

Cinematic Vision: *Ek Doctor Ki Maut*

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Abstract

Movies in India have been a source of popular entertainment. They can be categorized into mainstream or commercial movies and parallel or art movies. Parallel cinema as a film movement in Indian cinema started in the 1950s as an alternative to the mainstream commercial cinema, especially popular Hindi cinema, Bollywood. The movie *Ek Doctor Ki Maut* is a powerful art movie based on a story *Abhimanyu* by Ramapada Chowdhury. This story is about an Indian physician who pioneered the IVF treatment but is harassed and reprimanded by his peers and colleagues. The movie brings out the pain and frustration of a man who has worked hard to find the cure of leprosy but he finds that all his efforts were useless. All his dreams, hopes and aspirations are dashed to the ground. Parallel movies are not commercially successful as the traditional Bollywood formula of dance, song and fanfare is lacking in them. They are representative of elite class. They are funded independently and made outside the realm of major official studio systems. They work on filmmaker's choice, his own personal cinematic and artistic vision. The acting prowess of actors and actresses in art films and parallel cinema has taken them on to a higher pedestal and established their reputation. The filmmakers be it commercial cinema or art movies have showcased their talents and used this medium to highlight the prevalent issues. This has won them many awards and international fame and recognition. They are in relevance to the socio-political situation in India as they have the power to educate and bring out a change in Indian society. The present paper is an effort to highlight the problems faced by people in India when they make an effort to do something different. The paper also focuses on the systems working in Indian society and how cinema has worked into the lives of people helping to bring out a change of opinion and mindset of people.

Key-words : Catharsis, Bollywood, Literature, Novel, Drama, Modernization

Introduction,

Movies are a source of popular entertainment and a part of popular culture. Watching a film can be a cathartic experience. People laugh, weep, feel sad, enjoy and share their experiences along with the various characters portrayed in the movie. As they begin watching movies they are delivered into a new world, new arena which is imaginative. People form their opinions and ideas pertaining to various issues tackled in the movies. It helps in socialization as people freely converse about certain topics raised. But, making of the films is a concentrated effort. Many actors, directors, technicians, musicians, choreographers form a part of the fraternity. Movies are a fruit of team work. Some of the movies are adapted from literature- novel or drama. Others are inspired by real life heroes or some imaginative characters. People are taken to different locations of the world via these movies which is otherwise not possible in reality. They watch beautiful places and monuments of different cities. We get a peep inside the human world and actions and come to a better understanding of the world.

India is well known for its commercial cinema which is known as Bollywood. Apart from mainstream or commercial cinema, there is also an art cinema, which is known as New Indian cinema. The movies are also called as art movies in contrast to mainstream commercial cinema. “Art film is the result of filmmaking which is typically a serious, independent film aimed at a niche market, rather than a mass market audience. [Omar Ahmad] The parallel cinema or art cinema is usually funded by government aided mechanism. Art movies have a strong sense and expression of authorial voice of the director. Commercial movies are usually funded by big banners. Movies focus on certain concepts and theory, dreams and ideas of different protagonists

rather than a clear cut storyline. These movies are shown at various film festivals inside or outside the country. Art movies or Parallel cinema fall into the category of High culture as they are mostly watched and appreciated by the elite class.

Major names associated with cinema include Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal, G. Aravindan etc. Satyajit Ray was the most flourishing of the art directors. His films were played to the audiences in the big cities or in the international market. In South India, art cinema was favorably supported in Kerala. Many other states followed the suit and likewise presented art films on myriad themes. The line between mainstream cinema and parallel cinema has been blurring as mainstream filmmakers are continuously working on and experimenting with new ideas and thoughts. Some of the popular films are Sholay, Zanzeer, Don, Devdas etc. Some of the well known art films include Pather Panchali, Salam Bombay, Chandni Bar etc.

The essential difference between mainstream or popular cinema and art movies is that popular form is basically concerned with the entertainment of its audience. Hindi cinema or Bollywood has a mass appeal. They weave a world of fantasy before the viewers and the audience is mesmerized by them. Parallel cinema has the power to drive change in society, throwing light on the harsh realities of life. They focus on social critique. Many of the films are based on corruption, feudalism, nepotism, patriarchy, religious intolerance etc. Then, there are issues of modernization, class warfare, politics etc. This form rejects the use of regular dance and song feature which are quite common in popular movies. There are no fight sequences, employment of method actors, use of low colour palettes, close and lengthy shots, experiments in editing method, formalist approach to composition techniques.

Discussion

The movie analysed here is 'Ek Doctor Ki Maut'. The movie is an award winning film produced in 1990 by the famous Bengali director Tapan Sinha. The film is loosely based on the life of doctor Subhash Mukhopadhyay, an Indian physician who pioneered the in vitro fertilization treatment just around the same time when another scientist Dr. Robert Edwards was conducting the same type of experiments in England. He was the first Indian physician to perform in vitro fertilization but due to the callous attitude of the government and his colleagues, he was not given his due. He had to face a lot of hardships to prove his point. He was denied permission to share his views on the international platform. Out of frustration and helplessness he committed suicide. However, all his efforts were commemorated after his death. He was given the honour of the first Indian Doctor who performed in vitro fertilization but the man who could have discovered many more new things and would have made a difference was lost and gone.

The plot revolves around the life of Dr. Dipankar Roy, who discovers a vaccine for leprosy. He has undergone the years of hard work and patience to achieve something new but his real struggle begins when he has successfully invented the vaccine. The film gives a true account of the struggles of an ordinary doctor who has done something extra ordinary but fails to get the due credit and honour for his discovery.

Dr. Roy is a government servant who has discovered the vaccine of leprosy. He has worked after his office hours, setting up his own lab and working in small private labs of some of his friends. The news is flashed and overnight, an insignificant junior doctor receives the

international recognition. This is not digested by his seniors and this leads to professional jealousy, rivalry and abuse of power and bureaucratic negligence which destroys Dr. Roy to the core. With no one to support him except his wife, he has to fight his way out of the system to get his work to be noticed at least. During his research work he had also observed that his vaccine can play a crucial role in curing female infertility. This news is printed in the paper by his journalist friend who tries to help his doctor friend but the situation becomes out of control. He is summoned by higher authorities but it is just their way to humiliate him. He is reprimanded by the Health Secretary and others. The leading gynecologists start protesting against Dr. Roy's statement. They believe that the talk of infertility is their job and Dr. Roy is meddling in their affair. Dr. Roy is not able to understand the cause of their protest as he believes that it is the task of microbiologists and cellular biologists to cross check his study whether it can prove beneficial or otherwise. They can only review it and gynecologists should not find any problems with the issue. The protest against Dr. Roy grows strong but he had no choice as he could not leave his job. He had taken loans for his research work and he has to repay those loans.

He gets invited for a talk by medical students but they are not ready to accept Dr Roy's ideas and theory. They make fun of him. Roy tries to convince them as he maintains "Science does not depend on anybody's belief or disbelief; it asks for proof. It's all about truth." [wikipedia] Dr. Roy has to face a lot of humiliation from the students.

Dr. Roy is unable to bear the stress anymore. He suffers a mild heart attack but he refuses to go to the hospital. He is ably supported by his wife and a few others like Dr. Kundu , his mentor and Amulya , his journalist friend who stand by him through all thick and thin but his harassment

continues. He is transferred to a remote village in Bengal so that he cannot carry on with his research work or submit his papers.

Dr. Kundu, Roy's mentor understands the situation and is uncomfortable with the news item about the article mentioning about infertility. He says, "Dipankar's work is about leprosy." [wikipedia] Unnecessary reference to infertility has distracted people from the main subject or issue i.e. leprosy. His experience and knowledge of the world makes him tell that the situation has become explosive and unless Roy completes his papers and sends them for further scrutiny, there is no reprieve for him. He makes an effort to send a draft of Dr. Roy's work to an organization called John Anderson Foundation. He knows that in a country like India, no one would accept Roy's work or the labour he had put in unless it bears the stamp of west or approved by a foreign authority. So, he does his best as per the demand of time. He asks Roy to leave everything and concentrate on writing of papers. He takes to task Roy and his friends when he realizes that Roy has given a lecture to medical students. He makes Roy understand that first the news was leaked to newspapers, then BBC, and then this lecture fiasco will all provide him negative publicity. The need of the hour was to complete the research otherwise all his labour was useless and all publicity will kill his work.

Then, there is a ray of hope as Dr. Emily from John Anderson Foundation comes to meet Dr. Roy in the village where he is posted, facing all sorts of bureaucratic hassles. She goes through Dr. Roy's work and is impressed by his explorations and ideas. She again presses the need to complete his papers and send them across to her organization. But, it is difficult for Roy to complete his papers as he living alone in the village and there is no laboratory. Only his wife

comes to meet him during the weekends. He feels helpless and frustrated shunned down by his friends and colleagues.

Then a gynecologist friend Arijit and bunch of other doctors come to his aid and put pressure on the director of Health to revert Dr. Roy's transfer. The decision is taken and Dr. Roy comes back to his place. He hopes that now he would be able to complete his work and publish his papers but something else is destined for him. The vaccine for leprosy is discovered by some other scientist and Dr. Roy is shattered and devastated. Towards the end, some solace is there for Dr. Roy as he gets an invitation from the John Anderson Foundation for working with other eminent scientists for other diseases with a vision towards future. He is at peace that all his labour was after all not in vain. He accepts the invitation to carry forward his research.

The story has been narrated in the documentary style. It reflects the passion of a researcher in finding the cure of leprosy. He has the unquenchable thirst for knowledge wherein he tries to push himself and explore the various prospects of the disease. It deals with terms and terminologies of medical field and discusses the issue from a scientific angle. The doctor stands up for what he has dedicated his whole life to- his research. By the end of the movie, one becomes to feel the pain and anguish of the doctor, his frustrations; his struggles seem to be very much our own. Pankaj Kapoor and Shabana Azmi have given sterling performances in their respective roles ably reflecting the pain of the doctor and his wife.

Conclusion

Thus, cinema through these kind of movies project the real and grim picture of the society in India. Though, art movies are not commercially successful but they project and spread out an

honest message for their audience. An individual is only concerned with strengthening its own position and reputation at the cost of life of others. There is loss of morality and vision. It questions why any talented individual has to face insult and humiliation in its own country despite his best efforts to benefit the society. Why one need to validate the work from the western authority as if they are the masters who have all the knowledge of the world? Why do we not appreciate whatever we have with us? Why do we one has to showcase his talents? Whosoever is a genuine and good person needs to be appreciated. Thus, cinema gives an effective critique of the society helping to unravel the various social patterns prevalent in Indian society. It questions the significant ideologies in the society and also makes one understand how to face the disturbing elements circulating in the society.

Films inspire and strengthen the age old prevalent ideas about the victory of good over evil. Side by side they promote the ideas of struggle and hard work in an effort to reach the top. They inspire people to be experimental, determined, bold, clear about their ideas and perspectives. Now, it is not the question of the elite or the masses, it is the struggle of the individuals which matters.

Besides dealing with the positive aspects of the movies the negative elements cannot be negated. One cannot ignore that movies promote violence. Kids who are watching movies have no sense of direction as to what is presented to them. Movies present new ways of torture and physical abuse which inspire these young minds to indulge in violent activities. They are made for commercial purposes, they profess adultery. People do not care about public morality. They promote disrespect for law and order by aggravating criminal tendencies in people by reflecting violent acts against the guardians of law. They reflect larger than life characters. At times they

portray certain subjects or themes which are far from real. They lead to wastage of time and money, lead to addiction, present an imaginative world before the audience. They instigate people to form an opinion based on certain aspects of community. They may also encourage racism, biasness and other anti social activities which can hinder the peace of nation. One must also accept only a part of real life is reflected in the movies. An art form in order to be meaningful and impressionistic has to be truthful and honest in its representation. It should not hurt the sentiments of community. It is a source of income and revenue for the state and the people. It gives employment to a series of professionals associated with the film world- technicians, designers, makeup artists etc. The writers and the novelists also get the royalty as a reward for their writing, as their works are transformed into movies. Various struggling artists and actors achieve stardom through their efforts.

Thus, it can be said that making films is a challenging task which demands a creative effort by so many professionals. Some movies do not do good business on the commercial front as they are not entertaining. There are people who have focused minds to appreciate the movies with a strong message. They love the performances of actors and appreciate the content. Movies help us to change our perception of life, one tends to feel the struggles described are very much our own. At times one feels handicapped with the situation, movies act as a therapeutic medicine to provide a diversion from our monotonous lifestyle. They encourage people to follow the right path and try to root out the evils of the society. They give a direction to our lives to bring out changes for good with a deep hidden message just as the movie *Ek Doctor Ki Maut* projects i.e. to look for positivity in ones life even though one has lost all hope. One cannot predict what lies in store for him or her. If the change is for betterment, the negative tendencies can be slightly

ignored. Thus, cinema acts as a social critique projecting the ills of the society and acting as the mentor which will help individuals to rectify their mistakes for a glorious future besides providing entertainment.

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