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From Reel Journeys to Real Itineraries: Cinematic Mobility and Cultural Geographies in Tikdam

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Abstract:

The role of cinema has expanded beyond narrative entertainment in the present time vis-a vis cultural studies. It an extension of the medium that cultivate travel, giving an opportunity to realize one own self and experiential learning by locating palces. The notion of "travel by cinema" illustrate the dialogic interplay between on-screen and off-screen journeys, whereby spectators traverse not only geographical terrains but also emotional, cultural and ideological landscapes. This paper examines how the film Tikdam enacts this "screen-to-scene" transition, inviting audiences into imaginative and affective mobility. This mobility is a sense of thoughts and vision.

The story of Tikdam, set in the hill town of Sukhtaal, foregrounds the tensions of ecological precarity, rural-urban migration and the possessive attachment to local landscapes, which operate as metonymic spaces of discovery. Drawing on cinematic tourism theory (Gibson, 2006), spatial narrative and cultural geography (Bruno, 2002; Lukinbeal, 2023), this paper expounded that the narrative of the Tikdam eloquent forms of cinematic mobility that subside the remoteness between spectatorship and lived understanding. Such works exemplify how cinema generates affective itineraries (Nanjangud & Reijnders, 2022), permit spectators to chart cultural topographies and even create real itineraries from reel journeys.

Keywords: Cultural Consciousness, Narrative Representation, Identity, Gender and Tradition, Collective Memory.

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Paradigm Shift: The Tourist Gaze vs. The Mindful Observer

	The Tourist Gaze	The Mindful Observer
Core Motivation	Extractive pleasure-seeking	Experiential transformation & self-reflection
Relationship to Nature	A conquered scenic resource	A vast, dictating entity demanding humility (Cronon, 1996)
Economic Focus	Exploitative external forces	Decent work & sustainable local employability
Cultural Interaction	Commodification	Reverence for local indigenous wisdom

Fig 1 Paradigm Shift: The Tourist Gaze vs. The Mindful Observer

INTRODUCTION:

Cinema has always been more than entertainment; it is an archive of cultural memories, a map of imagined geographies, and a mode of experiencing life beyond the limitations of one's immediate environment (Prasad, 1998; Vasudevan, 2010). In the case of Indian cinema, the representation of small towns, particularly ecologically sensitive hill regions, has evolved from mere backdrop to a central element of narrative conflict and cultural inquiry (Gopal & Moorti, 2008). *Tikdam* is a prime example of this trend, where the hill station of Sukhtaal becomes a nexus of local and global anxieties (Sharma, 2023). *Tikdam* is a prime example of this trend, where the hill station of Sukhtaal becomes a nexus of local and global anxieties.

2. Cinematic Mobility and the Affective Itinerary

Cinematic mobility refers to the psychological and physical transition a viewer undergoes as a direct consequence of film viewing (Urry & Larsen, 2011). This process transcends traditional film tourism by focusing on the emotional and cultural geographies embedded in the film, rather than merely the physical locations (Crouch, Jackson, & Thompson, 2005). *Tikdam* activates this mobility by using the landscape to narrate universal themes of home, loss, and environmental change (Sharma, 2023). It helps the audience relocate themselves within the serene atmosphere and reboots their imagination, thereby extending

cinema's role beyond visual pleasure into experiential transformation (Vasudevan, 2010).

3. Screening Ecological Precarity

The central conflict of the film is rooted in the ecological and economic challenges faced by the people of Sukhtaal. The beautiful and serene atmosphere of this small town is under constant threat from rising temperatures and other environmental stresses, which in turn have led to a decline in tourist footfall (Becken & Hay, 2007). Since the local economy is heavily dependent on tourism, these ecological disruptions translate into economic instability, as reflected in the protagonist's loss of employment due to inflationary pressures within the sector (Gössling & Hall, 2006; Sharma, 2023).

4. The Conflict of Development and Nature

Tikdam dramatizes the tension between modern economic progress and the conservation of nature¹⁶. The wish for progress and development often leads to environmental challenges¹⁷. It dramatizes the fragility of tourism-dependent economies, particularly in ecologically sensitive hill regions¹⁸. The film thus resonates with real-

world concerns about balancing development with environmental preservation especially in the tourist prone hilly regions.

5. Highlighting the Small Town of Sukhtaal

Sukhtaal is not merely a backdrop in *Tikdam*; it functions as a character. The landscapes encompassing of forests, hills, lake by which the town gets its name Sukhtaal traditional homes—hold emotional weight. The town's nostalgia, communal bonds, and ecological fragility highlight the richness of small-town India often overshadowed by metropolitan narratives. As Gautam (2024) observed, the cinematography of

Tikdam transforms every frame into a 'postcard,' enticing viewers to imagine themselves within this scenic geography²³. By putting Sukhtaal in prominence, the film creates a cinematic itinerary that viewers might aspires to know-how in reality, embodying the spirit of cinematic tourism²⁴.

6. Humility in Nature

The film fosters a sense of humility in nature by depicting the mountain landscape not as a conquered scenic resource, but as a vast, powerful entity that dictates the lives and pace of the residents (Cronon, 1996). This

aligns with the present-day shift in tourism towards experiences that promote moment-to-moment awareness and a non-judgmental presence with one's surroundings (Moscardo, 2009). The viewer is implicitly encouraged to move from an extractive tourist gaze to one of reverence. Furthermore, studies of children's engagement with tourism interpretation suggest that nature-themed experiences can be highly effective in fostering deep social, emotional, and cognitive engagement with a destination (Ballantyne, Packer, & Falk, 2011). By centering the power of the environment, *Tikdam* sets a foundation for mindful tourism where the traveler acknowledges their small place within the larger ecosystem (Sharma, 2023).

7. Minimising Desires

Tikdam's narrative promotes the theme of **minimizing desires** by focusing on the simple, interconnected, and often resilient lives of the hill town residents. The cinematic itinerary presented here is one of retreat from urban consumerism. This theme is directly relevant to the growing academic interest in **resident's mindfulness**. The turmoil occurs in the life of widower Prakash with the lost of his job when the hotel closes. The reason behind the lack of tourist in the prominent

Sukhtall. Though, he not is willing to leave his land and his family of two children and parents behind but due to lack of job opportunities in his town. He unwillingly decided to take up to Mumbai with the same management. The love of children compels them set out on a mission to stop him and other male members of their hill town for earning. It reveals the mindfulness and reproduces the momentous living for the family bond. It also highlights the modest living is the psychological factor for the leading a meaningful and peaceful life.

8. Decent Work and Economic Growth

The film's investigated of environmental and economic vulnerability provides a powerful case study for the application of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** in the tourism industry. Specifically, *Tikdam* touches upon on the SDG 8 focused on the decent work and economic growth. The necessities of the sustainable employment in the region are evident in the film's plot. The overall growth of the tourism industry in India since 2000 has provided number of gain, including foreign exchange earnings and employment. The film suggest the necessity sustainable policy framework in this hilly region. **The endeavors for SDG 12 that is;**

Responsible Consumption and Production

& SDG 13; Climate Action: As the plot seems to drift into a preachy tone, with school kids led by Samay and Bhanu taking steps to halt deforestation, ban plastic use, and reduce noise pollution, the screenplay shifts and stays grounded. Its greatest strength lies in its simplicity, often reflecting realism. The actions of the schoolchildren feel authentic, never exaggerated. Even the kids determined and resolute to celebrate Diwali without bursting crackers to preserve the temperature. Eventually bring snowfall in the region. There small steps create responsiveness among the people it paved the way that how efforts made in one region can be used as model for the other regions as well.

9. Employability in Hilly Areas

Cinematic representation acts as a strong, non-traditional marketing tool that significantly affects tourism demand (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). By inspiring travel, Tikdam can directly stimulate the local economy in Sukhtaal and other ecologically sensitive hilly regions (Connell, 2012). The tourism sector is widely acknowledged as a significant source of employment and economic development in India (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2022). However, the film implicitly

calls for a specialized approach to employability in mountainous regions (Sharma, 2023). Policy and human resource expansion, including embattled training programs, are necessary to make sure that qualified employees can meet the increasing demand for nature- and experience-based tourism, thereby assist a transition from amateurish labor to specific, accountable tourism services (Baum, 2019)..

10. Nature and Peace as a Luxury

In the film, the tranquility of Sukhtaal is framed not as commonplace, but as a threatened value, positioning **nature and peace as a modern luxury**⁴². The humdrum of in daily life routine paved the ways to find a **meaningful and sustainable travel experiences in the hilly areas**⁴³. The quietude and pristine nature of the mountains, as captured by the film's cinematography, become a sought-after commodity that supports personal fulfillment and psychological well-being⁴⁴. For the city-fatigued viewer, the ability to engage with a natural, peaceful environment becomes the ultimate experiential luxury, directly driving the screen-to-scene travel motivation⁴⁵.

11. Pagan People and Local Wisdom

The film's focus on the local, perhaps "pagan" or indigenous, community highlights the profound value of local wisdom (Berkes, 2012). Their sustainable practices and deep, often spiritual, connection to the land contrast sharply with the exploitative attitude of external economic forces (Escobar, 1996). This local knowledge contributes directly to the place authenticity of the destination, which is a critical factor in enhancing a meaningful tourist experience (Cohen, 1988). Interpretation of local culture—defined as an educational activity aimed at enhancing knowledge of the community and its surroundings—is key to visitor engagement and the promotion of pro-environmental behaviours (Tilden, 1977/2007). *Tikdam* implicitly performs this interpretation, turning local people into the keepers of valuable, visit-worthy wisdom (Sharma, 2023).

12. Tourism as Exploration of the Self and Resources utilization

Ultimately, the cinematic mobility enabled by *Tikdam* reframes tourism as an exploration of the self and of resources (Crouch, 2000). By observing the conflicts and brooding moments of the characters, spectators are buoyant toward self-reflection (MacCannell, 1999). This is embodied in

Prakash's decision to remain in his hometown, prioritizing his familial bond over his professional and skilled aspirations in Mumbai. Such self-exploration is facilitated by a sense of resident mindfulness, where attachment to place becomes a grounding force (Lew, 2011). With the viral story of Sukhtaal's environmentally friendly Diwali celebrations spreading across digital platforms, the town emerges as a sought-after destination for visitors seeking not only serenity but also a cosmic energy rooted in ecological awareness (Sharma, 2023).

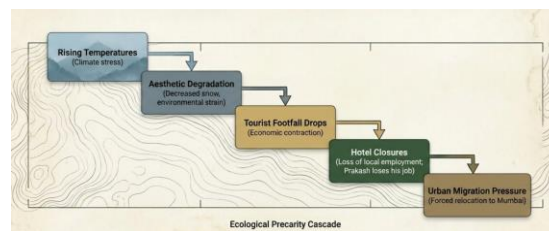


Figure 2 : Ecological Precarity Cascade

13. Conclusion

Tikdam serves as a powerful testament to the dynamics of cinematic mobility, successfully transforming the cultural geography of a small, precarious hill town into an affective itinerary for global viewers (Crouch, Jackson, & Thompson, 2005). The film's narrative goes beyond mere location promotion; it is an appeal for conscious tourism that emphasizes humility in nature, the importance of minimizing materialistic

desires, and the need for sustainable economic development in sensitive ecological zones (Becken & Hay, 2007). By focusing on local wisdom, promoting mindful engagement, and framing peace as the ultimate luxury, *Tikdam* effectively mobilizes travel purpose rooted in self-reflection and accountable resource investigation (MacCannell, 1999; Sharma, 2023). As screen tourism persist to drive economic activity internationally (Connell, 2012), policymakers and destination management organizations must influence and inspired by films like *Tikdam* not simply to attract tourists, but to cultivate a visitation ethic associated with principles of environmental sustainability and community preservation (UNWTO, 2018). The reel journey of Sukhtaal turn out to be a moral and mindful bond for the real itinerary (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2015). It gives a apparition that a developing country city towners can come in the limelight on the Universal ground with the power of technology an fulfilling the sustainable goal practices. It can generate the employability in their own town.

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