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Suggested Readings

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Rural Culture in Hindi Cinema

Shivam Singh

Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2020, page 317, Rs.1295, ISBN: 978-81-316-1034-3

Reviewed by

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"Visual sociology" offers new ways of studying and understanding the social world through visual, sensory and other experimental approaches. Researchers can study sociological questions in a new way and analyse or study the reality of the social world. With the help of pictures or movies, we learn to read pictures, shapes and symbols. This became possible after the emergence of "Visual Sociology" or "Cinematic Sociology" as a new branch of sociology. Since the culture industry is driven by capitalist or market forces, the construction of social reality in society takes place through the media and especially films. That is why rural themes have almost disappeared from Indian cinema in the 21st century.

Sociology of Cinema in general and Rural Cinema in particular can be described as a scientific and analytical branch of knowledge through which various aspects of "real" social life are presented as "reel" or "virtual" social life through "audio-visual" techniques. The film is mainly about entertainment. If "real life" is close to "rolling life", then "Parallel Cinema" or "Real Cinema" is born as one type. Which goes beyond entertainment and promotes processes of social reforms, changes in thought processes, traditions and beliefs. All these aspects found an important place in Rural Culture in Hindi Cinema written by Shivam Singh. The book is an important

contribution to the sociology of cultural industries. The cover of the book is self-explanatory. The ups and downs of the villagers' lives can be understood if you take each character featured on the cover seriously. Decoding these posts can be an interesting exercise for those who view language through cultural symbols. This probably motivates Professor Bhupendra Nagla to treat films as an expressive symbol system in the preface.

The book consists of six chapters that cover 317 pages (including bibliography and index). Village life in India represents the patriarchy and economy of "old" and "new" feudalism. Analytically, we can also distinguish between village life and agriculture. The depiction of rural culture in films is therefore only possible if all the producers of the film have to visit villages of a different character. I think that a dialectic of "local" enlightenment can be built through these intimate observations. But it is undoubtedly a historical process. All these issues have been systematically considered by the author.

The introduction gives the reader a comprehensive overview of the meaning of culture and cinema. In villages, due to the slowness of urban-rural mobility, "freedom" is replaced by "necessity", thus oppression in rural life gains legitimacy. In all films where the producer examines the necessity of social survival, there is a sense of deepening oppression, which is evident even when the front cover features the calm eyes of Smita Patil (film *Manthan*). The book successfully deals with the appearance of the "virtual" and certain topics related to the cinematic components of the story, the roles of the various actors in the leading roles, song structure and dialogue, and lighting of values. against inequality different from the villagers and exploitation, as well as motivating factors that create transformative trends in village life.

In the book related to the author's thesis, a total of twelve films depicting rural life are analysed, four films refer to the years 1950-70, five films from the years 1971-90 and three films from the period after 1991. A methodological question can be set up here. The author did not maintain consistency in the number of films. Second,

the distinction between "film" and "new film" has not been systematically compared. During these three phases of consideration, the Indian state also brought about qualitative changes in the rural economy through five-year plans and other efforts. New classes and new social categories in villages, village-urban interface, migration, position of outsiders, exploitative tendencies and rural culture and new non-agricultural activities of educated and working women. The relationship between these changes and films must be more critically addressed using a comparative perspective. Adorno, speaking of film, posed this question in relation to the "internal logic" and "the movement of this object". The author also argued that modernity causes industrial and technological growth that undermines family and family values. I think this conclusion is one-sided, because a change in value systems never means a decline. The new economy creates new values.

According to the reviewer, the degeneration of the value system is conceptually anti-sociological. Film narratives are valuable and can explore the realities of why and how films are made and produced. For example, films like 'Do Bigha Zameen', 'Naya Daur', 'Upkar', 'Swadesh' etc show how the social life of villages is built, shaped, maintained and changed. On the other hand, Ankur's film raises various contemporary issues like jajmani system, child marriage, poverty, crime etc. Looking at the film, we can analyse that such films were the beginning of the rebellion of the lower landowners or Zamindars System. Overall, this book becomes a path breaker because it logically demonstrates how emotional structures shape village life with the active support of history, memory and consciousness.

All the films reviewed by the author are also expressions of political consciousness, but the author did not mention those political structures separately. Each film and its associated symbolic expressions reveal different elements of political ideology, particularly related to liberalization, globalisation, privatization, social welfare, power relations, and the oppression of women. Films also express old and new forms of public languages, as a result of

which the author gives an understanding of the social functions of communication through this work. Times are changing and these changes are reflected in society and culture. From the legacy of the freedom movement in the form of the Nehruvian era to neoliberal economics, there have been changes in Indian society and rural India. These films express these changes. For an interesting presentation of these changes, the author needs and deserves praise and congratulations. Rawat publication also deserves credit for its useful and timely publication. The book would certainly attract the attention of cultural critics and "film journalists". It would be useful to introduce the book to undergraduate and graduate students to understand the complexity of social life that can be understood by watching the film. The writer is also asked to explore the nature and content of the film outside of "Bollywood" so that the reality of different parts of India can be felt "on the reel".

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Obituary

Dr Bindeshwar Pathak

On August 15, 2023 evening we received the sad news of the demise of Dr Bindeshwar Pathak. We never expected that the end would come so early. In fact, after the Independence Day celebrations he collapsed and was immediately rushed to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. He was brought into the hospital at 1.15 p.m. and shortly after which he suffered a cardiac arrest and died at 1.42 p.m.

Bindeshwar Pathak was born on April 2, 1943 in the village Rampur Baghel of Vaishali District of Bihar. His parents, Pandit Ramakant Pathak and Yogmaya Devi came from respectable middle-class background. His apparently uneventful early life but for a few incidences, that in retrospect changed the course of his life. Dr Pathak started his life like any ordinary person of his community. There was nothing dramatic about his middle-class family with its orthodox Brahminical traditions. But, he rose to become a gentle giant among the many luminaries that India has produced in the post-independence era.

After completing his high school in the village school, he took his B.A degree from B.N. College Patna. Since he had low grades in his B.A, he could not get a seat to study for M.A. Sociology in Patna University. So, he had to do a number of odd jobs, none too lucrative, to tide over a difficult period in his life. It was about this time that he got married to Amola Pathak. The not so comfortable financial position of the family did not offer too many leisurely options. The geniality and cooperation of his wife did help to sort out matters to a great degree. Three children, all well named, Madhubala, Kumar Dilip and Kiranbala completed his family. But, the struggles to manage the growing family not only got more difficult and complex.