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"Exploring Potentials in Challenging Periods"

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The Portrayal of Epic in Director Maniratnam's Films (Special Reference with *Ramayanam* and *Mahabharatha*)

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Director Maniratnam has a specialty in dealing with the realistic and emotional issues like caste, religion and language that many people are afraid to talk about through the Mass Media of film. Maniratnam has expressed his ideas through several techniques as storytelling, visualization, and characterization to evoke the inner emotion through his films. The objective of this research is to shed light on the portrayal of Epic in Maniratnam's Films. The research focuses mainly on two films of a particular director *Thalapathy* and *Raavanam*. The prime focus of this study is to find out the portrayal of epic stories Mahabharatha and Ramayana respectively in his films. According to that this study investigates that, how director Maniratnam portrays the Epic themes in his films? And how director handles his characterization as a gradual shift from epic story to his film? The researcher has used descriptive content analysis to analyze the selected films of director Maniratnam and employed the sociological approach to analyze the qualitative data. As the theoretical framework of this study, the researcher used the Auteur Theory, which examines the control of the author over his/her media productions. The research found that the director Maniratnam uses film as a tool to reflect not only the story of epic but also to construct the political subtexts in every available point of views. Through a visual analysis of the approach the portrayal of characterization and themes are more different from epic. Director Maniratnam shows the epic story through his films in his own way. And he made a huge impact on the gradual shift from epic character to film main character. Manirathnam tries to take the main ideas from the epic and adopting it to the lifestyle of ordinary people. Director used films to portray the political themes to convey the real issue to their audience.

Keywords: Hindu epic; Mahabharatham; Ramayanam director maniratnam; Portrayal

INTRODUCTION

Director Maniratnam is a well-known film director in south Indian film industry. He has directed many film based on politics. At the same time he has chosen family, friend, Love, Culture and war for his film themes. He has chosen some of his themes taken from Epic of Tamil language and directed films. Tamil language has many literatures with in it. Some Tamil directors select some literature and portray their story based on that concept. In that point director Maniratnam portrayed epic stories Mahabharatha and Ramayana to his films *Thalapathi* and *Raavan*. Director has chosen main theme from epic stories but the way he conveys his ideology can be easily understood by audience. He might have taken then main idea from epic but the ways he conveys his ideology and expresses his view are mostly different and they are connected to the hearts and minds of ordinary people.

The various ways of storytelling, theme selection, selecting suitable plots and well-known actors make his film something different from other directors from south Indian film industry. Director Maniratnam has a specialty in dealing with the realistic and emotional issues like caste, religion and language that many people are afraid to talk about through the Mass Media of film. Director has chosen the professional and well known music directors, producers, cinematographer and so on to direct his films. Director Maniratnam has chosen different plots and selected the suitable characters to his films. Director Maniratnam portrays his own ideology from his film to make a huge impact to the audience.

Director has chosen the plot from the ordinary place, using people's ordinary life style and simple format he conveys the message to the audience. It is a challengeable thing to bring the very large epic within three hours film. Somehow Maniratnam brought the main idea and theme based on epic and directed rest of the parts through his own way of storytelling.

OBJECTIVE

The research focuses mainly on two films of a particular director *Thalapathy* and *Raavanan*. The prime focus of this study is to find out the portrayal of epic stories Mahabharatha and Ramayana respectively in his films. According to that this study investigates that, how director Maniratnam portrays the Epic themes in his films? And how director handled his characterization as a gradual shift from epic story to his film?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Director Maniratnam has directed *Thalapathi* and *Raavan* based on Ramayanam and Mahabharatha. He did not copy from the epic and he just took the main point in epic and adopts it to his own idea using his own way. Here director has chosen main concepts from the epic and portray his stories in his own way. From these films, audience can understand director's ideology regarding epic.

THALAPATHY

Thalapathi portrays the epic Mahabharatha. Director did not capture the entire parts from Mahabharatham but brings his story to screen for the good understanding of ordinary people. Among many classic epics, one film especially *Thalapathy* brought the different ideology to the audience. Adapting a story from the Tamil mythology is not new in Tamil cinema. Alternately, the portrayal of Mahabharata which is as yet loved as the exemplification of friendship was never appeared with such altruism. The film plot rotates around Rajinikanth (Suriya) was left in train when he was infant. Rajinikanth is grown as a legitimate individual and because of the situation Rajini becomes *thalapathi* to mamooty. On the other side Aravindsaamy is a collector he mainly targets Mamooty and Rajinikanth. Yet Rajinikanth guarantees his mother that he will not touch Aravindsaamy in any conditions. This is the main story of the film. Maniratnam has expressed his ideas and messages in Thalapathi through several techniques as storytelling, visualization, and characterization to evoke the inner emotion.

In Mahabharatham and Thalapathi, many similarities can be seen. In the begging of the film, when Rajanikath entering to the screen he was shown/ screened background sun raising scenery and his name of this film is "Suriya". In Mahabharatha "Karnan" was not born from an ordinary man but he is son of sun. That is the concept director brings to Thalapathi film. Rajanikatha is playing the role as Karnam in this film.

In Mahabharatha "Thurijothanan" was king of nation and he had many soldiers and well trained 99 brothers but he believes Karnan only. Thurijothanan makes karnan as a soldier's leader of his kingdom. In mahabharathaThurijothana listens to karnam and respects karnan's friendship. As in

Thalapathi, Mamooty (Dhava) plays the Thuriyothanan role and he wants Suriya always when he makes decisions. Suriya is a young man always stands for justice, that genuine character attack a lot to Dhava, and he always likes to keep him near him, and makes him gang leader. The following sentences explain the true friendship between them.

Dhava said to Suriya when he rejected to come and stay with him “Suriya! You have many but I don't have anyone except you, you are my leader (Thalapathi) My best friend”

When Suriya is not ready to kill the collector, Dhava gets angry on Suriya, that time Suriya said to Dhava. “Dhava! Do you know what friendship is? Do you know who Suriya is? Suriya is friend of Dhava and Suriya living his life for Dhava, you know I will die for you, this is the life for you friend”.

These two incidents explain the deep relationship between Dhava and Suriya. The plot is different but the main concept is about the friendship which is in Mahabharatham. As that there are many similarities between Mahabharatham and Thalapathi.

Suriya and collector are brothers. They both do not know that but their mother came to know that Suriya is also his son and collector plans to kill Suriya and Suriya plans to kill collector without knowing they are brothers. Mother goes to Suriya and reveals that collector is his brother and she is from his mother. And finally Suriya promised his mother he will not touch collector. Same thing is from Mahabharatham. Kunthi requests not to kill Archunan his brother. Director did not convey the story a historical film but he tries to portray Mahabharatham from his own way just all can understand. On the other hand there are many differences audience can find out from the film. Director gets the main concept and idea from Mahabharatham and brings the story connecting with ordinary people life style. Back ground music plays the major role to easily convey the messages and emotions. Basically Maniratnam is from Bharamin community so here he tries to focus that Bharamin are high caste and Karnan (Suriya) was Bharamin community.

RAAVANAN

Director Maniratnam's next epic based film was Raavanan. Raavanan is portraying the epic “Ramayanam”. Epic Ramayana mainly talks about the Raman. On the other hand director in

Raavanan tries to bring the goodness of Raavanan. Ramayanam was a historical epic and it was mainly based on kingdom. But in Raavanan director does not direct the film based on kingdom but director tries to convey the message using with ordinary people and their life style. Director has directed the film based on Ramayanam which can be easily understood from many places in Raavanan. There are many similarities between epic Ramayanam and films Raavanan. The name director names the film as 'Raavanan' as it speaks about Raavanan from Ramayan. In Ramayanam king Raaman and king Raavanan become enemy because of Ravana's sister, and Ravana got angry and revenge Raaman by kidnapping Raaman's wife as that in Raavanan film also Veeraiya's (Raavanan) sister was raped by a police officer and Veeraiya tries to revenge police commander by kidnapping his wife. The incident saw that it was based on Ramayanam. And Ravana was a devotee of God Shiva as that in Raavan also Veeraiya is an ardent devotee of God Shiva. Raavanan kidnaps Sita but he never does any harm to Sita, and he never allows anything happen to Sita. Same story audience can find in Raavanan also. Veeraiya kidnaps Ragini, wife of police commander and never does any harm to Ragini, respects her and cares her. This incident also explains the similarities between Ramayan and Raavanan. Even though director gets the main idea from Ramayana but he portrays the Raavanan in his own way. Director does not make it as a historical film and he does not bring in the screen the kingdom. But director makes the film using ordinary people's life style and allow the ordinary audience to understand his ideology.

In Ramayana Raaman is God and Raavanan is expressed as villain but in Raavanan director tries to bring the goodness of Raavanan. In the end of the film Ragini understands the goodness of veeraiya and feels he is safe and has some attraction on Veeraiya. Ragini thinks that compare to her husband, Veeraiya is a genuine character and she realizes the real love which veeraiya having on Ragini and coming back to Veeraiya to forest. In this points audience can understand the real idea of Maniratnam. There many criticism about the film director playing with Hindu religious beliefs and creates his own idea by changing the historical epic. Director tries to bring the ideology that Raaman may be god of Hindus but Raavanan was the God of Tamil Hindu people.

CONCLUSION

To conclude the portrayal of epic within three hours is a tremendous task. But Manirathram tries his best in taking the main ideas from the epic and adopting it to the lifestyle of ordinary people. Through his cinematography he brings into alive the most important issues in India such as castism, religion and marriage through the local colours. Director Maniratnam uses Cinema as a tool to reflect not only the reality but also to construct the political ideology in every point of view. Then, he used films to portray the entertainment theme or political theme to convey the real issue to their audience. While other directors express ordinary issues like love, college life, marriage and sports director Maniratnam has uniqueness by himself as he views from different angles such as politics, struggles, caste structure, students strike and religious beliefs.

According to that, director Maniratnam has used varieties of approaches to expose the political significance through his films. The film is written and directed according to the director's perception and consciousness. Auteur theory clearly mentions that - director's film reflects the director's personal creative vision in that manner director Maniratnam has chosen - Chennai, Bombay, Tamil Nadu and many areas as the shooting location for his film. The directors' background and the region also may have an influence on their films. Once he has justified that the reason for the secularism and patriotism in his films - because he is from Brahmin and Indian. So his native or their living place also has the influence on his story.

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