

FILMS AND SOCIAL REALITIES

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ABSTRACT

Films are not only a medium for recreation but also are instrumental that can be used to bringout a social change besides being sources of awareness creation. A film can instruct or can bring delight in the process, it can throw open many possibilities for confronting the problem before one or the society at large. As an awareness creating medium films can serve different purposes in the same way or the same issue differently. The thought process and perceptions varying every film allows space for ironies absurdities, ambiguities, exaggerations etc. Depending however on the plots. All these may be part of the film making process which deals with signs and significations in the semiotic translation. In this background an attempt is made to highlight the imbalances in the portrayal of the issues and personae invloved in creating film.

KEYWORDS : Film , Recreation, Social Realities, Semiotic translation

Cinema is the opium of the masses in darkened auditoriums, people find temporary retreat. Life is forgotten and fantasy takes over . But fantasies are never value-free. They slyly transmit the creator's value system to the receiver.To that extent , films serve as a frontline where ideas constantly compete for primary. In India in the post colonial era or post independence era, the government has always insisted on the creators to promote as create awareness about social change. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1954,in response to the petition filed by women in Delhi to curb the evil influences of the films , observed ,“ Films have an essential part to play in the modern world. At the same time, it is true that any powerful medium like motion pictures has a good effect and a bad effect . We have to take care, therefore that we emphasise the good aspects of it”

Films in general are a tapestry of emotions and they serve as a part of entertainment . Cinema is the opium of the masses in this background this article tries to look at films as a reflector of social realities for films as a social media have the purpose to instruct refine, recreate. reform the social masses. This paper also attempts to showcase that films pay attention to the issues of the day. Besides analysing the contributions made by eminent film creators and producers with regard to projecting the role of films in general. If we trace the hstory of films and movie creations in India we cannot forget the father of Indian movies *Shri Dada Saheb Phalke* in whose name an award has been instituted to recognize the contributions of film producers and creators. The beginning included the creation of “*Silent Movies*” that focus on portraying mythological characters and personages in legends and epics, besides focussing on such characters that contributed to the social well being and portrayed the issues of society. The themes in general

were society centric during this era the emotional and intellectual needs of the society were also addressed. Films in the regional languages became trend setters, they too exhibited the issues such as martial disharmony, gender abuse, socio-political issues, ideological differences, discriminations of all kinds and alike. Over a period of time the focus of film industry changed.

In the present time, post liberation era feel good cinema has become the order with a focus however on the earlier issues with an addition to addressing the existential problems in the background of the changes in the lifestyles and realistic portrayal of the scenario. In order to give films an aura of reality and fantasy latter day movies included dance sequences and plotline in which young lovers negotiate their cultural differences and contrasting family ideals. Social activists have also become film creators in which they could present their socio political ideologies within the frame work of family as a fulcrum of the plot. Films in the recent days have become a tool in the hands of such activist to project their right or leftwing ideologies. Yet the portrayal of women in the present day movies has not changed, the women is portrayed either as a victim of patriarchy or belief systems that are directed by the culture, defined by scriptures and suppressed by the supremacy of the elite or the bourgeois or the zamindar in the locale.

There is very little of it to deconstruct the models defined both by culture and scriptures besides traditional stereo types very few creators have taken sides, for they happen to be impulsive and have taken the role of social activist who could speak out and they are those who have got engaged in negotiating with real and social issues to speak aloud. Other have a neutral stand and thus contributing to the making of a neutral cinema which has also neutered cinema. The question thus is ***“Do films portray reality in its stark nakedness?”***. An analysis of the well known Indian movies both in Hindi and the regional languages has been made in order to find an answer to the question above and incidentally to make observations above how films are serving the purpose for which they are created. The purposes of which films were created include mostly creating an awareness of the issues and evil practices that haunt the society and making the society confront conflicts and thus its existence a critical one. Existential crisis arise because of the inability of the members to find an identity in the society, a feeling of loss and trauma cost by social political and cultural practices and abuses meted out by the other members of the society.

Trauma can be from within and the ecology present outside which has quiet a lot of social disharmony, an unwillingness to adapt oneself to the changes and other common imbalances. Revolution in the Film Industry with the advent of technology Sound, Music, Choreography and Technological Special effects paved the way to bring the Indian cinema onto a global platform. Films are on Social Themes and Issues. for example the Kannada movie **“Bangarada Manushya” (Golden Man-1972)** an evergreen masterpiece, describes as modern Bhagavad Gita, the theme of duty and its supremacy over desire, and offers solution to the economical crisis that people face today. This film exhibits modern agricultural practices, rural development and also the hardship of farmers and their toil in order to make ends meet. This film also depicts how gradually the traditional lifestyle is being westernized.

“Muthina Hara” (String of Pearls-1990) another film, meaning a string of pearls, stands for what the soldier promises his wife; every year he buys a pearl and gives it to her with the hope that one day she can make a necklace of it. She does get her pearl necklace complete only to have it broken at soldier's funeral. The film is a Saga depicting **World War II** with a larger dimension speaks about the devastation due to War. Imperialists's greed lands up in war, victims are portrayed as innocence the message running throughout the film is **say no to war** but the message through a couple young lovers sacrificing the individuals in war and thus resulting in the suffering of the family. In the process of portraying reality, it has to be noted that creator's have failed to do poetic justice and this failure is one of the compromises that film makers have to make in their attempt to make films as a medium that showcase only realities.

Director ManiRatnam in his Tamil Film “**Anjali**”(2007) deals with a different problem :” **“Cognitive Mental Disorder”** . It is the story of a child, who is believed to be dead but physically alive but suffering from Cognitive disorder, facing many challenges and undergoing emotional trauma as experienced by her mother Chitra . The child though suffering from this disorder is portrayed as being undaunted by trauma of prognosis. However the mother exhibits her maternal love and take the child home and shows all sympathy love affection and care required for the child.Yet he Child is not accepted by anyone in her environment.in the course of the movie, we find the child becoming a darling of the society around.The director, in the film shows the child as being dead and showcases the impact of the child’s death on her sister causing and adding to the existing trauma witnessed by everyone when the child was alive even in death the child is alone but portrayed as living some traces of a need to be compassionate and sympathetic to people with genetic and acquired disorders, which again a social reality.

“ **Bharath Ane Nenu**” (2018) by Director Koratala - Sivam a phenomenal movie in Telugu had an impact on the current governance. The Union Government of India has just then passed the Motor Vehicles Act -2019 in the Parliament which allows the penalty on the violation of traffic rules. Ministry of Road Transportation and Highways was inspired by the movie. In the regional films **Mother India,(1957)** - it is about the widowed mother who brings up hertwo children by overcoming the hurdles in life and it underlines the need for a reversal of gender roles. **Taare Zameen Par(2007)**- it is about dyslexia, which a student suffers, and is not understood by others

In the popular Hindi film “**English Vinglish**”(2012) directed by Gouri Shide, delves into the ordeals of linguistic barriers in personal as well as social lives and the freedom gained by education and independence.This film shatters the shackles of the conformity imposed on Indian Tradition women as a homemaker.

In another much acclaimed film “**SlumDog Millionaire**”(2008)s an adaptation narrates the story of a 18year old Jamal Malik from Juhu Slum of Mumbai, accused of cheating on the grounds that no street kid could possibly know the answers

. “**The Great Indian Kitchen**”(2021) is about the great indian tradition how the newly married girl moves to the in-law house adapts to their customs and makes it her home.The ways of heroine cope with the seemingly endless domestic chores , difference of opinion and unfamiliar traditions is the subject of the movie.

The potentials of unemployed graduate waiting to scale up the social ladder despite all odds is the plot outline we find in a popular tamil film “ **VelaiillaPattadhari**”(2014-**unemployed graduate**), it hints at booming **IT Industry** in present context.

From the above illustrations one can understand how films have become highly effective more meaningful ‘**Social Discourse**’ mode focussing on the need for social inclusivity of the marginalised into the mainstream wherein we find the powerful “**haves**” , the mighty the patriarchy the social upper caste and the non-marginalised still calling the shots. In midst of a powerful ruling class the moneyed have the say with a mindset that thwarts the progress of the marginalised that thus leaving them unheard. Such creator of films who involved in the awareness creation endeavour in the understanding have been found to make some compromises like including an unwanted Dance sequence songs and so on. To cater to the taste of the rest of the audience . Even now films are mere a source of entertainment . Such inclusions are the factors that affect the creators mission of changing the mindset and of preparing the society to accept and include the subalterns and hear their voices which have been hitherto unheard . Films of the present decade too portray social realities using a lot of devices and techniques that make inclusions unreal.

Films that are educative in their purpose too have to undergo this operational need, for films of the present day do have a commercial go. True to their dictum the opposites co-exist, the binaries are there to make the non-binaries meaningless. Film industry or creators of films also allow space for the co-existence of both the real and unreal. Perhaps for a cause that is more valuable, to bring cheers to all. Films are thus those vehicles that transport the real and unreal to a social platform for the society to accept or reject depending on the emotional intelligence, emotional quotient and the need of the hour in the society. Portrayal of the real with the inclusion of the unreal has thus become the format of any film making process.

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