CONCLUSION

Music, dance, poetry, literature, drama and painting document different stages of evolution of socio-economic, cultural and political life of the human civilization. They also serve as sources of history-writing. Cinema should also be considered as raw material for history-writing in this context as it affects the social life at a comprehensive scale and plays an important role in documenting audio-visual reality. In India, there have been very less organized efforts to study the reflection of the socio-cultural and political structure through the prism of cinema. In my research, the relationship between realism and melodrama has been studied in the Indian context as it is now getting a lot of attention from film theoreticians. The portrayal of women in Indian cinema in the context of patriarchal set up of Indian society has been undertaken. The modernisation and bourgeois hegemony have also been examined. The issues related to culture and identity has also been studied. Moreover, how the nation and national identity is tied to project of nation-building is also analysed.

Our focus is on neorealism which strived for re-orientation of cinema-expression of everyday reality, recording events within their historical fold and focusing on the class/people who have never before received the attention of cinema. In other words, its purpose was to de-glamorise film and to make it a relevant, purposeful and socially useful form of communication. The main characteristics of neorealist cinema were authentic settings, natural dialogues, non-professional actors, naturalistic lighting and simple direction. In Italy, under Fascist rule the kind of cinema that was being created was detached from reality and aimed at promoting an ultra-nationalist propaganda. Neorealist films were a reaction against the disapprovingly called ‘white telephone films’ which were pretentious in nature and in which character talked on white shining phones. The propagandist motives and activities of Adolf Hitler and his minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels who were keenly aware of film’s ability to mobilize minds, to create powerful illusions
and captive audiences were quite clear. Neorealism then owes its origin, in part, to these filmmakers discontent at the limits placed on their freedom of expression. Neorealism emerged in response to this genre which delved in imagination and fantasy and was miles away from any kind of reality. It was a movement against the artificiality of the pre-war and Fascist cinema. It can also be construed as an attempt to make cinema more meaningful to the audience. Due to state repression and persecution a number of left-wing and Jewish filmmakers fled to various European countries. A number of film industry personnel who remained in Germany died in concentration camps. Some of the anti-Nazi artists and technicians who survived the onslaught later worked in the entertainment sector of the German film industry. It must be pointed out that one of the most significant influence that Nazism and Fascism, had on cinema did not pertain to films that were made in Germany and other Fascist countries but to the emigration they caused in 1933 and then again in 1940. The anti-Semitic and anti-communist propaganda coupled with too much state control of the film industry caused exile of so many artists that it must have, definitely, hurt German cinema as these artists would have enriched German cinema in better circumstances. This emigration served as a boon for the cinema of those countries who willingly and pleasantly accepted the refugees.

In India, the cinema of 1930s and 1940s became an expression of nationalism. This was due to the fact that the struggle for independence was the main discourse of these times and all other activities were subservient to this phenomenon. So any study of the content and the undercurrents of the films of this particular period must be viewed from this perspective. The familiarity with the mythological and devotional themes, reverence for the heavenly deities, fatalistic attitude of the masses and strict censorship norms for the films of socio-political nature were the main factors behind the huge appeal of such films among the common folk. The ‘historical’ of this period can be seen in the context of an emotional outlet for a country which was facing colonial brutality and finding solace in the historical glory of past
presented in the cinema. Even the crude stunt films were not only provocative but carried a hidden patriotic fervour in them. They advocated victory of good over evil, democracy, good governance, justice and freedom of speech and expression. This period also witnessed the apogee of Gandhian mass nationalism so the social issues and ideals of Indian national movement like emancipation of women, removal of untouchability, prohibition of liquor, non-violent struggle and promotion of communal harmony also formed the content of the films. The worldwide waves of communist movement could be seen in movements like Progressive Writers’ Association (PWA) and Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) which in turn also influenced films. The commercial formula films of today i.e. contemporary popular cinema also have their roots in the period of Second World War. With the flow of war-time money, a new class of capitalists came in to being with the sole intention of utilizing their black money and earning huge profits from it.

The aim of British administration was to perpetuate the imperial hegemony. Each and every sphere was regulated and controlled by the British in a fashion that best served its colonial policies and interests. The censorship machinery was geared towards maintaining the British stranglehold over India. The films that could politically inspire the masses or generate nationalist feelings and aspirations among them were censored and banned. Their over cautious and sensitive approach towards films was also a reflection of their consciousness regarding the strong impact of the films on the masses. The different ways in which producer/directors of the films took recourse to suggestion and symbolism and the use of allegory in depicting their nationalist feelings and social concerns has already been discussed in detail.

The attainment of independence meant realization of a dream but now the Indians had to cope with the dilemmas emanating from the demands of a new state - modern and traditional values, industrialization and poverty, affluence and hunger accompanied with the frustration resulting from unemployment, poverty, starvation and a sense of worthlessness. The
partition of India filled the masses with a sense of alienation in their own land. The themes in cinema vacillate between escapism and social relevance, realism and fantasy, romanticism and grimness and comedy and tragedy. The problem of modernity and tradition, religion and science, old and new, east and west – expressions of the same basic conflict – have been predictably central to the Indian cinema.

It can be argued that if neorealism in Italy emerged out of opposition to Fascist and escapist cinema which was away from reality then Indian neorealist cinema was also rooted in the milieu of colonial oppression and post-colonial apathy of the elected Indian government towards the contemporary issues of caste and class discrimination, patriarchal set up, social oppression, economic inequality, bourgeois domination and increasing antipathy towards democratic traditions. The centralization of the government authority and unbridled exercise of its power left a large section of society discontented. After the independence, the dreams and aspirations of the large section of society remained unfulfilled. The achievement of independence was seen to be as panacea by many but shattering of the hopes in the later years gave a blow to their aspirations. Moreover, the resonances of Italian neorealist cinema which was a reaction against the fascist forces could also be seen in cinema influenced by the colonial oppression in large part of Asia and Africa and the post–colonial apathy of the power-wielders of the state in India. To control the undesirable films the state retaliated with the time honoured privilege of censorship. Moreover, to restrict the intelligentsia and masses to a particular genre or style of cinema, which was away from reality, shows the authoritarian attitude and censorship intentions of a Fascist state.

Ravi Vasudevan and Sumita Chakravarty have deliberated on the forging of national identity in popular Indian cinema. The linkages between the culture promoted by films and Hindu nationalism have also been shown. It also diminishes the position of women in the patriarchal set up of the Indian society. There is a tendency to homogenize the nation and its portrayal. The depiction of upper caste patriarchal dominant Hindu world view with focus on
economic mobility is seen in large number of films. The combination of new media, transnational corporations and consumerism makes the situation critical for large sections of disadvantaged communities in developing countries.

The oversimplification of class, gender and cultural distinctions within the traditional comic trope in commercial Indian cinema find a brilliantly appropriate turn of phrase in ‘epic melodrama’, the term Ashish Rajadhyaksha applies to show the prevailing narrative form in commercial cinema in which concepts like tradition, nationness, womanhood, and generous patriarchy have played an important part. West or westernization has been used as a signifier for a set of cultural values or functions. City, in contrast to village, stood for corruption, decadence, and dishonesty. The city or an urban centre was seen as a source of employment and wealth and Mumbai and Kolkata saw huge migrations in search of employment opportunities and improved living environment. The scarcities of village life were replaced by ordeal of existence in wretched urban slums. City transformed into an emblem of decline in moral values and corrosion of social structure.

The vision of a Utopian society (desirable society and citizenry) with strong focus on what ‘should be’ and not ‘what is’ was the focus of realism in Indian cinema. Richard Dyer argues, “Entertainment offers... Alternative, hopes, wishes these are the stuff of Utopia, the sense that things could be better, that something other than what is can be imagined and may be realized.” This created stereotypes of poor but happy farmer, the hard working and honest labourer, generous and kind doctor and idealistic school teacher. These characters are uncorrupted by the social environment of an economy supporting capital accumulation, the struggle for higher salaries, illegal profits and other such activities. This utopian sensibility was also central to the project of nation building in the aftermath of partition and independence. But there was absence of such utopian ideas in some films which exhibited pessimism anxiety, despair, resignation and fear. *Hum Log* (1951), *Footpath*
(1953), Jagte Raho (1956), Pyaasa (1957) were some of these films. But we should keep in mind that even these films despite exhibiting negative qualities radiated some kind of hope and optimism. Moreover, the commercial and business interests did not let filmmakers make pessimist films as financiers were not ready to support such ventures as we have discussed in the case of Mill / Mazdoor (1936) and Do Bigha Zamin (1953). The project of nation building forced them to come out of its pessimism and despair.

The state claimed that it would create more employment opportunities and would alleviate poverty. But bureaucratic and political corruption and inefficiency coupled with tyranny of caste-based social relationships of domination and subordination, communalism and violation of fundamental rights of weaker sections served the interests of dominant sections of society and the desired goal could not be achieved. There was no progress in the position of the film medium which remained equally vulnerable to bureaucratic spite and susceptible to governmental pressures in the new epoch. The latest rhetoric about freedom, modernism and progress shown by the national leaders with free-will were not relevant to film censorship machinery which persisted to suffer under the gloom of its colonial legacy.

The Italian neorealism influenced Indian cinema in the beginning but later Indian cinema developed its own genre. Neorealism’s techniques and concerns were rooted in Indian reality which had poverty, inequality, unemployment, caste and class conflict, regional and religious divide, patriarchal oppression and overarching authority of the state, colonial as well as post-colonial, which were felt by Indian filmmakers. They borrowed from its stylistics and also tried to adapt and modify to suit their own styles. It also provided a progressive look to their films. The contribution of PWA and IPTA in the various stages was substantial. It led to a purposeful cinema contributing to the socio-economic, political and cultural concerns of the society. The 1950s was an age of hopefulness after the trauma of partition and the consequent mass exodus. It was a period inundated with nostalgia both for the Indian state and for its cinema. The period after independence
was characterized by a broader ideological investment in cinema of social justice connected with the image of the new state. The idiom of ‘development’ promoted by the state brought long term damages to environment and socio-polity, which far outshone the indefinable short term benefits. The Green Revolution and Narmada Valley Dam projects are two often discussed examples. In post-independent India, bourgeoisie became the power centres and wielders of authority. They initiated the process of nation-building. As family is the basic unit of society, it cradles class values, and the ideology of commercial cinema is tied to it. By extension, self-sufficient, traditional family on the celluloid, secluded in its enclosed circular account, is a ‘metaphor for the nation as family.’ Nation-building and globalized cinema has hyped caste rules and patriarchy. The fixation with the family propagates the myth that the ‘great Indian family’ is the storehouse of admiring values. Mehboob Khan’s *Mother India* tries to portray an ideal woman - wife, mother and a moral citizen. Her shooting of her son to save the honour of a girl becomes symbolic of saving the ‘moral force’ of the nation. Sumita Chakravarty and P.P. Parasher assert that in post-colonial India the upper-class, upper-caste, patriarchal and mostly Hindu family is the ideological centre of bourgeois cinema. Religious minorities and other marginal groups have been portrayed in these films as lower stereotypes or are missing from it.

Madhav Prasad’s expression of ‘feudal family romance’ for the prevailing textual form of the commercial Hindi cinema of the 1950s and the 1960s could be explained as a process of linear development from patriarchal status quo to a specific or unspecific rebellion/ quarrel and then ultimately to resolution where patriarchal influence is restored with slight diachronic changes. The ‘feudal family’ component of the description include an implicit or explicit exchangeability between the family and the nation (or any society that can replace the nation, for instance, village in *Mother India*): the family with its (mostly Hindu) patriarchal distribution of authority, and the nation with its ideological and authoritarian machinery, schools and universities, police and judiciary etc. Films like *Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gham* have promoted an
excessive yet hugely flourishing recipe of patriarchal power over post global modernity. With the arrival of this modernized neoliberal patriarchy the ‘feudal family romance’ has been replaced simply by a post global adaptation of itself.

The substitute to this is a cinema committed to the ideals of social struggle. Satyajit Ray, Guru Dutt, Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak and Bimal Roy were committed to this kind of cinema. Satyajit Ray’s kind of filmmaking had a certain pace which helped initially to define a new kind of cinema. Also, his distinctive style of narration was a rejection of dramatic and superficial way of telling a story and emphasizes on quasi - documentary mode of story telling. The use of non- professional actors, a deglamourised sound track in form of natural sounds, simple dialogues without any melodramatic kind of diction and authentic milieu are some of the characteristics of the cinema of Ray. His Apu Trilogy in general and *Pather Panchali* (1955) in particular is a masterpiece of Indian neorealist cinema. The deglamourisation can be either seen as renunciation of the beautiful or a redefinition of beauty. Guru Dutt projects a vision of a new Indian who is confused and torn between the values of a conventional and traditional society and the new values which are closely associated with modernization and commercialization of life patterns. In a way, he is critical of the emergence of the new industrial man who is practical, rigid and selfish. In this context, *Pyaasa* (*The Thirsting one* 1957) is a protest against the rising tide of materialism promoted by the capitalist forces aiming to turn individuals in to consumers ready to sell or purchase even identity and person of the protagonist.

Ritwik Ghatak dealt with as partition as his focal theme, and certainly looked at the consequence of this splitting up on the dislocations and displacement of families. Ritwik dealt with social realities - social oppression, exploitation and struggle. *Megha Dhaka Tara, Komal Gandhar* and *Subarnarekha* have common theme of displacement of thousands of masses from their homelands, their struggle for survival in refugee colonies and economic decline of Bengal due to partition of India. Ghatak’s trilogy was a contemptuous denunciation of the crumbling humanity and vanishing human
values. They view partition as a process or a continuing experience. Urvarshi Butalia sees it as the continuing presence of the past in our present and whose dark shadows of violence, trauma, displacement and rootlessness become part of our daily lives. Ghatak portrayed the predicament of the displaced refugees for whom partition cast its shadow in shaping their future lives. The issue of dislocation and displacement is another aspect which has wider connotation than mere geographical. Moreover, apart from economic misery and physical abuse, the pain and trauma of being labelled as refugees in their own homeland are some other aspects which have been deeply probed recently in the histories of memories. Ghatak depicted a ‘degenerate reality’ a reality that separated men from his traditional and culturally harmonious past, a reality that caused a politics of violence, deceit, hatred, destruction and dehumanization. In a way, Ghatak externalized his personal agony into a global perspective which could be understood and felt in India, Poland, Vietnam, Palestine, Germany, Korea, any nation which had suffered the pain of separation and the ‘bleeding scar of an overnight border.’ His films depict the tale of ‘degeneration, alienation and rootlessness’ created by uncertainty towards the independence and the growing poverty and misery of the masses.

Nandini Chandra has studied certain child - centric films to understand the association between the state’s view of children and its development agenda. Filmmaker’s depictions were closer to the state’s view of development. They did not perceive that their assurance of redistributive social justice such as land reform was at odds with the logic of an entirely bourgeois reform. They thought that the state must redeem the poor and the dispossessed but at the same time they accepted its incapacity to do it for everyone. The power-centres of state were perpetually upper caste. The inscription of the superior reason of the market in the state’s draft of social democracy in that case created a nationalism that preferred the bourgeois and industrial class. If it preferred the poor, it was the ‘deserving poor’ denoting the upper and intermediary castes within the petit bourgeois stratum.
Moreover, by not acknowledging the precise identities of the marginalized community, the cinema appeared to promote to a secular class ethos; but, in effect they strengthened a rejection of caste, class, gender and religious clash. Furthermore, the staging of secularism through the combination of diverse places of worship or figures of different religions fuelled the inherent practice of so called secular politics along symbolic lines rather than daily struggles and actions. Patricia Oberai has studied this kind of stereotyping and symbolism in context of calendar art and how over a period of time such stereotyping drains meaning out of such presentations and also reminds us of such differences which are co-opted by majoritarian Hinduism. The portrayal of landed aristocracy or feudal upper caste with their assurance to socialism and secularism was expressed in terms of the economic generosity or having once been the ruling class. Ready with these flawless qualifications, these characters then promoted the cause of a schizophrenic nationalist development. Moreover, they were numerous times depicted as ‘nationally validated thinkers and visionaries.’ Their paternalism towards the poor sections of the masses in the film was part of the colonial baggage and post colonial nationalist vision.

The national bourgeoisie has produced one hegemonic description of Indian culture, promoted through government institutions like universities, academies, art-galleries, museums etc. which has derided the new middle classes mainly on the basis of taste. The construction of certain artifacts as classical and deriding others as popular to create and perpetuate class distinctions is a device by bourgeoisie to maintain their hegemony. Moreover, the capitalist forces in the era of globalization, liberalization and privatization are potent enough with their ammunition of advertising in construction of a lifestyle as model for others. The Coca-colonization and Mac-donaldization of different regions of the world is a ploy to homogenize the tastes and hegemonize their imperial aspirations. The consumerist forces are active in redefining the regional traditions to such an extent that regressive rituals like karva chauth are promoted and advertised in such a manner that they have
been transformed into national festivals. Many women are embracing these traditions which were never been part of their culture. A custom of sacrifice is transformed into a festival of consumption. The role of husband has changed from being a passive and somewhat superior receiver of attention to being a somewhat guilty and unsure sympathizer, sometimes observing a fast to demonstrate solidarity and purchasing gifts to tone down his guilt. Such customs are acquiring huge proportions because they are being used purposefully to drive consumption. The role of cinema and television in this context is enormous. Films like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) have been bandwagons of such rituals. Television through its soap opera is engaged in creation and recreation of festivals on screen on daily basis as if all households in the country are engaged in preparation of one festival after another. Such portrayals are encouraging commercialization and the general audience cannot help but feel inadequate if they do any less.

The key development of the 1990s has been the speedy ascendancy of a global commercial television system dominated almost solely by world’s leading media firms. There has been a corresponding decline in public service broadcasting. Moreover, the global advertising agency market has undergone consolidation in a way as remarkably as that in the media industry. The global commercial media are vital to depoliticization process of economy. Without any required forethought and by simply pursuing market dictates, the global commercial media are better at catering to a depoliticized population that prefers personal consumption over social understanding and activity, a group more expected to take orders and less expected to create effect. The main focus of the media system is to offer its audience with light escapist entertainment. The forces of globalization are involved in such activities. Today, howsoever much cultural diversity is asserted, European culture – in a fairly decadent, commercial form – spreads like venom through the indigenous cultures of the rest of the globe by means of television and textbooks, cinema and politics. Globalization rests upon the pillars of modernization built during the initial decades of Indian independence. The
self-assurance of the middle class draws upon Nehruvian educational and industrial institutions. In India, globalization’s control of media shows an additional stage of bourgeois hegemony. Anirudh Deshpande argues that nation-building and globalized Hindi cinema has glorified caste norms and patriarchy. The obsession with the family promotes the myth that the great Indian family is the repository of laudatory values.

While using cinema as a source of history a researcher faces a number of difficulties. From literature to cinema, any cultural creation, in a bird’s eye view, doesn’t reflect the entire social reality because the bias and prejudices of various sections of society act-react up on each other to give a distorted picture of reality. But just like other realities, cinema is also a reality that cannot be ignored by the historians. We, the researchers, will have to examine this reality to find what information it could provide us. New methods and implements of experimentation are to be explored and exploited as the objective of history is to keep alive and transparent, the memory of the human society. Cinema reflects images of various aspects of the socio-cultural structure in new ways and angles. These images also reflect the typical characteristics of socio-cultural-political structure of that era, the conflict of the classes, structures of domination and subordination, aesthetic sense and cultural level of various sections of society, their socio-political awareness and the systematic developmental process of perception and understanding of history in its entirety.

The analysis of the reflection of various aspects of socio-cultural-political structure in cinema by using cinema as a source of history-writing to analyse the socio-political reality of that period and its historical study while investigating its social basis is neither a complete attempt nor the inferences drawn are all-pervading and complete. In fact, to raise the theoretical-practical questions associated with the use of cinema as a source of history-writing within the confines of Indian historiography, the possibility of the use of cinema as a raw material of history of a specific era and to examine neorealism as a link between reality and history have been the main
objectives of this study. It is also true that an honest investigation is an insatiable thirst - a never ending voyage. Where one investigation ends, another begins. This attempt should be viewed as a mere initial chapter of a comprehensive long term project.