



Revolution by the way of Movies: A Case Study of Third Cinema

Dr. Syeda Afshana

Sr. Assistant Professor, Kashmir University, Media Education Research Centre

Heeba Din

Doctoral Scholar, Kashmir University, Media Education Research Centre

ABSTRACT

Based on the ideology of anti capitalist system, neocolonialism and spectator cinema, Third cinema is a Latin American film movement started in 1960's-1970's that uses cinema as a tool which challenges structures of power and oppression.

In its earliest stages, as articulated by the classic manifestoes and theories of the 1960s and 1970s, Third Cinema was produced with the intention of provoking discussion with and amongst its viewers and proposing alternative visions of the past, present, and future (Dodge, 2007).

This paper seeks to understand the dynamics of using films to increase social consciousness and aim for liberation from cultural and political subordination. The sample will include; Gillo Pontecorvo's classic "Battle of Algiers", Sanjay Kak's "Jashn-e-Azadi, or "How We Celebrate Freedom" and Annemarie Jacir's "When I Saw You" based on the 1967 war in Palestine.

The idea behind the paper is to analyze how successfully third cinema challenges the structures of power and authority and using films initiates a dialogue that challenge previously held conceptions of the past, to demonstrate their legacies on the present, and to reveal the hidden struggles of oppressed.

KEYWORDS : Third Cinema, Battle of Algiers, Jashn-e-Azadi, Political Cinema

Introduction

Films are one of the most valuable tools of communication in any society; often called as mirrors of society, films are a powerful vehicle for culture, history, education, propaganda and leisure. In a 1963 report for the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization looking at Indian Cinema and Culture, the author (Baldoon Dhingra) quoted a speech by Prime Minister Nehru who stated, "...the influence in India of films is greater than newspapers and books combined." Even at this early stage in cinema, the Indian film-market catered for over 25 million people a week- considered to be just a 'fringe' of the population (Shah, 2011) But synonymously they have also been used with spectator culture, entertainment and even as a commodity that feeds the passive audiences with doses of same content in different packaging, branded as entertainment; so as to satisfy the economic interests of few.

The domination of Hollywood in the cinema market worldwide does not only point to its popularity but also to the acceptance of American values and thought process. And this domination has transformed cinema into a means to disseminate American values, which not only furthers the western consumerism models thereby benefitting them economically. But the ability of films to act as medium of communication, bearers of history and culture; also means that films then become the ideal platform to further western/first world ideology as well.

Third cinema came out as a response to this dominant cinematic form of First World nations and commercial national film industries (Dodge, 2007). Born as a Latin American film movement in late 1960's and 1970's, third cinema is a politically consciously movement that rallies filmmakers across the third world regions like Africa, Asia and Latin America to raise voice against the neocolonialism, capitalism, oppression and conflict. the tone of a Third Cinema film can reflect a revolutionary atmosphere and deliver its message with confidence, convey the disillusionment of failed or coopted revolutions, or express frustration with class, racial, or gender oppression continued colonial impulses from First World nations. For this reason, Third Cinema's importance in filmmaking history and its power to deliver social commentary with the aim of inspiring change cannot be understated.

The term was coined in the manifesto *Hacia un tercer cine* (Toward a Third Cinema), written in the late 1960s by Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, members of the Grupo Cine

Liberación and published in 1969 in the cinema journal *Tricontinental* by the OSPAAAL (Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America) (Ocatavia, 1997)

Third Cinema rejects the view of cinema as a vehicle for personal expression, seeing the director instead as part of a collective; It appeals to the masses by presenting the truth and inspiring revolutionary activism. Solanas and Getino argue that traditional exhibition models also need to be avoided: the films should be screened clandestinely, both in order to avoid censorship and commercial networks, but also so that the viewer must take a risk to see them(Third Cinema, n.d). Third Cinema takes a different approach to filmmaking, by subverting cinematic codes, embracing revolutionary ideals, and combating the passive film watching experience of commercial cinema.

Goals of Third Cinema

Third Cinema films generally engage the following issues and address the following questions:

1. Above all, Third Cinema questions structures of power, particularly colonialism and its legacies.
2. Third Cinema aims for liberation of the oppressed, whether this oppression is based on gender, class, race, religion, or ethnicity.
3. Third Cinema engages questions of identity and community within nations and Diaspora populations who have left their home countries because of exile, persecution, or economic migration.
4. Third Cinema opens a dialogue with history to challenge previously held conceptions of the past, to demonstrate their legacies on the present, and to reveal the "hidden" struggles of women, impoverished classes, indigenous groups, and minorities.
5. Third Cinema challenges viewers to reflect on by the experience of poverty and subordination by showing how it is lived, not how it is imagined.
6. Third Cinema facilitates interaction among intellectuals and the masses by using film for education and dialogue.
7. Third Cinema strives to recover and rearticulate the nation, using politics of inclusion and the ideas of the people to imagine new models and new possibilities.

This paper is an attempt to comprehend how third cinema through various cinematic genres like films and documentaries have managed to challenge the existing notions of power structures and try to break the hegemony with the power of films.

Sample Studied

The sample studied includes:

1. Gillo Pontecorvo's classic "Battle of Algiers"(1966) which chronicles the pain, suffering and suppression of Algerians by French colonizers during the 1950's
2. Sanjay Kak's "Jashn-e- Azadi, or "How We Celebrate Freedom"(2007) which tries to understand the meaning and sentiment of "Azadi or freedom" amidst the ongoing 18years of conflict in the region of Kashmir
3. Annemarie Jacir's "When I Saw You"(2013) based on the 1967 war in Palestine, which portrays the helplessness of refugees and tackles the questions of identity and statelessness.

The sample has been purposively taken to be able understand how successfully third cinema has been able to initiate dialogues, challenge authorities, call for liberation and set discourses for the oppressed throughout different parts of the world like Algeria, Kashmir and Palestine. The motive behind the select sample was also to see the changing patterns adopted by third cinema makers over a period of time as well.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Battle of Algiers, Jashn-e-Azadi and When I See you all the three cinematic texts successfully initiate a dialogue that challenges the structures of power and authority. And also at the same time confront previously held conceptions of the past, to demonstrate their legacies on the present, and to reveal the hidden struggles of oppressed. Based on the events that occurred in the capital city of French Algeria between November 1954 and December 1957, during the Algerian War of Independence; Battle of Algeria is an important historical record that shows how though France won the Battle of Algiers, it lost the Algerian War. It neither demonizes nor lionizes either side of the conflict, aiming for just-the-ugly facts objectivity. The torture scenes are laid out in montage for us without any self-conscious emotional affect or drama; they include blowtorching the suspect's naked torso, waterboarding, and clipping electrodes to the earlobes before hand-cranking the voltage. These scenes are presented without any of the internal humanizing or dramatizing conflict that would be considered vital now: they do indeed look almost like a military training film. Another sort of director, possessed of a more conventional liberal scruple, might have felt the need to show a torturer's inner pain or the torturee's hidden backstory. But Pontecorvo shows them in terms of strategy (Bradshaw, 2007)

Gillo Pontecorvo's classic " Battle of Algiers"(1966), not only won many awards and accolades but also gained a reputation for inspiring political violence; in particular, the tactics of urban guerrilla warfare and terrorism in the movie were supposedly copied by the Black Panthers, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (Mathews, 2011)

While Pontecorvo's quasi documentary style filmmaking proved very convincing, Sanjay Kak's authentic documentary Jashn-e-Azadi (How we celebrate Freedom) with real archive footage going back to early 1990's creates a resonating effect that leaves the viewer hanging with pain, sorrow and irony of life ,beauty and conflict in Kashmir. Kak's camera travels over snow piling upon snow in a martyrs' graveyard, where a father cannot find his son's grave anymore. It stops at an old man counting the dead from his village and follows fires spreading wantonly across settlements, laying waste to scores of houses. The documentary explains, azadi in the Valley is the object of eternal yearning, an ideal state that will come "one day". Perhaps it is political freedom or perhaps it is "jannat", the paradise promised to martyrs. Either way, it is always an absence (Chakravarthy, 2016). Jashn-e-Azadi, is not only a rear glance of life with military, it is a smidgen more, in and out, interlacing the cowed survivals and the recurring pangs of death. The documentary brilliantly manages to raise important points regarding the aspiration of freedom and liberation of Kashmiris and at the same time manages to deal with the interplay of life, death and politics in a prolonged conflict zone. It also demonstrates how the previously held conceptions of past effect the present and continue to shape it.

The two hour long documentary also is successful in bringing forth the continuous cycle of conflict and occupation that Kashmir has witnessed and is witnessing, which makes this cinematic text relevant even now.

Annemarie Jacir's "When I Saw You"(2013) succeeds in achieving the goal of engaging in questions of identity and community within nations and Diaspora populations who have left their home countries because of exile, persecution, or economic migration and also manages to reveal the "hidden" struggles of women, impoverished classes, indigenous groups, and minorities. A heartfelt movie about a child among the refugees displaced into Jordan after the 1967 war the film suggests a poignant connection between statelessness and the experience of losing a father and portrays the helplessness of refugees while tackling the questions of identity and statelessness. When I Saw You is a high-quality piece of independent cinema; Despite its historical verisimilitude, it is not a quasi-documentary. It presents questions about place, gender, power, love and separation but at the same time invites the viewer to think and watch, rather than telling them what they should know and believe (Irving, 2013)

Analyzing all the three cinematic texts we find that they prove to be the alternatives to mainstream. . The films have achieved to attain the various goal of third cinema like challenging the structures of powers in Battle of Algiers, questioning the issues of identity and statelessness in When I Saw You and initiating a dialogue among intellectuals to understand the complex situation in Jashn-e-Azadi. The films break free from the dominant narratives and subvert the system in order to fight against it. This subversion of cinematic codes and messages is aimed to move the audience to action, becoming mobilized and politicized through the education provided by the films

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