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An Analytical Study of Social Themes in Director Mansore's Kannada Films

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***Abstract:** This research article examines the recurring social themes in the films of Director Mansore, a critically acclaimed Kannada filmmaker known for his bold and thought-provoking narratives. Through close analysis of his four feature films - Harivu (2014), Nathicharami (2018), Act 1978 (2020) and 19.20.21 (2023) - the article argues that Mansore consistently champions the voice of the marginalized, exposing social injustices and challenging societal norms. By exploring the impact of Mansore's films on Kannada cinema and society, this study contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of cinema and social consciousness in the context of regional Indian filmmaking. A qualitative content analysis is used in this study to reveal the different ways in which Director Mansore approaches and investigates societal challenges.*

Keywords: Activism, Bureaucracy, Caste, Gender, Kannada cinema, Social themes.

INTRODUCTION

Kannada cinema is a regional film industry, serving the movies throughout the world. It is one of the most prolific and oldest film industries in India, with more than 150 films produced annually. Filmmaker Mansore has been a prominent figure in the Kannada film industry and his works often address social issues relevant to the region.

Director Mansore has emerged as a powerful voice in Kannada cinema, challenging the status quo with his unflinching portrayal of social realities. His films are not merely entertainment oriented; they are searing indictments of systemic inequalities, sparking conversations about caste, gender, and the struggle for justice. This article delves into Mansore's oeuvre, dissecting the recurring social themes that bind his films together and analyzing his unique approach to cinematic storytelling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The article “Impact of films: changes in young people’s attitudes after watching a movie” explores the impact of films on young people's attitudes towards social concerns, focusing on attitudes towards older individuals. Results show postgraduate students have more positive attitudes towards older individuals after watching a video, influenced by age and past interactions. However, these changes are not long-lasting (Kubrak T. 2020).

The article “Representation of social issues in films” explores the role of films in addressing social issues highlighting their role as entertainment, sociological documents, and cultural documents. It also discusses the history and impact of Indian cinema, highlighting its potential to create social change and dialogue (Vineeth Koul, 2014).

In a research on “American Social Issues Reflected by the Movie Joker”, the researcher says that the video focuses on the maltreatment of mental patients as well as the protest culture that emerges as a result of social injustice situations. The article recommends that the best way to address these concerns is through peaceful civil disobedience (Xuhao Zhang, 2021).

The article “Film as a development communication medium: an analytical study of selected Kannada movies” discusses the use of film as a medium for development communication, focusing on two Kannada films, "Bangarada Manushya" and "Bhoothayyana Maga Ayyu." It explores how these films address social issues and promote social change. The article also highlights the historical significance of Kannada cinema in promoting societal development. The study analyzes the content of the selected films, emphasizing themes such as the importance of farming, rural development, casteism, social unity, and family values. The films are seen as examples of how cinema can effectively address social concerns and reach a wide audience (N J Sachin, 2023).

The article “Cinema, Race, and Justice: A Qualitative Analysis of Selected Themes” analyzed seven crime and justice films, including 12 Angry Men, A Family Thing, American History X, American Me, Crash, Shawshank Redemption, and Traffic, using content analysis to assess characters' actions and themes, revealing restorative justice and peacemaking perspectives (Katherine Clay Thompson, 2007).

The research article “Social media activities impact on the decision of watching films in cinema” explores the influence of social media on Thai film audiences' decision-making process, focusing on promotional programs, platform activities, trailer assessments, and movie decisions. Results indicate that social media significantly influences film consumption, with promotional programs and social media activities playing a crucial role. The study suggests exploring strategies to boost cinema movie-watching frequency (Montajula Suvattanadilok, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This research article delves into the potent social commentary woven into the cinematic tapestry of Director Mansore's Kannada films. Through a meticulous analysis of his four feature-length works – Harivu (2014), Nathicharami (2018), Act 1978 (2020), and 19.20.21 (2023), the study exposes Mansore's unwavering commitment in amplifying the voices of the marginalized and challenging societal norms. A qualitative content analysis is used in this study to analyse the director Mansore films.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

At first researcher reviewed social themes that were observed in the Mansore Films. Under this category it is found that director effectively portrayed the systemic oppression, corruption, women sexuality, gender inequalities and role of media and its responsibilities.

Social Themes

Harivu (2014)

- **Systemic Oppression:** Harivu delves into the systemic oppression faced by the marginalized sections of society. The film portrays the bureaucratic system and the corruption that plagues it, as the protagonist and his son face numerous obstacles in their journey for medical care.
- **Urbanization:** The movie "Harivu" explores the theme of urbanization by depicting the challenges faced by individuals in the process of urban migration and the impact of urban life on rural communities. It portrays the struggles of a farmer who brings his son to Bengaluru for medical treatment, highlighting the disconnection and alienation experienced in the urban environment. The film delves into the contrast between rural and urban life, shedding light on the societal and emotional implications of urbanization.
- **Bureaucracy and Corruption:** The movie "Harivu" portrays the impact of bureaucracy and corruption on the common man. The protagonist, a farmer, faces numerous challenges in taking his son's body back home due to bureaucratic hurdles and corruption. The movie highlights the struggles of ordinary people in the face of systemic obstacles and the misuse of rules and regulations by the bureaucracy for their own benefit. The film makes an uncompromisingly sharp statement on the sordid self-serving proclivity of the bureaucracy.

Nathicharami (2018)

- **Female Desire and Sexuality:** The film boldly delves into the often-silenced issue of female desire, particularly for widows. Gowri, the protagonist, grapples with the societal stigma against a woman expressing her sexual needs after losing her husband. The film challenges these norms and encourages dialogue about female sexuality and the right to personal fulfillment.
- **Gender Inequality and Double Standards:** Nathicharami sheds light on the glaring gender inequalities present in society. Men's sexual urges are readily accepted, while women are expected to repress theirs and face harsh judgment for any transgression. The film critiques this hypocrisy and advocates for equal rights and acceptance of female desire.
- **Societal Taboos and Morality:** The film tackles issues like premarital sex and relationships outside marriage, which are often considered taboo in Indian society. By presenting these topics without judgment, Nathicharami encourages viewers to reconsider traditional notions of morality and embrace individual autonomy.
- **Widows and Social Ostracization:** The film sheds light on the plight of widows who are often ostracized and treated as lesser members of society. Gowri's journey highlights the emotional and practical challenges faced by widows and calls for greater empathy and support for this marginalized group.
- **Breaking Free from Societal Chains:** Ultimately, Nathicharami is a story about individual liberation and breaking free from societal constraints. Gowri's transformation as she embraces her desires and chooses her own path serves as an inspiration for women and anyone seeking to live life on their own terms.

Act 1978 (2020)

- **Bureaucracy and Corruption:** The film revolves around Geetha, a pregnant widow navigating the labyrinthine bureaucracy to claim government compensation rightfully due to her. The narrative exposes the rampant corruption, red tape, and apathy within the system, highlighting the struggles of ordinary citizens against an indifferent and sometimes hostile apparatus.
- **Power Dynamics and Abuse of Power:** The film portrays the power dynamics within the bureaucracy, revealing how lower-level officials exploit their positions for personal gain. This abuse of power further marginalizes Geetha and amplifies her frustrations.
- **Gender Inequality and Vulnerability:** Geetha's struggles as a pregnant woman facing a patriarchal system are central to the film. The narrative highlights the additional vulnerabilities faced by women in such situations, particularly in their interactions with male officials.
- **Socioeconomic Injustice and Marginalization:** Geetha's story represents the broader issue of socioeconomic inequality and the struggles of marginalized communities in accessing basic rights and entitlements. The film critiques the systemic biases that perpetuate this inequality.
- **Individual vs. System Conflict:** Geetha's desperate act of strapping a bomb to herself becomes a stark symbol of the individual's struggle against a flawed system. The film raises questions about the limits of individual resistance and the consequences of such actions.
- **Media and Social Responsibility:** The film delves into the role of the media in highlighting social issues and bringing pressure on authorities. It explores the potential for media to amplify marginalized voices and contribute to social change.
- **Human Dignity and the Right to Respect:** Ultimately, "Act 1978" is a powerful plea for human dignity and the right to be treated with respect. Geetha's story resonates with anyone who has ever felt powerless or marginalized by a system that should serve them.

19.20.21 (2023)

- **Tribal marginalization and exploitation:** The film highlights the struggles of the Malekudiya tribe, facing poverty, lack of basic infrastructure like roads and schools, and discrimination due to their tribal identity, and It exposes the power dynamics at play, where dominant groups often exploit tribal communities for resources or label them as "extremists" to quell their demands for basic rights.
- **Caste and class discrimination:** The film subtly addresses the underlying issues of caste and class discrimination faced by tribal communities, contributing to their marginalization and vulnerability, and it prompts viewers to consider the intersectionality of various social issues and their impact on different groups within society.
- **Importance of speaking up and fighting for justice:** 19.20.21 is a powerful story of resilience and resistance against injustice. It encourages viewers to speak up against oppressive systems and fight for the rights of marginalized communities.
- **Misuse of draconian laws:** The movie portrays how stringent laws like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) can be misused to target activists and dissenters from marginalized communities, and it raises questions about due process and the burden of proof when individuals from underprivileged backgrounds are accused under such laws.
- **Importance of education and legal rights:** This movie emphasizes the power of education in empowering individuals and communities to fight for their rights. Vittal's education plays a crucial role in understanding legal procedures and challenging his wrongful accusation. The Film Showcases the importance of legal representation and access to justice for marginalized communities. Advocate

Suresh Hegde's tireless fight for Vittala's release showcases the role of dedicated lawyers in upholding individual rights.

Cinematic Techniques

Mansore's films are not solely driven by social commentary; they employ powerful cinematic techniques to amplify the emotional impact of his narratives. His films are characterized by:

- **Realistic storytelling:** Mansore's films often adopt a docu-drama style, blurring the lines between fiction and reality. This approach lends authenticity to his narratives and immerses viewers in the lived experiences of his characters.
- **Non-linear narratives:** Mansore's films often employ non-linear narratives, challenging traditional storytelling structures. This technique allows him to explore different facets of his themes and offer a more nuanced understanding of the issues at hand.
- **Powerful visuals:** Mansore's films are visually stunning, employing evocative imagery and symbolism to complement his social commentary. This visual language adds depth and complexity to his narratives.

CONCLUSION

Director Mansore stands tall as a leading voice for social justice in Kannada cinema. His films courageously tackle sensitive social issues, giving voice to the marginalized and challenging societal norms. Through his powerful storytelling and masterful use of cinematic techniques, Mansore forces audiences to confront uncomfortable truths and inspires them to fight for a more just and equitable society. His work serves as a testament to the power of cinema to spark dialogue, ignite change, and champion the voices of those often silenced.

Mansore's contribution to Kannada cinema is notable, particularly in his portrayal of social issues and historical events. His films have been praised for their ambition in addressing important societal matters. However, some critiques have pointed out challenges in effectively weaving real-life material into impactful storytelling.

Mansore's work in Kannada cinema has made significant strides in addressing social and political themes, and his films have sparked important conversations about the portrayal of such issues in the industry. Mansore's Kannada movies would encapsulate these achievements and the impact of his work on the cinematic landscape of Karnataka.

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