

Socio-political issues in the movie ‘Ek Doctor Ki Maut’.

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Abstract:

Our study examines the socio-political issues presented in Indian system with reference through parallel cinema “Ek Doctor Ki Maut”. The whole story about an Indian doctor struggled for the invention of vaccine for leprosy but unfortunately because of Indian socio-political system, he could not finish his work within a stipulated time. During the time of doctor’s research 3.5 to 4.0 million people in India were suffering from leprosy. It is one of the major diseases like pox, plague and T.B., killing millions. The doctor sacrificed his whole life for the sake of humanity not for the sake of fame and money. Because of hypocrisy of other doctors, he failed to prove his invention and he is transference to a small village, so that he could not finish his research papers. We also examine how media discredits him because they are interested only in advertisement and money not in his invention. We also examine, how other countries are supportive of the doctor, while Indian government is not. In comparison with other countries, in India because of political system talent has less opportunities. This film portrays the society of 1980s when brain drain to the west from India was very common as talented and skilled people were not valued because of corruption, bureaucracy and a slothful government. This paper examines and critiques the period of 1970 and 1980s before the economic liberation took place and before the advent of satellite television and electric media.

Key-words: leprosy, brain-drain, vaccine, doctor.

Introduction:

‘Ek Doctor Ki Maut’ is counted as one of the best movies in the field of Hindi cinema. “It is directed by Tapan Sinha and was first released in 1990. The story of the film is about a doctor and the role is enacted by Pankaj Kapur. ‘Ek Doctor Ki Maut’ means ‘Death of a Doctor’ who devotes his whole life in finding out a vaccine for leprosy. Since he is a physician in a government hospital, his research is being undertaken by him at his own cost at home, no one is there to support him, except his wife who is Sima enacted by Shabana Azmi. In the film after many failed attempts, he gets success at last in finding out the vaccine for leprosy. The doctor could not publish his research papers within a stipulated time due to lack of proper facilities, so someone from other nation has already presented the vaccine for leprosy. In the entire the movie, the doctor has to fight with the press and the society. His fellow researchers also try to steal his investigated papers. At the concluding part of the film, one becomes hopelessly, dissatisfied with the system and begins to feel the sorrow and anguish, when the doctor speaks’

“I have not found any vaccine for leprosy, I surrender”. Because he is totally dissatisfied with the political system of India”.

Source or inspiration of the film :

The film is based on a story ‘Abhimanyu’ by Ramapada Choudhury. The movie ‘Ek Doctor Ki Maut’ is loosely based on the life of Dr. Subhas Mukhopadhyay. He was a physician from Hazaribagh, Bihar (now in Jharkhand). It was Subhas Mukhopadhyay who created world’s second and India’s first child, Durga, using in vitro fertilisation, commonly known as Test Tube Baby. Durga was the second test tube baby and was born after 67 days from the first IVF baby in the world. Because of

bureaucracy, negligence of the state government, he was harassed and not allowed to share his achievements with the international scientific community and unfortunately, getting dejected, he committed suicide on 19th June in 1981.

Socio-Political Issues in the movie 'Ek Doctor Ki Maut' :

Leprosy :

In the movie 'Ek Doctor Ki Maut', leprosy is the prominent and big issue in the society. During 1970 and 1980, most of people were suffering from this disease. The first formal attempt to estimate the global leprosy burden was made by WHO in 1966, when the caseload was estimated to be 10786000, of whom 60% were not registered for treatment. In 1977, the WHO expert committee, in his fifth report, estimated the caseload to be over 12 million cases were the range frequently mentioned in the mid 1980s.

In the movie, according to the doctor, during his research time, there are 3.5 to 4.0 million people are suffering from leprosy in India. It is also one of the major diseases like Pox, Plague and T.B. killing millions. In one of episode of the film, the doctor says that after hearing the news of a leprosy patient, no one would go to near to the patient even the family members.

When we look at various acts relating to leprosy, in the states like Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Madhyapradesh, Andhrapradesh and Orissa which prohibit leprosy patients from running in local elections. Other Laws include, The motor vehicle act of 1939 which prohibits leprosy patients from obtaining a driving licence, and The Indian Rail act of 1990 which restricts leprosy patients from travelling by train. By observing these above acts which I mentioned, we can think, how much it would be dangerous disease. When I am talking about disease, I would like to remember Mahatma Gandhi, he said "The ultimate measure of success would be the day the disease would be eradicated".

Brain Drain in India :

Brain drain is the biggest issue in the movie 'Ek Doctor Ki Maut' as well as even in India during 1970 and 1980. Let me explain, what is brain drain?

"Brain is the movement of highly skilled and qualified people to a country where they can work in better condition and earn more money"

In the post-Independence period up to the 1960s, India did not really experience the trend of brain drain. Beginning with the 1970s, India started to experience the problem of brain drain. There were several economic and sociological factors responsible like lack of demand for those personnel and better condition. During 1980 and 1990s, India continues to lose its scientific and technical human resources, while on the other hand, other countries like U.S. and U.K. have created opportunities. In India, because of political system like bureaucracy, corruption, talent has less opportunities and values.

What was the real reason for India's brain drain? I here would like to mention, the article by Guruprasad. He says "We always come across reports of how much talented Indians are conquering the world in the field of technology and business, but why are most of those Indians not in India but in U.S. or U.K. ? If we get a little more in depth to analyze this issues, we will begin to notice that the top Indians professionals are today in U.S. had actually left India during 1970 and 1980s after obtaining their degrees in India, so why did we have such a severe brain drain in 1970 and 1980s ? One common answer we get that India did not have the right opportunities for their specialization and it is easy to say that they were greedy, did not care for our country and flee to U.S. or U.K., but the real reason lies in the political and economical system, the snapshot of the 1974 budget might give us some hints. During Indira Gandhi's rule in 1970s, income tax was at all time high in the top slab, having a tax rate of 97.75%. To examine the present time, nearly 85% rise in brain drain from India to U.S. in the last ten years".

In the film, we can also see, how after doing painful struggles, the doctor gets success but the officers from Health Department and the society ignore his scientific invention. The Health Department officers also don't support him for going outside the country so that he could not finish his research papers in a stipulated time.

Bureaucracy, corruption, negligence in 'Ek Doctor Ki Maut' :

The film 'Ek Doctor Ki Maut' shows the society of 1970 and 1980s in India. It reflects the political system which was full of corruption, negligence and the bureaucratic system. The doctor (Pankaj Kapur) becomes the victim of the corrupted bureaucratic system. The film 'Ek Doctor Ki Maut' is loosely based on the life of Subhas Mukhopadhyay. Here I present some reviews about the scientific research of Subhas Mukhopadhyay who became the victim of the corrupted The State Government of West Bengal.

It was Dr. Anil R. Sheth from Institute For Research In Reproduction(ICMR),Bombay who said that "in 1978 government of West Bengal set up an Enquiry Committee which did not acknowledge his claim, Dr. Subhas absolutely stated to all concerned people that he can't provide a sure proof for his work on Test Tube Baby, but he also asserted that if there was a genetic marker, though a surrogate then proof will be obviously established. Even after these long years as far as known, no country in the world has accepted a legal evidence of a Test tube Baby on the municipal birth certificate. He was denied passport to go to Japan where he was invited to speak on Test Tube Baby. He was later transferred to the Eye Department of medical college, Calcutta in June 1981".

Professor Ashok Mitra from I.C.S, gave his review on 19 June 1985. He said "it is indeed the dedication and hardwork of Dr. Subhas Mukhopadhyay who obtained the Test Tube Baby in India. Like anything now in life, people always doubt but truth always remains".

On the other hand, press also plays an important role in making corruption. According to the Indian constitution, "Press provides for the right to freedom of speech and expression." But in this film, Press totally avoid his view about his research and discredits him because, they are interested in advertisement and money not in his invention. In the movie, Dipankar Roy speaks "it is the media which made the science commercial". In the comparison with other countries, they are supportive of the doctor while Indian government is not.

The Materialistic life of Gynaecologist Doctor:

The film 'Ek Doctor Ki Maut' also shows the materialistic life of gynaecologist doctors. The doctor (Pankaj Kapur) claims that in his research there was possibility to increase fertility in female's sterility, so all the gynaecologist doctors go against the doctor's research. Instead of supporting the physician, all of them ignore the scientific research of Dr. Dipankar because all of them are interested in their profit and fame. At this time the doctor speaks a famous dialogue "those who don't know the 'S' of science, argue about my research".

The Condition of Woman :

The second most important character of the film, Sima, enacted by Shabana Azmi is the only one who supports him entirely. The doctor is always busy with his laboratory, he gives very less care to his wife but even she helps and loves him. Once she decides to get divorce but she could not. When her husband Dr. Dipankar is transferred to a small village, she does a job as a teacher. So we can see the condition of woman, her work is that of a house wife only, though she has a university degrees. In one of the episodes of the film, she speaks,

"I am not selfish, made scientist as you, I have also a university degrees".

'Ek Doctor Ki Maut' as an art movie :

This great film 'Ek Doctor Ki Maut' is directed by Bengali filmmaker Tapan Sinha in 1990. The outstanding character of the film Dr. Dipankar Roy ignores domestic and family life, immersing himself into research and his wife is also portrayed so nicely. It is a NFDC production and certainly belongs to the art house genre. The screenplay and direction are realistic and natural. The brilliant performances by Pankaj Kapur as Dr. Dipankar Roy and Shabana Azmi as Sima in lead roles are so full of emotion. The background music is so sweet and impressive which touches the heart of the spectators. Many dialogues are very powerful, for example, once Dr. Dipankar Roy speaks to her wife, when he goes for bath at midnight,

"necessity knows the law"

One another dialogue is also so heart touching, he speaks,

“I am selfish man, yes I am, I am busy with myself and I like to live busy with myself”. He also speaks,
“so much to do, so much to do, so let me do, hurry up, hurry up”.

By seeing these above dialogues, we can think, how passionate he was about in his research in finding the vaccine for leprosy. One another doctor also speaks a famous dialogue, “Dipankar, there is no full stop in science”.

Conclusion :

The film ‘Ek Doctor Ki Maut’ is in fact, outstanding film and it shows the society of 1970 and 1980 in India when brain drain to the West from India was very common as talented and skilled people were not valued because of corruption, bureaucracy and a slothful government. The background music, acting and dialogues make the film outstanding.

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