

Dominant and Neglected Communities in the Indian Film Industry

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Introduction

“The caste system has many floors without an elevator or an entrance. Those born on the lower floor cannot ascend to the upper floors, no matter how deserving they are. When one was born, he or she was destined to die there.” Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

The caste system is an unavoidable fact of Indian society. It may make us ashamed of being a part of this unjust society, but reality cannot be denied. The mechanism of caste is fascinating because its defenders call it divine and unchangeable. Do we see a single superstar in the film industry who belongs to a low caste? Do we see a movie with a low-caste leading hero? Does the Film industry represent a comprehensive Indian society or only impose the upper caste? The answers to such kinds of questions are negative. Why negative? Because a child from birth has been told that a certain community is low in standard and belongs to Asur.

Do all Indian film industries have the sense to consider this burning issue? No one cares about the reality of our society. Indian films generally depict the Upper caste society; its people are generous, sympathetic, pure, stand against injustice, etc. But it is always hidden with whom they are generous and sympathetic. In India, a person is generous only to his caste's person; another caste's person is indifferent to him.

Cinema is a vital tool for shaping and reinforcing public opinion and perception. In India, cinema and media have been used until now to perpetuate Brahmanical culture, values, and this has thus led to the perpetuation of the caste-system. However, all the signs point towards the fact that the times to come will see Dalit-Bahujan cinema reign over the Indian film industry. And then we can certainly hope that Indian cinema, which would now reflect the concerns, ideas, and aspirations, and lived realities of a much wider spectrum of Indian society, will receive greater appreciation and recognition from those who set the benchmarks of global cinema.

We have seen a few films about untouchable communities, such as Achut Kanya, Sautan, etc. In these two films, the hero belongs to the upper caste and the heroine belongs to the lower caste. There is no revolt against a socially unjust system. But all superstars belong to the Upper caste; they are shown as representing all Indians. Their tradition, fashion, kitchen, and rituals are part and parcel of India. This issue is the most important to study in depth to understand the reality of Indian psychology.

Key Words –

Upper-Caste – a group of people placed at the top in a hierarchy of the caste system. Lower-Caste – a group of people at the bottom of a hierarchy of the caste system. Caste system – a hereditary, hierarchical social system of division where a person's caste is determined by birth and dictates their social interactions, occupation, etc. Representation – The act of speaking or acting on behalf of someone. Depressed class - a group of people at the bottom of a hierarchy of the caste system. Bahujan – The people of SC, ST, and OBC communities.

Aim of the research paper

We do not have India as a nation until we eradicate the caste system. It is a root cause of inequality, injustice, untouchability, etc. The present research paper aims to disclose a suppressed discourse in Indian movies.

Method

An analytical method will be applied in the present research paper.

Literary review

Mayne analyzed women's Hindi cinema, discussing the first films made by women and then female roles in films in 1980. Audience in Hollywood products. She focused on the issue of the relationship between the inauthentic and the authentic portrayals of the female experience, as well as on women's relationships traditionally and historically as filmmakers and as film consumers. In Oriental films, the traditional sexual role and gender hierarchies are marked by the domination of Western men. According to Ishtar and Lawrence (1987), women are treated as sexual objects in Western films. Datta (2000) examined the concept of cultural identity and personalized nationality with implications on gender through media and film. The main question in her study was about how larger ideological forces and market forces impact the process of gender presentation in Indian cinema.

In 1990, Uberoi studied the representation of women in Indian popular art. She has mentioned in her study that women's representation has two processes. The first is the commoditization of women, and the second is the troping of the feminine within an overall cultural context that is both homogenizing and hegemonic. She noted that in many genres of presentation in social and cultural activities, women are prominent objects of male desire and potential possessions. She analyzed two main reasons for their invisibility, both in society and in media. Anu Celly has analyzed aspects of women's representation in "Indian popular cinema". Using semiotic and psychoanalytical approaches, she pointed out that the

On the contrary, women's functions are factors of myth, custom, and ritual. She also believes that the victimization syndrome is a component of women's image and life history, and usually the gazes of the male protagonist control and limit women's subjectivity and sexuality into an object. For instance, even a film like Satyajit Ray's "Devi," which is seen as a kind of revolutionary and pioneering attempt to show women's image as a protagonist, there is uses of myth as a normative paradigm for the ideal construct of

Representation of Lower-caste

Representation of the Scheduled Castes in Hindi or Marathi movies was a neglected subject until 1980, but with the rise of depressed literature, it came on the national canvas. Jabbar Patel produced an iconic film on the biography of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and two films on the biography of Jyotirao Phule. After these films, there were no films to cast light on the issues of downtrodden people of our country. A few writers dared to talk freely about it; recently, 'Jay Bhim', a Tamil movie, broke the shackles of caste barriers. In Marathi, Nagraj Manjule proved his mettle in film direction by producing the superhit movie, 'Sairat'. Until this time, film direction was a monopoly of upper-caste people, and they thought that lower-caste people could not direct a superhit movie.

Nagraj Majule produced "Frendry," a milestone in Marathi films, truly based on caste discrimination. The film deals with caste issues and their impact on the lower caste people. Lower caste people are forced to do shameful work and are insulted everywhere by the higher caste people. The hero of the film has a desire to go to school like high-caste boys; he has always dreamed to school while doing traditional work, that is, beating a drum on various occasions to earn a few rupees. Every time he has been inhumanely insulted by upper caste persons and boys, a feeling of revolt fires in his heart; we can see hatred in his eyes. At last, he threw a stone at the upper caste people. It is a revolt against the unjust caste system.

A lower-caste director came to the forefront and made a film on the caste system. Manjule not only produced a film to represent the lower caste but also selected the hero and heroine of his film from the lower caste. In 'Sairat', almost all characters, including the hero and heroine, belong to the lower

caste. His Hindi film, 'Zoond', too, takes us to a different world, a world of slum youth. In this film, likewise Sairat, he selected the actors from a slum locality who do not have any background in acting. I think he intentionally did it, he wanted to assert that a person born in a low-caste can be a leading hero or heroine, and make it a superhit film. In a stroke, he breaks down many prejudices that prevail in the film industry about low-caste people.

We can take another example from the Hindi film, 'Rajneeti', the film tries to give a message on the politics of castes and religion. We see the superstar Amitabh Bachchan, Ajay Devgan, Saif Ali Khan, and Katrina Kaif in leading roles and representing different castes. Saif Ali Khan represents the Scheduled caste, Ajay Devgan Other Backward class, and Amitabh Bachchan upper caste, respectively. We can quote here a dialogue of Saif Ali Khan, which he delivered in an interview in the film. He says, "Do not look down at us when one person from our community gets a chance, he has written the constitution of our country."

There have been very few mainstream depressed class stories and characters in the more than 100 years of Indian cinema. Along with Nagraj Manjule, we have filmmaker Sadanand Menon, whose popular Tamil movies have led characters from backward caste representing the Scheduled Caste culture in Tamil cinema. Prakash Jha's Damul 1985 is one of the boldest films that seamlessly explored the casteist and capitalist politics in some pockets of rural India, like Bihar. The popular Scheduled caste artists of Indian cinema like Sonu Nigam, late Divya Bharti, Tamil actress Archana Madhavi, Brahmaadham Telugu comedian artist, Illayaraja, popular music composer,

Caste is a state of mind

The Caste system is a state of mind, and it has always been maintained by developing certain religious and socio-cultural traditions. The purity of one caste is protected by denying marriage in another caste, by prohibiting marriage in another caste, or by any such means. The Recent Film, 'Dhadak', presents a ground reality of inter-caste marriage. It is shown in the film that a lower caste person is treated even inferior to animals. Upper caste people do not treat him as a human. We see a similar story in Sairat and Dhadak in many contexts. Hero of the Sairat has been mercilessly killed because he belongs to a lower-caste and could not have any right to love an upper-caste girl, and the murderer feels proud of killing him.

Conclusion

We cannot have a democratic nation in the presence of the 'varna and caste system, and where a society is divided into thousands of different castes, each caste hates the other, then how can equality and brotherhood take root in it? In a democracy, all institutions, either Government or private, must be representative. The Indian film industry is not representative at all, and there is a need to rethink its structure and policies to make it representative for the benefit of all Indians. When we study the Indian film industry in depth, it is seen clearly dominated by upper-caste people, and lower-caste people are neglected as inferior beings.

Film is the most famous medium of mass awareness; its impact is too pervasive, especially among the youth. If it represents only the upper-caste, then it cannot be a comprehensive picture of that society. The monopoly of the upper-caste must be broken to make it more realistic and representative. The initiative must be taken from the side of the center and state governments to promote the Bahujan in the film industry of our country.

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