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Editor's Note

'Post-factual' media era is characterised with plethora of unregulated opinions, pouring around, competing for public attention. But in general, art in this era has moved beyond content, form and associated creative processes to the expanse of emotions that it can arouse. Cinema too is currently addressing a fundamental shift in spectator habits, with digital platforms altering the nature of screening spaces and viewing patterns. We, at CJR, find this the precise time to come up with an issue dedicated to the biggest entertainment medium of the recent centuries.

The 'home universe' of today has made "everyone" a critic. This new-age reviewer, habitualised and largely concerned with long-winded viewing of quality cinema, demands no mandatory standards than opinionating. But theories about films and contexts drawn from the decades of cinematic practice must be made crucial to every such understanding of cinema. Such depths of readings and references, accessible by correlating assorted meanings, offer opportunities to examine cinematic conventions afresh. However in this digital age, meaning making amidst hyper linked convergences demand a different order which is forthcoming.

At a time, when criticism is gradually ejected from an ever-shrinking corpus of traditional news outputs, questions of value and hierarchy have become more central. The online universe, with bloggers and content providers on an attempt to consistently compete for appreciation, eyes for gendered and radicalized ways. This is quite unlike the broader standards that was set by traditional cinema studies. Many expressions like 'hyper reality', 'post truth' 'digital humanities' and 'representations' are constantly played up in film writing, though with little disciplinary understandings of the realm.

Keeping an accurate tally of the changes that we observe throughout the field is quite difficult to fathom and record. Perhaps that isn't what matters most. This narrowing of criticism with non-recognition of alternate stories or narratives is the one that may have more serious implications on the well-being of cinema and related digital visual media. Film criticism can definitely provide an authority here, when it is grounded in expertise, history, and analysis, and as an alternative to the regime of mere opinion.

This edition of CJR seeks to represent the field at its brightest and broadest ways. As we search rich inputs in these pages from new voices and wise elders, we still persist in believing that film criticism is more necessary than ever before.

In This Issue

Vidhu Mary John with Mohammadali Nelliyullathil turn their attention to analyse the manner in which the art and craft of cinema reconstructed or deconstructed the World War II to further the American political agenda among its citizens and soldiers, against the backdrop of instructions issued by the government. The paper examines the manner in which political connotations were ingested into the films for a cosmopolitan appeal.

A V Gopakumar's long study focuses on the cinematic techniques employed by the internationally acclaimed Indian director, TV Chandran in signifying the "Concept of Alienation ". The author states that these intelligent cinematic interventions have also given the director the creative flexibility to bring an expressive effect on the protagonists in the films and an enigmatic process of immersive feel to active viewers through positioning them as an objective witness to the character's alienation.

Rajesh James, sheds light on how Malayalam cinema has discursively formulated and circulated certain ideologies by which communities such as Muslims and Dalits are stereotyped and (mis)represented in the context of the emergent communal divides, cultural exchanges and social reorganizations happening in Kerala. Using theoretical inputs from Ella Shohat and Sherene Razack, the paper explores dominant ideologies such as Caste, Hindutva and Islamophobia in films and the consequent victimisations of the marginalised and the 'precarious identities' in the Malayalam filmscape.

P Muhammad Afzal fastens a provocative lens onto the cultural and political debates that the Malayalam film Mukhamukham (dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1984) engendered in the Kerala public sphere to explore the relationship between cinema and politics in Kerala in the 1980s. The paper offers a detailed account of the various positions that the critics took towards the film, and disputes its status within the question of cinematic realism as central in these debates.

M P Mohammed Shareef conducts an intriguing analysis about the nuances of the debates around the "first" Malayalam cinema Vigathakumaran. Considering the dynamics of the movie 'Celluloid', which cinematically recreated the making of 'Vigathakumaran' as an important text, the paper sets the ground for the discussion thereby unravelling the peculiar situation that the first ever production attempt of a Malayalam cinema witnessed.

Lakshmi Pradeep, meanwhile, focuses on Bengali feature film maker Ritwik Ghatak's 'Titash Ekti Nadir Naam' , (A river called Titash,1973) which stands out for his soul searching cinema. Vimal Krishnan turns his attention to a visual art project, which narrated the popular legend of Perumthachan's temple pond through the new medium of virtual reality (VR), which explored the possibility of refiguring a mythical space as a three-dimensional immersive virtual reality simulation. Such an adaptation produces a unique experience of a mediated narrative wherein auditory, visual and embodied modes of reception generate the phenomenon of "presence."

Vidya R. surveys the recent Disney animation movies in the context of myth and Jungian archetypes focusing on the archetype, 'The Mother'. She finds that although most of the archetypes as stated by Jung is present in the films, the majorly present archetype is 'the mother.' Abdul Muneer V conducts an analysis of five films produced by Samira, examining their themes, plots, filmmaking style, treatment, and storytelling ability, employing the qualitative visual analysis method. The findings of the study demonstrate that Samira utilizes her films to explore gender dynamics, particularly concerning education and empowerment. Moreover, the investigation concludes that her frames and shots exhibit an inherent authenticity, with limited reliance on cinematic gimmicks. Additionally, the incorporation of metaphors and symbols emerges as a distinctive characteristic of her filmmaking style.

Cinema, though habitually side-lined of major themes, focus, and subject matter, is in a state of vast transition. The articles listed here are all saturated with a mix of nostalgia and concern about it and looks to appreciate the silver wherever it is found. Perhaps it's time to change the lens, to look for more silver linings.

Dr. Sudheer Shah Salam

Issue Editor

Questioning the imagined Identities: (Re)thinking Stereotypes in 'Usthad Hotel' and 'Thattathin Marayathu'

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Abstract

It is high time to revisit how Malayalam cinema has discursively formulated and circulated certain ideologies by which communities such as Muslims and Dalits are stereotyped and (mis)represented in the context of the emergent communal divides, cultural exchanges and social reorganizations happening in Kerala. Malayalam Cinema, particularly mainstream commercial cinema, constructs and propagate certain stereotypical images of Muslims as people of repressed sexual desires, as people of terrorist lineages, as money minded and food crazy people. The paper analyses films such as *Usthad Hotel* (2012) and *Thattathin Marayathu* (2012) as representative texts that carry this ongoing ideological victimisation. Using theoretical inputs from Ella Shohat and Sherene Razack, the paper explores dominant ideologies such as Caste, Hindutva and Islamophobia in these films that determine the visual grammar and the consequent victimisations of the marginalised and the 'precarious identities' in the Malayalam filmscape.

Key Words: Stereotypes, Islamophobia, Malayalam Cinema and Ideology.

Introduction

It is time to revaluate the way how Malayalam cinema has represented and spurred certain ideologies by which certain individual and collective identities such as Muslims and Dalits are stereotyped and (mis)represented in the light of terrorist attacks, cultural changes and social reorganizations especially in the Malabar regions of Kerala. Malayalam Cinema (hereafter MC), particularly mainstream commercial cinema, constructs and circulate certain stereotypical image of Muslim identity as people of repressed sexual desires, as people of terrorist lineages, as money minded and food crazy people. Commercially successful films such as *Usthad Hotel* (2012) and *Thattathin Marayathu* (2012) are not an exception to this ongoing ideological victimisation. The former, scripted by Anjali Menon, creates an imaginary and spectacular space of Karrimikka, the protagonist of the film, where he cooks and serves delicious dishes. The film idealizes his profession to the extent of celebrating his spectacular cult as the only desirable ways of life meant for an ideal Muslim in Kerala ignoring the diverse desires and plural identities of Muslims in Kerala. The latter movie, scripted by Vineeth Sreenivasan, gazes at a Muslim girl as a fetishistic and exotic object. The film ideologically

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foregrounds a decodable message that an 'ummachi' girl's (a reginal slang for a Muslim lady) dream can be materialized only beyond her religion and with the intervention of an upper caste man. Using theoretical inputs from Ella Shohat and Sherene Razack the paper explores such dominant ideologies that determine the visual grammar of Malayalam Cinema that victimizes the marginalised and the 'precarious identities' in Kerala.

In any instances of film making, there is no such thing as a 'real' presence, but only a re-presence or a representation. 'The value, efficacy, strength and apparent veracity of cinematic images rely very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the object reflected; they function as a presence to the spectator by virtue of its having excluded, displaced and having made supererogatory any such real thing as the reflected object' (Said, 1978). Representations then can never really be 'natural' or authentic depictions of the object reflected. Instead, they are constructed images, images that need to be interrogated for their ideological content. According to Ella Shohat: "Each filmic utterance must be analyzed not only in terms of who represents but also in terms of who is being represented for what purpose, at which historical moment, for which location, using which strategies, and in what tone of address". Examining the cultural production of knowledge in MC necessitates a close reading of certain images which are widely celebrated as touchstones of reality. As Ella Shohat (1995) rightly points out, each of this filmic representation demands an analysis of the socio-political mediations that overshadow them (ibid)..

As apparatuses of continuation, these popular images perform the central problematic of burying certain gestural acts by freezing its potentialities in images (Agamben, 1999). Although known for its creative/critical innovations and certain radical political points of view, MC is also not an exception to this. From its beginning in the late 1920s, it has thrived on freezing certain possibilities of the image and carrying certain stereotypical imaginaries particularly that of Dalits and Muslims. Although such is its trajectory, in background of global terrorism, cultural shifts and religious polarisations, there is a resurgence of such tendencies in MC in the context of the rising communalism and divisive thoughts in Kerala. Mainstream Malayalam cinema in general and the so called 'new generation cinema' in particular, construct a cinematic imaginary of Muslims such as people of repressed sexual desires and as people sympathetic to the global terrorism among many others. This is particularly salient in the climate of islamophobia and the contemporary resurgence of elitist and communalist tropes that label Islam and Muslims as the barbaric and uncivilized Other. Muslim women are particularly targeted since media images of burqah-clad women have become the

collective benchmark of Islam's regressive mindset and dogmatic repression. These images serve to legitimise all forms of feudal, communal and elitist hegemonies under the trope of modernity and liberalism. As Ella Shohat argues, the representation of an underrepresented group such as the Muslims in MC is framed within the hermeneutics of domination overcharged with allegorical significance (Shohat, 1995). Such embedded hermeneutics of domination is encoded and slyly circuited in the filmic images of recently released *Usthad Hotel* and *Thattathin Marayathu*.

The Deviant Muslim Man

The former, scripted by Anjali Menon, is located in the city of Calicut under the presumption that it is the cultural epicentre of Malabar Muslims. It captures certain cultural specificities of Calicut by framing samples of its rich haute cuisine such as *halwa* and *biriyani*. Though biriyani has become a common dish of Kerala across religions and communities (for instance Thalassery biriyani), the movie constructs it as a typical Muslim dish and attempts to define Muslim identity in terms of its tastes. It is obvious that this association is much more than an allegorical signification. It is an ideological tool that can serve to reinforce systems of inequality and subordination by equating a particular community with a food item and thereby suggesting its otherness by objectifying it.

The movie constructs an imaginary land of Karrim Ikka where he cooks and serves delicious dishes. He not only wants to feed the customers but also desires to make them happy. The movie idealizes and idolizes his profession to the extent of derogating Abdul Razaq, his son, who pursues a different profession. The narrative circuits a crippled image of Razaq as an unethical business man who resorts to all foul means to make profit. Such representation re-presents Razaq, a prototype for contemporary emerging Muslims, as a threat to the well-entrenched dominant Brahminical order. Consequently, the fall of Abdul Razaq becomes an ulterior motive of the text and he is thoroughly broken and destabilized in the end. By backgrounding emerging Razaq to the margins and foregrounding the self effacing and service minded Karimikka at the centre, the text narrativizes an ideology that an ideal Muslim must do service rather than be served. It becomes obvious that representations are not limited to the content of the story alone. It is an ideological tool that can serve to reinforce systems of inequality and subordination and to help to sustain upper caste elitist orders and desires.

The continuity of colonial scholarship in contemporary cinematic representations construct Muslim women as a universal, ahistorical, and

undifferentiated category who become essentialised through the uniqueness of their difference. Malayalam cinema in general continues this discourse of abject victimhood by representing Muslim woman as a foil to modernity, civilization, and freedom. The essentialism invoked in this process projects Muslim woman as an *a priori* social category with embedded qualities that become objectified through a discourse of Otherness which requires a process of hegemonic unveiling for comprehension. *Usthad Hotel* too follows this discursive logic through crippled Muslim heroine named Shahana. Though the movie apparently represents her as an independent and modern woman, she is shown as a victimised and subjugated other. The film parades certain images of her allegorical imprisonment. She has to fulfil her desires in secret which implies the meaning that lives of Muslim women in Kerala are worse than Muslim women of Arab countries. She says 'this is my last free day tomorrow I am going to get married". Marriage as an institution is usually celebrated and solemnised in the elite caste circles of Kerala in spite of all its drawbacks. But the text purposefully targets Muslim marriage (nikhah) as exploitative and abusive. That's why the film asserts the arrogance and domineering nature of Shahana's proposed husband. Even if she could get out of the initial marriage proposal, she ends up a typical house wife who helps her husband in preparing biriyani, sacrificing her desire to be an interior designer. The film ends where apparent exposition of Shahana's rebellious nature cathartically exhausts in the safe hands of Faizi.

The movie also carries certain derogatory stereotypes that make Muslims as the 'crippled Other'. While seeing a few children, Faizi asks a man whether it's a joint family. Without batting an eyelid immediately, the man says "these are all my children" at which the audience explodes in slit laughter. Such a dialogue although generate a comic point to laugh at, it carries the problematic impression that all Muslims are medically reckless. The xenophobic canard of population growth among Muslims also finds a subtle reflection here. Through the mannerisms of Abdul Razaq the movie insinuates that Muslims prefer a boy to girl child and to be a girl child is something inferior in a Muslim family. When the movie end Faizi decides quit his new job in France and becomes a biriyani maker. Apparently, such conclusions glorify Faizi as young man who respects Muslim traditions and culture. But the last shot consciously places Faizi near a *biriyani chembu* and his identity circumrotates around it. Biriyani functions as a metaphor that allegorically constructs an imagined Muslim identity which is serene, ideal and spectacular. It becomes a signifier of an ideal Muslim identity and that assumption seems quite naive, if not patronising.

The Imperilled Muslim Woman

In her book *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics*, Sherene Razack exposes three prominent figures who have come to symbolize world after 9/11": the "dangerous" Muslim man; the "imperilled" Muslim woman; and the "civilized" European (Razak, 2008). *Thattathin Marayathu* (2012), a film by Vineeth Srenivasan, imports these stereotypes as new avatars of veiled Islamophobia as foregrounded by Razack. The movie casts a 'dangerous Muslim man' in the representation of Abdul Khader. Ayisha and Vinod materialise imperilled Muslim women and civilised European respectively. The case is worse with the representation of Ayisha. She is a paradigm of the "oppressed Muslim woman" and "rescued Muslim maiden," or perhaps 'Muslim maiden in need of rescue'. The narrative consciously places her in a subjugated ambience. Consequently, the narrative brings Vinod and establishes his role as a redeemer.

Though the movie was celebrated as a 'true love story', the narrated love is dubious. Vinod defines Ayisha's femininity in terms of beauty and identifies her with hot Chicken *biriyani.* He falls in love with her when she wears *thattam*. The film presents Ayisha as a fetishistic and exotic object. The film never really zooms on her personality but glorifies her physical beauty to the extent of making Ayisha an exotic queen. Vinod's mannerisms unveil his sadomasochist drives and the narrative unconscious inherently states that Vinod loves not Ayisha, but fetishized and objectified Ayisha. It's evidently clear in the phrase *"thattam* has become a weakness for Malayalees" that appeared in the promotional posters of the movie.

According to Stuart Hall "racism operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories, and its typically binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness" (Hall, 1996). Hiding behind the aura of its secularist and humanistic propaganda, the movie insinuates a silent racism by asserting Vinod's and Ayisha's religious differences. Promotional write-up has stressed that "it's a story of a *Nair* young man who loved a Muslim (Ummaachi) woman". Whenever narrative gets the chance to assert characters religious ambits, it never misses the chance. Such religious significations are essential to prioritize Vinod's upper caste lineage. Thus, the movie silently professes an ideology that an '*Ummaachi*' girl's dream can be materialized only outside of her religion and with the intervention of an upper caste man.

It is obvious that representations are much more than the re-enactment and criticism of socio-political stereotypes, conflicts and dilemmas. They are in a sense ideological tools that reinforce systems of inequality and subordination. Such reflections and recreations have a silent discourse that glorifies and fetishizes certain objects to (re)establish its priorities. Films such as *Usthad Hotel* and *Thattathin Marayathu* too are engrossed in such ideological ambits. Representation of Karim, Abdul Razaq and Ayisha and the fetishization of biriyani and *thattam* do affect the ways in which Muslims are perceived and positioned in the political economy of Kerala. In spite of its apparent humanisms and valorisations of regional cuisines, it accomplishes certain ideological functions. As Sara Ahmed (1998) argues this close analysis, thus, cannot blink at who is defining desirable effects for whom when someone or something is represented.

Coda

The paper explored the value, efficacy, strength and the apparent veracity of certain contemporary cinematic images that propagated an ideology of exclusion and displacement. In spite of its popular clamour, these representations are hardly the authentic depictions of Muslims in general and Malabar Muslims in particular. Instead, they are constructed images, images that need to be interrogated in the context of the ongoing Islamophobia in the country. With that perspective in mind, the attempt was to engage in a close reading of the filmic images and utterance in a selected Malayalam films in terms of who is defining desirable effects for whom when someone or something is represented.

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An exploratory study of the portrayal of environmental issues in films Analysis of Ritwik Ghatak's soul earching film *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam*

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Abstract

In our present day global village the mass media plays an important and powerful role in highlighting environmental issues and creating awareness among the public. Today several important environmental concerns demand our attention worldwide. In the multimedia scenario, film is an audio visual medium which has a powerful influence and transformative power on the audience. Films can be categorized into documentaries, feature films and short films. Documentaries have focused on diverse issues, ranging from pollution, global warming, droughts, famine to mass species extinctions and resulting social issues. They lay out how these issues could pan out in future to spell disaster. Bengali feature film maker Ritwik Ghatak stands out for his soul searching cinema. In his film *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* , (A river called Titash,1973) he portrays the angst and agony of the ordinary fisherfolk as they grapple with the water crisis for no fault of theirs. Ghatak uses the river itself as a character, a metaphor, and a vehicle for the storytelling .. We can see all around us it is the common people, '*the aam aadmi'*, like the fishermen, who have paid a heavy price. Their livelihood threatened by the huge dams, toxic wastes and pollutants littering water bodies, sand mining, untenable water extractions and diversions leading to falling water tables, drought, floods even as they are unable to come to terms with this so called 'Development', which has suddenly uprooted them from the rivers, the water bodies and a way of life they had lived from generations.

 Ghatak said "Civilisation never dies. It may change, but it is eternal. Where the paddy field is born on the dry river bed of Titash, there begins another civilisation." So, for Ghatak, civilisation is eternal. Many of his protagonists in the film were in the depths of disillusionment, despair and a sense of failure, yet they had a ring of truth around them. Perhaps he is ending on a slightly hopeful note, that all is not lost, and there is yet hope for mankind if we mend our ways to not only improve the physical environment, but also the socio cultural and political environment. The message is for sustainable development and the need for preservation and protection of our water resources as they are being increasingly threatened by man. It is in this milieu that films like Titash Ekti Nadir Naam are close to our heart. They remind us of the haunting stories behind the greed of man and the subsequent ecosystem collapse.

Key words

Water crisis, Malo fishing community, Mother nature, Transformative power

In our present day global village the mass media plays an important and powerful role in highlighting environmental issues and creating awareness

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among the public. Today several important environmental concerns demand our attention worldwide. But at times media has been criticized for not giving adequate coverage to environment news and adopting a sensational approach to several environmental issues reflecting a lack of an in depth analytical reporting. However of late media has focused more attention on environment related matters.

 All the different types of media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, films and internet have featured issues related to environment, and brought them to the attention of the common man. In the multimedia scenario, film is an audio visual medium which has a powerful influence and transformative power on the audience. A single picture is worth a thousand words. Films can be categorized into documentaries, feature films and short films. Documentaries are the portrayal of reality and an interesting, and informative tool to educate the masses about environmental issues. The dawn of the 21st century has seen several memorable documentaries and some documentary filmmakers are using films as a tool for raising environmental consciousness and social change and instilling in people a sense of responsibility. These are the makers of the new age documentary films. Early documentary films such as those by the Lumiere brothers were single-shot moments captured on film: a train entering a station, a boat docking or factory workers leaving for work. But today this medium is used to send social messages across.

Documentaries: A look at a few memorable documentaries in recent years that have put across a powerful message of environmental conservation will enhance our awareness of the problems plaguing our society. Documentaries have focused on diverse issues, ranging from pollution, global warming, droughts, famine to mass species extinctions and resulting social issues. These documentaries lay out how these issues could pan out in future to spell disaster.

The 11th hour (2007), featuring actor and environmentalist Leonardo Di Caprio, looks at the ways in which we have impacted the planet through global warming, climate change, deforestation, species extinction and the depletion of the oceans' habitats. The documentary features former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and physicist Stephen Hawking, among many other politicians, scientists, and environmental activists. This haunting documentary puts forth a powerful message of sustainable development. Another thought provoking documentary is about the honey bees that have been dying at an alarming rate around the world. In *More Than Honey* (2013), Markus Imhoof searches for the answers as to why the little creatures are suddenly dying, looking from industrial agricultural practices to crop pesticides.

Blue 2017 is an attempt to peep into the world's quickly-depleting marine life, and how preservation efforts are attempting to save the oceans from pollution, among other threats. The depleting marine life is the focus of *Artifishal* 2019. Here the focus is on the global fisheries industry, as they investigate the impacts of over fishing and how our taste for seafood is devastating wildlife below the surface everywhere.

Chasing Ice 2012, This film beautifully captures the problem of the planet's melting glaciers over multiple years with National Geographic photographer James Balog. The scenes are extremely powerful and they leave little to the imagination. *Ice on fire* 2019 by Leonardo Di Caprio considers the potential for mass extinction as a result of Arctic methane gases seeping into the air as the icecaps melt. It's a beginners' guide to the scale of the potential catastrophe, setting out on the hunt for technologies that might reverse the damage caused by Carbon dioxide leaking into the atmosphere.

Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret (2014) by Kip Andersen, delves deep into the impact of animal farming on the planet's greenhouse gas emissions, the damage to our oceans and deforestation. In *Climate Change: The Facts*, passionate environmentalist David Attenborough presented stunning facts about the planet's descent into climate change and how humanity could attempt to rectify it. It originally aired in 2019, after one of the hottest years ever recorded, and caused quite a storm amongst viewers. *Climate Refugees* 2010 is another interesting documentary. Considering that climate change is unlikely to affect all countries equally, this feature asks who will be hit the hardest? And when that time comes, what will the ramifications be? From droughts and famine to rioting and issues of national security, Climate Refugees lays out how overpopulation and climate change could meet to spell disaster. *Tapped*, 2009 dives into the water bottle industry's impact on climate change, pollution, and our health, and looks at how dependant we are on oil.

A notable documentary from India, *Seeds Of Plenty, Seeds Of Sorrow* is directed by Manjira Datta, and talks about the highly touted Green Revolution in India. The much hyped Green Revolution is credited with ensuring that countries like India do not suffer from the scourge of hunger and famine anymore. Through this film, the director asks thought provoking questions that are in dire need of strategic answers. Who has been the principal beneficiary of the biotech package? The poor peasant? The big farmer? The multinational corporation? And what damage has the Green Revolution done to the social structure and ecologies of Third World countries? The film attempts to show the darker side of a supposed development strategy that was deemed to be successful. It reveals a darker, more problematic side to the Green Revolution.

In India it has helped create a new serf class and the dramatic crop yields of the early years have fallen away in the wake of pesticide poisoning, depleting water table and short-lived miracle wheat strains.

Anand Patwardhan chronicles the stories of anguish of the ordinary citizens, and tribals in their own words in *Narmada Diary* 1997; the well known documentary portrays the resistance to big dams, and globalization by regional and environmental groups.(Pradeep,2015).

Ritwik Ghatak : **the iconic film maker** - While many documentaries have explored various dimensions of ecological issues, a few feature films too have dealt with related problems in a creative and subtle way sending across a powerful message of committed cinema. It is the need of the hour to gain a better understanding of such narratives too. While several filmmakers have contributed their mite, yet Bengali film maker Ritwik Ghatak stands out for his soul searching cinema. His films are often synonymous with the angst and agony of the common man. Passionate, wildly talented and an alcoholic the 'enfant terrible' of Indian cinema, Ghatak remains an enigma for many. Ritwik Ghatak's career was one of constant struggle—against a public that, (in Satyajit Ray's words) , 'largely ignored' his films; against a society that had lost its way amid rampant modernization; and against a national cinema whose conventions he broke time and again. His films reflect an intense political awareness and are discomfiting. Film critic Adrian Martin has remarked rather poetically that Ghatak is the spirit that haunts world cinema with his seismographic rendering of trauma (Pradeep,2019)

His contemporary relevance stems from his commitment to speaking truth to power in exploring this agony and poverty. Deeply influenced by Rabindranath Tagore who believed,"Art has to be beautiful, but before that it has to be truthful", for Ghatak his films were a vehicle to share his own private truth. (Ghatak,2000). The musicality of melodrama structured his narratives and plumbed the depths of our experience. Each one of his films was a landmark achievement. The emotionally haunting and ambitious masterpiece *Meghe Dhaka Taara* tells the story of Neeta, a woman who sacrifices her life to rebuild her family shattered by the effects of partition. The film opens with a wide angle image of a huge tree from below which Neeta emerges. Two dominant images are associated with her throughout the film: the tree and waters, both symbols of fertility and creation in Hindu mythology.(Pradeep,2019). Environment and mother nature are intrinsic in his films. Like many Bengali film makers such as Satyajit Ray, All Ghatak's films portray strong female characters subtly hinting at the universal mother, mother nature or mother Bengal. (Chatterjee, 2009).

Titash Ekti Nadir Naam : Ritwik Ghatak's soul searching cinema elevated Indian parallel cinema to new heights. In his film *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* , (A river called Titash,1973) he portrays the angst and agony of the ordinary fisherfolk as they grapple with the water crisis for no fault of theirs. Yet for all its tragedy and melodrama, *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* is a celebration of a river and its people. We can see all around us it is the common people, 'the aam aadmi', like the fishermen, who have paid a heavy price. Their livelihood threatened by the huge dams, toxic wastes and pollutants littering water bodies, sand mining, untenable water extractions and diversions leading to falling water tables, drought, floods even as they are unable to come to terms with this so called 'Development', which has suddenly uprooted them from the rivers, the water bodies and a way of life they had lived from generations.

This film portrays the life of the poor fishermen living near the Titash river in Bangladesh. It won acclaim around the world and in 2007, the British Film Institute honoured it as the best Bangladeshi film ever made. The film is a portrait of a fishing town, where three storylines interweave over the course of a generation to depict the mundane joys and anguishes of a struggling village; the river Titash itself, by the end of the film, dries up. Ghatak uses the river itself as a character, a metaphor, and a vehicle for the storytelling. Deepa Mehta, film maker opines that this film is a work of pure genius. "A passionate elegy for a dying culture, it moved me profoundly, and continues to haunt me to this day." The structure of the film was also refreshingly ahead of its times. It was a pioneering film which explored the immense possibilities of non linear narratives and a mosaic pattern of storytelling where several characters appear in a string of myriad, interconnected stories set in a hyperlink format.

The film is an adaptation of a Bengali novel by Adwaita Mallabarman. His novel *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* was published in 1956, five years after his death. It is regarded as a commendable, intrinsic part of Bengali literature. Mallabarman's novel builds a pen picture of the Malo fishing village of bygone days through their dialects and art forms and makes a strong statement on how lopsided modernization policies, vested interests of politicians and natural disasters come together to wipe out this once vibrant society. He portrays the Hindu fishermen and the Muslim farmers living together harmoniously initially, but the partition of Bengal leads to communal tension .Mallabarman's story documents a way of life that has all but disappeared. *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* was a Swan Song of not only this remarkable writer, but also of the river and Malo fishing community on the banks of the Titash too. In fact it is symbolic of fishing communities around the world facing the

same plight. It is to Ghatak's credit that he has done justice to the adaptation of this novel.

The tale is set among the Malo fishermen who toil on the waters of the Titash. There are multiple characters as the film follows a mosaic pattern of story telling. The main protagonists are Basanti, Kishore, his bride Rajar and their son Ananta. Basanti is a young girl who wants to marry Kishore, but he marries Rajar, whom he happens to rescue from a village conflict, yet he is separated from her soon after marriage, as she is abducted by some bandits. He is deeply disturbed by this turn of events. Basanti later on gets married to Kishore's brother Subol, but he is drowned. The story picks up after a lapse of ten years when Rajar comes to the village with her son Ananta. Kishore and Rajar are unable to recognize one another. Later we are witness to Kishore's demise and how Rajar drowns alongside him. We see Basanti taking care of little Ananta; even in the face of criticism by her parents. Meanwhile the landowners rake up misunderstandings and conflicts between the communities to protect their vested interests. They insist on the repayments of loan from the poor fishermen and peasants. The film takes a critical view of the Zamindari system and the havoc it caused to the social fabric of our country in those times. At the end the river dries up (partly due to a scheme engineered by the landowners). The death pangs of the village are portrayed vividly. The opening shot depicts the tragedy of the film, a dried up river, and this same river is again shown at the climax of the film amidst a Bengali song at the backdrop. The bone dry river bed is pictured eloquently in long shots, even as poignant images of begging and starvation deaths in the village pull at our heart strings. From harmony, understanding and peaceful coexistence the two communities are pushed to a struggle for survival leading to conflicts and violence. Basanti is a sad witness to this sorry state of affairs unfolding in the village. We can see Basanti desperately walking through the desert, stumbling , yet she doesn't give up hope as she tries to dig for water on the river bed. Even as she is dying she has a flashback or a vision of a young boy running across green paddy fields, [possibly Kishore], and her face lights up; the film ends on a freeze-frame of her

The partition of Bengal was a heartbreak for Ritwik Ghatak. Even as he highlighted his anguish he mused, "Civilisation never dies. It may change, but it is eternal. Where the paddy field is born on the dry river bed of Titash, there begins   another   civilisation."   So,   for   Ghatak,   civilisation   is eternal.(Ghatak,2000). Ghatak never gives easy answers in his films as we have to engage with layers of meanings. Many of his protagonists were in the depths of disillusionment, despair and a sense of failure, yet they had a ring of truth around them. Most of his films ended with a glimmer of hope in the

horizon. Perhaps he is ending on a hopeful note, that all is not lost, and there is yet hope for mankind if we mend our ways to not only improve the physical environment, but also the socio cultural and political environment. The message is for sustainable development and the need for preservation and protection of our water resources even as they are being increasingly threatened by man.

Bengali and Indian culture and symbols resonate throughout the film. The plot develops amidst the undercurrents of mythology and religious icons. This makes it a little difficult to decipher the subtle characters and the unfolding events during the first viewing of the film, particularly for foreign audiences. Motherhood is a recurring theme in most of Ghatak's films visualized by shots of rain, boats, big, sprawling trees, water bodies and so on. The concept of Mother Goddess, Bhagwati is also weaved into the storyline.

Conclusion: Films and documentaries have played a powerful role in riveting the attention of society towards environmental concerns. Ritwik Ghatak has portrayed the environmental issues of water crisis and loss of livelihood in an aesthetic and thought provoking manner in his feature film *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam*. The partition and its terrible aftermath has been a recurring theme in many of his other films. His partition quartet consists of four films; *Meghe Dhaka Taara, Nagarik, komal Gandhar and Subarnarekha*. Uprooted from the land of his birth he never forgave the world for turning him into an eternal refugee. His films are thought provoking and linger on in our minds, raising questions of sorrow, concept of family and humanity at large. His last film *Jukti Thako aar Gaapo* (1974), was an auto portrait of a rebel and won the National award. In it he plays the alcoholic intellectual Nilkantha and says "I am burning – the universe is burning, everything is burning." All his films give us a new perspective of history and historical events and invigorate us to take a larger view of issues on a global scale. He uses folk music, local myths and so on to convey his message.(Pradeep,2015).

At times Ghatak is a little melodramatic. He uses myriad techniques to portray the emotions and the dilemmas of his characters. Close ups are interspersed with long shots, the latter helps the viewer to take a look at the happenings from a distance. So the audience gets a bigger perspective of the issue, both from the individual level and from a global context. In Titash, this perspective is needed to gain a finer understanding of environment issues for the stakeholders.

Viewing Ghatak is an edgy, intimate experience, an engagement with a brilliantly erratic intelligence in an atmosphere of total honesty. The feeling

can be invigorating but never comfortable.(Levich,1998). Ghatak once said in an interview that art was not a trivial thing. The primary objective of making films is to do good to mankind. If you do not do good to humanity, no art is a true work of art.(Ghatak, 2000). Ritwik Ghatak is a film director whose cinema is remembered for his depiction of social reality. The powerful message he has sought to convey in Titash Ekti nadir Naam must resonate in our ears. It is in this milieu that films like Titash Ekti Nadir Naam are close to our heart. They remind us of the haunting stories behind the greed of man and the subsequent ecosystem collapse.

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Enacting/Encoding the American World War II Agenda-War Propaganda in Hollywood movies of WWII Years

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> *Movies read or interpret the cultures in which they exist, just a beat behind the present tense of events.*
>
> *- Helene Keyssar (1991)*

Abstract

Cinema as a tool of propaganda assumed significance during WWI and continued to remain an important tool in the arsenal in the ensuing years. Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia and Vichy regimes used cinema to further their political agenda. This research analyses the manner in which the art and craft of cinema reconstructed or deconstructed the World War II to further the American political agenda among its citizens and soldiers, against the backdrop of instructions issued by the government. It will examine the manner in which political connotations were ingested into the films, how it was used to distinguish between enemies and allies of the US and to explain why US were contributing in a significant manner to the war effort. This research attempts to study feature films based wholly on war as well as soft core 'seemingly apolitical feature films of escape and diversion' . The research finds that cinema through its entertaining form has been used to show not only how WWII was fought but how America fought it- bravely and without bowing to its enemies. All three movies emphasize why America found it imperative to fight the war, depicts the enemies of the Allies and explains why they had to be vanquished.

Keywords: Political agenda, American World War films, Propaganda films.

Introduction

Films must be read as complex texts littered with cinematic codes and symbols, structured within the relevant socio-political context. They represent events and realties of the time or era or the creative imagination of the filmmaker. "Films have

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the ability to evoke the mood and tone of a society in a particular era" (Quart & Auster, 2002)

> "By films one means not merely documentaries, which obviously directly captures something of the reality of people's lives and feelings, but also mainstream Hollywood commercial films. It is not only that these films sometimes convey and imitate the surfaces of day-to-day life…But, more importantly, fictional films reveal something of the dreams, desires, displacements and, in some cases, the social and political issues confronting …society." (Quart & Auster, 2002)

Rarely are films disconnected from the political or attitudinal bias of the maker and the studio that finances the film. "…films, both the explicitly political and the nonpolitical, were and are often bound by institutional forces like the power of the studios or producers to make the final cut…collective screenwriting and rewriting, censorship" (Quart & Auster, 2002) In this sense, a film is a creation set within and reflecting the social and political mores and agenda of the group that gives it its structure. At a much wider level the representation of reality maybe 'manipulated' by the more powerful demands of a country's government. That is to say that cinema may and does reflect the socio-political agenda of the government that acts as a gatekeeper or agenda setter in a country with a totalitarian regime, or during times of social, political and economic upheaval. Cinema, then, is a tool or carrier of propaganda for the government.

 Propaganda is, simply put, persuasion via mass communication that keys on two important goals: first, forming new or adjusted attitudes in the minds of audiences, and second, urging them to action, to do something about these newly acquired attitudes (Donald, 2017). Taylor (1998) remarks on propaganda "in the politics of the 20th century", and the role that cinema can play in a propagandistic mission has been overlooked. He points that the reason for this could be because it is looked upon as a "dirty word" and describes something that is to be found only in dictatorial regimes and not in "'liberal democracies'" . Additionally, "It is a major premise that propaganda need not only comprise blatant political messages, but may also constitute more subtle statements ('softcore') of social integration, arguably all the more powerful because of their very indirectness" (Short, 1983).

Cinema has a tool of propaganda assumed significance during WWI and continued to remain an important tool in the arsenal in the ensuing years. Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia and Vichy regimes used cinema to further their political agenda.

The republic of the United States of America, which enjoyed an elected government too were not opposed to the idea of propagating the US war effort through films, during the period of World War II. The film industry of the US (henceforth referred to as Hollywood) was one of the few industries allowed by the war-time President Roosevelt to continue its commercial operations without heavy interference from Washington. While major industries like steel, auto manufacturing and construction

were subject to 'war conversion', Hollywood continued to bring out films without any hindrance. Roosevelt was of the opinion that the "American motion picture is one of the most effective mediums in informing and entertaining… citizens. The motion picture must remain free in so far as national security will permit. I want no censorship of the motion picture" (as cited in Schatz, 1999).

The government recognised the importance of films as a form of diversion for civilians and soldiers and that the most effective propaganda often took the form of *mere* entertainment. Officials of the Office of War Information, the government's propaganda agency, issued a "constantly updated manual instructing the studios in how to assist the war effort... reviewed the screenplays... pressured the movie makers to changes scripts...and sometimes wrote dialogue for key speeches" (Koppes & Black, 1990).

The fact that Hollywood was willing to produce training films, war related shorts and newsreels did not hurt. That its feature films supported the FDR's unofficial interventional policies was a bonus.

The President appointed Lowell Mellett, the former editor of *Scripps-Howard Washington Daily* and Presidential aide, as the Coordinator of Government Films and Liaison between the government and Hollywood to endorse and advise the industry in its support of the war effort. Mellett proposed that Hollywood films should try to feature six war-related subjects that the government wished to see in films- issues (why US was fighting), the enemies (why they have to be defeated), the allies (why they deserve support), the home front, the production front (how each American could contribute) and the US Armed Forces.

> The persistence of the cues, the stories, the myths of World War II is a sign of the astounding success with which the pop-cultural media…(especially movies)— articulated and disseminated narratives that would explain the war: why we were fighting it, why our enemies had to be defeated, why our allies deserved our support, how each American could contribute to the eventual victory … Of these various pop-cultural media, Hollywood films played the most important role in promulgating mythmaking narratives about the war, for two main reasons…because of their status as fiction, films were able to offer completed narratives about the war… The second reason for films' dominant role in transmitting mythmaking narratives about the war is their greater popularity—popularity to the point of ubiquity—compared with other fictionalizing media, radio, theater, comic strips, and comic books, as popular as these genres were (McLaughlin & Parry, 2010)

"...Hollywood and the armed services, working from different perspectives and with different goals, cooperated to create stories about the U.S. military in war and peace. …movies became the source of most people's knowledge of the American fighting men and women and the wars in which they fought to protect the nation from any external threat." (Suid, 2015)

This research analyses the manner in which the art and craft of cinema reconstructed or deconstructed the World War II to further the American political agenda among its citizens and soldiers, against the backdrop of instructions issued by the government. It will examine the manner in which political connotations were ingested into the films, how it was used to distinguish between enemies and allies of the US and to explain why US were contributing in a significant manner to the war effort. This research attempts to study feature films based wholly on war as well as soft core 'seemingly apolitical feature films of escape and diversion' (Short, 1983).

The films that have been chosen for this study includes *Casablanca*, a soft core film set against the WWII backdrop and hailed as one of the most romantic movies ever, *Objective Burma* and *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo*, both war movies focusing on tactical maneuvers of the US Forces, the resources and technology at the disposal of the US, the cruelty of the enemies, as well as the bravery and sacrifice of American troops.

Analysis

Casablanca

Casablanca is a 1942 Warner Bros. production which won the Academy Award in 3 categories in 1943. Set in French Morocco during the time of WWII, Richard Blaine (Humphrey Bogart), called Rick, the protagonist is portrayed as an American expatriate who runs *Rick's Café Américain*, an upscale nightclub and gambling establishment. He professes to be neutral and apolitical even though it is revealed during the course of the movie that like any typical Hollywood American hero he champions the underdog- as is evident from his support of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War and his gun running to Ethiopia to combat the 1935 invasion of Italy. "I stick my neck out for nobody" is a constant refrain of Rick's during the initial part of the film, though his actions contradict his words. Two of the other important characters include Victor Lazlo (Paul Henreid), the Czech Resistant Leader who has escaped from a German concentration camp to Morocco and is hunted by the Third Reich, and Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman), Lazlo's wife, Rick's ex-lover and the reason for his bitterness. The Prefect of the Police in Morocco, Captain Louis Renault (Claude Rains), is shown as a corrupt officer and an opportunist, and serves the dictates of the Vichy government. He adds though "I have no convictions…I blow with the wind, the prevailing wind happens to be from Vichy," in an honest and diplomatic assessment of his own character. The true antagonist of the film though is the German Major Heinrich Strasser (Conrad Veidt) who has been directed by the Nazi government to 'persuade' Lazlo to return. The Germans have clearly been marked as the enemies and every attempt is made to point out their violent, greedy and overbearing nature. Strasser is the personification of Nazis and he is shown as a bully, someone drunk on his own power but indecisive when it comes to decisions related to Lazlo.

The political and social fabric of Morocco of the time has been portrayed. Morocco is under the control of France, and Germany does not have any direct power. It has assumed much strategic and geographical significance due to the fact that it is a port of escape for fugitives and others who wish to leave war-torn Europe behind, for, from here, they can make their escape by air to neutral Lisbon and from there onwards to America. It is repeatedly mentioned that most of those who arrive at Morocco hope to be lucky enough to get exit visas (controlled by the local police, specifically Captain Renault) and make their way across to Lisbon and onwards to the promised and America, the land of the free. Many arrive, but few make it out of Morocco and most spend their time "waiting, waiting" for escape. There is also the underlying message that humans are a mere commodity here. The film stresses that the direness of the situation in Morocco cannot be ignored and that one of the reasons that America is fighting the war is because it cannot, in good conscience, turn its back on those people who need American help and intervention. Renault points out to Rick "Isolationism is no longer a practical policy" (Up until the Pearl Habour Attack, the popular sentiment in the country has been one of isolationism).

At this time, two German couriers carrying letters of Transit that allow the carrier free movement across German-controlled territories, are attacked and killed and the letters go missing. Ugarte, a regular at Rick's who runs an underground business selling exit visas at exorbitant rates, is behind the theft and murder. He shows no remorse in the murder of the Germans and neither does Rick, when Ugarte (Peter Lorre) furtively owns up to possessing the letters. In fact, the murder appears to be incidental. Ugarte entrusts Rick with the letters and dies in police custody without revealing the location. Renault suspects that Rick may have the letters. Strasser, however, initially believes that an American is not capable of that level of guile, remarking that they are nothing but "blundering" fools. Renault slyly reminds him that they had, however, "blundered into Berlin in 1918" thereby telling him not to underestimate the resourceful Americans and implying that the Nazis were not as powerful or omnipotent as they would like the world to believe. A search is conducted at the café and Rick remarks that Renault's officers had really thrashed the place to which Renault says "I told my men to be especially destructive. You know how that impresses the Germans."

These are the letters that are vital to Lazlo's and Lund's escape to Lisbon, and ultimately to America. The situation is urgent given the fact that Strasser is determined that the couple would never leave Morocco. Upon their arrival in Morocco, the Gestapo liaison had offered to facilitate Lazlo's escape, provided he hands over the names of the leaders of the Underground Movement in Europe, warning him that if he fails to do so his life will be forfeit. "From every corner of Europe, hundreds, thousands would rise to take places," he bravely asserts and continues with the taunt, "Even Nazis can't kill that fast." The filmmakers point out that Nazis are not infallible and that the path to their defeat lies in people rising up and fighting as one. So, it is the welfare of the common man that America seeks to protect.

The narrative leading up to and including the *La Marseillaise* scene at the café is interesting because it brings into play several characters that represent nations involved in the war or occupied by Germany. There is Yvonne, the French girl; Sasha, the Russian bartender; Berger, the Norwegian who is part of the Resistance movement; Lazlo, himself, a Czech; and of course, the many French nationals gathered there. The guitarist is Spanish and Ugarte and Ferrari (the owner of Blue Parrot, another gin-joint, and a profiteer) are Italians, and belong to countries controlled by fascists (McLaughlin & Parry, 2010). While Rick seems to live true to the American isolationist policy, he can't help being affected by the plight of the young and newly married Bulgarian couple (the young lady remarks about the state of affairs in their land and says "The devil has the people by the throat"), and at his loss, ensures that the husband wins enough for an exit visa to Lisbon. Again, it must be noted that *Café Américain* seems to be a safe place where all can gather for a good time, under the watchful eye of an American.

In the '*La Marseillaise*' scene all the key players are gathered at Rick's. Yvonne walks in with a German officer. It is evident that Sasha disapproves but it a French soldier who vocalizes his feelings (implying that the Vichy government may be allies of the Nazis but popular sentiment in France was not pro-German) and insults Yvonne for cozying up to the German. The German officer takes umbrage and things almost turns violent before Rick breaks it up. While the Germans use might and physical force to defeat their enemies, the *others* take to violence to defend themselves and their sensibilities. Therein lies the first German-*others* differentiation.

Immediately following this, Lazlo and Rick repair to Rick's upstairs office where Lazlo requests his help as a fellow revolutionary. Rick declines and says that he is no longer a part of any movement, though he admits to having the letters in his possession. He refuses Lazlo's offers and refuses to give a reason for rejecting it other than to say: "Ask your wife". This is a moment of antagonism but these differences are cast aside by what happens next. The viewer's attention is drawn to the loud signing from the café proper. The camera is so positioned to give a clear view of the Germans seated in an alcove, cut off and shunned by the rest of the crowd. This separation of the Germans is deliberate and serves to remind the viewer that, essentially, they stand alone, surrounded and outnumbered by the *others*. The song that the Germans are loudly signing, with one of them pounding away on Sam's (Dooley Wilson in the role of Rick's Black singer) piano, is a military anthem 'Watch on the Rhine'.

The bird's eye view offered by the camera shows Renault looking up at Rick, who is standing on the balcony, with a meaningful glance. However, it is not Rick who reacts, but Lazlo. He bravely marches down and up to the orchestra and orders them to play *La Marseillaise*. Lazlo himself leads them in the rendering, with the Spanish guitarist adding her strong voice to his, and soon the whole room, irrespective of nationality, joins them in an attempt to gain this victory over the Germans. Their unified voice drowns out the voices of the German minority and the Germans are

forced to give up when the crowd sings on powered by a sense of oneness. Yvonne, who is sitting with the German officer, sings passionately with tears in her eyes while her companion appears dejected. The song ends with enthused shouts of 'Vive la France.'

In the climax, Rick tells Ilsa that she is to escape with Lazlo as she is Lazlo's strength and his reason for fighting. When Ilsa protests he tells her that when one thinks about it, given the dire straits, "it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world." He is unsure of his future; he may face life in a concentration camp. The viewer is reminded that personal sacrifices are called for when fighting for a great cause, and that what one *wants* to do, and what one *has* to do, differs. America too has to make sacrifices. The war must be fought and American soldiers are needed, if only to set the world to rights.

The movie ends on an unexpected note with Renault finally taking a stand and deciding to turn Nationalist. He goes so far as to propose that he not only provide Rick with safe passage from Morocoo but also leave along with him. The film closes with Rick saying, "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship" might refer to an absolute end to American isolationist policy, its proposal to cement ties with allies and pro-American nations, and its entry as a powerful, interventionist country into the world scenario.

Casablanca with its narrative and characterization serves America's and Roosevelt's war propaganda effectively. It points out the Germans as enemies while implying that they are responsible for the deplorable state of affairs with their power-hungry nature but thrusts home the idea that Germans are bullies. America does not stand bullies. Nor can it turn its back on the suffering millions. Hence its participation in the war is not only necessary but justified. Similarly, vis-à-vis the *La Marseillaise* scene, Lazlo's action and the crowd's reaction, the film tells the viewer how the bullies can be defeated, by standing up to them and fighting as a unified force. The need of the hour was leadership and action, which Lazlo provides (which America can provide). Rick is a symbol of America. He is idealistic and fights for other countries' freedom (Italy and Spain). Though he may have stepped away and adopted an isolationist policy, he finally reverts to his true nature, in providing transit visas to Lazlo and Ilsa, knowing the heavy price he may have to pay. He steps up and in much the same way America with its true love for liberty, freedom and justice, has been called to step up and accept the mantle of a leader.

Objective, Burma!

Objective, Burma!, the Oscar-nominated 1945 Warner Bros war movie, focuses on the heroic efforts of a group of US Army Paratroopers who land in Burma and destroy a strategic camouflaged Japanese radar station and communications centre. While stranded in Burma and fighting for their very lives, they lead the Japanese troops away from the point of invasion. Burma is described as the "toughest battleground in the world" and it is into this place that Capt. Nelson (Errol Flynn) leads his team and

Mark Williams (Henry Hull) a war correspondent out of Washington. They are the first men to enter Burma after the forced retreat by the Allied Forces and Williams wishes to go along because he says "I wanted to do what I [can] so that people back home would know a little better what the war is about".

Williams is used effectively to make the process and difficulty of waging a war easily understood by the viewers. Williams is a civilian and in the guise of explaining to him, the explanations are made to the viewer. He makes the viewing a personal experience for the viewer and by proxy, brings the war closer.

Unlike in *Casablanca* and *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo, Objective, Burma!* is blatant in its hate propaganda against the enemy- in this case, the Japanese. From derogatory terms to descriptions of how one group (half of their 36-man team) of paratroopers, except for two who are allowed to escape, were gunned down after the mission at the radar station ("It was a slaughterhouse"), the scenes are inciting. But it is the scene at the abandoned village, where the tortured and mutilated bodies of the members of the second group are shown, that really underscores the savageness of the enemies. Lt. Sid Jacobs (William Prince), who had dreamt of returning to his job as a High School teacher, is found tortured beyond bearing and near death. He recounts, in pain, how they were tortured for information and how each man died, loyally, without giving away their comrades. The scene in which he begs Nelson to kill him and end the pain, is powerful and serves to remind the American public of the depravity of the Japs. The expression on the faces of those who see the cut-up bodies, drives home the horror of the situation. They can barely recognize their team mates. It is Williams who breaks down and it is through Williams that the message is driven home "This was done in cold blood…They're degenerate, immoral idiots. Stinking little savages. Wipe them out, I say. Wipe them out! Wipe them off the face of the earth."

The local Burmese villagers are also shown to hate and fear the Japanese, who indiscriminately kill or enslave the locals (unlike the Americans).

The US allies are mentioned in the opening credits in a dedication to the "heroic men of the…British, Chinese and Indian armies." The film contains a few scenes where British personnel are shown training and marshalling resources, but it is, at its core, an American show. While it deviates from reality and re-writes history, the film concentrates only on 'American factors', choosing to gloss over or completely neglecting other countries' efforts. Except for 2 *gurkhas* who act as guides and one Chinese Army personnel, the crew is American and only Americans survive.

The film also focuses on the camaraderie and sense of family that the fighting forces have. Everyone seems to know everyone else. They tease each other and poke fun at the other's expense, but they are a unit. While going away on the mission, the men are shown to be praying, sleeping, reading, smoking, thinking or agonizing, giving the impression that while courageous, they are human. When Nelson overhears one of his men agonizing over his fear of jumping and his likelihood of freezing before the jump, he steps in to reassure him. Nelson is shown as the All-American hero-

commanding, worthy of respect and admiration, a natural leader of men, kind, compassionate (who will not leave the sick behind even though he owns up "I should leave him…But I can't do it"). Nelson is able to snap them out of their despair, when they become disheartened. One of his men says of him, "I'd follow him down the barrel of a cannon."

The men themselves are extraordinary and bolster each other's flagging spirits. They move through unfamiliar, dangerous and difficult terrains, without complaints. They carry their sick and Williams, mourn their dead and give them a decent burial, collect their tags even in the face of danger so that their families have a little something to hang onto, and constantly look out for each other. Their morale and their strength of will are strong. When a plane spots them after several days and they are informed that rescue is not forthcoming, one of the men quips, "Tell my girl that I won't be back for dinner." They are ordered to move north, away from the Base without being given a reason. This discourages some of them until, one points out "If they order us North, they've a good reason for ordering us North". They face numerous dangers and follow orders because of their faith in their superior officers and belief in the cause that sacrificing their lives for. The group represents the American armed forces and is symbolic of the superior fighting troops of the US. When they are finally rescued the viewer is forcefully reminded of the price that had to be paid when Nelson, while handing over the tags of his dead teammates, says "Here's what it cost. Not much to send home, is it? A handful of Americans."

The film also alludes to the concept of 'good' mothers who send their sons off to the war with their blessings- a reminder to all mothers back home that they too should do their duty to the country.

Thirty Seconds over Tokyo

Thirty Seconds over Tokyo, the 1945 MGM movie that won the Academy Award in one category, like *Objective, Burma* is a war movie. It focuses on the aerial bombing, under Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, of Tokyo (and other major cities of Japan), 131 days after the Pearl Habour attack. Woven into the war story is the 'soft core' element in the form of the romance and love between Army Major Ted Lawson (Van Johnson) and his wife of 6 months, Ellen (Phyllis Thaxter).

Lawson, a pilot, volunteers to be part of a secret mission that calls for the team members to spend about 3 months abroad. They are extensively trained, among other things, in taxiing and taking off at 500 feet (to fly off a warship). In the midst of the training Lawson learns that Ellen is pregnant. Ellen is a strong and supportive army man's wife, with American values, as is evident from her comment, "You're worried because you've got a wife. That's wrong, Ted." She wishes things were different and that the war wasn't a necessity but she wholeheartedly believes that the cause her country is fighting for and her husband is involved in, is important. When the training is complete and Lawson leaves at a moment's notice, she lets him go with her blessings.

Lawson is the hero who puts his country's demands before his own. He is eager to play any small role he can in the fight. The other airmen are just as enthusiastic to be part of the mission. They are aware of the grave dangers but none take up Doolittle's offer to drop out if they don't feel up to it. The life onboard the ship that transports them to "within 400 miles of Japan" portrays the camaraderie between the Army and Navy personnel. The fact that they are together in fighting this war is emphasized and the normal rivalries seem to have no place in the film.

This film too identifies the Japanese as the enemy but the vitriolic hatred of *Objective, Burma* is absent. During his briefing on Japan and its people, Lt. Commander Stephen Jurika (Leon Ames) warns them pointedly of the dangers of falling into Japanese hands. The Captain of the warship says over the loudspeaker, that the mission "is a chance for all of us to give Japs a taste of their own medicine." Lawson, who dreamt of being an aeronautical engineer tells his friend Lt. Bob Gray (Robert Mitchum) on the ship, "I don't hate the Japs. Yet. Funny thing! I don't like them but I don't hate them…It's a case of drop a bomb on them or pretty soon they'll be dropping one on Ellen." This points to the fact that it is the Japanese who are responsible for America's reaction and that all actions undertaken are defensive in nature. America is not the aggressor or the initiator of this course of actions. They have been forced to act by the Japanese. America's sentiments are echoed by Bob Gray who says, "I'll be glad when this war ends."

China is depicted as a strong ally as the Chinese villagers actively search for and rescue downed airmen along the China coast where they land/crash after running out of fuel. They help the Americans at great personal cost (the village that sheltered Lawson's team, most of them gravely wounded, is searched and torched) and provide the little they can. A Chinese father-son doctor duo, help nurse them back to health, though they are forced to amputate Lawson's leg. The Chinese are shown to be grateful and in awe of the Americans for their attacks on Japan and consider it an honour to provide help. A Chinese grandmother is moved to tears by the pain that Lawson and his men are in. The American heroes are honoured by a group of children who sing the 'Star Spangled Banner' in Chinese. Lawson says "You're our kind of people" acknowledging the Chinese and painting a picture of how they should be seen by the viewers. Yet care is taken not to emphasize too strongly the help that China rendered in assisting the men out of the country. This was done according to directions from the War Department which felt that it would be damaging. Also, efforts were taken not to turn it into a one-man movie but to acknowledge that it was a team effort (Lawson and Doolittle are important but so are the others).

The three films push the American agenda in its unique ways, subtle and blatant. Yet, it is evident that Mellett's dictates have been obeyed and that cinema through its entertaining form has been used to show not only how WWII was fought but how America fought it- bravely and without bowing to its enemies. All three movies emphasize why America found it imperative to fight the war, depicts the enemies of the Allies and explains why they had to be vanquished.

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Cinematic techniques in signifying the concept of Alienation in TV Chandran's Films – A Semiological Study.

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the cinematic techniques in signifying the "Concept of Alienation "in films by internationally acclaimed Indian director, TV Chandran. Semiological review of the films reveal that the director has adroitly used techniques like high angle shots, low key lighting and hosepiping camera movement for signifying the concept of alienation, and also could overcome the narrative's impossibility in visualizing the subjective experience of the characters involved in alienation. This cinematic intervention has also given the director the creative flexibility to bring an expressive effect on the protagonists in the films and an immersive feel to active viewers through positioning them as an objective witness to the character's alienation.

Keywords: Low Key Lighting, Hosepiping, Alienation, High Angle Shot, Semiotics

Introduction

The concept of alienation is deeply rooted in all the great religions and socio-political theories of the civilized epoch. According to Alan Baker, when we look into the epistemology of the term 'alienation', it derives from the Latin 'alius', meaning 'other', and elucidates the concept of separation or estrangement. The word has found applications in myriad domains of Philosophy, Theology, Psychiatry, Social and political science, Law and Literature. Furthermore, the word "alienation" suggests separation and distance; it embodies the term "alien", a stranger in a society who has no connections with others, meaning no 'liens" of any sort (Baker, 1979).

The American sociologist C. Wright Mills explored the effect of alienation in modern society in his book "White Collar" in 1951, and observed that the modern consumption-capitalism has formulated a society where one has to sell his/her personality in addition to their work while studying the middle classes in the United States of America. (Wright Mills, 2002)

Soren Kierkegaard in the nineteenth century observed alienation from a Christian viewpoint, and considered alienation as separation from God

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because they are living too much in the materialistic world. Keeping this in mind, alienation can be described as a dearth in human being in relation to the world, and individuals need to bridge this gap by gaining their souls from God. Many twentieth-century philosophers and theologians were influenced by Kierkegaard's philosophy like Martin Heidegger. (Stewart, 2012)

In the theory of psychoanalysis postulated in the opening of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud proposed a theory of divisions and conflicts between the conscious and unconscious mind, between different parts of a hypothetical psychic apparatus, and between the self and civilization. Though the concept of alienation was not explicitly addressed, it postulated defense mechanisms, envisaging splitting, in both normal and abnormal functioning. (Mangal, 1990)

After the academic explosion in alienation research that characterized the 1950s and 1960s, interest in alienation research subsided (Geyer, 2001), although in Sociology it was maintained by the Research Committee on Alienation of the International Sociological Association (ISA). The topic gained prominence again in the 1990s, following the fall of the Soviet Union, globalization, the information explosion, ethnic conflicts, and post-modernism (Geyer, 2001). According to Geyer, the growing intricacy of the contemporary world and post-modernism encouraged a reinterpretation of alienation that fits the contemporary living ambience. Moreover, the works of Felix Geyer, Lauren Langman and Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, also addressed the issue of alienation in the modern western world.

In a broader philosophical context, especially in existentialism and phenomenology, alienation describes the meagerness of human being or mind in relation to the world.

TV Chandran and 'concept of alienation'

TV Chandran is an Indian film director, screenwriter, and actor, predominantly working in Malayalam cinema. He made his directorial debut with the unreleased feature *Krishnan Kutty* (1981), and followed this with the Tamil film *Hemavin Kadhalargal* (1985). Chandran came into prominence after *Alicinte Anveshanam* (1989), which was nominated for the Golden Leopard at the Locarno International Film Festival. T V Chandran is most known for his art-house films which have references to history and undertones of politics and feminism. TV Chandran has won several film awards including six National Film Awards and ten Kerala State Film Awards. In addition to these, he is a recipient of a number of awards at various international film festivals. His movies are a kind of parallel Kerala history, and is about the subaltern study

of Kerala from its formative periods (1948-1950) to the contemporary situation. Moreover, TV Chandran's characters are created by the churning process of history, and viewers can see the concept of political and social alienation in TV Chandran films, highlighting the plight of marginalized societies in India.

Methodology

The research method followed is a qualitative study using semiology. Content analysis is typically called quantitative as it involves counting and summing phenomena, to even support studies of more qualitative nature. Krippendorff (1980) calls it primarily a symbolic method as it is used to investigate symbolic material, conducting much interpretative works, relying on a good knowledge of the texts under examination. In this study, an attempt has been made to study how the director uses cinematic technology to visualize the concept of alienation. The selected films for the study are: *Alicinte Anveshanam* (1989),*Ponthan Mada* (1993),*Ormakalundayirikkanam* (1995),*Mangamma (*1997), *Danny* (2001),*Paadam Onnu: Oru Vilapam* (2003) , *Vilapangalkappuram* (2008) and *Bhoomimalayalam* (2011). The visual analyses were made using VLC player, Windows Media Player, and film prints. For .avi and MPEG-4 files where the frame rate was 25, VLC player was used, and for the .VOB files, Windows Media Player was used, and scene numbers in the scripts were used for the film prints.

Cinematic Techniques in TV Chandran films, and Concept of Alienation.

The researcher have gone through the usage of cinematic techniques in the films selected for the study, and analyzed whether these techniques had any influence on the concept of alienation. Towards this end, the researchers has taken camera codes like angles, lighting and camera movement for the study.

Camera angles and Signification of 'Alienation'

Table 1: Protagonist's High Angle Shots in TV Chandran Films	
Film	**Protagonist's High Angle Shot details with Screen Duration / Scene No**
1 *Danny*	Shots of Danny- 00:04:43 to 00:05:02; 00: 59:55 to 00:01:12; 01: 03:40 to 01:03:57; 01:06:45 to 01:07:05; 01: 10:45 to 01:11:01; 01: 21:51 to 01:22:21; 01:25:27 to 01:26:13; 01:28:13 to 01:28:57; 01:39:51 to 01:40:34

2	*Ponthan Mada*	Shots of Mada & Sheema Thampuran 00:08:12 to 00:08:40; 00:10:48 to 00:10:54; 01: 38:20 to 01:38:30; 01:43:38 to 01:44:10
3	*Alicinte Aneshanam*	Scene 3 : Alice on the verandah waiting for Thomas Kutty
		Scene 7 : Alice leaning on the wall
		Scene 8 : Alice leaning on the bed
		Scene 12: Alice moving through the coconut groves
		Scene 14: Alice sitting on the verandah
		Scene 19 : Alice with the school headmistress
		Scene 22 : Alice on the floor with scattered books
		Scene 31: Alice on chair looking at children drawing
		Scene 54: Alice climbing the steps of the studio
		Scene 57: Alice climbing down the steps of the church
4	*Bhoomimalayalam*	00: 27:04 to 00:27:42, Shot of Nirmala, and other women in cashew factory
		00:40:59 to 00:41:11 Shot of Sathi, and other women in a factory in Gujarat.
5	*Padam Onnu Oru Vilapam*	Shots of Shahina-00: 10:03 to 00:10:09;00:26:27 to 00:26:35; 01: 12:12 to 01:12:36; 01:13:59 to 00:14:22; 01:36:11 to 00:36:18; 01:36:20 to 01:36:29; 01:36:34 to 01:36:47
6	*Vilapangalkkapuram*	Shots of Zahira-00:16:51 to 00:17:16; 00:21:18 to 00:21:55 00:22:23 to 00:22:27; 00:22:30 to 00:22:43; 00:23:41 to 00:23:48; 00:23:53 to 00:24:34; 00:26:00 to 00:26:05; 00:27:15 to 00:27:20; 00:35:50 to 00:35:55; 00:47:35 to 00:47:50; 00:49:21 to 00:49:33; 00:49:45 to 00:50:26; 00:50:33 to 00:52:00; 00:52:18 to 00:53:01; 01:10:36 to 01:10:44; 01:11:41 to 01:11:46; 01:12:40 to 01:12:49; 01:12:50 to 01:13:05 01:24:50 to 01:27:06

The filmmaker has often chosen high angle shots to subordinate the subject, and made the protagonists appear weak, helpless, or small in the society. According to Jeremy G. Butler, a high angle shot is usually when the camera is located high (often above head height) and the shot is angled downwards. A

film maker will often choose a high angle to subordinate the subject. Literally "looking down" on the subject, the camera makes him or her appear insignificant, weak, helpless, or small. This approach was used by the director in the above movies mentioned to visualize the alienation of the protagonists, and it deepened the concept of alienation in these movies (Butler, 2007).

This approach was effectively used by the director in films like *Danny, Ponthan Mada, Alicinte Aneshanam, Bhoomimalayalam, Padam Onnu Oru Vilapam,* and *Vilapangalkkapuram*. Moreover, a differential approach was used by the director in portraying male and female protagonists, and the representatives of the minority communities. This is done by showing these representative protagonists on high angle shots for a longer duration to emphasize the alienation they are experiencing in the society. The women protagonists like Alice, Shahina and Zahira, and Danny and Mada, representatives of the religious minorities were made powerless and week through this cinematic technique. Furthermore, women protagonists were given more preference in this kind of portrayal compared to male counterparts, and it reflects the director's concern for gender discrimination that exists in the society, and has highlighted the alienation of women, especially the women of minority community.

Low Key lighting and Signification of 'alienation'

Low-key lighting is a method of lighting in photography, film or television. Traditional photography follows a three-point lighting techniques, including key light, fill light, and back light for illumination. Low-key lighting habitually on the other hand, uses only one key light, optionally controlled with a fill light or a simple reflector, and accentuates the curves of an object by throwing areas into shade while a fill light or reflector may illuminate the shadow areas to control contrast. This approach tends to intensify the sense of alienation felt by the viewer, hence is commonly used in film noir and horror genres. Researchers looked into the usage of low key lighting in the films selected for the study.

Table 2: Protagonist's Low-key lighting Shots in TV Chandran Films

Film		Protagonist's Low-key lighting Shots details with Screen Duration / Scene No
1	*Danny*	Shots of Danny- 00:51:02 to 00:51:11; 01:04:33 to 01:04:52; 01:06:45 to 01:06:47; 01:10:21 to 01:10:37; 01:11:47 to 01:12:11; 01:21: 51 to 01:22:21; 01:28:04 to 01:28:13; 01:28:13 to 01:28:57; 01:39:51 to 01:40:34
2	*Sankaranum Mohanum*	Shots of Mohana Krishnan- 00:37:06 to 00:37:46; 00:43:51 to 00:45:45; 00:49:31 to 00:50:35; 01:10:15 to 01:10:36; 01:11:48 to 01:12:10; 01:12:17 to 01:14:44
3	*Ponthan Mada*	Shots of Mada & Sheema Thampuran 00:06:40 to 00:06:47, 00:10:40 to 00:10:43; 00:15:10 to 00:15:13; 00:21:34 to 00:22:50; 00:38:11 to 00:40:00; 00:41:27 to 00:41:32 Shots of Mada & Sheema Thampuran together 00:36:46 to 00:40:00; 00:46:20 to 00:47:46; 00: 47:46 to 00:48:53
4	*Alicinte Aneshanam*	Scene 7 : Alice and kids on the bed
		Scene 36: Alice sitting in front of her house
		Scene 46 : Alice crying in the study room
5	*Mangamma*	Scene 18:Mangamma in tea shop
		Scene 22: Mangamma and Velayudhan in the tea shop
		Scene 32: Mangamma reading Balan's letter
		Scene 69:Mangamma and Balan in tea shop
6	*Padam Onnu Oru Vilapam*	Shots of Shahina-00:17:18 to 00:17:45; 01:36:20 to 01:36:29; 01: 36:34 to 01:36:47, 01:37:18 to 01:37:23; 01:38:01 to 01:38:06, 01:38:37 to 01:38:41
7	*Vilapangalkkapuram*	Shots of Zahira-01: 10:21 to 01:10:24; 01:11:53 to 01:12:07; 01:12:24 to 01:12:30

Low key lighting is another cinematographic technique used by the director to create meaningful shadows, and this cinematic intervention produces shadowy areas. It tends to heighten the sense of alienation through deviance, disequilibrium, and even social rupture. According to Susan Hayward, low key lighting is a cinematographic technique used by the director to create a chiaroscuro effect resulting in meaningful shadows, and it is used in cinematography to refer to any scene with a high lighting ratio, especially if there is a predominance of shadowy areas. It tends to heighten the sense of alienation through deviance, disequilibrium, and even social rupture hence is commonly used in film noir and horror genres (Hayward, 2000). In the above mentioned films, the director uses low key lighting shots to visualize the alienation faced by the protagonists, and it deepened the concept of alienation in these movies.

T V Chandran has used this kind of lighting in films like *Danny, Sankaranum Mohanum, Ponthan Mada, Alicinte Aneshanam, Mangamma, Padam Onnu Oru Vilapam*, and *Vilappangalkkapuram*. These cinematic interventions with angular shadows, harsh, low-key lighting brought about the high contrast, and united by the consistent thread of a visual style that emphasizes a claustrophobic and off-balance feel to the world, reminds us about the characteristics of film noir. Through this approach, TV Chandran, draws the viewer into a distorted view and creating a sense of immediacy with the image to portray the somber and melancholic life of alienation.

Camera Movement -Hosepiping and Signification of 'alienation'

In the film, *Padam Onnu Oru Vilapam*, the scene where protagonist Shahina's uncle, Hassan (marriage broker) along with Muslim clergies, try to persuade her for an early marriage, the director uses an arc like subjective panning 'hosepiping' to visualize the entrapment and confinement of Shahina to the orthodox and mideval mindset (screen time: 00:37:02 to 00:37:34). The same camera movement is twice used in the film' *Vilappangalkkappuram*, when the clergies visit protagonist Zahira in the hospital (screen time: 00:34:34 to 00:34:50), and during Zahira's marriage with Salim, where the clergy's enjoying the food served (screen time: 01:19:00 to 01:19:25). According to Daniel Chandlier, the speed of pan across characters creates a particular mood as well as establishing the viewer's relationship with the subject, and continuous panning across from one person to another reveals the clumsy nature of Muslim clergies and their supporters. This approach reveals the villainous nature of clergies, and also deepens the concept of alienation in these movies (Chandler, 2002). In addition to this, the speed of pan across characters creates a particular mood as well as establishing the viewer's

relationship with the subject, and continuous panning across from one person to another reveals the clumsy nature of uneducated Muslim clergies and their supporters. This camera movement illustrates a character's subjective experience with the feel of a documentary.

Furthermore, camera movement has the potential to function in many different ways, such as to direct the viewer's attention, reveal off-screen space, provide narrative information, or create expressive effects. Because of its ability to reveal or conceal space, the camera movement often makes in the creation of suspense and surprise possible. The researcher could find camera movements that position the viewer as an objective witness to unfolding events in TV Chandran's selected films.

Conclusion

The semiological study of the selected films of TV Chandran reveals that he could build a strong imagery of alienation through his protagonists, who symbolizes the subjective experience of alienation through cinematic techniques. Semiological review of the films reveal that the director adroitly used different cinematic techniques like high angle shots, low key lighting and hosepiping camera movements, which have a significant impact in deepening the concept of alienation. The usage of high angle shots of the protagonists in the listed movies signified the powerlessness and helplessness of the marginalized community representatives, especially the women folk of the community. Low key lighting in the movies created a chiaroscuro effect with meaningful shadows and it signified a melancholic life of alienation like the film noir genre. Moreover, this effect has also heightened the subjective alienation of the protagonists in TV Chandran's films. Another specialty found in the movies is the usage of hosepiping. This camera movement could visualize the subjective experience of the protagonists in the movie, and also could create an immersive feel through positioning of viewers as an objective witness to the alienation experienced by the characters.

Furthermore, the analysis of the selected films revealed that TV Chandran is a maverick in visualization of the concept of alienation through camera codes and lighting, and could bring lucid support to delineate the concept of alienation, and reminded the researchers about the auteurs of the film noir. This cinematic intervention was deployed because the overarching theme 'alienation' was bigger than any character to the director.

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Abstract

This paper revisits the cultural and political debates that the Malayalam film *Mukhamukham* (Face to Face, dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1984) engendered in the Kerala public sphere to explore the relationship between cinema and politics in Kerala in the 1980s. While the film, in which the rise and fall of trade union leader was central to the narrative, was heralded as a true portrayal of the state of politics in Kerala by some critics, the film was vehemently criticized by those who were sympathetic to the Left. The paper offers a detailed account of the various positions that the critics took towards the film, and Adoor Gopalakrishnan's response to the criticisms. Identifying certain questions such as the film's portrayal of the history of the Communist movement in Kerala, the representation of the revolutionary, and the question of cinematic realism as central in these debates, the paper discusses how the debates around the film help us make sense of the relationship between cinema and politics in Kerala.

Keywords

cinema and politics, Kerala, *Mukhamukham*, Communist movement

Introduction

The Malayalam film *Mukhamukham* by the internationally renowned director Adoor Gopalakrishnan was released in 1984, when the campaigning for the Indian parliamentary elections in the state was underway. The film, which told the story of the rise and fall of Sreedharan, a trade union leader, created a controversy in Kerala. V.C. Harris, a noted Malayalam film critic, gives an account of the response the film received:

> *Mukhamukham* was a major attraction at the 10th International Film Festival of India held at Delhi, and it was easily the best-noticed film at the Indian Panorama. The film was warmly received by foreign as well as Indian critics, and it was given the prestigious Critics Award. Yet, back home in Kerala, *Mukhamukham* had a different kind of reception. It was as though Keralites…could not digest the film's apparently hostile references to the history of the Communist

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movement in the State. 'How dare Adoor Gopalakrishnan portray the Communists in this manner?' asked the outraged party loyalists. For those who had to somehow attack the film on artistic grounds, it was never an easy task, but they managed— 'mixing memory and desire' and critical clichés and broadsides (Harris, 1989).

While the film was heralded as the true portrayal of the state of Communism (and of politics in general) in Kerala, Left-sympathizers levelled many charges against the film. Let us look at some of the major criticisms that were raised against the film and Gopalakrishnan's responses to those criticisms. This will help us identify certain questions that were central to the discussions surrounding this film.

P. Govinda Pillai, a Marxist theoretician from the state of Kerala, in South India who himself was associated with film society initiatives such as Janasakthi and Kairali Film Society (which distributed and tried to produce political films or "good cinema" during the late 1970s and 1980s) calls *Mukhamukham* a reincarnation of "Bhagavan Macaroni" (Pillai, 1984), an anti-Communist propaganda *Kathaprasangam[2]* that was popular during the Liberation Struggle of 1958-1959 which culminated in the dismissal of the first Communist government in Kerala. By calling the film a reincarnation of "Bhagavan Macroni", Pillai locates the film as part of the continuing anti-Communist propaganda since the Liberation Struggle in 1959. Pillai also accuses the film of major historical inaccuracies. He argues:

> When a party leader goes underground, he maintains his links with the party. In fact, it is the party which decides that he should go underground and provides him with a safe shelter. But Sreedharan is not in touch with his party. No one knows where he is during the ten years he goes missing. This is simply not the way it is (quoted in Bhaskaran 2010).

Govinda Pillai also points out that: "no memorial was ever been erected for a Communist before verifying his death. No degenerate Communist had ever been honoured. These were terrible mistakes and history did not support any of Gopalakrishnan's contentions" (ibid, 131). The question of historical correctness and the authenticity of Gopalakrishnan's narrative are central to

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[2] *Kathaprasangam* is a popular story-telling art form in Kerala After the first Communist government came to power, there was an acute food shortage in the state. Macaroni was promoted as alternative food by the communist government. The title of the *Kathaprasangam* refers to E.M.S. Namboodiripad, who was the chief minister then.

Pillai's criticism. It is important to note here that the "fictional" nature of the narrative in a "realist" film is also central to Pillai's criticism.

Raveendran, noted filmmaker and writer, maintains that the human in the human condition that Gopalakrishnan talks about is Communism. Raveendran reads the narrative of the film as a symbolic text and takes issue with the way the history of Communism is portrayed in the film. He asks:

> Is the history of the Communist movement in Kerala just the stories of revisionism, class unity, creation of martyrs for its own good and Left militantism? According to *Mukhamukham* that is the case. Even anti-Communists would accept that such a portrayal is a denial of history. In fact, what the film tries to do is not just describe the fall of a movement. It also tries to argue that the said movement was flawed and decadent from the very beginning itself (Raveendran, 2011).

According to Raveendran, Gopalakrishnan's critique of Communism doesn't have the backing of intellectual honesty and historical understanding. He accuses *Mukhamukham* of stooping to the standards of a propaganda film. Raveendran is also critical about the historical juncture at which the film came out. He believes that *Mukhamukham* which hit the theatres during the campaign for the general elections of 1984, in effect became an active part of the anti-Communist campaign.

Vijayakrishnan, a well-known Malayalam film critic sees *Mukhamukham* as different from Gopalakrishnan's earlier films not only for its anti-realistic nature, unlike his earlier films, but also for its political nature. According to Vijayakrishnan, Gopalakrishnan has always stayed away from political statements in his films. Even when there were political references in Gopalakrishnan's films, they sounded like those of an apolitical intellectual. Vijayakrishnan observes that "it is mainly by giving symbolic value to the tile factory, the background space of the story, and its trade union leader Sreedharan that Gopalakrishnan adopts an anti-realist mode" (Vijayakrishnan, 2013). Vijayakrishnan also draws attention to the artistic failure of the film. He states:

> The artistic failure of the film is even more striking. If Gopalakrishnan was able to achieve wonders through this film as a work of art, he could have been forgiven to an extent for the distorted political views. However, since the art in this film ended up as a failure, the flaws in the political content exhibit all the deformities" (Vijayakrishnan, 2012).

According to Vijayakrishnan, "*Mukhamukham* is as much a retrogradation of Malayalam cinema as much as it is a retrogradation of Gopalakrishnan" (Vijayakrishnan, 2012). C.L. Thomas accuses Gopalakrishnan of not having honesty and commitment towards the subject of his film, which is the Communist movement. He sees the film as one based on the prejudices of the director because of which the film has ended up as a third rate film (Thomas, 1985). He substantiates his argument by showing the different shades of the character of Sreedharan, "Gopalakrishnan pretends to investigate the trajectories of the growth of the Communist movement and the feasibility of the ideology that informs the movement. For that purpose, the director makes Sreedharan symbolically stand for Communist ideology and the Communist movement" (Thomas, 1985). Thomas asks how someone like Sreedharan, who is seen as a drunkard and a womanizer, can represent the movement. What Gopalakrishnan tries to show in the film is, according to him, that even in the early days of Communism the leaders were not upright people. Gopalakrishnan's portrayal of the Communist leader was met with severe criticism from C.L. Thomas. We will come to the question of the representation of the Communist hero in the coming section.

S. Jayachandran Nair takes issue with Gopalakrishnan for portraying Sreedharan as a drunkard. He asks, "was it drunkards like Sreedharan who led the revolutionary movements in our land?" (Nair, 1984). Arguing that Gopalakrishnan is exploring a tumultuous period in the history of Kerala with his inaccurate historical sense, Jayachandran Nair further remarks that "Gopalakrishnan tells the story of a movement, for which he has no affinity, through the trade union leader Sreedharan. This character is created in the image of P. Krishna Pillai" (ibid, 14). M.P. Narayana Pillai wrote that the story of the film is unrealistic and that if it was made during the Liberation Struggle it would have benefitted the anti-Communist forces. He sees *Mukhamukham* as giving a wrong historical understanding. According to him, *Mukhamukham* doesn't show any affinity that the pre-1957 communist movement deserves, which he credits for the radical changes in the Kerala society (Pillai, 1984).

At the same time, M.F. Thomas, who was the secretary of the Chithralekha Film Co-operative that Gopalakrishnan had founded, hails *Mukhamukham* as a legend. According to him, "*Mukhamukham* is not the story of an individual. It is the story of a social transformation. It is the political history of Kerala. It is the story of the people's uprising that changed the course of history. It is also the story of the fall of those people". He describes *Mukhamukham* as the first political film to emerge from Kerala "where people mistake intellectual masturbation for political cinema" (Thomas, 1984). He adds that the film is about reality and the image that is created around this

reality and, how, over a period of time, the image overtakes reality. He believes that Gopalakrishnan has succeeded in telling the complex story of the growth and fall of Communism. Similarly, Aswathy, a film critic at the Chandrika Weekly, praised the film saying that "*Mukhamukham* is as strong and beautiful as Adoor Gopalakrishnan's previous works of art. *Mukhamukham* is capable of reminding the Communists (and politicians in general, in a broader sense) that their days of glory are over and that they are still clinging to the past glory and to prompt them for a self-introspection". Responding to the criticism that the characterization of Sreedharan was flawed, Aswathy argues that it is because some critics read Sreedharan as a representative of Communism that they raise such criticism. According to Aswathy, except for the scenes from the tile factory and the last scene where both the factions of the Communist Party march together, everything else is unreal. Aswathy argues that it is because one treats the incidents in the film as real that some critics accuse *Mukhamukham* of historical inaccuracies (Aswathy, 1985).

It emerges from the various responses to the film that the film's portrayal of Communism and the Communist hero generated much debate. The question of "realism" also emerges in these discussions where the treatment of real incidents through a symbolic narrative is questioned. Before that let us look at Gopalakrishnan's responses to the various criticisms as the questions Gopalakrishnan raises in his response to the criticisms are of importance for my discussion in this paper.

Gopalakrishnan describes his film in the following words:

> There lives a revolutionary—not necessarily political—in every individual. But in the course of time, as a matter of common experience, this spirit either dies out or becomes dormant. The idea of this film was born out of my desire to search for this spirit (Gopalakrishnan, 1985).

Gopalakrishnan has always maintained that *Mukhamukham* should not be seen as a political film. He states that the film is about a human condition. To the criticism that his film was anti-Communist, Gopalakrishnan has repeatedly said that he respected Communism. In an interview with *Frontline*, Gopalakrishnan says:

> Some people think it [*Mukhamukham*] is an anti-Communist film. I think they are not even seeing the film superficially; they are attributing things to it. I would say that they have not watched the film

properly. I never say that the movement has failed. In fact, in the very crucial sequence of the film, you remember he sits arched through the door and then outside you see the roof and this courtyard and you see this lonely image of this man sitting there. Then, almost like a commentary, you get the voice which says, 'In the onward progressive march of the proletarian movement a group of people are unable to continue with the march and they stagger and stop and the march continues....' It's very important. It has the red colour as its theme. It has the Internationale as its theme music. So it cannot be working against (Gopalakrishnan, 1985).

Gopalakrishnan has maintained that *Mukhamukham* is a film about the revolutionary spirit present in every individual (Gopalakrishnan, 1985). He asks how one should portray Communism and asserts that he is not interested in the way some commercial movies portray Communism. Here Gopalakrishnan could be alluding to the so-called "red films" like *Angadi* (The Market, dir. I.V. Sasi, 1980) and *Ee Nadu* (This Land, dir. I.V. Sasi, 1982) of the I.V. Sasi—T. Damodaran duo that had appeared a few years before *Mukhamukham* or the early "Communist films" of the KPAC tradition. Let us look at how Gopalakrishnan talks about representing the Communist hero. Gopalakrishnan writes:

> What if I wanted to make a "revolutionary film" which everybody would accept? The character of Sreedharan should not have any distinct characteristics or individuality. Since Hindu gods have their own shortcomings one cannot portray him as equal to gods. What can be done then? We can give him the image of the "good" person then. Otherwise, how will a large majority of the people in this country approve of such a character? In order to show that he led a revolutionary mass organization one can also add revolutionary songs. At least five songs should be there in the first half of the film. Along with titles, one can also employ chorus which will create adrenalin rush in the audience. The hero should not be as fat or old as Sreedharan. Weren't early communists all slim and handsome! Where have I reached now with these descriptions? Isn't this a description of the film *Punnapra Vayalar*, a "revolutionary" film everybody appreciated!! Sorry I am not interested in making such a film (Gopalakrishnan, 1985).

In these words, Gopalakrishnan is offering a critique of the melodramatic representation of Communism and the Communist hero in popular Malayalam cinema. It may be argued that through the film *Mukhamukham* Gopalakrishnan is attempting a critique of such melodramatic techniques. Gopalakrishnan

states: "I had portrayed Communist workers as they are— men with the same emotions and weaknesses of fellow human beings, and I had never intended to defame or misrepresent the movement" (qtd in Bhaskaran, 2010). In an interview to *Filmfare* in 1985, Gopalakrishnan said:

> I do not pretend to be a political movie maker at all. In a political film, you have to take a stand, and fight out of commitment, all at the expense of turning blind to other aspects. As a conscientious director, I cannot say I am not affected by things political. Still, I cannot be devoured by them. I have admired people not only in the Communist movement but also in other political struggles (qtd in Bhaskaran, 2010).

In an article titled "Whose Failure? The Film's or the Critic's?" Gopalakrishnan strongly reacts to the criticisms raised by P. Govinda Pillai and Vijayakrishnan. In keeping with his earlier positions, Gopalakrishnan maintains that *Mukhamukham* should not be seen as a political film. According to him, the politics of the film is in the background of the narrative. The problem with Govinda Pillai's criticism, according to Gopalakrishnan, is that Pillai watched the film with the assumption that *Mukhamukham* is a political film (that too an anti-Communist film). Gopalakrishnan states that he never intended to make a political film and that Communism is the most beautiful philosophy that human beings have ever seen. He also contests Vijayakrishnan's accusation that *Mukhamukham* is anti-realistic. Gopalakrishnan states that the crux of the film is the investigation of the real: which is the real—the experienced real? Or the perceived real? He also challenges Vijayakrishnan's argument that he has adopted symbolism in the film. He writes that a tile factory should be seen only as a tile factory (Gopalakrishnan, 1985). Gopalakrishnan responds to the accusation regarding the portrayal of Sreedharan as an alcoholic that those who want to see Sreedharan as a flawless person find fault with such a portrayal. Gopalakrishnan also adds that Sreedharan was a messenger and many critics failed to see the messenger separate from the message.

It is important to note that the film received strong reactions not only from the Left sympathizers, but from the general public as well. At the same time, the film was much appreciated outside Kerala. As the researcher elaborates, the film, while marked by liberal prejudices, offered a critique of certain practices prevalent in the Communist movement in Kerala. The strong reactions to this film may be seen as a response to the perceived denigration of the Communist movement which has played a significant role in the shaping of modern Kerala and a modern subjectivity in the region.

The researcher's attempt in the preceding paragraphs was to give an account of the passions that were mobilized in the reactions to the film. The various responses undeniably elicit questions of cinematic realism and the portrayal of Communist history.

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When was Malayalam cinema? Caste, Public Sphere and Modern Identity

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Abstract

This paper explores the nuances of the debates around the "first" Malayalam cinema *Vigathakumaran*. Considering the movie *Celluloid,* which cinematically recreated the making of *Vigathakumaran,* as an important text, the paper sets the ground for the discussion. It tries to unravel the peculiar situation that the first ever production attempt of a Malayalam cinema witnessed. Looking at the history of cinema in the South Indian context, the paper tries to argue that the social aggression of various kind that the first cinematic endeavor of the region faced was predominantly of casteist in nature. This is largely because of the innate potential of the modern institution of cinema which brings otherwise divided social groups under one roof, thus unsettling existing social orders.

Keywords

 Vigathakumaran, *Celluloid*, Caste and Malayalam Cinema, History of Malayalam Cinema.

Introduction

The film *Celluloid*, which revisits the making of the film *Vigathakumaran,* the first ever movie to be made in Malayalam (The Lost Child, dir. J.C. Daniel, 1928), was released in 2013, reigniting discussions on the history of Malayalam cinema and the status of *Vigathakumaran* as the "first" Malayalam film. This article analyses *Celluloid* as a text in order to understand how the historiography of the Malayalam film industry has been retrogressively produced following the formation of the state of Kerala. It is, therefore, essential to map the trajectory of the discussions around the film *Celluloid*, in order to make sense of the initial understandings of the early Malayalam cinema and its concerns. These discussions attempt to respond to questions such as when was Malayalam cinema?, what were the concerns of the industry at that time?, and what were the initial attempts made to produce the first Malayalam film?.

Debates still continue regarding the status of the "first" Malayalam film—whether it was *Vigathakumaran*, a silent movie which was the first film to be indigenously produced in the geographical terrain of what was later identified as the unified state of Kerala, or the first sound film *Balan* (1938) in which

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Malayalam was spoken for the first time. According to Ratheesh Radhakrishnan (2015), the debate started with the rediscovery of J. C. Daniel, the director of *Vigathakumaran*, by the film journalist Chelangatt Gopalakrishnan, who popularized the status of the movie through his writing of the life story of Daniel. The recovery of the debate was also fed by Kunnukuzhi Mani who brought forth the story of P.K Rosy, the heroine of *Vigathakumaran.* It should be noted that these debates unfolded during the late 1960s and 1970s, more than thirty years after the release of the film (Radhakrishnan, 2015). However, these debates resurfaced with the release of *Celluloid*. Due to the paucity of material related to the movie itself, the study here takes *Celluloid* into account as it brings forth at least a sense of the early history of cinema in the region, and further allows one to engage with how this narrative has been produced retroactively.

The film *Celluloid* received critical appreciation in film festivals, and was successful at the box office as well. The film is a biopic which sketches the life story of J. C. Daniel (considered to be the father of Malayalam cinema), the production of his film *Vigathakumaran* and the story of its heroine P. K. Rosie. The basic premises of the film were based on the biography of J. C. Daniel, *JC Danielinte Jeevitha Katha* (2011, *Life of JC Daniel*) written by Chelangatt Gopalakrishnan, a prominent writer of the history of Malayalam cinema.

Celluloid brings to screen the life of J. C. Daniel and his relentless struggle to make the first film in Malayalam. The film essays his love for cinema as he travels around to procure equipment required to make a film, writes numerous letters to experts and technicians who had access to such technology at the time, and visits them to understand and to seek support for his efforts and entrepreneurship. In the process, he also meets Dada Saheb Phalke, the pioneer of Indian cinema. The researcher argues that *Celluloid*'s narrative locates the efforts of J. C. Daniel into a particular historiographic landscape, that of a "national" imagination. *Celluloid*, produced in 2013, is a historiographical effort to locate the origins of Malayalam cinema. At the same time, the film also places the Malayalam film industry in an autonomous, though subsidiary relationship, with what is assumed to be "national" Indian cinema. The film, therefore, imagines the origins of Malayalam cinema as the film industry of a sub-region, with its own particular cultural and aesthetic concerns, within the broader ambit of Indian cinema.

According to the film *Celluloid*, Daniel comes across as someone who is driven not only by cinephilia, but also by his curiosity towards the potentials of a modern technology. He is also depicted as someone who is strongly

shaped by the imagination of a Malayali nation, and what it means to be a Malayali subject. The retrospective consciousness of Phalke as the Father of Indian cinema, and the ways in which it is cinematically formulated in *Celluloid* shows the supposed "indebtedness" that Malayalam cinema has towards what has been historically identified as "Indian cinema" and its initial patriarchs. In *Celluloid*, the initial trajectories of Malayalam cinema do not appear as an autonomous process, but firmly locates it as a part of the national history of Indian cinema. In part, it's recognized in this the ways in which the Malayali identity/subjectivity also self-consciously finds itself to be a part of the Indian national identity, and therefore as a regional identity. Moreover, Daniel's desire for an autonomous Malayalam film is constructed by positing it against the perceived hegemony of Tamil cinematic productions in the region. In *Celluloid,* therefore, the autonomy of the initial Malayalam cinema is imagined on the one hand within the larger purview of Indian cinema, while on the other as an opposition to the dominant Tamil cinema.

The film projects that it was in the early 1920s that Daniel started developing his dream for making the first ever Malayalam cinema. It is notable that this was almost a decade before populist demands for a unified state of Kerala was articulated through the *Aikya Kerala* movement. Thus, Daniel's efforts may be seen as an attempt to establish a production base in Travancore, rather than an imagined region called Kerala. Even in the film as well as in Gopalakrishnan's biography, Daniel refers to bringing films produced in and for *Malayalakkara,* the land of Malayali. The linguistic therefore prefigures the territorial imagination of a communal entity.

By the 1920s, the people of the region (then comprised of the separate provinces of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar) were already familiar with the medium of cinema, with a considerable presence of touring cinemas and other makeshift film exhibitions in these regions. The films which were brought for these exhibitions were mostly from Madras and Bombay and on a thematic side, these films were mostly mythologicals, based on Hindu Puranas. A significant number of foreign films were also exhibited during the period. It is interesting to note that, when the idea of a film in Malayalam was conceived by JC Daniel, he had his reservations about the thematic and aesthetic treatment of the films. He refused to comply with the predominant form and theme of mythologicals. The film *Celluloid* has captured Daniel's anxieties about his venture into the production of the first Malayalam film. The character of Daniel (played by Privithiraj Sukumaran) is often seen sharing these anxieties with his wife Janet (played by Mamta Mohandas) in the film. While expressing his distaste for popular mythologicals of the period, Daniel

says that he is, "tired of watching 'Puranas', coming from Bombay and Madras. What we need to make now is a 'social-drama' like Chaplin's *Kid*." These concerns of Daniel could be considered as his desire to bring an independent autonomous intervention, through the development of a new aesthetic flavour, in the medium of cinema as a modern institution.

Bringing in a female actor to play the lead female role was also a difficult task for Daniel. The prevailing social system of caste distinction and discrimination, which took on aggressive and virulent forms in Travancore (and other parts of the region comprising Kerala), deposited caste purity on the body of the woman who had to be protected from the gaze of men belonging to the lower castes. This limited women from being in the public domain let alone be part of theatre or cinema performances that were particularly designed for mass public viewing. While looking for a female artist for *Vigathakumaran,* Daniel had to face this bitter reality. In *Celluloid,* during his search for a female artist, Daniel is told that "even for acting in plays, there is no female artist available. How would anybody even come to act in cinema?!" However, Daniel's determination was instrumental in bringing in the first heroine in Malayalam cinema.

However, despite Daniel's concerted efforts, *Vigathakumaran* was virulently attacked by the dominantly upper caste audience across Travancore. Apart from the fact that the film was directed by a lower caste Nadar Christian, what was considered most offensive by the Nair orthodoxy was that P. K. Rosy, a converted Dalit woman, played the role of a Nair woman in the film. Rosy had to face the casteist wrath of the upper caste members of the audience, who stopped her from attending the film's premiere at Capitol Theatre, a *"cinemapura"* where the film was screened in Thiruvananthapuram. Later Rosy had to disappear from Travancore as she could not withstand the witch-hunt initiated by Nair *Madambis* (feudal lords) who burnt down her hut and chased her away from her village (Rowena, 2013). The first heroine of Malayalam cinema disappeared then to never be seen again. While discussing how Rosy and her role in *Vigathakumaran* have been completely invisibilized in the mainstream narrative of Kerala's film history, Rowena notes,

> It is no wonder then that the Dalit female body of Rosy aroused such hatred and anger in the Nair landlords. She was pretending to be Nair, but even then they knew that hers was a body that they had strictly forbidden any kind of entry or space in the public sphere. Yet she was standing there instead of the Nair woman that the landlords could not bear to see on screen at that time, but demanding a legitimacy that they would not even grant even to Dalit men. The mirror that was to reflect

their modern self was sending back the image of the Dalit woman that they never acknowledged even in real life except to exploit and use sexually. It is no wonder that the Nair men tore the screen in anger – Thus the mirror that mirrored the wrong image was broken and the Dalit body of Rosy was banished from Malayalam film history itself (2013).

Rowena (2013) points out that the violent disparagement of Rosy ushered in an age of upper caste actresses who would don the role of the heroine in popular Malayalam films, a trend which continues to this day.

The first ever attempt made in the production of a Malayalam cinema by J.C. Daniel and the story of the making of *Vigathakumaran* resulted in the economic ruin of the filmmaker and the disappearance of its lead actress. The film, however, met with moderate success while exhibited in Alappuzha, Nagercoil, Thrissur and Thalassery. However, both Daniel and Rosy remained obfuscated in the annals of Kerala's film history. Nevertheless, one can note that even in the early conception of the cinema in the region, there had precipitated a quest for intervening in the medium of cinema – through the initiation of new aesthetic and thematic concerns – and its development as a modern institution. Daniel's revolutionary act of introducing the first female lead into the Malayalam cinema, notwithstanding adverse traditional practices of caste and entrenched patriarchal notions, could be seen as one of the rudimentary interventions he made through the modern institution of cinema in Malayalam. The fate of the first film in Malayalam, because of the rejection of the rigid structures of caste dispositions, could also invoke questions about the traditional caste identities of the period. If one looks past the commercial failure of *Vigathakumaran*, one can indeed note how film as a medium could question and transform existing sensibilities, aesthetic conventions, notions of public space and conceptions of the region and its ethnicity. The unsuccessful fate of *Vigathakumaran* as a film and a process indeed reveals how cinema, a modern institution of art unsettles the existing social orders and norms. The entrant of cinema as a technology, process and institution in to the people and society at large has brought in several changes.

An important intervention that cinema as a modern institution brought into the subcontinent was that it could reconstitute the pre-existing social hierarchical orders such as caste and class which were prevalent then, especially in the social realm. The innate potential of the cinema was that it had to be exhibited to a mass audience in an enclosed space. This very nature of the medium was responsible for effectively disrupting prevailing segregations based on social hierarchies. People across different social backgrounds like caste and class,

who were otherwise segregated and separated by the norms of pollution and untouchability, were forced to sit together and enjoy the same film which was screened.

Sivathamby (1981) notes that this breakdown of hierarchies within cinema halls acts as a precursor to imagining the region in terms of an ethnic community. The Cinema Hall was the first performance centre in which all the Tamils sat under the same roof. The basis of the seating is, not on the hierarchic position of the patron but essentially on his purchasing power. If he cannot afford paying the higher rate, he has either to keep away from the performance or be with "all and sundry." Thus, in the history of Tamilian arts, the film has been the first social equaliser. And this had a tremendous impact both on the audience and on the medium itself as it operates in Tamil Nadu.

Because of the socially exclusive character of the arts (including literature) in pre-modern times, it was not possible to portray any character or situation that would be representative of all the Tamils irrespective of their caste and status. It was after bringing them together as spectators under one roof or as readers reading copies of the same book (this was facilitated by the secular system of education introduced by the British) that creative artistes could think in terms of depicting and portraying characters that were 'typical' of the entire Tamils or characters that were typical of the various sections of the Tamilian population. (Sivathamby, 1981)

Cinema disrupted traditional social formations through its commercial determinism. It could be said that the introduction of cinema in Indian public life, during the early 20th century, had a significant role in constituting a market by embedding new consumerist practices among a wider range of subjects. The accessibility to the medium of cinema was only defined by one's ability to purchase a ticket to watch a film. In this way, cinema as a modern institution was producing the possibility of a public sphere where other factors like social and cultural capital do not play a determining role. In this way, the coming of cinema into the subcontinent played a crucial role in destabilizing prevailing social norms and opening up possibilities to create more inclusive and egalitarian public spaces.

Film theorist Andre Bazin (1971) has noted in his seminal work, "What is cinema?" that the medium of cinema and the exhibition of it to the audience created a sense of familiarity between the medium and the spectators. The cinema recreates or substitutes a world which is more in "harmony with our desires" (Bazin, 1971), a new world of spectacle for the gaze of the audience of cinema. It could be said that the experience and act of film viewing can be

imagined as two worlds facing each other, the one that is projected for the audience on the screen and the other one we occupy and live in. However, it could also be said that this interface between the medium of cinema, its narrative and the viewer is neither just a correspondence between nor a reflection of two mutually exclusive worlds. Rather, the modern technology of cinema and its peculiar viewing practice enabled an agency of space for the audience to negotiate with what is shown on the screen and what was represented on screen. This space between the screen and the viewer becomes a terrain of conflicts, negotiation and reformations. So, it was not only the technological apparatus of cinema, but the public space of theatre, the spectacle, the audience and as a whole cinema that was a "thoroughly 'modern' addition to public life; the modernity of cinema did not merely lie in its novelty as a technological from, but in its innate capability to re-order social spaces (Athique & Hill, 2009).

An analysis of available texts and debates in fact suggests that the sketchy fate of the first ever film production attempt in the region Kerala, could be because of the anxiety that the modern institution of cinema brings into the traditional society where social interactions, transactions etc. are controlled by the caste orders and the entry of the cinema into these conventional societies would unsettle the norms.

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Reimagining *Perumthachan's* Pond: Information and Experience in Virtual Reality Narratives

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Abstract

This paper discusses a visual art project, which narrated the popular legend of *Perumthachan's* temple pond through the new medium of virtual reality (VR). The paper primarily focuses on the design process that was adopted to render one of *Perumthachan's* mythical architectural quirks — a shape- morphing temple pond mentioned in *Kottarathil Shankunni's Aitheehyamala* — as an immersive VR experience. This VR experience was first presented to a group of school children at a lower primary school in the village of *Uliyannoor* near the *Uliyannoor Siva* temple, the place where it is believed that *Perumthachan* was adopted and raised by a family of craftsmen. In this manner, the project explored the possibility of refiguring a mythical space as a three-dimensional immersive virtual reality simulation. Such an adaptation produces a unique experience of a mediated narrative wherein auditory, visual and embodied modes of reception generate the phenomenon of "presence." The paper illustrates this by detailing how a feeling of presence can be evoked by incorporating "information" and "experience" into the design of a VR simulation. This means that the factual parts of a phenomenon denoting the informational aspect, could be combined with its emotional or affective parts denoting the experiential aspect, to enable viewers/participants to engage with the VR simulation both cognitively and emotionally, which generates the unique feeling of presence.

Keywords: Information, Experience, Virtual Reality, Narrative.

Introduction

With the advent of technologies such as virtual, augmented and mixed reality, new ways of narration and storytelling are emerging. While traditional forms of visual media such as television and film confine the viewers to a two-dimensional visual frame, virtual, augmented and mixed reality enable total or partial immersion in a media simulation. While VR temporarily suspends the experience of the real life world by supplanting it with a virtual world and enabling the viewers/participants to direct their gaze in 360 degrees, augmented and mixed reality make possible the simultaneous experience of real and simulated worlds, each one complementing the other. These new media interactions are accessible through the support of wearable and handheld devices such as head mounted display units, shutter glasses, mobile

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phones and hand controllers.

These disruptive developments provide scope for new narrative grammars and theoretical frameworks (Aylett & Louchart, 2003). This paper summarizes the details of a visual art project which rendered the popular legend of *Perumthachan's* temple pond as a virtual reality narrative. The VR narrative could be experienced by wearing a head mounted display unit which tracks the head position of the viewer/participant. This affordance known as "three degrees of freedom" enables the viewer/participant to look in any direction by remaining on a fixed point. This also gives rise to user dynamic viewpoint, a defining feature of VR wherein the display is updated according to the specific viewpoint of the user/participant (Brooks, 1999). In this manner, virtual reality technology, through a computer mediated environment, gives the viewer/participant a feeling of presence (Biocca, 1992). It engages the sense of vision, hearing, kinematic and proprioceptory experiences(Walsh & Pawlowski, 2002). All these facets engender a new mode of narrative reception through a combination of information, experience and the phenomenon of presence.

The Myth

Perumthachan, one of the twelve abandoned children of *Vararuchi*, was adopted by a family of craftsmen who belonged to the village of *Uliyannoor. Perumthachan* grew up to become a legendary carpenter and an architect and it was believed that he possessed supernatural abilities. From impressive temple complexes to puckish wired dolls which spat jets of water on unsuspecting passer-by walking over river crossings, the creations attributed to *Perumthachan* are awe-inspiring and amusing. One such creation is the temple pond known as *Paankulam.* Trustees of the *Uliyannoor Mahadeva* temple once commissioned *Perumthachan* to dig a ceremonial tank, about the shape of which they were divided in opinion. Some wanted a circle, a few others demanded a perfect square, and a different group wanted yet another shape. Having failed to reach a consensus, *Perumthachan* settled the issue by offering to a dig a pond which would assume all the different shapes desired by the onlookers as they looked at it from their respective positions (Shankunni, 2004).

Project Overview

With the support of an arts practice grant given by India Foundation for the Arts, a VR recreation of *Perumthachan's* mythical pond was created. By wearing a head mounted display unit (Oculus Go), the viewers/participants

obtained an embodied experience of the changing shapes of the pond. The VR experience was first showcased in the very village of *Uliyannoor*, to the class V students of the government lower primary school near the *Uliynaoor Mahadeva* Temple. The VR simulation was designed by Firefly Creative Studios in Hyderabad. The final simulation was rendered in 4k resolution at 60 frames per second in both mono and stereoscopic formats.

Narrative Structure

A three-act structure was formulated to present the VR adaptation of the mythical pond, to the target audience:

a) **Prologue:** In this act set in a classroom, a storyteller narrates the enchanting legend of *Perumthachan's* temple pond to a group of children at the *Uliyannoor* lower primary school. A sense of wonder is evoked among the students as the story unfolds. The storyteller finally asks if the students wished to see this magical pond. He then offers to take them there.

b) **Simulation of the pond:** After the prologue, the scene transitions to the simulated environment of the pond. An architectural design was speculated, wherein the pond assumed three shapes when seen from three different elevations and directions. At the lowest level, the pond took on a circular shape. At the mid-level, the pond assumed the shape of a square. Finally, from the highest vantage point, the pond looked octagonal. Depending on the elevation and the direction of view, the pond assumed one of these shapes.

c) **Epilogue:** The epilogue follows the VR simulation of the pond, where the storyteller gleefully asks the students about their experience. The narrative is concluded with his affirmation: "all stories bear a grain of truth."

d) **End Credits:** During the end credits, the camera pedestals upwards along a fixed vertical axis and the viewers/participants obtain a bird's eye view of the pond, wherein all three shapes at the different levels become visible.

The narrative combines live action footage and computer-generated modelled environments. While the prologue and the epilogue were shot with a VR camera (Ricoh Theta V 4K), the environment of the pond and the end credits were digitally designed using 3D modelling software (Blender/Nuke) and game engines (Unreal Engine) that render modelled environments for VR. The

live action and modelled environments were edited (Adobe Premiere Pro CC) to create the final VR narrative.

Presence, Information and Experience in Virtual Reality Narratives

A unique aspect of virtual reality simulations is that they induce a phenomenon called "presence." "Presence" denotes a feeling of "being there" or in other words a heightened sense of immersion in a simulated world. This is a state available to a viewer/participant exclusively through the medium of virtual reality. This feeling of being there is also referred to as place illusion (PI) where the participant feels that he or she is inhabiting the simulated environment (Slater & Sanchez- Vives, 2016).

Virtual reality induces presence through other illusions as well such as the "plausibility illusion" (Psi). The feeling of presence is enhanced when the VR simulation generates plausibility illusion. As Slater and Sanchez-Vives (2016) describe:

Place illusion can occur in a static environment where nothing happens – just looking around a stereo-displayed scenario, for example, where nothing is changing. When there are events in the environment, events that respond to you, that correlate with your actions, and refer to you personally, then provided that the environment is sufficiently credible (i.e., meets the expectations of how objects and people are expected to behave in the type of setting depicted), this will give rise to a further and independent illusion that we refer to as "Plausibility" (Psi) that the events are really happening. Again, this is an illusion in spite of the sure knowledge that nothing real is happening.

Both place and plausibility illusions were achieved in the VR narrative of *Perumthachan's* mythical pond. The simulation was modelled based on photographic references of the ponds of Kerala. These photos were gathered after extensive field visits to various temple ponds in Kerala. As in a virtual heritage environment, the simulation of the mythical pond had to combine precise architectural details and affective dimensions.

Virtual heritage projects aim to simultaneously educate and entertain their audiences through immersion, but emotion without context achieves little. Virtual heritage environments demand integrity in information so that audiences do not confuse speculation with fact. Combining affect with information design can create experiences and meanings for an audience that are both educational and emotionally satisfying. (Kruiff, 2012)

While information design collates and presents precise factual details,

providing the appropriate affective context comes under the purview of experience design. The design process adopted to recreate the mythical pond incorporated both information and experience into the VR simulation. Visual details such as the texture of laterite, vegetation, proportions, scale and acoustics were designed based on photographic and multimedia information culled out from site visits to existing ponds. This constituted the "information layer" in the simulation enabling the generation of place and plausibility illusion.

Relying on the "information layer" alone would have rendered the experience of the myth ineffective. A myth falls into a liminal space between reality and fiction. Virtual reality simulations can also be placed at the ontological intersection of the "real" and the "fictional." VR therefore is also an unreality simulator (Slater & Sanchez-Vives, 2016)! Hence the affective layer — constituted by elements such as the narrative context (the prologue and the epilogue), staging and camera moves (dolly and pedestal moves) which build intrigue and offer the viewers/participants fantastic views of the mythical pond, visual embellishments such as lighting and a lively ambience (birds, people, falling flower petals and milkweed follicles) music and voice-overs — completes the VR narration of the myth.

In this manner, presence could be induced by blending informational and experiential dimensions. This makes VR a stimulating storytelling modality, wherein the narrative experience is greatly enhanced through illusions of "place, plausibility and embodiment" (Slater & Sanchez-Vives, 2016).

Conclusion

This paper summarizes the details of a visual art project which adapted a regional myth to the new medium of virtual reality. By demonstrating how information and experience could be blended to evoke a sense of presence, the paper provides scope for speculations on how stories could be narrated through this emerging medium. Such speculations could pave the way for artists and theoreticians to work towards a grammar of VR storytelling through creative praxis and critical enquiry.

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Jungian Archetypes in high fantasy films:
An explorative study of Disney movies.

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Abstract

Myths and fairy tales which upturns physical laws are present in all cultures and societies. The collective unconscious carries these, thus contributing to the repeated motifs of the myths, folk tales and fairy tales. Adored by a universal audience, fantasy films, mostly made around them, have a cult following. This paper attempts to understand the latent Jung archetypes focusing on the Mother archetype present in selected fantasy movies made by Disney from 2010. Qualitative methodology involving content analysis is used to identify the archetypical elements in the films. The movies are analysed based on Jungian Archetype, the Mother. The central argument of the paper is that the strongest and majorly present archetype portrayed in Disney films of this decade is 'the mother'.

Keywords : myth, archetype, high fantasy,

Introduction

Oldest forms of narratives with unknown origins, Myths attract humans in all walks of their lives. They offer fantastic narratives with magical beings, sorcerers and supernatural events. Being away from reality and from natural facts and logic, they are often taken as falsehood and unreal (Fowkes,2010). Physical laws and natural phenomena are upturned and imagination knows no limits in myths. Present in all societies and culture, they become the base for the lore, folk tales, legends and fairy tales.

According to Jung (Iaccino, 1998; Jung, 1953) the source of all myths is the collective unconscious. This is attributed as the reason for the similarities and narrative motifs present in them. Myths, though concealed with the wisdom of the ages, are often dispensed as false legends. Folk tales and fairy tales are part of growing up. May be, that's the reason for the academic and non-academic community to condemn these as children's tales. These tales are at the heart of every community and is generated from the unexplored unconscious of all humans. Each and every milestones in the evolution of human beings have had its impressions in the collective mind, thus the collective unconscious (Jung, 1968). Thus the basic needs, the inborn characteristics and tendencies of the mind are "imprinted".   The collective unconscious carries these, thus

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contributing to the repeated motifs of the myths, folk tales and fairy tales. Nevertheless, Self-discovery has been understood as the most important need in life (Bettelheim, 1976). Understanding meaning of life is a quite difficult task which has to be acquired step by step from early childhood. Fairy tales offer a solution to this by situating a child in a very different world where the challenges and threats of the protagonist remains similar to that of the child concerned (Bettelheim, 1976).

The conflicts the child faces, the resolutions he or she may receive are all placed in the narrative of the stories. The child relates its experience with them. She/he gets attracted to a story if it can "enrich" her / his life, "stimulates her/his imagination" , acknowledging her/ his difficulties and provide solutions to her/ his problems(Bettelheim, 1976). The evolution of human species, the problems they face, the resolutions, the natural phenomena, birth, death, all of these find a room in these tales. Knowingly or unknowingly people find answers to the life's problems in them. Archetypes of various kinds are thus present in all these stories.

 All these imaginary stories weaved around myths and folklores often find their way to the audiences' notice in the silver screen through the genre, fantasy films. Adored by a universal audience, most of the fantasy films have a cult following. The fandom sites and blogs for science fiction and fantasy films vouch this. Criticised for pushing off the audience from a realistic experience, this genre is taken to be enjoyed for leisure and entertainment. The motifs that are present in the age old legends find their place in the fantasy films. Housing boundless imagination, the genre demands high cinematic and technological novelties. Through CGI, motion capture techniques and animation, the mystical and miraculous worlds are presented on the screen.

Major studios compete for the production of these films. Walt Disney, Warner Brothers, DreamWorks animation, New Line Cinema and the like offer the audience visual treat by means of sword and sorcery tales. Most often the films are much awaited by the global audience. They have much hope in the companies while the social media are bombarded by anticipated stories and expectations on the upcoming films.

But like these tales on which they are made, these films are also least seriously considered. Unsurprisingly, fantasy film scholarship remains a much unexplored domain, with little attention fetched from serious academic milieu. This genre is considered by the academics as meant only for children and young adults (Fowkes, 2010). Evading the norms and grammar of reality must have aroused mixed response from the academic society.

Walt Disney Company, headquartered in California, has attracted the audience through their films based on age old fairy tale collections. Rather than Brother Grimm's fairy tales, the tales promoted by Walt Disney are taken into heart by young and old alike. Disney's films tower above the rest in the genre; they have basically owned the genre for decades, with its animated classics and live-action remakes.

This paper attempts to understand the latent Jung archetypes focusing on the Mother archetype present in selected Disney movies from 2010. Qualitative methodology involving content analysis is used to identify the archetypical elements in the films under consideration.

Archetypes, Myths and Fantasy Films

Archetypes are images, motifs and symbols seen in lore and myths (Jung 1953). They are present in the collective unconscious and thus appear in myths and stories of all cultures. In other words, the collective unconscious is built with these archetypes. Jung has classified the archetypes into many types like persona, mother, shadow, anima, animus, etc. (Iaccino, 1998). Each has been defined elaborately by Jung in his works. They emerge in most of the fantasy films too. These films are built with Hero's journey along with other motifs. The film, as life itself is a transformation, a journey of self- discovery embedded with philosophical motifs and symbols. Various archetypes have their strong presence in these movies. Persona, The Hero, the Mother, the Shadow are majorly found in these movies (Iaccino, 1998; Nikolejeva, 2003).

The movies selected for analysis are Tangled(2010), Brave (2012), Frozen(2013) and Moana (2016). The movies are analysed based on Jungian Archetype, Mother.The central argument of the paper is that the strongest and majorly present archetype portrayed in Disney films of this decade is 'the mother'.

The Mother

Mother archetype can assume many forms including natural mother, mother in law, grandmother, governess etc. At the same time, in many tales they appear as symbols which connotes devotion, fertility, fruitfulness, protection, help (Jung, 1953). Thus, that which attributes to wisdom, magic, spiritual, growth, fertility, symbolise the mother archetype. This can assume the form not only of human mother but of goddesses, heaven, spiritual space, moon, sea, garden, "ploughed field", rock, cave, deep well, a magic circle and the like (Jung, 1953). The evil mother archetype also includes witches, dragons

etc. Jung also talks about "the loving and terrible mother" who provides the readers with an ambivalent feeling.

This decade had been phenomenal in the narrative construction in many of the Walt Disney films. They broke the binds of animation with regard to The Jungle Book, The Lion King by bringing CGI to live characters. They also have brought in live actors to their age-old damsels in distress like Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast and even another version of Sleeping Beauty, The Maleficent. Apart from these recreations, they came up with some heroines who did not end up in a lip-lock kiss or a wed-lock. Nevertheless, the archetypal symbols and projections are more evidently present in these films.

Tangled, Brave, Frozen, Moana and The Jungian Mother

Tangled (2010) is the story of Rapunzel told in a slightly altered narrative. Disney has added magic to the heroine's hair which is sought after by the witch. She keeps her in the tower for this magic which offers the witch to be young and beautiful eternally. The mother archetype can be seen here in varied symbols.

There is the obvious natural mother, the queen who loses her daughter in the beginning of the film. The film ends with the reunion of the mother and daughter, in the tight embrace. This mother suffers the loss of the daughter, misses her, and awaits her return. There is the negative construction of the mother archetype, the witch. She steals the princess from her castle, keeps her in a tall tower, far from the gaze of other human beings in pretence of protecting her. A type of mother-complex as explained by Jung (1953) is also projected here. The 'imprisoned' Rapunzel has a "shadow existence" which is an attribute of the complex identified by Jung (ibid 25). He also identifies another feature which is "prolonging mother's life by the daughter through a sort of continuous blood transfusion" Jung (1953). This is displayed in the film when the witch combs Rapunzel's hair, her beauty, youth and life are rejuvenated and redeemed. It's interesting that, though imprisoned and even portrayed as evil, the witch mother does not harm her in any way. Rapunzel also tries to make the witch happy by being obedient, though at heart she fights her instincts to see the outside world.

Apart from these clear and noticeable mother figures, there are symbolic mother archetypes too in 'Tangled'. The flower which is given to the queen in her pregnancy is one such symbol. As identified by Jung, flowers function as symbols of mother archetype (Jung 1953). This flower restores the life of the pregnant queen and is thus depicted as the life saver. He also mentions magic

in the category of mother. The magic which heals everything, the aging, fatal wound is representative of the spiritual mother. The hair provides magic. It heals, restores youth and make the bearer beautiful. It is also the unseen thread that combines all the happenings, functions and motifs together in the narrative. Here, Rapunzel herself acts in a latent mode as the mother archetype, when her tear brings back life to the hero, Eugene. This is another attribute of the mother archetype as explained by Jung.

 'Brave', released in the year 2012, offered a break from the typical story-line presented by Disney over the years. It characterises the binding between the mother and daughter, with the magic overlay in the narrative. The caring mother is accidentally turned into a beast and the daughter tries to revive her. The Bear-beast is manifested as the mother-complex as identified by Jung. Though manifested as a beast, the mother tries to save her daughter even by risking her life. In the initial scene, the audience are provided with a cue regarding the bear- beast. The mother while playing with her daughter, catches her and says that she would gobble her. She also acts as gobbling playfully, in an act of love. The Bear can also be read as an unconscious psychological manifestation of a beast-mother.

The underlying magic exhibited as 'wisps' is a mother archetype. Jung (1968) treats magic as mother archetype. The natural phenomenon occurring is also the mother. Thus wisps connotes the symbolic mother. Though, the other archetypes like the father, trickster and the like are present, this archetype is the strongest and occupies the major share in the story-line of the film. This is the conflict creator and the resolution offeror, the one which constructs the story and makes it flow forward.

 'Frozen' (2013), a tremendous box-office hit was acclaimed for its portrayal of sisterly love and breaking of stereotypes. The archetype, Persona is relevant in the film as the elder sister Elsa, who tries to hide her original personality. The movie is her accepting her power and regulating it so that it can be used wisely. The mother archetype is also strongly evident in the film. Elsa's natural mother who died in the sea is the strength behind her daughters. This archetype has her hidden presence in all over the narrative.

The strongest mother archetype is Elsa herself. As the one who tries to control her younger sister, she is a perfect mother archetype with mother-complex working in her inner psyche. The conflict initially created at the coronation ceremony is through her opinion about Ana's choice of a life partner. This is the mother acting in her role. She assumes the role of elder sister converted to mother. The authority, care and attitude she has on her sister, represents the

mother here. She is also the life giver for the snowmen, Olaf and Marshmallow. She gives life to them through magic and at the end, extends the life of Olaf. The magic present in Elsa is another mother archetype. Though fierce in the beginning, it becomes the healer and the force that holds the sisters together. It also provides the power Elsa needs to rule the kingdom. It is the spirit of Elsa in the film.

The ice which is present in the film is again the mother archetype, by portraying the natural phenomenon. Though the Hero, trickster, father figures are around, the mother archetype functions as the strongest in these movies.

Released in 2016, *Moana* says the life of the daughter of a chieftain, Moana, who is strong-willed and brave. There are quite a number of mother archetypes in the film. The initial ones to be mentioned here are her natural mother and her paternal grandmother. Moana's mother is shown in a woman-typical costume with long hair, a flower in the hair, chain and the mannerisms of a woman. Quite contrary, Moana has a loose hair, does not wear a chain or does not have mannerisms ascribed by the society to a girl. This binary opposition is pronounced by her mother's dialogue referring her to be like her father. But she, supports her in her decision to sail. Her grandmother calls herself, the village crazy lady. Though she also acts as the caregiver and magician archetypes, her latent and manifested archetypes are in the form of mother. She tells Moana the story of Maui and urges her to look for him and restore the heart of Te Fiti. She dies by the time Moana departs to the sea, but manifests as spirit, guiding her at moments of peril. She also guides her as a light in her voyage.

In the initial scene, a cute and little Moana who is greatly attracted by the sea, saves the life of a baby sea turtle. She is shown to have the motherly instinct while acting as the saver. In the scene where she tries to restore the heart of the goddess, Te Fiti, she shows the care of a mother and a daughter to the great goddess.

Ocean is an omnipresent mother archetype in the film. Moana is attracted by it. In the initial scene the ocean is displayed as playing with her and caressing her hair like a mother. The ocean is shown to be helpful and it is always present for Moana's guidance. The heart itself which looks like 'the spiral of Yin and Yang' is also a mother archetype. Its heart which creates life through Te Fiti. Thus the function of creation makes it a mother archetype.

Te Ka the volcanic demon who is made of earth and fire is the evil force, the negative mother. She attacks as fire. But she is later revealed as Te Fiti herself

without the heart. Once Moana restores the heart, she transforms into Te Fiti, The ultimate Great Mother archetype. She is restored and emerges from the ocean. The shot where the green Te Fiti emerged on the waves of the ocean symbolises the myth of Earth lying on the great sea. She later touches the black ground which becomes green. Plants, trees and flowers sprout from her. She wears a green tiara made of leaves and flowers. She is depicted as the Nature-Mother, the Greta mother archetype.

Having adopted elements from Polynesian Mythology, *Moana* also has a demigod, Maui, who carries a Fish-hook which could be decoded as a male phallic symbol. The attack of a male figure on the Te Fiti is also read the attack of male phallus over the female. He is also the archetype, trickster, who tries to establish himself as the hero too.

Conclusion

Fantasy Films, which contains lores, myths and fairy tales, contain plethora of images which could be deciphered as mythical. These elements are derivated as explained by Jung from the collective unconscious. The archetypes which are present in these stories have their abundant representations in these films. Disney films are not exceptions. They are blamed for making gender stereotype and reinforcing the patriarchal paradigm. Still the Jungian archetypes are hugely present in these films.

 Journey of life is shown along with the Hero's Journey. The rites of passage, the father, the hero, trickster, jester, persona, shadow and all other archetypes find their place in Disney movies. But the omnipresent and the strongest of archetypes present in Disney's recent animation movies is 'The Mother'. The mother archetype as explained by Jung is manifested as the provider of life, the helpful agency behind all beings, the magic, the nature, the provider, the supernatural being, and even as the evil witch or demon provide the major crux of these films. The symbolic phallic is altered by these mother archetypes bringing in the Nature itself as the powerful being. This archetype creates the conflict, resolves it and restores the balance of life.

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Revisiting the Cinematic Journey of Samira Makhmalbaf within the Iranian New Wave

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Abstract

New-wave filmmakers in Iran have depicted the pressing political and social issues faced by the country through their films. These issues include oppression, ethnicity, war, authoritarianism, religious and cultural taboos, family dynamics, polygamy, divorce, loneliness, and existentialism, among others. Among these filmmakers, Samira Makhmalbaf stands out. This article aims to analyze five films created by Samira, focusing on their themes, plots, filmmaking style, treatment, and storytelling ability, using the method of qualitative visual analysis. The study reveals that Samira employs her films to question gender dynamics, particularly through the lens of education and empowerment. Furthermore, it concludes that her frames and shots possess a natural quality, with minimal use of cinematic gimmicks. The incorporation of metaphors and symbols is another notable feature of her filmmaking.

Keywords: New Wave Cinema, Iranian Cinema, Samira Makhmalbaf, Gender, Storytelling

The global film industry witnessed the rise of a new cinematic movement during the 1960s, and Iran was no exception to this trend. The socio-political and cultural backdrop of the country played a significant role in the development of new wave films. Moreover, the influence of new wave movements in international cinema, particularly the French new wave, Italian neo-realism, and German expressionism, also contributed to the emergence of this movement in Iran. The influence of international film festivals, formation of film societies and clubs also accelerated the process. Initially, film makers like Dariush Mehrjui and Masoud Kimiai pioneered the trend. Immediately after the Islamic Revolution in Iran 1979, a new set of filmmakers stole the show. The prominent figures include the famous Abbas Kiarostami, Majid Majidi, Jafar Panahi, and youngsters like Asghar Farhadi, Babak Payami, Samira Makhmalbaf, and Tahmineh Milāni. A new club of filmmakers in Iran is now

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leading the industry with its significant presence in renowned international film festivals and awards.

New-wave filmmakers in Iran have portrayed pressing political and social issues and themes which country face through their films. Issues of oppression, ethnicity, war, authoritarianism, religious and cultural taboos, family, polygamy, divorce, loneliness, existentialism, and so on. During 1990s, the filmmakers gave much focus on gender issues and questions. Immediately after Iran and Iraq wars, the sufferings of women became a big talking point. The movies made during the period discussed women's dreams, desires, and desperations from various angles. Such movies had women as key players (Muneer V, 2017).

The Question of Gender

Marandi (2011) notes that gender issues are treated subtly through films in Iran, a traditionally conservative society. Film makers including women raise issues and questions in this way. The treatment of women before the revolution was worse compared to the post-revolution period, where they were portrayed as mere objects – their roles in the film were limited to spouses and mothers. Compared to modern times, they were almost archaic (Bahar, 2010). Reza Sadr (2006) also substantiates this argument that women in Iran were portrayed as helpless victims during the pre-revolution period.

As with other regions globally, it is evident that significant changes have occurred in various aspects of women's lives, particularly among young women. These changes have persuaded young filmmakers to reconsider and redefine their conceptions of sexuality and gender, thus causing wider repercussions in the modern Iranian historical context. Gradually, a gender consciousness has been developed and reflected in Iranian cinema (Najmeh, 2015).

Many filmmakers, especially young women, have inculcated this gender consciousness and utilized the medium of cinema to reflect this phenomenon since the 1990s. Rakhshān Banietemad, Samira Makhmalbaf, Tahmineh Milani, Niki Karimi, and Marzieh Meshkini are prominent. Compared to the East and West, the powerful presence of women filmmakers grabbed much of the attention of world viewers and became a hot talking point in international film festivals. This tendency has inspired young women to pursue film studies as

their major and seek careers in the film industry. It has been deeply reflected in the increasing number of films women filmmakers produce in Iran.

The Story and Storytelling of Samira

Samira Makhmalbaf has made significant contributions to the growth of the Iranian film industry. 1980 she was born in Tehran and debuted in the film industry at eight. Her father, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, produced the film 'The Cyclist' through which she was inducted into the world of Cinema. Samira produced her first feature-length film at age 17. The film titled "The Apple" was showcased at the Cannes Film Festival, with the director being the youngest participant in its history. *The Apple* has been screened in over thirty countries and invited to over one hundred international film festivals (www.makhmalbaf.com).

Samira's second film, titled *"Blackboards,"* was filmed in Kurdistan in 1999. It had the honor of being selected for the 2000 Cannes Film Festival and was awarded the prestigious Special Jury Award. The film has garnered several notable accolades, including the esteemed "Federico Fellini Honour Award" and the distinguished "Francois Truffaut Award." (www.makhmalbaf.com).

Samira has collaborated with esteemed directors including Ken Loach, Shohei Imamura, Youssef Chahine, and Sean Penn on the collaborative project titled September 11. This project was showcased at the 2002 Venice International Film Festival. *At Five in the Afternoon* is the fourth production by Samira Makhmalbaf. This film was shot in Afghanistan, appeared at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival, and garnered the Special Jury Award. Two-Legged Horse, Samira's fifth film, was shot in Afghanistan in 2007. This cinematic masterpiece received the esteemed Grand Jury Prize at the San Sebastian Film Festival in Spain. (www.makhmalbaf.com).

In to the Cinema: Style and Stylistics

Samira believes cinema can change people, their thoughts, and their perspectives. They can reflect the suffering, pain, and agony of humanity. She tried to portray all these themes in her films. Being a young graduate, she had concerns over the education of the young generation, especially of girls of Iran. She construed that education is the only way to enlightenment. Knowingly or

unknowingly, the themes of education and empowerment were portrayed in her many films. In the research paper titled "Samira Makhmalbaf: Educationalist," Alexis Gibbs examines how the subject of education is portrayed in the films of Samira Makhmalbaf. In her first directorial effort, *The Apple*, and her subsequent film, *At Five in the Afternoon*, she emphasizes the significance of education. It is not necessarily the concept of formal or institutional education. It enables a person to exist and survive in the actual world (Gibbs, 2014).

Being the great daughter of a great father, Samira has been influenced by her father, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, in film direction. Samira Makhmalbaf stands out due to her meticulous and rigorous examination and portrayal of the characters, environments, and perceptions within her films (Danks, 2002). The films of Samira generally fall under the genre of docu-fiction. It is a blend of fiction and documentary. She selects natural locations, not making sets. She picks non-professional actors and asks them to behave as they usually do in front of the camera. As her films depict the themes like poverty, suppression, education, and politics, especially of women, she picks characters from her surroundings. Her frames and shots are very natural and adopt fewer cinematic gimmicks. The use of metaphors and symbols is another feature of her filmmaking. Growing up, she observed her father's filmmaking techniques and immersed herself in the works of influential Iranian filmmakers such as Dariush Mehrjui and Abbas Kiarostami. As a result, she developed a passion for capturing authentic experiences within a realistic setting.

Filmography

1. The Apple

Her debut film, *The Apple*, is the story of two girls and their father. A father imprisoned her two children in the house for eleven years, from when they were two years old until they were 13 years old. When the neighbors became aware of the situation and notified the welfare ministry to assist the children, the sisters had already become mentally disabled and could not speak or walk normally. After some time, the welfare ministry sends the children back to their father so that he does not confine them again, but their father imprisons them again. A nurse who has come to the home to care for the children is compelled to confine the father inside in order to take the children outside to play. When

the girls enter the street for the first time, their father, who has been confined in the home, observes the condition of his imprisoned daughters. In conclusion, the now-free daughters struggle to release their father from house confinement (www.makhmalbaf.com).

In 1998, the film received the Sutherland Trophy at the London Film Festival and the International Critics Prize at the Locarno Film Festival in Switzerland. In the same year, it got Jury's special prizes at both Sao Paulo Film Festival in Brazil and Thessalonica Film Festival in Greece. In 1999, *The Apple* received an audience prize, a critic prize, and Jury special prize at an independent cinema festival in Argentina.

Samira says that *The Apple*, which was initially conceived as a documentary film, allowed her to research the question of how much playing in the alleys and streets, which is the exclusive domain of boys, helps men become more social than women who do not have the opportunity to play in the alleys and streets. The film also reveals the motivations of parents who act as their children's prison guardians. She was also curious about how neighbourhood residents can be oblivious of a virtual prison in their vicinity or remain indifferent upon learning of the catastrophe. Furthermore, she has yet to discover the answer to this final query(www.makhmalbaf.com).

The Apple, a persistent object of desire for the twins, represents their pursuit of freedom and their modest desire to purchase one. According to Al Sharji (2016), this film explores various themes such as gender, adolescence, the dichotomy between public and private spheres, the oppression experienced within the familial institution, as well as concepts of veiling and modesty. In her work titled The Apple, Samira challenges prevailing Orientalist notions of parentage and family by delving into the thoughts and desires of Ghorban, the abusive father of the twin girls. Rather than simply attributing Ghorban's mistreatment of his daughters to religion or culture, Samira provides a deeper understanding of his motivations and commitments, thereby refuting the Orientalist stereotype that portrays Muslim men as "evil, misogynistic savages" (Chan, 2016).

According to Irene Matthews (2001), "The Apple" can be regarded as a resilient poem depicting a family trapped in their own misguided ways. It effectively captures the challenges encountered by girls and women in the patriarchal

society of greater Iran. In her work, Samira criticizes the hypocritical values associated with patriarchy, without vilifying the patriarchal figure. Specifically, she highlights the detrimental impact on women, particularly young girls who are confined within their homes for 12 years, a result of their fathers' intentions to safeguard their purity from the perceived threats of the external world (Chan, 2016).

In his article, Toumerkine (2003) also explains how *The Apple* has become a positive symbol. Apples possess the biblical resonance of illicit temptation and conjure up misogynistic stereotypes of women who undermine masculine virility. However, apples become positive symbols in this film, serving as catalysts that imply two exploited girls may be able to escape their abusive families and become independent, productive citizens (Atakan, 2006). The conditions of women in Iran have symbolically many resemblances in this film. Derya Atakan (2006) adds that *The Apple*, an allegory with global relevance, is incredibly potent in Samira's native country, where the hopes and aspirations of the young are erupting through all the historically perpetrated injustices against women that have been received and ideologically reinforced.

2. Blackboards

Blackboards, the second feature-length film by Samira, provides a creative exploration of the impoverished and distressed lives of homeless individuals in Kurdistan. Following the chemical bombardment of Halabcheh in Iraq, a group of refugee instructors from the Kurdish community sought out students willing to receive an education in the border region. These instructors carried blackboards that symbolically resembled the crosses of Jesus Christ. One of the instructors encounters a cohort of teenage smugglers and endeavors to convince them to prioritize education while they transport their significant illicit cargo. The other teacher encounters a group of elderly and weary men who are returning to their home country after years of migration, seeking a place to spend their final days. Regrettably, the pervasive effects of starvation and insecurity have eroded any opportunities for educating the future generations. (www.makhmalbaf.com).

The film has received numerous international accolades. These include the grand jury prize established by the American Film Institute, a distinctive

cultural prize awarded by UNESCO, the Giffoni's Mayor prize, and the Francois Truffaut prize at the Giffoni Film Festival in Italy. Additionally, the film has been honored with the Federico Fellini Honor by UNESCO and the Jury's Prize in the official competition section of the Cannes Film Festival in France.

In addition to the horrific effects of conflict, especially on children, the arbitrariness of borders is one of the film's central themes. Samira, through her film, challenges the prevailing Western notion that war and violence are intrinsic to Muslim cultures by shedding light on the frequently overlooked victims of war. Instead, she presents a poignant portrayal of numerous Muslim individuals who endure the unbearable and terrifying conditions of the war-ravaged Badlands, illustrating their struggle for survival (Chan, 2016).

Blackboards reveals that the mountainous landscape exhibits parallel to suffocation and confinement, as its residents endure enduring poverty and monotony. Consequently, Makhmalbaf maintains her recurring theme of "striving for freedom." Unlike *The Apple*, which adheres to a clear chronological sequence, *Blackboards* employs a disillusioned perception of time. This blurred chronology, along with enigmatic narrative elements and the boundless expanse of the desolate wilderness, suggests an endless struggle for both the nomads and the young boys. (Mulvey, 2001, cited in Chan, 2016).

The film "Blackboards" delves into the dire circumstances faced by Kurdish nomads following the Iran-Iraq War. These nomads live in constant fear of gunfire and the hidden danger posed by chemical weapons. Through the characters navigating the rugged landscapes with the hope of eventually reclaiming their homes, the movie effectively conveys the theme of poverty and the profound impact of conflict (Chan, 2016). Thus, the film depicts the unending miseries and never losing hopes of the oppressed people and their dependence on education as a tool to survive.

3. God, Construction, Destruction

The film, set in Iran, analyses the post-9/11 experience of Afghan emigrants forced into exile by Afghanistan's bleak conditions after the Soviet invasion.

Following the events of September 11, there was a prevailing sense of apprehension among Afghan refugees residing in Iran regarding the potential for

the United States to launch military actions against Afghanistan. A teacher gathers her Afghan pupils to observe a moment of silence to remember the incident's fatalities, despite their apprehensions regarding the American attack. In terms of understanding the importance of the occasion, the infants are unable to grasp its significance. At a later point, the teacher leads the students to a towering brick-baking furnace and states, "This furnace is similar to the New York Tower." Subsequently, she requests the children to observe a moment of silence as they gaze upon the chimney releasing thick smoke, in memory of the individuals who lost their lives in the New York tower tragedy. The 11-minute film, titled "God, Construction, Destruction," is part of a collection of 11 films created by esteemed filmmakers including Ken Loach, Claude Lelouch, Danis Tanovic, Sean Penn, Shohei Imamura, Amos Gitai, Youssef Chahine, Idrissa Ouedraogo, Mira Nair, Alejandro Inarritu, and Samira Makhmalbaf. It is based on the September 11, 2001 attack (www.makhmalbaf.com).

The initial sequence of Samira's film showcases a gathering of Afghan civilians who are depicted retrieving water from a parched well in Iran. This group represents the largest refugee population globally, which experienced a substantial surge in numbers between December 1979 and February 1989 due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Afghan refugees were compelled by the conflict to relocate to neighboring Iran and Pakistan, seeking shelter from the violent turmoil in their homeland. Samira's film specifically centers on those Afghans who continue to live in exile within the borders of Iran. In her work, titled "God, Construction and Destruction," the director explicitly explores the post-9/11 experiences of Afghan refugees residing in camps (Espiritu, 2012).

Remembrance Pedagogy

According to Roger Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert (2000), Samira utilizes the term "remembrance pedagogy" to depict a particular form of historical awareness. Remembrance pedagogy involves a mindful focus on, learning from, and active engagement with the memory of the remnants of traumatic history (p. 3). The objective of "9/11 remembrance pedagogy" surpasses a mere recollection of the suffering endured by others in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks. Instead, approaches to 9/11 remembrance pedagogy should take into account not only what is remembered, by whom, how, and when but also the challenge of representing and grappling with the

event's inherent limitations. This phenomenon arises because the extremity of the 9/11 event both shocks and resists assimilation into preexisting discourses (Espiritu, 2012, p.7).

4. At Five in the Afternoon

At Five in the Afternoon explores the challenges faced by Afghan women as they strive for education and positions of authority. The focal point of the film revolves around Nogreh, a young woman residing in a war-torn Kabul, sharing a shattered building with her father, sister-in-law, and the latter's baby (Al Sharji, 2016).

After the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, a young woman strives to make the most of her newfound freedom for her social development as a woman. In 2003, the film bagged Golden Peacock for best film at India's 34th International film festival. The film was honored with the Grand Prize from the Society of Churches of the World and received a Special Jury Award at the Cannes Film Festival in France. In 2004, it also earned the Youth's Cinema Award at Singapore's 17th International Silver Screen Film Festival (www.makhmalbaf.com).

In this film, Samira Makhmalbaf examines freedom, the hopelessness of conflict, and destitution, all emphasized by the surreal images of Kabul's congested and decaying streets. In this instance, much like *Blackboards*, the theme of conflict holds a significant position, although the backdrop shifts to Afghanistan and the central character is an ambitious street girl from the country. Samira's portrayal of Noqreh and the other Afghan women reflects Lila Abu-Lughod's examination of the Western perspective on Afghan women in her work titled "Do Muslim Women Need Saving?" (Chan, 2016).

In the film *At Five in the Afternoon*, Makhmalbaf directly challenges Western portrayals by vividly illustrating the aspirations, challenges, and brutalities of war through the character of Noqreh. These thematic elements persist throughout the movie as Noqreh, a young Afghan girl, dreams of becoming the future president of Afghanistan, yet faces both literal and symbolic destitution. Together with her family, she traverses the desert in pursuit of a meaningful existence. *At Five in the Afternoon* proposes that Afghan women, exemplified by Noqreh and her political ambitions and affinity for poetry, possess a voice.

However, they find themselves adrift in the barren landscapes of conflict and a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction (Chan, 2016).

5. Two-legged Horse

The film is a brutal and merciless examination of power relationships. The film analyses the master-servant relationship between a deformed boy and Mirvais, an underprivileged youth who works as the disabled boy's carrier.

 In order to obtain the position, the youngster must compete against other impoverished children in a contest. The victor will be any boy who can carry a boy who lost his legs while running like a horse during the conflict on his back to school. The youngster ultimately triumphs in a gruelling competition. In exchange for a daily wage of one dollar, the boy must transport the disabled boy to and from school daily. When the young boy carries the child with disabilities on his back, he participates in street sprints alongside donkeys and horses. Prior to placing the disabled boy on the swing, the boy carefully bathes and cleanses him. However, the disabled boy expresses dissatisfaction towards the boy, as he yearns for him to transform into a horse.

In 2008, the film received numerous international accolades. These include a special mention award at the Rome International Film Festival in Italy, the Georges Delerue Award for best music at the Ghent International Film Festival in Belgium, and a special Jury prize from the 56th International Film Festival in Spain.

Samira desires to ascertain the extent to which a relationship between two individuals can develop. On the one hand, two individuals reach the pinnacle of affection, companionship, and sacrifice for one another, while on the other, one exploits the other as an animal. In the meantime, she endeavours to discover, through this film, the limits of human tolerance and how much a person can endure to satisfy his requirements and transform. Let us consider how often each of us has been someone else's steed. Or did we use someone as a horse? (www.makhmalbaf.com).

Conclusion

Samira Makhmalbaf has made significant contributions to the expansion of the Iranian film industry. She firmly believes that film has the power to alter people's perspectives and thoughts, serving as a reflection of humanity's distress, pain, and anguish. In her films, she endeavors to portray these profound themes. Particularly as a young graduate, she became deeply concerned about the education of Iran's youth, particularly young females. What sets Samira Makhmalbaf apart is her meticulous and rigorous analysis and depiction of the status of characters, settings, and perceptions in her films.

The majority of Samira's films fall under the documentary-fiction genre, skillfully combining elements of both fiction and nonfiction. She opts for natural locations rather than creating elaborate sets, choosing to capture the authenticity of real environments. Additionally, she deliberately casts amateur actors and guides them to perform naturally in front of the camera. Her films often revolve around female-centric themes such as poverty, oppression, education, and politics, drawing characters from her own surroundings.

Samira Makhmalbaf's filmmaking style is characterized by its natural compositions and perspectives, employing minimal cinematic devices. Metaphors and symbols also play prominent roles in her films. Growing up immersed in her father's filmmaking process and being influenced by Iranian new-wave pioneers like Dariush Mehrjui and Abbas Kiarostami, she developed a passion for documenting reality within a realistic setting.

Her first film, The Apple, represents not only the siblings' pursuit of independence but also their modest ambition to afford one. This film addresses gender, adolescence, public and private spheres, family oppression, veiling, and modesty. Blackboards, Samira's second feature-length film, is a creative investigation into the lives of Kurdistan's homeless, who are destitute and distressed. God, Construction, Destruction, set in Iran, examines the post-9/11 experience of Afghan emigrants forced into exile by Afghanistan's dismal conditions following the Soviet invasion. At Five in the Afternoon examines the struggle of Afghan women for education and leadership. The film is a ruthless examination of power dynamics. Two-Legged Horse explores the master-

servant relationship between a deformed boy and Mirvais, an impoverished adolescent who serves as the deformed boy's carrier.

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