CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

The present study has focused on two broad aspects — (i) the cinema industry, that is, people who are connected with cinema in one way or the other, be it production, distribution and exhibition and (ii) the people who see films, termed as 'Respondents' in this case. As sociology of cinema means the relationship between cinema and society, the study has delved into the nature of interactional process between the two and the manner in which these two affect each other. That is, it has endeavoured to study cinema as an institutional system and thereby deal with the whole gamut of production, distribution and exhibition and how this is reflected on the people who see films and its overall impact on society.

The main objectives of the study were to

1. study the relation between cinema and society;
2. study the growth and pattern of cinema;
3. study the social and economic organization of the cinema industry;
4. study the composition of the respondents who see films in terms of their characteristics, attitudes and reactions to cinema viewing;
5. examine the themes, values and ideologies portrayed by cinema;
6. assess the kind of impact it has on people who see cinema;
7. study the impact of information technology on cinema and thereby
8. suggest new areas of research in the sociology of cinema.
These objectives have been achieved through a first-hand study of developments in cinema. Person-to-person interviews were conducted with a cross-section of the people from the cinema industry and general public so as to provide a reliable basis for scientific interpretation of the data. This data has been analysed and presented in broad Chapters.

The salient conclusions based on analyses are presented below.

**Historical Context**

No authentic records are available about the beginning of cinema in Delhi. One of the reasons for this may be that Delhi which has been the capital of India since pre-historic times and has the distinction of having several cities, built one after the other by various Hindu and Muslim rulers and finally by the British was reeling under political turmoil. Following the participation of Indian troops in the First War of India's Independence in 1857, the British had deposed the titular Mughal Emperor Bhadur Shah Zafar and formally annexed Delhi. Thereafter the British main effort under the Crown was to turn Delhi into a military area for stationing of British infantry and artillery. And this they did soon after because from 1859 onwards the city came to be known as the Fort of Delhi. It is, however, believed that there existed a few cinema houses in Old Delhi during this period. Like all cinema houses the world over, these cinema houses too were being run as theatres till the time moving pictures came into India in the year 1896. As Delhi at this time was occupied by the British, these cinema
houses mostly screened English silent films. The minimum rate of admission was four annas and highest Re. 1/-. As in Bombay where the moving pictures were initially introduced, these shows were accompanied by an orchestra.

It may, however, be inferred that cinema activity eventually picked up in Delhi when the British transferred their capital from Calcutta to Delhi in the year 1911 and decided to build a new capital thereafter by the name of New Delhi. Because with the inauguration of New Delhi in the year 1931, new theatres started coming up and cinema activity gradually started flourishing. One of the first theatres to come up at New Delhi was Regal in the year 1938.

Organizational Perspective

From the beginning due to historical and other reasons Delhi came to concentrate on distribution and exhibition activities and showed films to its audience mass produced in Bombay.

However, modern technology like television, video and of late cable television, accompanied by changing social trends, irrational policies regarding entertainment tax and mounting overheads seem to be eroding cinema halls. Of the 73 odd theatres in Delhi, barring those located at Chandini Chowk, Pahar Ganj, Karol Bagh, Connaught Place and the resettlement colonies, numbering about 25 the rest are in doldrums.
According to one of the exhibitors, the south Delhi theatres are virtually finished and are waiting for an opportune moment to close. Unlike the theatres in central Delhi which have the benefit of a floating population, south Delhi cinemas lost out to video menace in these affluent colonies. The film people of Delhi became aware of the crisis when two prominent theatres of south Delhi, namely, Archana and Kamal closed down.

But for some of them the future is not all that bleak. Many of the exhibitors are revamping their cinema halls with the hope of getting the crowd back as they have come to realise that the experience of watching a film on the video and cinema are different. For others, it is the change in the thematic content of the films from violence to romance that is keeping the hope alive of cinema halls doing brisk business once again.

Respondents' Viewpoint

People prefer to spend their leisure time at home either by reading the newspapers or magazines/books or watching television. If the first priority of reading newspapers is taken, the column that attracts their attention is 'any other' which may be the headlines etcetera followed by the editorial, magazine and film section. While reading magazines/books, it is the topical or domestic or film magazine which holds their attention. In television also, it is first the news that attracts their attention. This is followed by serials and films.
While spending leisure time outside the home, a visit to cinema hall comes to occupy a fifth place after visiting friends, going to hotels/restaurants, visiting relatives and doing other activities. This goes on to show that people visit the cinema hall less often and not very frequently. Instead they prefer to watch a film on the video.

Themes and Values

People of all age-groups seem to have shown fond preference for 'social' themes. Surprisingly, the patrons of social films are the educated people and not those who seem to have a low level of education. Though occupationwise, it is the working class and the professional class followed by the business class who seem to have shown fond preference for watching socials on the screen. This may partly be due to the magnetic hold exercised by the popular social films on its audience. At another level, it could also be argued that the popular social films tend to reflect or express the values of the society with which the people are able to identify. Following 'socials', 'love stories' seem to be the second choice of the people. 'Art films' too are preferred by a significant number of film viewers.

Review of the film and story or theme are the two important criteria which people take into consideration while selecting a film for viewing. Infact, it is the story or theme which seems to make an incredible impact on the people after a film is over. It is this feature around which other features such as actors and actresses, music and songs, photography, sets and scenery etcetera revolve. It is through the story or theme
that values and ideology of a given society are eulogised and transferred to the people. The story or theme of a film thus seems to play an important social and critical role. It may either reinforce the existing values and ideology or question them. It is this fact which makes cinema an extremely compelling and decisive cultural medium.

Social Impact

A large majority of the people were of the opinion that cinema plays a positive role in society by offering catharsis. That is to say it offers release to their tensions which they experience in their daily life, be it their family or place of work. This may also be an index of the tension ridden state of the Indian society which is accentuated by innumerable social changes in the patterns of the caste system, the class system, the family life, industrial relations and political structure, all of which seem to have reach a highly turbulent state after the achievement of independence in 1947. After catharsis, entertainment figures prominently in the reckoning of cinema viewers.

Similarly, a large majority of the people were of the view that cinema plays a negative role in generating social and sexual violence and crime in the society. Almost an equal number of people blamed the cinema for providing an escape from reality into a dream world instead of facing up to the problems of life.

A large majority of the people were of the opinion that the first and foremost probable role of cinema in society should be entertainment. Secondly, it should play an educative role and thirdly, teach positive values.
Scope for Further Research

The present study has clearly brought out that the growth and development of cinema has to be understood in the social context. The values, beliefs and attitude of people directly influence the types of films produced, distributed and exhibited in cinema halls. At the same time, the study has revealed that the perceptions regarding the relationship between cinema and society vary considerably among different age groups and socio-economic strata. Thus a study of this type can be replicated in different socio-cultural and economic settings. It also hints at a definite need for area-based house-to-house surveys to arrive at conclusions applicable universally. The inter-relationship between cinema and various processes of social change such as industrialization, urbanization, migration, modernization and technological developments may be studied in depth from the viewpoint of changing social values. The impact of cinema on the individual behaviour, family life, community integration and social organisation may also be further probed into. In a developing society, both positive and negative aspects of cinema are required to be researched into.