



Caste In Cinema: A Sociological Inquiry Of *KAALA*

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From a sociological point of view, it is apparent to see everything in the relationship between society and human beings. As Weber would argue, 'sociology is a science' that attempts the interpretive understanding of social action *to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects*. However, the question is how cinematic action would be considered a social action. In other words, cinematic action is a social activity. To address his question, the psychoanalytic perspective of cinema studies plays an essential role in understanding the actions and reactions of various protagonists within cinema. Without going into more detail about the validity or invalidity of the real-life portrayal of multiple characters, it would be fruitful to come to the point directly. The end of the discussion of this essay is the Bollywood movie *KAALA*, which was simultaneously released in three languages: Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi. The questions that the paper is trying to answer are (i) how the plot has been executed, (ii) how Iconography has been used for assertion though it is silent, and (iii) how the movie reflects everyday life.

There has been a considerable debate about the gap between reel life and real life when we watch a film. It is also true that many times, we fail to associate, or there is no connection between what happened in real and what is happening in real life. There are very few movies in Indian cinema, in general, and Hindi Cinema, in particular, that focus on caste explicitly. However, in the last few years, some movies have come out that directly dealt with Dalits' issues.

Cinema in Society or Society in Cinema:

As an art form, cinema reflects the society it is set in and acts as a reflector of that society. In some films, there is a mark on society, and society, in turn, reacts to these films in various ways. The most important question that is very difficult to answer is whether cinema (s) influenced a society or by society or vice versa. The present paper attempts to find a way to answer this question. Though with certainty, there is no absolute answer to this question. The way most of the movies are sheer fantasy. These leagues of films depend upon its box office grocery. These movies have nothing to do with reality. In other words, there is no connection between what is happening in real life and what is there in real life. Amid this chaos, a particular movie(s) or once-in-a-lifetime movie(s) reflects society's everyday life and somehow shows how to negotiate our daily struggles.

With the development of technology, cinema has become the most powerful medium. Individuals can look into the workings of another family through the images projected in cinema. The storyline lets them forget their pain and worries and live with others through cinema. So, certain films encourage people to look at certain events in a fresh manner and suggest a possible solution to the audience's problems. That helps the audience to confirm not only their views but perhaps prejudice as well. The direct and indirect suggestions made in films will likely overtly and covertly impact the viewer. This is because of two reasons. First, the audiences not only view or see what the director gives but gradually translate, interpret, and internalize such behavior in their mind. Secondly, the viewers also watch the characters interact with each other and solve problems at their convenience or sense. It is very accurate when someone reads the recent reviews of the *KAALA* movie, where reviewers critique or appreciate based on what they think there should be in cinema. This interpretation is an interplay of many factors. Cultural factors determine which emotional expressions are highlighted and suppressed. However, viewers can understand universal emotions and behavioral responses, which may influence their responses, views, and attitudes and confirm their prejudices.

This review is divided into three sections. The first one provides a very brief account of the movie's plot. The second section discusses some of the dialogue and scenes of the film that concern everyday life. The last section responds to the earlier reviewers of the movie.

PLOT

Kaala movie has plotted the everyday struggles in *Dharabi* (Asia's largest slum). The film starts with a protest called by 'local basti' known as 'Dhobi Ghat' against forceful displacement and eviction by a local goon cum politician. Navigating the plot through this protest, what they call 'Dharna,' the movie ends with a victory celebration by slum dwellers. This celebration seems to mark two essential things; the first one is the small Dharna that started a few months back and now becomes a movement for every slum dweller across the globe, a movement of land rights for every resident of a hoped *pati*. The second important aspect is the

lynching of the goon cum politician known as **Hari Dada** with the mask of another protagonist called **Kaala**. The movie's main protagonists are Kaala and Hari, and they evolve from the Dharavi.

Society in **KAALA**

The film reflects or acts as a mirror to society to convey a more realistic or approximate reality. It can communicate precise knowledge through written, spoken, or symbolic language. The film is a product of the culture in which it is set. So it is apparent to see the culture of Dharavi, the everyday struggle of a slum-dweller. In other words, in **KAALA**, we can see the life struggle of migrant labor that predominantly stays in slums only.

Further, it also shows how the life of a city is very much dependent upon those slum-dwellers. It reflects at least in two instances, firstly when the goon cum politician **Vishnu** describes '*Chhota India*,' which means small India, where people from every section of the society are staying, and **KAALA bhai** is the king, so his words are final. Secondly, Maharashtra went off when **KAALA bhai** gave a strike call to press their demand on the government. The lives of the urban elite or rich people are badly affected by this strike because their lives, in some way or another, depend on the slum dwellers. This strike shows the mindset of urban folks towards slum dwellers, as the director has shown quite clearly when two young lads give an interview to a TV journalist; one says that most of them are criminals, rowdy, and gangster, whereas the other lad blames the striker for not getting a transport.

How the scenes are constructed, the characters are defined and delineated, and how the story moves forward with the help of music and symbols lend the film a certain cultural edge. To extend it, Chakravartee (1995) has argued that "cinema has enabled culture to be transmitted through a mechanical medium that projects a totality of effect." It can be seen when Ranjit tries to present a counter myth with the climax. Further, these counter myths reignite the longstanding debate of *Aryan invasion theory*. It says very clearly that, *Kachra aur Gandagi ne aaj mujhe hara dia...* today I have been defeated by dirt and garbage, and it is not more than a dead. What does it mean; it seems to reflect the upper caste mentality towards the lower caste people in rural areas. For urban folks, it shows how they ruminate about *jhopad pati* or slum dwellers. *Hee hame kanoon mat sikha, hame kanoon manne bi ata hai aur atyachar hone se uskhe pichhe **** dalna bhi ata hai. Kuchh kanoon hum gareebo k liye bhi banaya gaya hai nahi to tum lok kabse hame samundar ke uss par phak diye hote.* The nearest translation in English would be like, hey, do not teach us how to abide by the law; we know it and how to tackle it when somebody does injustice within the umbrella of law. To continue the dialogue further, the protagonist argued that there is some law for people with low incomes otherwise, since You people could have kicked us. This dialogue seems to tress on the constitution in general and fundamental rights in particular. Because of these basic rights, we can protect ourselves or what.

Search for new Iconography:

Every cinema in India starts with images of a god or goddess. Sometimes, a tagline of God/Goddess is there at the start. However, *Kaala* breaks that tradition. It starts with a depiction that says how, over time, the land's inhabitants are forced into peril by invaders who snatch the land from them. Further, the movie's main protagonist, Kalikeeran, always attired Black Kurta or Blue Kurta. A couple of names imply some significant historical figures like Lenin from the Marxist tradition, Selva from South India or particularly from Tamil Nadu, and Bhimji from Ambedkar's first name. There is a conversation between Kalikeeran and his son about changing society, where he argues, "*Apne zameen aur, logo ko jane bina, do kitabo paddle bad lab aur kranti ka naam lekar game hain. Apni jade janna jaruri hai badlab ke liye.*" This dialogue reflects the message of Ambedkar, who said that those who do not know their history cannot make history.

KAALA in Society:

At the same time, cinema also holds up a mirror for society, indicating what is happening. There remains a gulf between those who look upon cinema merely as a medium of entertainment and those who would like to see it as a medium of communicating cultural and social values and, thus, as a tool for bringing about a better social order (Murthy, 1980). The "*mystique participant*" allows the viewers to see cinema at multiple levels: simple entertainment, occasionally educational, confirming prejudices, and feeling detached or involved. This participation relies on factors such as age, gender, and education. There is no doubt that the discourse of cinema is influenced heavily by the media, fiction, narratives, and folk tales. Such a discourse influences how the audience views and interprets a film. These discourses are of two types: constructivist, i.e., building meaning, and detectivist, i.e., finding meaning, both of which will be influenced by the viewer's expectations, dispositions, cognitive and visual schema, cultural models, and clues from the images and representation of images, as well as by other stimuli such as songs.

Conclusion:

It is well-documented how much Ranjith adores his preambles that set the scene! The film *Kaala* begins with an animated prologue that shows urban poor people in Indian cities before focusing on Mumbai, where slums encroach like the shadows of tall buildings. Further, there is a fantastic image of *Kaala* trudging through a carpet of flames, but a Shivaji Rao Gaekwad character also perishes.