

Significance of Imageries in the Malayalam Film Guru (A Content Analysis)

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Abstract: This comprehensive study explores the signification of imageries in the Malayalam film Guru by Rajeev Anchal. The purpose of this study is to find out the connotative meanings of imageries, religious and cultural significance of dress codes. A Content analytical study is used to find out signification of imageries and codes. Guru is a Film by Rajeev Anchal is about communal harmony and religion. The message of the movie is universal and opens the viewers eyes to truth that lie.

Keywords: imageries in Malayalam film, guru film study, story -telling imageries guru, cultural imageries guru.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cinema is a social communication. It can by-pass the traditional socializing agencies such as the school, the religious institution, and parents, and can establish a direct contact with the individual. Guru, a Malayalam film by Rajeev Anchal is a surrealistic movie, which takes you on a fantasy trip and uses metaphors to convey a message. This film was made in 1997, post Babri. If the wish is to become true 'India first needs to be communal-riot free. So it can be a guru of secularism to the world.

This film has two stories. The second story if the story with in the story. And in the second part, there are many signs and symbols which deliver the message. Film's disclaimer says "this movie intended at avoiding a great tragedy tomorrow and to hold-mirror to human conscience. Unlike most movies which tell one story, this uses another story, a parable to reinforce the message. It is no secret that the movie attacks blind faith, ignorance, meaningless rituals in religions.

Scope of the study:

In recent times, one of the most powerful and influential ways of thinking about media has been the approach known as semiotics. In films, an image of an object, person or landscape will have a denotative dimensions. But all images are culturally charge by the connotation procedures available to cinema, like camera position, angle, position of objects or people with in the frame, use of lighting, colour process or tinting, and sound.

Studying the signification of imageries in the film Guru will help us to understand the codes, meanings, denotation, connotations of the images and film.

Limitations of the study:

The study considers only 3 aspects in the film. They are: connotations of image meanings, dress code of the characters, and the self-explanatory codes. There are other aspects of the film which are not considered by the study, like camera movements, lighting, character study, camera shots etc.

This study takes only one film directed by Rajeev Anchal. So a generalization is not possible. But this film is important as it has been discussed for its rich symbolization of imageries. But, the restricted number is a limitation.

Background:

Guru, a film by Rajeev Anchal is one of the greatest ever movies made; this movie is about communal harmony and religion. The message of the movie is universal and opens the viewers eyes to truths that lie. This movie is intended at avoiding a great tragedy tomorrow and to hold mirror to human conscience.

It is just not done in Indian cinema - a film maker with box office hits going into the art market. It usually happens the other way. For, in industry terms, such a shift would equate shooting yourself in the foot.

But that is what Rajeev Anchal who started his career with runaway hits like 'Chithrasalabhangal' and 'Kashmeeram' did when he the spell of Karunakara Guru, the spiritual head of the Ashram at Pothencode, near Thiruvananthapuram.

Rajeev Anchal's film Guru is about the Guru, though its derives ultimately from H.G. Wells' 'The Country of Blind', about a normal man who finds himself in a valley of blind people and hops to rule on the basis of that saying "In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king'. But the blind man thinks his claims to sight are a mental aberration. The tale shifts through, based on the experiences Rajeev Anchal had with Guru. And so guru, the film went on to become the first Malayalam film nominated for an Oscar by the Federation of India, in the foreign category section.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**Media Semiotics: An introduction, Jonathan Bignell**

Jonathan Bignell analyses different media semiotically. He considers media in a broader sense of the term. Media refer more widely to all these things which are channels for communicating something. The book deals with the semiotic approach by conducting analyses of recent material in the media of advertising, magazines, newspapers, television and cinema. These analyses are used to introduce, discuss and evaluate semiotic methods, and to show how this method can be extended by other approaches.

Semiotics become important because of the assumption that meanings in the media are communicated by signs. Semiotics was first developed as a way of understanding how language works. It can be extended to the analysis of other non-linguistic media of communication.

Jonathan Bignell introduces the basic concepts of semiotics - the sign system, components of sign, sequences of linguistic signs, visual signs, etc. After the introduction, Bignell analyses advertisements, Women's magazines, newspapers, television news and cinema.

On the signs and codes, he writes: an image of an object, person or landscape will have a denotative dimension. But all images are culturally charged by the connotation procedures available to cinema, like camera position and angle, position of objects or people within the frame, use of lighting, colour process or tinting and sound. The codes of cinema are particular ways of using signs, the photographic signs, dialogue signs, musical, sound effect and graphic signs which are the resources from which particular film sequences are constructed. Any film sequence can be analysed to discover the relationship between signs in the sequence, and the way that signs from different signifying systems are combined together by means of codes to generate meanings. Bignell considers the semiotic point of view of Christian Metz and Umberto Eco.

Jonathan Bignell says that the properties of film stock can produce different connotations. The uses of colour or black and white film with varying degrees of sensitivity generate different meanings. Also, the camera movements can be used to produce connotations. Changes in the framing of shot are used to narrow or open out the field of view to connote a claustrophobic experience or a liberating one respectively. Lighting techniques and sound effects produce connotations. Bignell considers film narrative, film genre and cinema audiences, etc.

Christian Metz (1974) as quoted by Jonathan Bignell, described cinema as a signifying practice, a way of making meanings in which different codes interact in films or film genres in particular ways. Some of these codes were seen as specific to cinema, like editing, lighting, monochrome or colour. Colour and composition. Others derive from other media from social life in general, like dialogue, characterization, gesture and facial expression and costume.

Umberto Eco (1977) extended Metz's consideration of codes. He argued that, far from cinema using fragments of reality in order to build its representations; all images require the operation of cultural codes in order to signify. Eco believed that conventions embedded in society were the precondition for signification.

Christian Metz and Umberto Eco focus on the signs and codes, which are common to the cinema and 'extra-cinematic' environment. When cultural images come in cinema, its meaning are shared by society. Its connotations travel to the cultural, political and social perceptions of cinema. The cultural imagery sometimes, becomes a truly realistic presentation, sometimes, it takes up stereotypes, it assumes propaganda fashion, sometimes.

All these are discussed on the grounds of cultural studies, sociology, aesthetics or political disciplines.

Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) spoke of language as a 'profusion of signs'. This was not just a picture the way of describing things. It proposed that we see the whole of communication and behaviour as assemblies of signs, governed by codes, or set of rules, which by careful observation and analysis furnish cues to the decipherment of meaning. The relationship of signs, the interaction between them, called by De Saussure, was the determinant of meaning.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research studies concerning cinema most frequently use content analysis. Content analysis is popular with mass media researchers because it provides an efficient way to investigate the content of the media.

Guru is a film which has imageries and connotations. Other films of Rajeev Anchal are not considered in this study because they are symbolizing personalities and personal imageries, which has no connotation but has only denotative meanings.

Walizer and Wienir (1978) defined Content analysis as: any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information.

Advantages of content analysis:

Content analysis procedure operates directly upon transcripts of human communications. The best content analytical studies utilize both quantitative and qualitative aspects on text. Thus, content analysis combines what are usually thought to be aesthetical modes of analysis. Documents of various kinds exist over period of time.

This research is intended to study the signification of the imaginaries in the film Guru directed Rajeev Anchal. It is analysed both visually and thematically to arrive at valid conclusions about the analysis, under consideration qualitative analysis was employed because the characteristics of the study were immeasurable. The unit of analysis includes shots, scenes and dress codes.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

It is found that four, story-telling imageries in the Malayalam film Guru have connotative meanings. The major story-telling imageries in the film are, Reghuraman is a rebel to religion, Reghuraman is a rebel to politics, Swamini is a symbol of serenity and mad man is a symbol of a man walking towards wisdom.

The study explores the religious or cultural significance of a dress of the major characters. In this film, It is found that dress codes have religious significance Hajjiyar, Reghuraman father, Reghuraman's mother and Reghuraman as chaver are the four religious significant dress codes. In this film two dress codes have cultural significance. They are; Reghuraman as tourist guide and Reghuraman in the country of blind.

The major self-explanatory imageries are analysed. Four major imageries are Irama fruit, Kankamthra, Vijayantha Maharajav and the country of blind. The Irama fruit is a symbol of religion. Kankamthra is a symbol of the walls of religion. The imagery of the country of blind explains that it is a developed country. The imagery of Vijayantha Maharajav explains the symbol of humanity who lost insight.

5. CONCLUSION

It is found that there are two types of imageries in the film Guru by Rajeev Anchal. They are film imagery and story-telling imagery. Most of the stories telling imageries in the film have connotations and the major film imageries in the film are self-explanatory.

The Study explores the religious or cultural significance of the dress codes of major characters. In this film, It is found that the dress codes of major characters are either religiously or culturally significant.

A socio-linguistic study can delineate the different aspects of the language used in the film with respect to the social settings. For language assumes a greater role as it can signify the social system which it has developed. So the linguistic approach can analyse the images in the film Guru.

Film's disclaimer says "this movie intended at avoiding a great tragedy tomorrow and to hold-mirror to human conscience. Unlike most movies which tell one story, this uses another story, a parable to reinforce the message. It is no secret that the movie attacks blind faith, ignorance, meaningless rituals in religions.

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