



CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS WITH METROPOLISES

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ABSTRACT

The present research study will try to evolve in close symbiotic relation between the metropolis and cultural, social conditions and predicament in the selected movies such as *Delhi Belly* directed by AbhinayDeo, *Delhi Six* by Rakesh Omprakash Mehra and Mani Ratnam's *Yuva*. The research work will attempt to register insider's outsideness in metropolises's landscape to see how the surrounding world is represented in the movies such as Sudhir Mishra's *Calcutta Mail*; *Rock On* by Abhishek Kapoor begins with struggle in Mumbai and later has the backdrop of the city Delhi in which a band of young rebel musicians shown to capitalizing on their skills for survival. The movies such as *Mahanagar* by Satyajit Ray, *Life in a Metro* directed by Anurag Basu that set in Mumbai, and *Page-3* directed by Madhur Bhandarkar explore power – play between the culture and the media through the eyes of a female. The study will involve the city environment from the perception of the characters of the movies and from the filmmakers' point of view i.e. interplay would be searched between the pace of metropolises' landscapes and the pace of human activities i.e. how the internal crises, limitations finds space for freedom, openness, hybridization and recognition.

Key Words: Hindi Cinema, Society, Metropolises, Cinematic Representations

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Indian Cinema opens the window onto a culture of aesthetics, presents human activities with life's intricacies, places gross realities and emotional sufferings in the web of illusions and disillusion, exhibits the paces of ups and downs of life and there is cinematic exploration of the varied perspectives of social attributes of Indian life. Popular Indian cinema approaches metropolises' lifestyle from the view of modernization, freedom, dislocation and displacement and it raises consciousness for 'decolonizing the mind' and moving the centre' (Ngugi: 1981, 1993). It forms the critique from the perspective of culture, crises, emotions, society and economy.

Cinematic representations in contemporary Indian Cinema comprise of "narrative structure, length, motivation, moral universe, sets, costumes, acting style, editing principles, sound design, special

effects.....keeping in mind the conditions of Cineplex exhibition, the market in telecast rights, global audience tastes, and the industry's own crossover aspirations" (Sen and Basu, 211). The popular Indian cinema portrays social cause and social environment through cinematic imagination. The cinema generates the milieu as well as transformation to "guarantee pleasure by a corroboration of the spectator's identity" (Viridi, 172). The contemporary Indian films provide the topography of postmodern culture and society with equal striking changes in the nature and appearance of the people living in big cities such as "urban lifestyle is now a maelstrom unfolding in muted-tone luxury condos and lofts, flash malls, and steamy nightclubs," while "women protagonists, a far cry from the classical self-sacrificing mother-wife-daughter, now freely express libidinal desire, and

stand up to patriarchal oppression” (Sen and Basu, 211).

In the research paper the notion of metropolises and its impact on social and human predicament is undertaken. It analyses the living conditions in urban cities and the class/ gender disparities that prevail at both structural and formative level. The study evaluates tension and contentions that occur on account of the spaces of modernity and urbanity. In light of these challenges, the research paper tends to focus on the themes and conceptions of the city at large through the cinematic exploration of films such as *Life in a Metro*, released in 2007, directed by Anurag Basu that set in Mumbai. *Page-3*, released in 2003, directed by Madhur Bhandarkar, explores power-play between the media-culture and society through the eyes of a female. Both the films reconceptualise gender and sexuality in urban spaces.

Life in a Metro deals with the three feminist objectives from postcolonial perspective the ‘oblique method of resistance through self-westernization, self-modernization and self-determination’ (Young, 374). It narrates lives of people in context of extramarital affairs, sanctity of marriage and love. Extramarital affairs result from disillusionment, quest for contentment and for intimacy by breaking the customized boundaries of the institution of marriage. Love has been measured in view of the diffused connotations of sexuality in urban space to search legitimacy in man-woman relationship as well as to form social engagement and self-conscious penchant for identity. The “*Rishtey*” lyrics in *Life in a Metro*, composed by Sayeed Quadri, Amitabh Verma, Sandeep Srivastava and sung by James, convey the existentialist notion of living, feeling, experiencing and acting. It is apt to illustrate Satre’s notion in his essay regarding “*Existentialism is a Humanism*” in context of bourgeoisie’s life in metro cities, he writes: ‘If, however, it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders. And, when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality,

but that he is responsible for all men’ (Satre:1946). All these lead to a sense of disorientation and passionately struggles for existence come before one’s essence, subsequently the societal impact of postmodern metropolises shape their own pathway, create their own values that in variance with the inherent identity or values which they dispossess due to the absurdist’ notions that they ingrain in midst of hue and cry of the mechanised, modern and material world. The absurdist philosopher Albert Camus in this context stated that ‘individuals should embrace the absurd condition of human existence while also defiantly continuing to explore and search for meaning’ (Camus: 1991). Such choice and experience determine confusion, nothingness and anguish in the “*Rishtey*” song’s lyrics –

*Rishteytohnahi, rishtonkiparchaayiyaah mile
Yehkaisibheedhai bass yahaantanhaayiyaan mile-----
(Ek chat ke tale ajnabihojaatehairishtey
Bistarpechaadaro se chhup so jaate hey rishtey)
Dhunde se bhiinamenahidarmaayiyaan mile
Yehkaisibheedhai bass yahaantanhaayiyaan mile
(Jiskobhidekho who adhrasahaiyahaan
Jaisekahinhour who adharakhahuwa)
Ho jab jahaanjudewahijudaayiyaan mile
Yehkaisibheedbai bass yahantanhayiyaan mile.*

The lyrics intensely resonate the individual consciousness for closeness, but finding their subjectivity stronger before reality, such individuals become fugitive to their absurd intimacy and to their own created make-believe world of interdependency and trap; this lyric purports another side of relationships in which a character attempts to search value out of his choice and behaviour, yet ends up in futile solipsistic and individual experience and nullifies “the concept of inter-subjectivity” (Jurgen, 1970). The characters appear to be communicating and cooperating not for love, care and share but more for “social cognition” and self-individuation” (Sanche, 2014)

In the movie *Life in a Metro*, Ranjit in his 30s married to Shikha with a six year old son, but they decided that she should stay back at home and take care of the house and kid. Ranjit while venturing out on his quest for money and success, forgets his family and get into illicit relationship with Neha. Neglected by an indifferent husband Shikha too gets attracted to

an unconventional – minded person Akash. On both sides love blossoms, but Neha realises her disillusioned folly and Shikha too cultivates moral shame and guilt to cross her limits. Instead of being only interactive, she extended her inter-subjective dimension to romance and friendship.

The lyric “*Rishtey*” symbolically refers to dissection and depravity pervading in Wasteland metropolis Mumbai when Rahul invents a novel strategy to rise up the ladder of success. He provides his flat to superiors at the office where they can safely bring their mistresses, girl-friends and substitutes in return for accommodation for his promotion. Ranjit uses his flat to meet Neha, but relegates commitment and that result in her attempt to suicide and her union with Rahul, whereas Ranjeet returns to Shikha at last and Shikha sets of Akash, who leaves for abroad. These relationships are specific time-bound, created out of circumstances/internal crisis, but have no “moral response and responsibility” (Sanchez, 2014). Samuel aptly writes in his essay “*The Metropolis and Mental Life*” that – “City life is a violent stimulus – the swift and continuous shift. He argues that people in cities instead of reacting emotionally, reacts primarily in a rational manner, thus creating a mental predominance through the intensification of consciousness, deal with ever-shifting contexts and there is more concern for economic ramifications and pseudo-differentiations” (Simmel, 1903).

In the film *Life in a Metro* the characters both men and women are under the influence of external forces of consumerist, capitalist, secularist culture and their entity is subjected to moral dilemma, guilt-stricken, liaisons and emotional dependency. Their notion of self-actualisation/self-knowledge evokes reactionary valorisation, indulgence, of non-committal relationship based on sex. And a sense of new incumbency to avail the space provided by the urban conditions at personal and intra-personal level. For instance in the movie cell phones have shortened distances within world and travelling through air has brought cities nearer, even then scarcity of time for having breakfast, to attend to dinner with near and dear ones, rushing for lunch between fret and fume of everyday routine life. Commercial lifestyle, malls, multiplexes to watch

movies have become the entertainers and make-shifts. Long distant years have reduced to months or lesser to achieve one’s ambitions. Consumer and capitalists’ economy is based on Sensex rise and fall. Boredom and monotony are the current trends to escape into make-believe world of entertainment, sex and dreams, as a result causing sleeplessness. Rahul the protagonist represents to one such character, who work as a call centre executive in a BPO in Mumbai, he silently loves his boss Neha. Neha is a smart young woman who has made it up the ranks in a very short time, because her boss Ranjeet loves her and is willing to shower her with gifts and opportunities. A critic on the state of Indians’ metropolitan life in Hindi films writes: “The urban films on the one hand seem to function into the advanced horizon of new capitalism and verbal obscenities (Biswas, 2006); while on the other hand the social space seem to be split between rational knowledge and morality as one between the mind and body” (Deluze, 1989).

The film *Page-3* projects the glitz and glamour of celebrity lifestyles and their artificial world of luxury, leisure and leverage which feed cynical attitudes and sexual motivations. The filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar makes revelations through the interplay of culture and media in the city of Mumbai. It portrays the metropolitan culture of high society or upper class. It is a world that is dark, sad, slick, and full of crime and corruption. It presents “spurious nostalgia, the underlying mood of pessimism that undercuts any attempted happy endings and it has the existential motifs of dark visual style and the black vision of despair, loneliness and dread” (Porfirio, 85). The mise-en-scene of the film reinforced the vulnerability of its lead characters especially and inescapably coded, written and over-determined” (Doane, 216). The lead heroine of the film Madhavi Sharma who collects articles for the third page of a popular, colourful, daily newspaper, has to update herself with the scandalous social events happening in parties and at get-togethers, mostly start late at night and continue till the wee hours of the next day. Her task is to create entertainment for readers and “to cause sensational gossips in the social circuits through Page 3 culture” (The Hindu (India): 30 June, 2005). This film is also

the story of three girls who intend to live with dignity in an indecent society. Madhavi Sharma, an entertainment journalist shares room with Pearl Sequiera, a bold outspoken Air-hostess, who wants to marry for money, while there is another woman Gayatri Sachdeva, who comes across Madhavi in a state of trance due to consumption of alcohol and sexual abuse when she was travelling by a Borivelli-bound Western Railway train on her way to Malad. Gayatri has been the victim of abuse at the hands of Charu Mohanty, the filmmaker. Madhavi gets her to her apartment and all three women share in this way decadence and viciousness of the fragmented and complex urban space. Pearl meets her millionaire, a much older man, marries him and settles in New York. Meanwhile Madhavi plans to expose Rohit Kumar who makes Gayatri pregnant and later forces her to submit the article to abort and then Gayatri attempts to suicide. Madhavi plans to write about him and submits article to her editor but editor curbs her by insisting upon her the conditions to apologise to the leading actor Rohit Kumar.

Madhavi gets more disillusioned with her job, when she lands on the crime beat. While recording a series of crime news, she gets emotionally shocked when she reports about the missing children from Anjali Thapar's rehabilitation home, who have been used for sex acts at Ramesh Thapar's bungalow. But this piece of news is also declined by her boss due to pressure of Thapar and she is dismissed from service. Her misery and dread becomes unbearable when she finds out that her boyfriend is gay, and finds him in bed with her best friend Abhijeet.

Gayatri meanwhile searches for the alternatives to liberate herself that helps her to procure money, position and independence. She who supposedly returned to Delhi sleeps with a director and gets cast in a movie. Thus we find that Madhavi gets caught in the whirlpool of chaos, violence and hypocrisy in the metro culture and society. Anjali Thapar whose holistic social work to rehabilitate orphans symbolically represents motif of film noir and criminality in the masochistic world of power and exploitation. Gayatri Sachdeva searches authenticity in an authentic life by living in denial and ignoring good and evil. Pearl willingly reject values that are

eternal to the self and creates her own value system to survive and to be being-in-itself rather wandering in nothingness. The cinematic representation of metropolitan life manifests that ethics and emotions gets displaced and contradicted due to desire, vices, class or caste identity, commerce, lifestyle and occupation. The filmmaker uses a language that shows how capitalism and its human agents deviate from semiotic environment of human life for the sake of "heteronomy of elements" (Prasad, 1998). Hindi movies of Indian Cinema industry open the window onto a culture of aesthetics. These present human activities with life's intricacies, place gross realities, emotional sufferings, illusions and disillusion. These movies explore uncomfortable sensations and desires of social Indian life. These films illustrate "metropolises' battered concept of integrity and professionalism" (Robert, 88).

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