

Diwali

on Celluloid!

Disha Gadhiya walks down memory lane and captures different facets of Diwali being captured on silver screen!



There's no doubt that Diwali has been the most celebrated festival in India. Go to any part of the country and you can witness this carnival of lights in its sheer elegance. The festival is an absolute crowd-puller! So there's no doubt about Bollywood dream merchants cashing on the mass hysteria surrounding this auspicious Hindu celebration as well. Over the years, Hindi cinema has reflected real life and real life, in return has often caught up on what's been shown on the silver screen. Dating back to the 1940s, the trend of featuring Diwali in cinema was started by Jayant Desai with his film aptly named – 'Diwali.' This was followed by the 1956 hit 'Diwali Ki Raat' that starred the heartthrob of yester years' late Talat Mahmood alongwith Gajanan Jagridar's 'Ghar Ghar mein Diwali'!

While these were examples of films that designed their central theme around the festival, the trend didn't carry forward beyond the 50s. As the horizon of film writing expanded, the role of festivals diminished. Today, films insert plots related to a festive event only if their films hit cinema theatres on or around that particular festival season. Nevertheless, there's been a fascinating account of how Diwali has been showcased on the big screen. Strangely enough, when observed carefully, most of the older films have had tragic endings post their Diwali sequences. Here's a sneak peek into how cinema celebrated Diwali over the years while in some, even posing as the major turning points for the film:

Waqt (1965)

Do you remember the classic number 'Ae meri zohra jabeen' from this epic sung by Balraj Sahani for his wife? Well, this famous song that is much rather performed at events celebrating wedding anniversaries was in fact, sung on the day of Diwali in the film, as Balraj Sahni's character celebrates the start of his new business.

As his wife played by Achala Sachdev is busy distributing sweets, she is taken by surprise as her husband starts singing this song for her. And just after the song, an earthquake hits and destroys their lives that separate their three sons. The festival serves as a turning point in the film.

Chirag (1969)

The movie not only gifted its audience the evergreen melody of 'Teri Aakhon ke Sima Duniya mein Rakha Kya Hai!' but also featured a plot altering sequence around the Diwali celebrations.

The leading couple Ajay (Sunil Dutt) & Asha (Asha Parekh) who are very much in love despite being seven years into their marriage celebrate yet another Diwali together. However, Ajay's mom is unhappy with the fact that Asha hasn't had any children yet, and she is worried that their family name will not move forward (How primitive a thought!).

She rudely states her thoughts to Asha on the auspicious day, who then prays to God that her duty towards the family name be fulfilled. But, as accidents always occur in life (or maybe

in movies), suddenly a firecracker that Asha lights tips over, causing sparks to go directly into her beautiful eyes and makes Asha turn blind for life. This climatic scene changes the seam for the film's story thereafter.

Anuraag (1972)

The festival of Diwali gains a lot of importance for the young boy named Rajesh (played by Vinod Mehra) who suffers from cancer in this film. Rajesh who is on his death bed tells his grandfather (Ashok Kumar) that he would like to see this festival of lights one last time before he dies. So the family fulfils the dying child's last wish by celebrating the festival a month before it is due to start. The entire neighbourhood comes together to celebrate Diwali especially created for him, in one of the film's most touching scenes.

Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam (1999)

It is on the celebrated day of Diwali that Salman Khan's character - Samir, a wanna-be singer from Italy arrives at the house of a prominent Indian classical musician living in the Rann of Kutch. Samir has travelled miles across to seek training from this maestro.

Samir is given a humble warm welcome into the house by all the family members and is later introduced to the musician's wife, the second in command for the house. Samir meets her just as she is about to leave for a Diwali

Pooja. But she stops and takes time to talk to him. She informs him that he has come to their house on a very auspicious day of Diwali. But having lived in the West all his life and unfamiliar with the customs and traditions surrounding this Hindu festival, he innocently greets her – Merry Diwali! Hearing this, the musician's wife cracks up, puts her hand forward for a shake and politely corrects his mistake by wishing him 'Happy Diwali.'

Taare Zameen Par (2007)

The latest instance of Diwali celebration is seen in this film but not in the joyous of forms. Ishaan Awasthi's character is spending his last Diwali before going to the boarding school where his parents have forcibly admitted him. As the neighbourhood children are bursting crackers on the building's rooftop, Ishaan is sitting in a secluded corner where the boxes of crackers are kept.

A young boy comes to collect some crackers and sees him sitting in the corner. He teases him for not enjoying Diwali because he is afraid to go to the boarding school. However, innocent Ishaan denies that he's scared. But the boy continues to provoke him leading to which, Ishaan picks up a string of 'sutli' bombs in angst and lights it while holding it in his hand. While doing this, he screams at the boy telling him that he is not afraid of going to the boarding school.

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