

# Short Film *Lakshmi* as film for ‘an art for art sake’

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## Abstract

*Lakshmi*, one of the most criticised short films in the recent past dwells between woman’s freewill and social morale. The film received criticism from the wide range of audience from the different point of view. This paper tries to establish the idea of ‘art for art sake’ which considers the art just a high art. Thus this paper ends the endless discussion on Lakshmi’s promiscuous act in the film and helps the audience to watch the film as an art form.

**Keywords:** Frustration, art for art sake, art for life sake, fourth wall effect’, and ‘verfremdungs.

*Lakshmi* is a short film which runs about 18.16 minutes that features the life of a middle class woman named Lakshmi. It is starred by Lakshmi Priyaa Chandramouli, Nandan and Leo. The film was directed by Sarjun KM and music by Sundaramurthy KS. The film was published in you tube channel ‘Ondraga Entertainment’ on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017. So far the film has 9,128,682 views, received praise and criticism from its dividend viewers.

The life of Lakshmi in the film is monotonous which the viewers feel heavy at the initial couple of minutes of the watching of the film. Significantly more so as her husband moves over her consistently without a second look at her. There is likewise an insight that her spouse may be involved with the relationship of another lady. Scenes begin to change Lakshmi's life as she meets an artist on her regular train. She ends up grinning automatically, enjoying the liable euphoria that spontaneous consideration gives. Until a bandh drives their ways closer enchanted by the man, Lakshmi winds up in his home and ends in his bed and return to her regular life but changes her mode of travelling as bus.

Lakshmi longs for love and acceptance when she gets them from someone she responds to it. The director presents the events in such a way that Lakshmi and Kathir like each other even before they could speak a word. Lakshmi tells herself “in middle class life even the hormone should be middle class.” This dialogue makes anybody to think that there is something which goes before Lakshmi and Kathir to attract each other.

The story of a middle-class woman, frustrated by her unhappy marriage, falters and gives way for her into temptation. Maybe that’s why Sarjun made the husband’s character get involved with another woman. It wasn’t particularly necessary, the indifference Lakshmi suffered from was pretty evident. Possibly he realised that indifference is not enough reason for a woman to err; so that audience can forgive Lakshmi easier. So that they can reason saying, ‘the husband had an affair as well’. Anyway the audience should remember that they watch a film in you tube. This paper aims to focus on the question that how the audience react to art such as films and short stories.

The irony in *Lakshmi* is this the decision of her one night home away in no way changes her life or her husband’s morale. She comes back to the same routine the very next day. The film has reached the vast audience, received relative criticism and film’s portrayal of a new woman with the support of the lyrics of Mahakavi Subramaniya Bharathiyar infuriated many viewers. The film maker’s treatment of extramarital affair as the woman’s right, need not be correct. The film is criticised as a feminist emancipation, having extra marital affair as a woman’s right, and also questioned when a man has an extra marital affair why not a woman.

The film has received a stunning response from critics and as well as from the common viewers. People criticise negatively and positively about her act of sharing the bed with another man. There are so many memes created to attack the character of Lakshmi. Many movie critics have posted their views of the promiscuous act of the lead character in the movie. There are many viewers who support the woman's act and there are many they degrade the character for her act. The controversy around Lakshmi makes anyone to rethink how one sees women on-screen and arts in general. The Tamil audience expect woman on screen/or literature morally rich, self- sacrificing, and always perfect.

An example is taken from the *Sorrows of Young Werther* written by John Wolfgang Von Goethe. His novel has an immense cultural impact of committing suicide. When one cannot attain his lady love, following that novel many young men and women committed suicide when they were not successful in their love life.

Devdas (Bengali) novel and movie version (in many languages) has introduced new pattern of expression to love failure and romanticise the lady love differently. Now Devdas cropped out in everyman as a drunkard when they fail in love making and love failure. The sorrow and love failure later changed in to sorrow and liquor drinking. Perhaps this film set the module for many films in most of the languages in India to connect love failure or any sorrow to liquor addition. Now this liquor addiction is part of our Tamil society. I would like to point out there were critics and writers like Mathew Arnold who insisted that art should have moral values.

Our lives are highly influenced by the films we watch, how we romanticises love how we take up life in reality also is affected by the films we watch. Thus films have a huge impact in our lives. As films influences the masses even our political leaders are actors and actresses. Recently the movie *Mersal* has received a lot of criticism on its projection of free medicine in some countries. In an interview to Thanthi TV, director Chandrasekhar told the interviewer that the film is only an art it has nothing to do with the reality and the film should satisfy the viewer's expectation.

Now the question is how we reader/viewer react to such arts and films. Do we react in such a way that we objectively approach art and appreciate the art or go one step ahead to personalise and criticise the happening in the film. The fault of Tamil audience here is to look for moral or social message in art forms and every art in an elevated form. Oscar Wild in his essay 'Decay of Lying: an Observation 1981' says that art do not imitate life rather life imitates art. "Art does not copy life but life imitates art.", "Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art.", "Art begins with abstract decoration, with what is unreal and non-existent." If one applies this idea of Oscar wild on the short film Lakshmi it needs no interpretation. Wild speaks about three stages of art, in the first stage life becomes fascinated this new wonder, in the second stage art takes life as a part of her rough material, recreated it, and refashions it in fresh forms and in the third stage when life gets the upper hand it drives art out into the wilderness. Wild's view helps us to apply a new idea to this short film. His idea help us to look at the short film as an art form.

I would like to remind you that films have a huge impact on the way we act and think which is not necessary. As the audience expect more facts and values from art, the art will lose its capacity of being a beautiful lie. The character Lakshmi is a character and the film is just a film. So the audience should feel detached and find a solution, to escape the emotion which the movie gives, we must consider the philosophy of 'art for art sake' which was coined and used by Oscar Wild in his essays. We need to watch Lakshmi as an art, lie and one can detach life from such movies. See this as a movie and try to accept every scene is planned in such a way the director wants to present to his audience. In 20 the century there came a form of dramas called 'Epic Theatre plays' popularised by Erwin Piscator, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vsevolod Mayerhold and Bertolt Brecht. The technique used here is the audience fully aware that they watch a play. They call that effect a 'fourth wall effect', 'verfremdungs effect', 'making strange effect' where they create an effect through speaking to the audience that the audience watch a drama.

The director has presented Lakshmi, the heroine who lacks motivation and conviction. Lakshmi is a complex person she does not hold any moral values in her life. Only emotions and feelings overtake her. We audience with one reference to the sexual life of woman, pity her or scold her. We should not allow the art to influence us as a person. The movie is cinematic and there were many logic failures in the movie. So the audience should feel detached from such movies where this kind of movies can be viewed as an art for art sake. The movie is not something which represents the society or morality of middle class woman so viewers should learn to detach art from reality and see life and instances in the movie as she sees. It is only an art as many other visual art like picture of Mona Lisa, which has nothing to tell viewers. Finally, Plato considers philosophy superior to art, in his theory of mimetic says that 'art is twice removed from reality' thus *Lakshmi* as an art is also twice removed from reality.

**Work-cited**

1. <https://indianexpress.com> › Entertainment › Tamil
2. Pranav Khumar's article on Philosophy of Aruvi: <http://bit.ly/2mGVMzq>

