

Emergence of Alternate Cinema: With reference to Bharathiraja's Films

R. Geetha¹ • T. Varalakshmi²

¹Department of English, Ashoka Bhavan, Jnanabharathi Campus, Bangalore University

²Department of English, Govt. First Grade College, KGF, Karnataka

This Research article focuses on the idea that film/cinema as a mass media is one of the most influential art form.

Is Cinema an art? This complex question is not applicable to other art forms. When we watch a cinema it is not the same experience of looking at a painting that is a conflict between you and the image and between the images itself, good film is always a war/conflict between images or thoughts.

In any country the value of an art form depends on four factors

1. The Cultural and Historical background
2. Freedom of Expression
3. Encouraging Government policies
4. The Platform for exhibition

The researcher is of the view that films in India need to be analysed from a cultural approach because the fabric of the society is made of different cultures and ethnicities, it is also necessary to bring films into academic curriculum because the basic of growth and development of a social system is through proper education, unless education provides a relation between the text and the reader, it is impossible to make meaningful inferences. The paper tries to draw attention to sociological and historical criticism, this approach interprets cinema as a reflection of the society creating beliefs and ways of thinking that are shared by the members of culture.

S.Sarkar examines the difference between Parallel Cinema and Middle Cinema and how the

rebellious women can bring about social change in Indian Society, Women are framed by family, culture and society.

Hungarian film critic: Bela Balazs said “The question of educating the public to a better and more critical appreciation of film is a question of the mental health of a nation”.

Lauzar and Dozler suggest that the way some characters are depicted in a show can represent their political and social views at that point.

In Saheli: Its journey of Befriending and Helping Women, Priyanka Mittal writes “I was shocked to know that India can only boast of having a total female population higher than the total population of various other countries, but cannot boast about their treatment”, from female infanticide to child labour to domestic violence and sexual abuses the list gets longer.

The answer to the question, why should we worry/bother about women portrayal in cinemas?

The researcher believes that the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake reflects humanity’s highest calling to know more for greater understanding and a richer life of the mind.

Films that are able to accomplish such artistic facts are deserving of our praise and admiration for uniquely utilizing the tools of its medium to tell a compelling important story.

The Emergence of Alternate Cinema.

This journey from experimenting films and their roles in Independence struggle, from borrowed creative expression to its own language broke the stigma that films were meant only for male audience and most of the films were the product of Hero and political circumstances, it aimed to preserve Indian culture and morale.

During the backdrop of II World War the focus of the films was shifted from Nation to realities of life like poverty, unemployment, caste, feudalism etc, this created a rift between the English speaking Indians and others in the country because the themes in the regional cinemas were the sufferings of common man.

It was an emotional appeal to the masses creating a space for thinking to examine the contradiction of the world. Cinema is a path of modern education, as it is a participation in democratic dialectics.

Parallel Cinema: (Late 60’s & 70’s) the prominent film makers of this form of cinema looked up

to Satyajit Ray for immediate influence. Who has been greatly influenced by third wave cinema. The French New wave and Italian Neo-realism had influenced other film makers like Bimal Roy, Ritwik Ghatak, Sehgal, as well and other regional film makers from other parts of India changed the cinematic grammar and idioms, later NFDC encouraged hundreds of such films in more than 20 languages.

The purpose of this research article is to analyse the selected films of Bharathiraja and draw inferences from each of the scenes in which the themes are highlighted.

Bharathiraja popularly known as 'Iyakunar Iyamam' is an indigenous film maker who is famous as a film director and a political thinker as well. He worked under great directors like T.R.Sundaram, Puttanna Kanagal and Many others who were famous for their directoral techniques.

Hailing from Allinagar of Theni district in Tamilnadu a southern state of India Bharathiraja named Chinnaswamy entered as director in his debut film 16 Vayadhinile which was a super hit. The success was overwhelming, his consecutive village based cinemas were successful and he was considered the director of this form of cinemas, later he succeeded in making urban oriented psycho-thriller Sigappu Rojaakal proving his versatility and thereby shunning his critics wrong.

His skill lies in bringing real and reel as close as possible, he is known for the skill of projecting the life style of villages, he is a trend setter for the younger generation of directors who could understand the indigenous culture and importance of its implication, he has praised director Paa, Ranjith for his indigenity and his admirations are for many other young upcoming directors who deal with the theme of realities of life. His attempt of out of studio shoots, shoots on realistic locations, no or less makeup and projecting Kamal Hassan in weird costumes were unexpected initiatives of those times.

Vedam Pudhidhu – the trio combination of Bharathiraja, Vairamuthu the lyricist and Ilayaraja the Musical Maestro was a feast to the audience. Starring Sathyaraj and Amala this Tamil Movie directed by Bharathiraja is a strong critique of brahminical caste system and its hypocrisies.

Plot: Baluthevar and his wife belong to a land owning warrior caste called thevar held supposed by lower in the vedic caste system live in a village, their son Raja returns from the city after long education he falls in love with vaidhehi daughter of a priest belonging to the brahminical caste

the Shastri (Priest) discovers the love between Raja and Vaidehi and tries to marry her off to another man of his caste.

Vaidehi fakes her suicide escapes from the scheduled marriage and takes shelter in a house that she happens to pass by, in a heated conversation between Raja the Hero and the Vaidehi's father who accuses him of his daughter's death. During the discussion they slip and fall into the dangerous gushing waterfall and die.

Vaidehi's younger brother Sankar who is devoutly studying the Vedas is left an orphan, no one from his caste takes care of him, hence he is left wandering in the streets for food and shelter, Balu Thevar, adopts him and adjusts his own life style according to wishes of the young boy.

At a point Balu Thevar tells the boy that it is not important to learn Vedas and worry about caste. The boy responds and points out at the hypocrisy of Balu Thevar himself because his name is Balu but Thevar is the Caste which he belongs to, realising the reality to the merit in the argument he abandons all his weapons the symbol of warriors, later in a conspired fight Balu in the ensuing scuffle is stabbed to death. Sankar is disappointed and disgusted by the social setup gives up the Brahmin beliefs by symbolically emerging the sacred thread in the nearby stream.

In the 35 National film awards it was awarded the best film of an other social issues in the 35 film awards the film was awarded Best Tamil film for Bharathiraja, Best Tamil Actor for Satyaraj and Best Tamil director Bharathi raaja

Karuthamma-the very name sounds like an Indian village belle whose story forms the crux, even after quarter century this film is relevant with the theme of gender sensitivity, it's a milestone in the annals of Tamil cinema addressing the heinous act of female foeticide prevalent in Tamil Nadu during that time, the after effect of this cinema was notable that there was a drastic decrease in the act of female foeticide.

Plot: the couple in the village expecting a son after two girl children is once again disappointed, therefore the father Mookaiyan orders the midwife to kill the new born girl by feeding poisonous cactus extract but the infant is rescued and adopted by a school teacher who brings up this girl as a doctor who later returns to the village and at a point realisation that Mookaiyan is her father treats him of paralysis elsewhere Karuthamma the protagonist of the film is typical village who undergoes all hardships of being a woman her caring and generous nature attracts Raja the

doctor who visits the village, karuthamma sacrifices her life to get justice for her sister lands in jail leaving the audience in completely emotional the music by A.R.Rehman is a feast to listen and the lyrics of Vairamuthu is extraordinary .

This award winning cinema has successfully highlighted the issue of female foeticide which created mass awareness on this evil practice. the government of Tamilnadu initiated several new policies to prevent and later the law across the country banning gender identification of foetus has saved millions of girls

References:

Chakravarthy.S.Sunitha, National Identity in Indian Films.

Dissanayake, Wimal, Indian Popular Cinema.

Madhavaprasad.M, Ideology of Hindi Films.

Misha, Vijay, Bollywood Cinema (2001)

Pendakar, Manjunath, Indian Popular Cinema: Industry, Ideology, Consciences.

Vridi, Jyothika, The cinematic imagination: Indian Popular Films as Social Theory.