

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CASTE SYSTEM AND TAMIL CINEMA

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APSTRACT:

I tried a handful of movie listing apps and it usually only varies between authorized funny bad. This app by Filister, titled Movies only, puts all other apps for embarrassment. Attractively designed, Movies has a smart interface that allows the user to discover what flicks are playing, and includes plenty of other neat features, too. Browseable categories include Box Office, Cinemas, Upcoming, DVD and My Movies. Simple Box Office lists let you browse by movie title. You can see each movie's score on the: popular review site Rotten Tomatoes, in the main actors, in the ratings, the length of the film and how much money the film has grossed so far. If you click on a specific lead, you can search for theatre's in your area by name or away from your zip code within a 30-milli window on the On the Theatre tab of screening times, video link to the trailer, photos, summary, an expanded list of cast members, critic and user reviews (you can also add your own review), and other movie On the Theatre tab. It can also upload theatre's to Google Maps. The Upcoming tab will give you a good view of the upcoming movies.

It contains information that is as easy and similar as a Box Office lists tab for both this tab and new DVD versions. My movies give you a personalization of the app with lists of your favorite movies, reviews, pictures, and so on. It can also connect to websites such as Facebook, filister and Netflix. The and work without the flaws of this app. Sometimes the loading time for screens is a touch on the slow side. It is also known that there are problems with some phones, such as the app HTC hero. Nevertheless, in general this is a tremendous

practice that does a lot of things right. Note: When you buy something after clicking on the links in our articles, we may earn a small commission. For more information, read our affiliate link policy. This weekend, at a nightclub in Harvard Square, many popular musicals, including Belle Linda Halpern The Threepenny Opera and Something's Coming from West Side Story Pirate Jenny, will be singing her favourite choices. Right now, but he's helping me with a presentation - and I'm not bursting into song. Halpern, co-founder of Cambridge-based Ariel Group, Inc, is still a successful cabaret singer who performs at least once a month. The rest of the time, he coaches business people on how to communicate more emotionally and present more effectively. We admire you for the logic of following the train though. But we want to connect with you as a person, we have to see how you feel about things. I turned to Halpern for advice on a conversation I planned to present to 80 people. This, I noticed, was a well-structured presentation - well-structured that my audience could plan to fall asleep exactly when. Input. Point one. Point two. Result. Get past Nodosa. Thought. Thought. Help. After listening to me, Halpern agreed. First, he said I needed more animation. Instead of using logic to switch (Now that you understand my first point, let me go back to my second point.) I need to use meaningful hand gestures and add emotional colours to my face. Halpern, I'm not suggesting you be flashy, but we need to see how you feel about things. Said. So, we tried an exercise. Halpern assailed me a topic (my neighbourhood) and wanted to start talking. Every 10 seconds a different emotion - love,

hate, humility, happiness - called for a meaningful transition for it. (I love the people in my neighborhood and the sense of history. I hate it when I find out about a crime on my block.) Over and over again, Halpern forced me to communicate with vehicles other than my voice. If I were deaf - or in the back order - I should know what you're talking about with body language, he explained. In fact, my voice was the next big challenge. Defining my voice as monotonous assumes it has a tone in the first place. It was time for another exercise involving Shakespeare. Halpern asked me to read a four-line passage from the Storm. This phenomenon is subtly and invisible ingrained into the psyche of people irrespective of their social standing. Hence, the institute of caste, has its long-reaching, invisible influence over, different stages of cinema. The research employs case study method, and discusses different cases of caste's influence over diverse stages of different films

KEYWORDS:

caste, social, male, female, family, village, cultural, desire, discrimination, birth, die, people. Tamil Cinema, Caste System, Caste and films,

INTRODUCTION:

Caste is a hierarchical institution which solidified millenniums ago, its roots have been traced to the pre-Vedic period dating even before the oldest Sanskrit literature. The origin of caste is interpreted by different authors to different periods, but what all the different scholars and authors agree is that, caste is a discriminatory organization, and it is inhuman, in its treatment of people. The practice of caste has been mutating over the millenniums evolving and managing to survive because of its malleable nature and also because human psyche's suppressive nature. Pankaj (2007) argues that in 50 years of politics, the supremacy of caste has remained unchanged; it couldn't be eliminated or resisted. The equivalent of caste has been found in other

countries such as Prussia, Rome, Greece, Japan etc. (Ghori, 2016), but the discriminatory practices have completely vanished or enfeebled, unlike in the state of India, where caste has managed to fester to other religions which originally originated from other countries as well.

The relationship between caste and films is cryptic even after seven decades since the inception of Indian cinema and needs to be demystified. The relationship between caste and its effects on different stages of films must be explored. How does the institution of caste affect the manner in which cinema is produced? The institution of caste affects distribution network of a cinema? How does the opinion of caste affects the manner in which cinema is viewed), points out case study can be attempted, when a researcher wants to find out "how" and "why" of a problem, additionally Yin also suggests that we could use case study when the margins between phenomenon and context is unclear as in this study, the 'phenomena' on 'caste' in the 'context' of 'filmmaking and viewing are very blurred', hence the choosing of the methodology of 'Case Study' is justified for the research.

The research paper deals with a unique phenomenon of caste, which is difficult to track and hard to identify, mainly because caste is a nuanced, intrinsic and exquisitely subtle in its working. Hence, the research requires a methodology which is specific in nature and need not cater to a rather general working, but still strong enough to prove that, caste as a factor affects cinema on multiple contact points. One of the research methods that suit this unique scenario is the 'Case Study' method. The case study method can be applied in two distinct manners, one is horizontally and other is the vertical (in-depth) approach. For the purpose of this study, the horizontal approach which deals with many cases studying a single phenomenon, helps to a great extent, hence the study employs the 'Case Study Method' in a horizontal fashion. The research chooses to

answer the research questions using a separate film as case study for each of the different research question which deals with different stages of the film. Stake (1995) suggests that clearly defining the research objectives and setting restrictions are important for case study method as it can easily get out of hand. Thus, the research only deals with limited cases as examples to discuss each phenomenon and is not exhaustive in nature.

The institution of caste affects the manner in which cinema is produced? Caste as an intentional narrative. The case of ‘Asuran’ The film ‘Asuran’ was adopted from the novel ‘Vekkai’ by writer Poomani. The film ‘Asuran’ (Demon) picturizes the clash between two families and caste oppression and discrimination perpetuated against the perceived lower-caste family. The film was celebrated by scholars and masses alike for its nuanced interpretation of caste issues, and the term ‘caste’ was used only in one place in the entire movie. On the other-hand, the entire movie picturized the nature of caste hierarchies in a rural area. The author of the book opined that the film was never about Dalitness (Kolappan, 2019), it was only about the struggle for land between two families and how the feud between them turned violent. Though the writer praises the director for handling of the violence he Studies an Indian does feel that the narrative was made more about caste and it also included discriminatory scenes which was not depicted in the writing (Kolappan, 2019). The discrepancy between the texts had originated because of the deliberate directorial decisions of the directorial team of the film ‘Asuran’ headed by director ‘Vetrimaran’. The film had strong reference to the ‘Keezvenmai Caste Atrocity’, which made up an important scene of the film. The movie closely reproduced the horrific ‘Keezvenmani’ incident and also incidents of ostensible lower caste people not able to wear footwear and being mistreated for it. It definitely points to conscious decision of padding the story with

caste incidence to provide a more interesting, believable and much needed, caste narrative, which is needed to counter the pro-casteist narratives brought about by an increasing number of film-makers. Caste as unintentional heroism.

The case of accidental Devarism of ‘Sanda Kozhi’ ‘Sandakozhi’ (Fighter Cock) directed by ‘Lingusamy’, is regarded as caste movie by a few cinema scholars. Subagunarajan (2019), recounts the story behind the song “Mundaasu sooriyanae, Mukkulaththil moothavanae, ...”, (a caste glorification song), which is also visualized with numerous Aruval’s (A modified sickle) (a sign of bravery, pride and courage of the caste). The director had discussed with Subagunarajan whether the backgrounds depicted in the films was believable and apt for the location in which the story was set.

When Subagunarajan enquired how come he has caste glorifying songs without being familiar with background, it was revealed that the song’s opening lyrics was suggested by the music director of the film, who hailed from a completely different caste. None of the people involved in the movie, like stars, music director, director, or writers of the film were from the caste that was gloried, still the (glorification) song made it to the film and was celebrated by the people of caste, that the song glorified. In the above case, caste has been used as a support for the heroic presentation of the lead actor. Caste has certain characters associated towards it, irrespective of whether it is true or just a cinematic construction (Rajangam, 2016), however that cinematic construction is believed to be true by the people. Research Question (RQ2): How does the institution of caste affects distribution network of a cinema? Case 3 (RQ2): The difficulty of distributing caste-based Films? ‘Film distribution’ is a hidden link in the cinema business that is not perceptible to the outside world. There are about 1500 single screen theatres in Tami Nadu (“State wise

number of single screens”, 2010), and around 900 theatres in total (“Indian state wise theatre list”, 2018 & “Theatre list”, n.d.), the entirety of theatres is completely controlled by an invisible network of distributors. They hold control over what movies are released in theatres irrespective of the audience choices. The distributors buy the film from producers and release them to theatres, the distribution network is concentrated in a small set of hands. The state of Tamil Nadu is divided into 9 zones such as “NSC (North Arcot, South Arcot, Chengalpet), Coimbatore, Madurai, Trichy-Thanjavur, Salem, Tirunelveli Kanyakumari (TK) and Chennai City” (Pillai, 2016). Time and again the cinema have been in the hands of few, powerful production houses, only post 2000 small producers have been able to Studies in Indian Place Names successful films, giving rise to new wave Tamil cinema such as *Pizza* (2012) and also new wave directors such as Pa. Ranjith to support the alternate voices.

Since the distributors hold a constricted grip over the cinema’s release, there is an inherent relationship between caste, market and distributors. The distributors role is to estimate the business, of a film, so when a distributor makes a call on a film, they are assuming and predicting the market of the film, which they usually estimate from previous experiences and the buzz that a film makes. Distributors watch a film before deciding to distribute the cinema, even mediocre films made on the subject of caste get celebrated by audience and hence the distributors believe in the film. ‘*Pariyerum Perumal*’ (The God who rides the horse) was initially released in 96 theatres in Tamil Nadu, each of whom gave it one or two shows each, only after the buzz and the word of mouth response that it created the movie was extended and slowly the number of shows and theatres were increased to around). The film deals with a student from ostensible lower caste and his struggle amongst dominant upper caste students and his tussle for a decent education.

It takes a film number of days to sustain in the market. Not all films have the luxury of sustaining in theatres till they get a good word of mouth publicity. On the other hand, even under-par films which create a buzz because of the caste denotations and glorification are celebrated and glorified by people who are patriotic towards their caste, and this creates an over interested caste patriot, and indirectly an extra market for the film and the extra-market serves as motivator for film distributors to take up such endeavours apart from propagating the power dynamics with other films. Research Question (RQ3): How does the opinion of caste affects the manner in which cinema is viewed? Case 4 (RQ3): Caste as ‘Stardom’ Tamil cinema has been a long-standing institution with its influence wrapped around the audience of the Tamil cinema. This phenomenon has especially been very influential in the pre-2000’s era was illiteracy was at its peak, and the technology of cinema was still new and sorcerous. Hence the people who were in their youth who fell in love with cinema of certain stars, as they grew, they continued to be held captive by the same cinema and its stars. The rise of the political superhero M. G. Ramachandran’s (Popularly known as M.G.R.) success can be attributed to the same, though he passed away in 1987, still people continue to vote to the political party to which he was affiliated to because in their hearts, M. G. R’s will always remain as the hero of the downtrodden, even after his death. This effect was achieved by carefully planned and managed image of M.G.R. “*Madurai Veeran*” (Brave lad from the city of Madurai) movie where M.G.R. portrayed a role of a man from an ostensible lower caste, it was an enormous hit and people of the ostensible lower caste still celebrate him as their own.

It should be noted that in “*Madurai Veeran*”, M.G.R. was still born in a so-called upper caste and only brought up in the house hold of a person from an ostensive lower caste. Caste of stars also lead to controversies sometimes; a

movie star's caste may also lead to controversies in certain cases when interacting with people of other castes. One such element of analysis is the movie starring actor "Vikram", when his movie was named as "Theiva Thiru Magan" (Son of God), the people from the 'Devar' caste, were against it and protested against the name of the film, because it was a reference to the veteran leader "Muthu Ramalingam", who remains a revered leader of the caste Devars. Later the movie was renamed as "Theiva Thiru Magal" (Daughter of the God) to avert the controversy.

In contrast to the above incident, the name "Muthu Ramalingam", was used as a name to a movie, which in a way celebrated the cast of "Devars" and the film not only released in the same name as the leader, but was also celebrated by the people of the same caste. A notable fact is the director and lead actor of the film were from the same caste as that of their leader. When contrasting the above two unit of analysis together, it is visible that, using of the name of a caste leader is not a problem as long as people of similar caste are involved in the film and becomes a problem when people of different castes are involved. Case 5 (RQ3): Caste as a Market. The case of 'Droupathi' & 'Devarattam' India opened up its markets in the beginning of the 1990's to bring growth, development and prosperity to the country, the opening of the market, along with abundant wealth also brought about numerous changes in the social, economic and political structure of India. The sudden influx of change drastically altered the political scenario in the country and especially in the state of Tamil Nadu. People started to think about, representation and everyone wanted a piece of the pie and hence indirectly the caste-based activism started to rise. Vicious circle of effects of Caste Movies The increase in the caste-based activities and awareness led to the change in the Tamil cinema scenario too.

The films which were using caste only as a backdrop for the films became more voracious

in their approach towards caste. Caste was no longer a background concept, it moved to the foreground, films like 'Devar Magan' (Son of Devar), caused a huge uproar among audience and was a humongous hit. The success of 'Devar Magan', inspired a plethora of films to be made, grounded in caste glories, revolving around villages and caste pride. 'Ejaman' (Lord), 'Chinna Gounder', 'Natttamai' (Village Head) etc. were few of the films that followed suit. The success of these films established that caste was a marketable subject. The rise of social media like YouTube (2005), Facebook (2006) and other social networks towards the late 2000's and increase in the usage and affordability of smartphones and access to data across the nation, provided access to the media content in the hands of the people who never before were able to register their feedback.

The combination of above factors coupled with polarization wave across the nation has led to deliberate advances in caste frontier in the movie industry. Film makers openly glorified caste, and the feedback they received, revealed that there was a market for caste associations, this led to each dominant group trying to further their motives by making films which glorify their caste. The Film makers such as 'Muthaiah' with the filmography of 'Kutty Puli' (Little Tiger), 'Maruthu', Devarattam (Dance of the Devars) have continuously dealt with the theme of caste, and the manner in which caste is handled throughout these films show consistent sign of caste glorification, and have an political theme of blaming the people of other caste. The depiction of caste in these films have been progressively more virulent in nature. The manner in which people from the caste celebrate these movies, prove beyond doubt that these films feed on the caste market. The people of the said glorified caste gather together and celebrate the release of the movie, by dancing to the song that sings the praise of their caste. The films such as these tap into the caste sentiments of people, and further expand the caste market of these films, leading to a

vicious circle. It is important to note that most of the caste film always deal with problems within the caste and, the protagonist and the antagonist usually hails from the same caste, however the dialogues, symbolisms and other pointers, point towards demeaning other supposed lower castes. ‘Draupathi’ (Mythical protagonist), a cinema directed by ‘Mohan G’ is similar in approach to the above films and again tries to glorify the caste and has generated enough buzz, by ridiculing their caste opponents, and insinuating dialogues along the line of hate speech, and the casteist outfits have been celebrating the film, even before the release of the film. A peculiar trend set by the film of ‘Draupathi’, is the other OBC castes have also been joined-hands celebrating the film, where the major narrative seems to be Dalit’s versus the combined castes of OBC’s. This is a completely new phenomenon, especially in the perspective of caste co-operation.

This dangerous trend along with the polarizing politics happening in the entirety of India and the market buzz the film has generated, will be followed suit by numerous filmmakers trying to tap into the market potential and propaganda potential of caste films. states that cinema is an excellent ideological tool used to convince the masses and change their opinions, and points to the success of the Hollywood in the changing the mindset of people across the world. Similarly, cinema has been successfully utilized as a tool of propaganda and popularity in the southern states of India, such as Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh which is blatantly visible from the success of M.G. Ramachandran, M. Karunanithi and J. Jayalalitha in the state of Tamil Nadu who combined ruled for almost 5 decades and N. T. Rama Roa in the state of Andhra Pradesh (Studies in Indian Place) discusses the concept of Sanskritization, where a particular caste tries to change its behaviour to imitate that of the upper caste’s and getting rid of habits that are considered as lowly by ostensible Brahminical

caste in order to get accepted and climb higher in the stepped ladder system of caste. The caste Brahmins have cemented their status in the top of the entire social structure, despite their low population, and never doubt their ostensibly-higher social stature. They maintain their stature by continuing to work in cliques and by remaining closed and highly-controlled group they hold a tight grip over their social stature. The end of Dravidian movement brought about a vacuum in the top social tier in Tamil Nadu, because of the substantial loss of Brahminical cast’s social stature in the state of Tamil Nadu. The vacuum ideally should have brought about an end to the caste system in the state, but it had just replaced the Brahminical caste with that of the next lying caste, and led to the Other Backward Castes (OBC) gaining substantial political, social and financial power in the state of Tamil Nadu. Despite the OBC’s success, they did not have the support of the traditional institutions and rigorous rules as that safeguarded the stature of Brahminical caste for millenniums. The above limitations, meant that the OBC’s had to constantly reinforce their position, this along with numerous other factors gave rise to caste specific political parties, and as an extension caste-based movie had to be made to act as a tool for propaganda and mass mobilization. ‘Cinema’ being an ideology manipulating tool, began to be used to manifest and conjure bravery, pride and honour for OBC’s as a substitute for the ‘ostensible-purity’ which they lacked to make it up to the reach and sustain at the highest peak of the social strata as the previous occupiers of the position did.

This manoeuvre, bears similarity to the concept of ‘Sanskritization’ (M.N. Srinivas, 1952), but differs considerable from ‘Sanskritization’ as it doesn’t mimic Brahminical characters (which became undesirable due to Dravidian movement) to attain purity, rather it consciously adopts alternative strategies to occupy the void left at the top of social-strata, and can be called as ‘displaced alternative-Sanskritization’, and ‘desacralization’ for

short. The phenomena of ‘didacticization’ needs to be explored in detail to understand how it works in the state of Tamil Nadu.

CONCLUSION:

Caste is a deep-rooted belief within the psyche of the Indian mindset and its almost intertwined with the day-to-day activities in a nuanced manner. The cinema industry apart from being a business and an entertainment industry, is also an ideological factory, hence the exploration of the relationship between caste and cinema becomes essential. Caste as an entity deeply-affects the cinema experience. The cinema is affected by caste in multiple angles, it affects the cinema in different stages right from conception of a story idea to selection of lead characters and even to the manner in which the film is distributed and received by audience. Sometimes these choices are made consciously and at other times they creep up in a more subtle and unconscious manner, but it is indisputable that caste affects the process of cinema and hence it has a psychological effect in the manner how films are view by people and how people also create cinema. Gorringer (2008) points out that, evading critical issues, will not pave way for improvement or inclusion. Caste is a way of life; its effect is on multiple levels too complex to be measure accurately. Caste is deeply embedded in the psyche of a person, and its experience differs from person to person, hence a general representation of caste and its effect on people becomes inaccurate as it fails to support itself when comparing with large sample groups as it becomes too impersonal. What can be deduced from the above case studies is that caste definitely, plays a role in different stages of cinema and it affects the decision making in both extrinsic and intrinsic manner.

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