE+LA+SA+BC= 16)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Taxonomic coverage index (Lipstick under My Burkha)} &= \frac{16}{22} \times 100 \\ &= 72.73\% \end{aligned}$$

Taxonomic coverage index = 72.73%

The amount of information related to women's rights and empowerment = 72.73%

Cinema: Raazi

$$\text{Taxonomic coverage index (Raazi)} = \frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$$

Total score (WR+WE+LA+SA+BC= 17)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Taxonomic coverage index (Raazi)} &= \frac{17}{22} \times 100 \\ &= 77.27\% \end{aligned}$$

Taxonomic coverage index = 77.27%

The amount of information related to women's rights and empowerment = 77.27%

Cinema: Thappad

$$\text{Taxonomic coverage index (Thappad)} = \frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$$

Total score (WR+WE+LA+SA+BC= 19)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Taxonomic coverage index (Thappad)} &= \frac{19}{22} \times 100 \\ &= 86.36\% \end{aligned}$$

Taxonomic coverage index = 86.36%

The amount of information related to women's rights and empowerment = 86.36%

Cinema: Sherni

$$\text{Taxonomic coverage index (Sherni)} = \frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$$

Total score (WR+WE+LA+SA+BC= 16)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Taxonomic coverage index (Sherni)} &= \frac{16}{22} \times 100 \\ &= 72.73\% \end{aligned}$$

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Taxonomic coverage index = 72.73%

The amount of information related to women's rights and empowerment = 72.73%

Cinema: Gangubai Kathiawadi

Taxonomic coverage index (Gangubai Kathiawadi) = $\frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$

Total score (WR+WE+LA+SA+BC= 19)

Taxonomic coverage index (Gangubai Kathiawadi) = $\frac{19}{22} \times 100$
= 86.36%

Taxonomic coverage index = 86.36%

The amount of information related to women's rights and empowerment = 86.36%

Cinema: Mrs.Chatterjee vs Norway

Taxonomic coverage index (Mrs.Chatterjee vs Norway) = $\frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$

Total score (WR+WE+LA+SA+BC= 18)

Taxonomic coverage index (Mrs.Chatterjee vs Norway) = $\frac{18}{22} \times 100 = 81.82\%$

Taxonomic coverage index = 81.82%

The amount of information related to women's rights and empowerment = 81.82%

Cinema: Laapataa Ladies

Taxonomic coverage index (Laapataa Ladies) = $\frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$

Total score (WR+WE+LA+SA+BC= 20)

Taxonomic coverage index (Laapataa Ladies) = $\frac{20}{22} \times 100 = 90.91\%$

Taxonomic coverage index = 90.91%

The amount of information related to women's rights and empowerment = 90.91%

Cinema: Mrs

Taxonomic coverage index (Mrs) = $\frac{\text{Total observation Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$

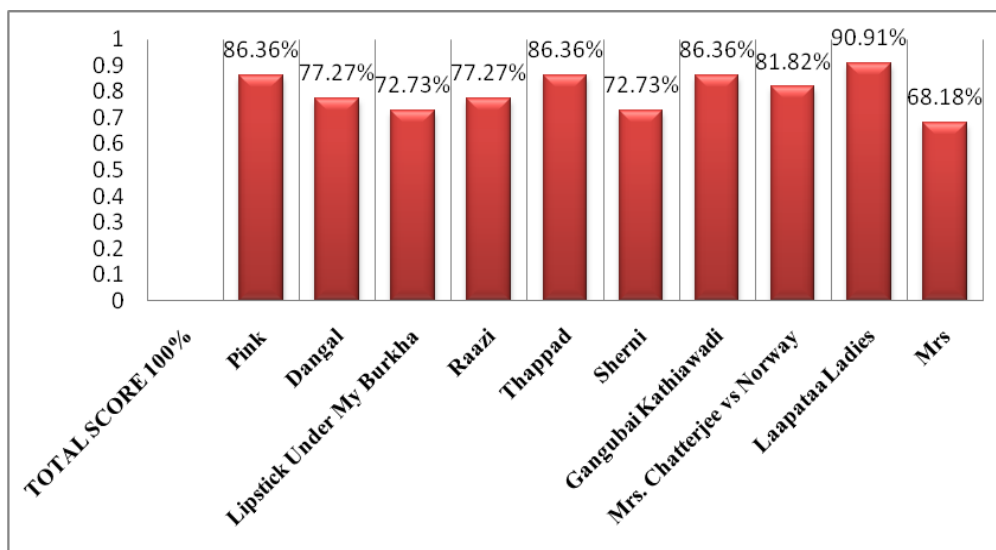
Total score (WR+WE+LA+SA+BC= 15)

Taxonomic coverage index (Laapataa Ladies) = $\frac{15}{22} \times 100 = 68.18\%$

Taxonomic coverage index = 68.18%

The amount of information related to women's rights and empowerment = 68.18%

Overall, by observing 10 films, we see that all of them are full of information related to women's rights and power.

Figure: 1 Comparison of Total Scores for Selected Hindi Films

According to Figure 1, the top films in terms of entertainment, as well as providing information on women's rights and empowerment on pseudo-public information services are: Laapataa Ladies (90.91%) , Pink (86.36%),Thappad (86.36%), Gangubai Kathiawadi (86.36%).

FINDINGS

The analysis of the ten selected Hindi films demonstrates that cinema can communicate a considerable range of information related to women's rights and empowerment through popular narratives. The major findings of the study are as follows:

- i. All ten selected films contain identifiable information relating to one or more dimensions of **women's rights, women's empowerment, legal awareness, social awareness, and behavioural-change-oriented messages**. However, the extent of such representation varies from film to film.
- ii. According to the **Taxonomic Coverage Index (TCI)**, *Laapataa Ladies* records the highest coverage at **90.91%**. *Pink*, *Thappad*, and *Gangubai Kathiawadi* each record **86.36%**, followed by *Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway* at **81.82%**, *Dangal* and *Raazi* at **77.27%**, *Lipstick Under My Burkha* and *Sherni* at **72.73%**, and *Mrs* at **68.18%**.
- iii. An aggregate examination of the binary coding indicates that **social awareness** is the most consistently represented category across the selected films, followed by behavioural-change-oriented themes and women's rights. Themes relating specifically to women's empowerment and legal awareness are comparatively less uniformly represented.
- iv. The films address issues such as **consent, equality, dignity, freedom, justice, education, self-reliance, leadership, decision-making, patriarchy, gender stereotypes, violence, social norms, and participation** through characters, conflicts, dialogues, and narrative situations.
- v. The findings suggest that popular Hindi cinema can communicate social information in an accessible and engaging form. Its informational function, however, is embedded within entertainment rather than delivered through a formally organised information system.
- vi. Therefore, the selected films may reasonably be regarded as a **Pseudo-Community Information Service (Pseudo-CIS)** in the context of this study. They can supplement awareness-building initiatives concerning

women's rights and empowerment, but they cannot replace institutional, professional, or authoritative information services.

SUGGESTIONS

The findings indicate several possibilities for strengthening the educational and informational use of socially relevant cinema.

Public and community libraries may periodically organise **screenings of carefully selected films dealing with women's rights, gender equality, legal awareness, education, self-reliance, and social participation**. Such screenings can be followed by moderated discussions so that the social issues represented in the films are critically understood rather than passively consumed. Film-based programmes may also be combined with **reliable information resources** provided by libraries, government agencies, educational institutions, and other recognised organisations. This is particularly important because cinematic representations may simplify, dramatise, or selectively present complex legal and social issues.

Libraries and information centres serving rural and marginalised communities may explore the use of appropriate films as supplementary tools for awareness programmes relating to women's education, rights, social participation, and empowerment.

At the same time, future studies may examine a larger number of films, regional-language cinema, OTT productions, and audience responses. Reception-based research would be particularly valuable in determining whether exposure to such films actually influences awareness, attitudes, information-seeking behaviour, or decision-making among viewers.

Further research may also refine and validate the **Pseudo-CIS framework and the Taxonomic Coverage Index (TCI)** so that the informational value, accuracy, accessibility, and social relevance of cinematic content can be assessed more systematically.

CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that contemporary Hindi cinema can perform an informational role alongside its primary function as entertainment. The ten films selected from the period 2015–2025 contain substantial representations of women's rights, empowerment, gender equality, dignity, legal and social awareness, self-reliance, and resistance to patriarchal norms. The TCI analysis further shows that the degree of such informational coverage varies across individual films, with *Laapataa Ladies* recording the highest score among the selected sample. The study therefore supports the proposition that socially oriented cinema can function as a **Pseudo-Community Information Service** by presenting issues of public concern through narratives that are accessible to large and diverse audiences. Its significance lies particularly in its ability to bring questions of gender, rights, social norms, and women's agency into popular discourse.

Nevertheless, cinema should not be equated with a formal Community Information Service. As a creative and commercial medium, films may employ dramatisation, simplification, selective representation, and stereotyping. Consequently, cinematic information cannot always be regarded as complete, verified, or authoritative.

Hindi cinema may therefore be understood most appropriately as a **supplementary information and awareness medium**. When supported by libraries, educational institutions, and reliable information sources, socially relevant films can contribute meaningfully to public discussion and awareness concerning women's rights and empowerment.

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