

The Songs of Resistance: Textual Analysis of the Patriotic Hindi Film Songs of Pre-independence Era

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Abstract

Movie songs are an excellent type of audiovisual communication that not only reflect society in a specific period of time, but also efficiently communicate society's problems and answers. With its varied linguistic variants and emotional connotations, Bollywood movie songs have played an important role in propagating concepts of national awakening and the right to freedom. Many songs produced by poets and lyricists such as Pradeep, AnjumPilibhiti, and DN Madhok sparked the torch of independence in Indian youth and also mobilized the masses to fight for the country. Popular songs such as '*ChalChal re Naujavaan*, '*Door Hato, aye duniyawalo*, '*Hindustan Hamarahain*' and others were used to spread patriotic messages and awaken Indians. Though it was difficult to write such songs under the British era without them being prohibited, Indian filmmakers rose to the occasion and devised ways to employ those communications under the watchful eye of the British. This study examines the significance of well-known patriotic cinema songs written during the pre-independence era and their influence on the independence cause. The paper uses textual analysis to gauge the content and context of freedom struggle during the colonial era and concludes that these songs were excellent awakening tools.

Keywords: Bollywood movies; Freedom struggle; Indian independence; Patriotic songs; Textual analysis.

Introduction

Indian cinema, during the pre-independence era, employed popular historical myths, events, and symbolic imagery to represent the theme

of freedom struggle and to inspire people to rise against the oppressive British government (Kaul,1998). The flame was further fanned by movie songs with nationalist overtones and hidden meanings disguised in poetic language. Ajay Mankotia (August, 2021) in his news article lists many movie songs from the 1930s and 1940s that were significant in inspiring Indians to fight against colonial rule. He describes how these songs instilled in the people not only patriotism but also the notion of true nation building. Musical works with meaningful lyrical themes that connote the socio-political situation of contemporary India became the key means for disseminating social reform messages. Regardless of the movie's theme or plot, such songs were purposefully included in the talkies to awaken people. The themes of the songs changed as the socio-political structures of the country changed, making them a real mirror of the society. All of the major historical events, such as numerous freedom movements, World War II, Mahatma Gandhi's rise, communal strife between Hindus and Muslims, and India's independence, were depicted in pre-independence film songs. Many films used metaphor, innuendo, symbolism, and oblique references to get through the ever-vigilant censors and deliver the message to an audience that was discriminating enough to recognize it. By decoding the socio-cultural context and the persuasive components in the songs' texts, the study seeks to comprehend the importance of these songs in the Indian Freedom Movement.

The conceptual framework for the study has been established through the work of many media theorists. Three scholars' notions have been taken to comprehend how the nationalism aspect in the songs works. They include: 1- Billig (1995) who defines nationalism as a frequent exhibition of some common symbols or language phrases that elicit a sense of shared geographical boundaries, cultures, and identities. 2- Anderson (1983), who describes nation as an imagined group of people who share similar interests, are congruent, and have a feeling of togetherness despite not knowing each other firsthand, 3- Deutsch (1953), who emphasises the importance of communication channels that effectively express symbolic messages to certain communities or groups united with the state. To understand the effectiveness of the persuasive aspects in the songs, the researcher has used classic media effect theories such as Cultivation and Agenda setting. Ashley Montagu's (1979) concepts describing communication as a collision of symbols and how these symbols serve a higher function than just transmitting the message, have been used to recognize the value of linguistic signs embedded in the songs. And, finally, Albert Bandura's social learning theory has been used as a guide to understand why these songs were so effective in mobilizing people.

The researcher uses the textual analysis method to assess the persuasive value and sociopolitical messages of Bollywood songs of 1930s and 1940s.

Objectives: The objectives of the study are to understand:

1. The socio-political and cultural context of patriotic songs produced during colonial rule.
2. The major social themes these songs contained besides a call for national awakening for freedom.
3. The persuasive role linguistic signs played in these audio visual communications.

Review of Literature:

Skey, Michael (2020) argues how the relationship between the media and nationalism has been neglected by scholars of both the disciplines and there is a strict need to investigate why and how national frameworks communicate in routine interactions and during the extreme situations of crisis or celebrations. Photikanitand Sirasoonthorn (2018) employs documentary research method to investigate the social perception value of Thai Band *Suntaraporn* and illustrates how the cultural power of music can instill social messages in society. Ziv (2017) registers the response of 1,100 Israeli respondents after they listened to a protest and a Patriotic song. He concludes that the text has an effect on the receivers and helps strengthening group cohesion and attitudes. Hong's (2021) study was conducted to provide insights into Indian cinema in China from the perspectives of local audience. It identifies social values and cultural proximity shown by way of cultural symbols, highly appealing and comprehending. Trivedi(2021) concludes that the patriotic songs of Hindi films have helped building nationalistic pride among Indian citizens since the pre-colonial era when they were used to evoke feelings of awakening for the freedom struggle. Szivak (2019) argues that the linguistic style of the Hindi song depends on the song situation and the context of the film. It connects the song to a broader spectrum of cultural meanings and can convey a large spectrum of extra-musical meanings. Sharma (2005) describes how the arrival of talkies in India in 1931, at a period when there was a pressing need to expedite the pace of social transformation, hastened the pace of social changes. The sound in movies expedited India's final attack on the British Empire and her attempt to free herself from the foreign dominion.

An article on Quint.com outlines all of the extant patriotic songs from the Colonial era and describes how these songs helped mobilise the masses

for the war for independence (Mankotia, 2021). Another story in Heritage Times by Salim (2020) explains the difficulties filmmakers faced while using these tunes in their films under the scrutiny of British censors.

Methodology:

The paper employs textual analysis method to critically review the patriotic and theme-India songs produced during British rule. The term "theme-India" refers to all the songs that contain social messages aimed at improving or praising Indian society. The songs of the movies released from 1931 to 1947 have been purposively selected using Google search engine through key word research. These Keywords include: *Bharat, Hindustan, Azaadi, Vatan, Bharat-mata* and *Desh*. Rhetorical criticism approach has been adopted to analyze text for historical, social and cultural context and to evaluate the persuasive force embedded in the songs.

The sample size contains a total of 41 songs of the movies released between the year 1931 when India's first talkie Movie *AlamAra* released, and the year 1947 when India got independence from British Rule. The texts of songs have been examined for the following literary constructions:

- Contemporary socio-political Messages
- Recurring Themes
- Linguistic signs and symbols

Results and Analysis

To comprehend the research concern, the text of all 41 songs was studied. Many songs from the 1930s praised *Bharat Mata*(Mother India) while also advocating for social reform. The social environment was shifting over the 1940's and songs with more of a cry for independence were used in movies. Songs calling for Hindu-Muslim harmony and Gandhi ji's teachings predominated in the second half of the 1940s decade. Many songs also portrayed contemporary events, such as the West Bengal famine in India in 1942. The analysis yielded the following outcomes:

- 1. Contemporary Socio-political Messages:** The songs had a variety of themes. Three dominant socio political messages were identified in the songs:
 - 1.1 Patriotism and awakening for the struggle for freedom:** This was found to be the major theme in most of the pre-Independence

era movie songs. The messages made a call to all the Indians in support of the independence movement by fueling the nationalist fire, evoking feelings of love for the country, and sparking patriotic fervour.

The song “*Door Hato Aye Duniawalo, Hindustan Hamara Hain*” from the movie *Kismet* is the most famous in this category. It was written in response to Gandhi Ji’s call for quit India Movement in 1942 when all of the political leaders were put behind bars. Despite the fact that the film was about the love life of a pickpocket, director Gyan Mukherjee asked lyricist Pradeep to write the song, which was incorporated into the film as a stage performance. Some words were changed to avoid censorship, and it was implied that the song was actually dedicated to Germans and Japanese with whom the colonial government was at war.

*Aaj Himaalay Kii Chotii Se Phir Hamne Lalakaraa Hai
Dur Hato Ain Duniyaavaalon Hindustaan Hamaaraa Hai
Shuru Huaa Hai Jang Tumhaaraa Jag Utho Hindustaanii
Tum Na Kisii Ke Aage Jhukanaa Jarman Ho Yaa Jaapaanii
Aaj Sabhii Ke Liye Hamaaraa Yahii Qaumii Naaraa Hai*

(Today we again call from the peak of Himalayas, go away the intruders; India is our land. The war has heralded. You need to wake up my fellow Indians. Don’t bow before anyone either German or Japanese.)

Movie: *Kismet* (1943)

Another song in this category was ‘*Chal Chal Re Naujawan*’. The Indian National Movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi, was at its pinnacle at the time, and the Indian National Congress (INC) held morning assemblies known as ‘*Prabhat Pheri*’ (Morning rally). Under the leadership of Indira Gandhi, INC also founded the ‘*Vanar Sena* (Monkey Soldiers)’, a children’s organization. Saquib Salim writes in *Heritage Times* (2020, January)–“the song was adopted as the *Vanar Sena*’s marching hymn, and Indira herself sang it at gatherings”.

*Chal Chal Re Naujawan, Chal Chal Re Naujawan
Kehna Mera Maan Maan, Chal Re Naujawan
Tu Aage Badhe Ja, Aafat Se Lade Ja
Aandhi Ho Ya Tufaan, Garja Ho Aasmaan
Rukna Tera Kaam Nahi
Chalna Teri Shaan*

(Keep walking youth. Keep fighting with the enemy. Don’t stop even if

you face tornadoes or storms. Quitting is not the virtue, walking is pride)

Movie:*Bandhan*(1940)

Another song delivered a message to be ready for the upcoming war, but, with care so the mistake that made 1857 revolt a failed one would not be repeated:

Khincho Kaman KhinchoKhincho

O BharatMaaKeNaujawan

AajNishanaChukNaJana

PichliGaltiMat Dohrana

VarnaPhirHogaPachhtana

JagHeTuphanBawandar

Aankhe Mat Micho

Khincho Kaman KhinchoKhincho

JoBhikhMangne Se DarDar

AajadiMilti Ho GharGhar

LanatAiseeAajadi Par

Ho VeeroKeSantaneDeshTiro Se Sincho

(All the sons of India, be ready with your bows & arrows. Be careful.

Don not repeat past mistakes or you would lose again. Freedom cannot be achieved by begging. You need to fight for it.)

Movie:*Anjaan*(1941)

The songs written during the final years of colonial authority contained unmistakable anti-British themes:

Sadiyon Se HaiGhulam, JanmabhumiHamari, AzaadHai Hum Aaj Se,

JailonKeTaaleyTod Do, Angrezon Bharat Chhod Do

(Our motherland has been a slave for centuries. We are free from today. Let's break the jails. Let's make all the Englishmen quit India at once.)

Movie:*Ahimsa* (1947)

Other songs in this category included 'JeeteDeshHamara' from movie *Sikandar* (1941), 'BadheChaloJawano' from *Humrahi* (1945), 'HumJaagUthe-Hain So Kar' from *Hum EkHain* (1946), and 'YehDeshHamaraPyara' from the movie *Hamjoli* (1946).

1.2 Gandhi Ji's teachings and a call for Hindu Muslim Unity: As we draw nearer to independence, we notice that communal violence among Indians was being exacerbated by the British strategy of divide and rule. Songs from the middle of the 1940s emphasized ideas for societal harmony. Many songs exhorted listeners to follow Gandhi Ji's *ahimsa* (non-violence) philosophy and other teachings.

1944 movie '*ChalChal re Naujawan*' song that was written by *KaviPradeep* had the clear message for communal harmony:

'Jai Bharat Desh, Teri Jai,

Bharat KeNaujawanonChaloEkRaah Par,

Ai Hindu MusalmanonChaloEkRaah Par'

(Oh Youth of India, let's walk together. Oh Hindus and Muslims, let's walk together)

Movie:*ChalChal re Naujawan*(1944)

Movie *PahaleAap* released same year with a song conveying the message of same tone:

Hindustan Ke Hum Hain, Hindustan Humara

Hindu Muslim Donon KiAankhonKaTaara

Lo ChaleSipaahiBanke

BhaartiBaankeBhaarti

AbAayeSaamne

HimmatKiskiHimmatKiski

HarMaidaanJeeta, HarMaidanMaara

Hindu Muslim NeMilke Jab Ye Lalkaara

(We are Indians and India is our land. It is the apple of Hindus and Muslims' eyes. When we both fought together, no one could stand us)

Movie: *PahaleAap*(1944)

Text of the famous song of movie *Koshish* (1943) also gave similar message;

'Ai Hind KeSapooton, Jaago, HuaSavera, Hindu Hon YaMusalman, Hum Sab

HainBhaiBhai' (Hindu and Muslims are brothers. We all are the sons of Mother India).

Gandhi Ji's teachings of *Ahimsa* and *Swadeshi* movement were depicted in many songs. A song of the Movie *SonaChandi*(1946) motivated people to use *Charkha* (spinning wheel).

'Charkha ChalaaoBehnon, KaatoYehKachheDhaage'

Another song's text read:

'PyareBapuKeCharnon Ki Le Lo Kasam,

PyaaarePyaaareTirange Ki Le Lo Kasam'

(Let's Swear by GandhiJi, Let's Swear by the Tricolor)

Movie:*AajKa Hindustan* (1940)

1.3 Messages of social reform and a picture of current problems:

The majority of songs from the 1930s addressed the need for societal change. Numerous songs urged for development for a prosperous future of India. Some songs made fun of untouchability and encouraged equality and tolerance for other cultures.

Bombay Talkies' film *Janmabhoomi*(1936) starring Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani had '*Mata Ne HaiJanamDiya, JeeneKeLiye*' song that advocated the use of healthy lifestyle habits in the same lines of developed countries like America and Japan.

Mata Ne HaiJanamDiya, JeeneKeLiye,

NahinRogo Se MarneKeLiye.

Amreeka, Japan, Yourup, Englishtan

Sab BacheHue HeRogon Se,

HainDeshHamaraHara Bhara

Fir BheeHarPraniMaraMara

Hum Alas TajkeDukhDardo Se SabkoMuktKarenge

(The mother gave birth to us to live our life, not to die with diseases. When

countries like America, Japan, Europe and England have saved themselves from diseases, we are living like poor and ill souls. Our country is rich in natural resources. We need to fend away the laziness and be healthy.)

Movie: *Janmbhoomi* (1936)

Another song in the same movie spoke of an all-inclusive caste-free India:

Gayi Raat, Aaya Prabhat, Hum Nidra Se Jaage

Jai JaiJanni, Janmbhumi, Hum Balak Hain Tere.

Ho Koi BhiMochi, Bhangi, AaoAaoPyareBhai

SaathSaath Hum Gram GramMatraKiSewa Main Lag Jaayen

KamarKaske..

(The night is over and the dawn breaks. Wake up. Let's salute the motherland. We are your children. Come people from all the castes. We should all work together to serve our country the best.)

Movie: *Janmbhoomi* (1936)

Numerous songs depicted the agrarian society of India as it dealt with many modern concerns. A 1943 film had a song written by MahirulQadri and sung by Shamshad Begum and Motilal. It communicated about the tragedy of the 1942 West Bengal famine.

Maata Maata, Meri Maata, Bharat Maata

Teri Matti Chandi Sona. Aata Hain Is Pe Rona, Auron Ka Tu Khilona.

Teri Raksha Karne Wale, Hum Desh Pe Marne Wale..

Majdooro Ne JoKheti, ApneLahoo Se Sichi, Mile Use Na Roti, JalJaayeAisiKheti.

(O my mother India, your soil of gold and silver has become a toy in the hand of 'others'. The farms that peasants ploughed with their blood do not yield. Such farms should burn.)

Movie: *Taqdeer* (1943)

Another song was composed on the same lines. The song's lyrics alluded to two issues that plagued Indian society at the time; Famine's aftermath and a growing sense of communal discord among the people of India.

Tum Ma Ho Badi Ma

NyaayKeDil Me Deep Jala Do, Soye Hue HrdayKoJaga Do

ChhoteBaalakBilakhRaheHai, NangeBhukheSisakRaheHai
Daulatwaale, DaulatwaaleHulakRaheHai
JulamSitamKaRaajHata Do
Badli Gam KiAisiChhai,DushmanHuaHaiBhaiKaBhai
HinduMuslimSikhIsaai,

Ab Tum Sabko Gale Mila Do

(Oh mother, please light the lamp in the heart of heroes. Wake them up. Small kids are crying as they have nothing to eat and no clothes to wear. Only rich people are happy. Please correct the wrongs. The bad days have come when brothers have become enemies. Please bring all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians together again.)
 Movie:*BadiMaa*(1945)

2. **Recurring Themes:** The study discovers 7 major recurring themes in pre-independence songs after analyzing all 41 samples. As full lyrics of many songs are not available, the overtones have been identified analyzing the text of the *Mukhras* (Chorus) of those sample units. Many songs that contain two distinct themes have been assigned to both the categories. (See the table-1)

Table 1: Recurring Themes Appeared In Songs

| Themes | No Of Times It recurred in Sample texts |
|--|--|
| Waking Call for Freedom Struggle | 21 |
| Representation of Socio-political developments | 10 (Quit India Movement, <i>Swadeshi</i> Movement, Untouchability doctrine, <i>Swaraj</i> , Communal Disharmony, world war-II) |
| Social Reform Messages | 5 |
| Teachings of Mahatma Gandhi | 6 |
| Praise for India and Indians | 25 |
| Texts pertaining to contemporary problems | 8 (Hunger, Malnutrition, adverse effects of famine) |
| Call for QuamiEkta / Hindu Muslim Unity | 6 |

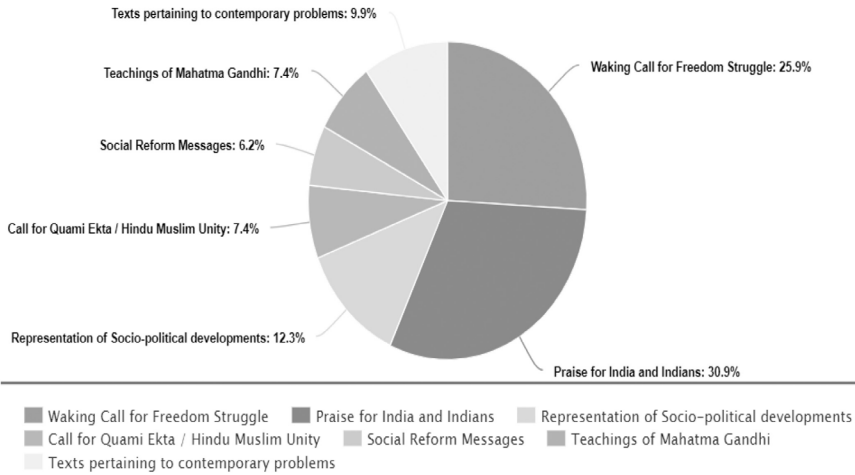


Fig. 1: Graphical Representation of the Recurring Themes Appeared in Pre -Independence Songs

3. Linguistic Signs and Symbols:

Songs from this era frequently used linguistic marks and symbols that were typical of the time. At that time, a dialect of Hindustani known as ‘Hindavi’ was used that contained extensive vocabulary from Hindi and Urdu. The principal linguistic markers that have been utilised to characterise India and Indians in the songs include: *Hind, Bharat Mata, Watan, Hindustan, Desh, Janani, Janmabhumi and Hind Mata.*

- Many songs during that era regarded India as Mother: *‘SaareDeshon Se Nyaari, Pyaari Bharat Mata Hamari’ (KarmaVeer, 1938), ‘Mata Mata, Meri Mata, Bharat Mata’ (Taqdeer, 1943), ‘NaachRahiThi Bharat Mata, AzadiKeAangan Mein’ (Zanjeer, 1947).*
- The messages for the freedom were predominantly addressed to the Indian youth. The commonly used phrases for youth include: *‘Hind keNaujawan’, ‘Hindwasi’, ‘Bharatwasi’, ‘Bharat maaKeSapoot’, ‘Hind KeBachche’.* The term *‘Naujawan’* was the most frequently used linguistic term for the receivers of the text messages embedded in patriotic songs.
- The Religious identities depicted in the songs are chiefly dichotomous: Hindu and Muslims. Many songs also used the term *‘Sikhs’*, but, the word *‘isai’* (Christian) rarely occurred in the text

of the songs. The first ever use of the term 'Isai' was found in the song of a 1944 movie *Bhai* by GhulamHaider- '*Hindu Muslim Sikh Issai, Aapas Mein HainBhaiBhai*'.

- *The messages contained motivational phrases constructed with action verbs with symbolic connotations of a call to wakeup: Utho Hind Ke-Naujawan, Jago Hindustan KeSipahi, JagoJagoBharatwasi, ChalChal Re Naujawan, BadheChalo, Hind Ki Sena, AzaadiKiJung,Swantrat-aKiPukar, Veeron KiSantan.*
- *The Verb "Jaago" with a connotation of 'wake up' call was used most of the times followed by the verb 'Chalo(Let's go)'.*
- *The songs depicted enemy as Dunia Wale, Dushman,Bahari, Atyachari, Aafat, Toofan, Aandhi, JulmSitamKa Raj and Englishtan. Interestingly, no song used the word 'Angrej' to describe the enemy.*
- *'The motherland' was described as a symbol of pride with the phrases like: Bharat Hamara Jag Se Nyara, Jug JugChamke, Vishwa Guru, Taj Himalaya, Ganga Jamuna, Mandir Masjid, Sanatan Bharat, and Hind-Desh.*
- *Adversity was defined through the terms like Ghulami Ki Zanjeer, Lachari, Bhookh, Garibi, Atyachar and Bebas.*

Discussion:

The language signals that express socio-political and cultural situations during British control were clearly identified in all 41 songs included as samples. The views were found to be factual in the case of patriotic songs that acted as an instrument to motivate people to come together for the national cause and filled them with a sense of communion, as Montagu (1979) asserts that the symbols express much deeper meanings than messages communicated among senders and receivers, and they serve a deeper purpose of creating a socially cohesive community.

The findings suggest that the songs reflected contemporary society structures and issues. The symbols were collected from society and then meticulously reconstructed in auditory visual forms to create a shared meaning that the receivers could readily decode, understand, and act upon. The songs were written to fit the social conditions prevalent at that time and to cultivate the message of freedom in the minds of listeners who had already begun to identify themselves as residents of a country under oppressive regime. Because several key themes were repeated over and over with similar language metaphors, imagery, and characters, they encouraged listeners to pay attention to the ideas that these songs conveyed and

aided in the establishment of an agenda. The repeating stimuli were interpreted as the most crucial indications that altered locals' perceptions by establishing in them a shared sense of territorial boundaries and common interests.

The findings achieve the first objective of the study. The songs' sociopolitical and cultural backgrounds were quite similar to the conditions on the ground. Whenever the polity made a new decision or initiative, it was represented in the song sequences. During the 1930s, songs were mostly focused on the social ills prevalent in the contemporary Indian society. The patriotic subject in most of the songs during that period was limited to glorifying Bharat Mata. As the freedom struggle gained traction in the 1940s with the call of the *Swadeshi* movement, the Quit India Movement, World War II ramifications, and terrible times like communal disharmony and hunger scenario, the connotations in the songs changed correspondingly. The observations also fulfill the second research goal by cataloguing the themes that appeared in the songs.

The study's third objective has been accomplished by identifying linguistic indicators and their persuasive effects on people. The value of shared symbols with identical denotative values and connotative statements is emphasized in the conceptual framework theories relevant to the idea of nationalism. Discreet use of prominent words and phrases that formed popular culture of that time aided in completing the task. Despite their symbolic meanings, action verbs like *BhadeChalo*, *Jaago*, *Dikha do*, and *Hara do*, *Door Hato* worked as Iconic symbols. These phrases became synonymous with a wake-up cry for the struggle against English domination and audiences across India identified with them.

Plain but popular adjectives and nouns were used in linear sentence formations to express the meaning of country to the people. The songs became mass-consumable due to the simplicity of the linguistic terms used in them to build the messages. The popular means of mass communication at the time were radio and transistors. They aided in the dissemination of the expression hidden in the audio of these songs to those people also that did not have access to films. The mass appeal of the songs made it possible to sing them during stage performances, community gatherings and to incorporate them in traditional media communications, thus spreading the message extensively. Because of their overuse in cinema in a certain contexts, several of the terms took on strong emotional connotations. Syntax also had a part in infusing specific emotions into the collection of the words. *GhulamiKiZanjeer*, *Hindu-Muslim*, *Madir-Masjid*, *Bharat kaTaj Hima-*

laya, *Hind keSipahi*, and *HumeinChahiyeAzaadi* are instances of terms that were used continuously in the same grammatical forms over time. They transmitted more than just the expressions that were imbedded in them. As a result the songs became instrumental in mobilizing masses for freedom struggle during the British era.

Conclusion

With the foregoing findings and discussion, the study concludes that pre-independence era songs were effective communication tools that not only inspired Indian citizens to fight for independence, but also helped them unite around common social causes, cultures, and identities through the careful use of mass-appealing linguistic symbols. Social learning theory of Albert Bandura explains how both the filmmakers and the audiences learnt from the immediate social environment. Both agenda setting theory and cultivation theory are relevant to the study's goal of determining the songs' effectivity quotient. Billig and Anderson's theories help understand the compositions' 'Nationalism' appeal. These melodies were transformed into feelings that were shared across India, thank to the use of common symbols. Because the songs can be played as standalone units through audio channels such as radio and transistors, they helped mobilise people with no access to cinema as well. The study also looks at the use of symbols in the process of national awakening. Though there are some limitations to the study, such as the lack of lyrics for many songs, making it difficult to gain a deeper understanding of the context and meaning of songs, it concludes, based on the above qualitative data, that cinema songs composed during British rule proved to be excellent communication tools for uniting, awakening, and making people aware of their adversaries, as well as providing solutions to those unfavourable situations.

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