

# The aspects of 'Third Cinema' storytelling in Tamil films and the 'Digital Kinetoscope' experience of Digital citizens.

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## ABSTRACT

Storytelling is an institutional effort. The controlled traditional media were functioning as agent of storytelling through epics and myths which was a connection of group and social behaviors. The collaborative structure (sound, sight and light) of film (film language) made both the experience of 'kinetoscope' and 'cinema'. The cinema became a trade, it transformed and was adopted by many social groups. By questions against the film language, the trade of storytelling and the profit of the industry made different kinds of 'film movements'. The 'Third cinema' movement (1960s-1970s) -normally encompasses 'Cinema Novo, 'Imperfect Cinema, and 'Third Estate'- questioned against Hollywood (first cinema) and European (second cinema) films on the functions of its aesthetics and techniques.

"Third Cinema films aspire to be socially realistic portrayal of life and emphasize topics and issues such as poverty, national and personal identity, tyranny, and revolution, colonialism, class and cultural practices"-John LeBlanc (2010).

The consequences of 'Third cinema' movement, the purpose of storytelling, continentally become the reflection of the reality of life. The Tamil film industry has changed its story telling. This study focuses on the aspects of 'Third cinema' storytelling in Tamil film and comparatively focuses on the structure of a song 'Azhagumalaraada' from 'Vaidehi Kathirunthal' (1984) and the content of 'Peranbu' (2019). On the other hand, the digital environment has transformed into a new form of cinema audience, like mono viewing of Edison's 'Kinetoscope'. Lumiere brothers' the space between the projector and screen allowed more individuals to experience the collaborative form (Film, space, and screen) of 'cinema'. The smart phones have abridged the cinema space into 'mono viewer' which I termed as 'Digital Kinetoscope'. This paper also explores the exposure of the 'Digital citizens' to 'Third cinema'.

## 1. Introduction

Storytelling is a part of the process of socialization which begins from an organized family system into group communication to be aware of social and cultural activities. Every culture maintains its own stories or narratives by cave paintings, oral, written drama as a means of information, education, entertainment, cultural conservation or to inculcate moral values.

The marvel of the century, the mindboggling storyteller of the world, 'cinema' was invented by the collaborative efforts. Edison's recorded audio (1877) and Eadweard Muybridge's edited motion photographs (1878) flagged the way for the experience of (sight, sound and Light) the audio-visual medium. The photographic motion frames (movie) were viewed through Edison's kinetoscope by an individual viewer in US (1880's) and later in Europe. Lumiere brothers (France) altered the 'kinetoscope' into 'Cinematograph' to capture an event on the film and project it on a screen as larger than life sized images. they screened the general scenes of public events in France (1894). Unlike kinetoscope, the space between screen and the projector made it possible for a group of audience to view the moving images. 'Cinematograph' conceived 'cinema'. Cinema (the film, the space and the screen), became an edited medium and the editing techniques lead to storytelling in different styles. When it became a trade, it was transformed and adopted by many social groups. The film language (the combination of story elements: plot, dialogue, character, theme, etc. and the production elements: camera angles, lighting, costumes, acting, sound and editing) made films an effective story teller of the world. "Cinema is a mixed or impure medium"-André Bazin (1967). In 1910s, the film language was the existing and influential intellectual progression. According to the intellectual usage, the film movements around the world shaped various forms of the film.

The Pre-World War II Film Movements: German Expressionism (1920s), Soviet Montage (1920s), French Surrealism & Poetic Realism (1920s – 1930s) concentrated on the aesthetic value, but Post-World War II Film Movements: Italian Neo-Realism (1940s – 1950s), Japan New wave (1950s), Indian Parallel (1950s – 1960s), Brazilian Cinema Novo & West African Third cinema (1960s) and the contemporaries of the New Waves of the Continents, on its contents.

"It seems to us that the decade from 1940 to 1950 marks a decisive step forward in the development of the language of the film -Andre Bazin (1967). The film makers have been using the film language to stiffen the plots and themes of the film and to sandwich their ideology according to their belief value, attitude, training, and political, social, economic, geographical conditions. Therefore, the collaborative form of its structure became a tool for social change rather than entertainment. The perspective of storytelling changed worldwide after world war II. The encompassed cinema movements of Argentina, Brazil

and Cuba coined the term 'Third Cinema'. The theory came to light through an essay 'Towards a Third Cinema' by Fernando Solanas (b. 1936) and Octavio Getino (b. 1935) published in Havana (1969), and was translated in many languages. The intention of 'Third Cinema' was socialist revolution through cinema which was already practiced in Tamil cinema. The consumption of cinema in Tamil Nadu is unique than any other states of India. The Tamil film industry is always connected with Dravidian politics and played a vital role in social and cultural changes. It became a social club for entertainment and to disseminate ideology on political, social and cultural values. The storytelling of Tamil film has been an evolution from mythology to social reform, gender and to personal identity. On the other hand, the digital environment has changed the film going culture (social club) to mono viewer like Edison's 'kinescope' which I termed 'Digital Kinescope'.

## 2. Review of Literature

The cultural hegemony and dominance of Bollywood within the Indian film industry has both marginalized and erased the rich complexities and ethno-linguistic specific cinematic traditions of India. The Tamil film industry begins about the same time as Hindi and Bengali cinema in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although the Tamil film industry was less known and acknowledged, it is rapidly emerging as a key player within Indian cinema -Selvaraj Velayutham (2008). In India, the only state to attain political power and socio-cultural changes through cinema is Tamil Nadu. The profound effect of storytelling is noteworthy to analyse academically. During the first decade of cinema, Madras was only one stop..... a vast network that linked Europe and the US with Australia and East Asia. -Stephen Putnam Hughes (2010). Due to the association with world cinema, the Tamil film industry attained classical standard, the international tactics implemented by the film makers helped them to convey their ideology. The screening of a film act....not exhausted in the struggle for power but will instead continue after the taking of power to strengthen the revolution. -Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino (Toward a Third Cinema 1969). Through storytelling the Tamil cinema made political revolution and power. Solanas and Getino, argued that in guerrilla film-making (under internal category of Third Cinema) .....the film crew needed to operate with a radical conception not only of the content of the film but also of the production process, including the team's internal relations, the role of the producer or director, and of individual skills- Michael Chanan (The Changing Geography of Third Cinema 1997). The Dravidian filmmakers used the contribution of every individual, principally the contribution of M. Karunanidhi, though he was not familiar in 1940s, to make fruitful result for social change and later political power. It is worthy to analyze his contribution in relation to the theory of 'Third Cinema'. 'He showed new directions in Tamil cinema'- Kavitha Muralidharan (2018). After the first seed of revolutionary dialogue which was planted by M Karunanidhi in Parasakthi (1952), the industry has been producing 'Third Cinema' till date.

The songs in Tamil cinema are a supportive element for storytelling, ideology and disseminating philosophy on human values. 'Indianess' is deeply enrooted in folk music and it has been used for moral, religious and political purposes (Kumar, K.J; 2000). In Tamil Nadu too, songs emerged from much known and famous traditional art form 'Therukoothu', which brought together prose, music and drama. -Dr. Sony Jalarajan Raj, Dr. Balakrishnan Muniapan (2012). This study analyses the Tamil 'Third cinema' song, Vaitheki kaathirunthaal (1984) and the content of Peranbu (2019) with structuralist and feminist theory. And to analyse the exposure of digital citizens to the 'Third Cinema'.

## 3. Methodology:

This study is a qualitative Exploration of the aspects of 'Third Cinema' storytelling in Tamil film. The study focusses on the theory of 'Third Cinema' to apply on the movies which made an impact in Tamil society. The variables of the study were selected core films, song from Tamil cinema. And the psycho analysis of 'Digital Kinescope' experience of 'Digital Citizens'.

### 3.1 Objective:

- To analyze the storytelling aspect of the 'Tamil cinema' with the perspective of 'Third Cinema' theories.
- To evaluate the existence of 'Third Cinema'/ 'New wave' in Tamil films.
- To find the applications of the 'Third Cinema' theories on the plot, dialogues and Lyrics.
- To analyze the perspective of traditional film exhibition and mono-viewer of digital citizens.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. The aspects of storytelling in Tamil cinema

**4.1A.** The transformation of Tamil traditional storytelling to cinematic aspects: In Tamil culture, storytelling functions as the aspects of Tamil language. The aspects encompass three branches: Iyal (prose), Isai (music) and Nadagam (Play). The collective form of them (Muthamizh) is generally called as Tamil. The muster or academy of most learned men of ancient time's Tamil land was called 'Sangam', which produced literature known as the 'Sangam literature'. Tolkappiyam, which is the oldest extant Tamil grammar text from the 'Sangam literature' (500BC), the composition of one of five great Tamil epics Silappadikaram from the 'Post-Sangam' period (200-600AD) and the greatest poet of Tamil modern litterateurs Subramanya Bharati's (1882-1921AD) Paanchali Sabadham- an epic poem based on a single episode of the Mahabharata are the invaluable sources for the storytelling with these three aspects. The three aspects: Literature, Music and

Performance could be monofunctional. The other forms of storytelling in Tamil culture are the polyfunctional form of 'Katha Kaalakshebam' and 'Villu Paattu'. In these forms, the storyteller would narrate through songs and strong dialogues with musical instruments on a stage or amongst a crowd. The Tamil public who were already well exposed to the traditional street play 'Theru Koothu' came to watch the Stage Drama (a hybrid form of Tamil tradition which is a combination of 'Theru Koothu' and the 'Parsi theatre' from Bellary, Andhra Pradesh) and cinema in 1897 at Madras through the Lumiere brothers' 'The living photographic pictures in life sized reproductions' of the arrival of train, of workers leaving from factory, of a sea-bath. The first Tamil and South Indian silent movie 'Keechaka Vadham' (1916) and the first Tamil talkie 'Kalidas' (1931) were mythological Tamil epics which were staged by the Tamil theatre companies. The performances of artistes and the aspects of the films were similar to that of the dramas and had more songs like 'Katha Kaalakshebam' till 1936.

Elis R Dungan, an American born film director introduced many techniques including the Euro-American influential melodramatic approaches of acting on a super hit secular film 'Sathi Leelavathi' (1936) that moved away from the influence of stage plays. Subsequently the International approaches were instigated in Tamil Cinema and various genres were introduced in 1940s and 50s. The notable films like, Pathala Bhairavi (1951), Parasakthi (1952), Devadas (1953), Antha Naal (1954), Thookku Thookki (1954), Ratha Kanneer (1954), and Madurai Veeran (1956), are stands for the evolution of the different garner in Tamil film and the screenplay and dialogue of M Karunanithi in Parasakthi, began new wave in Tamil cinema. While the Dravidian film makers were producing films for socio-cultural revolution and political power, C V Sridhar shaped new trend (Makkalai Petra Maharaasi-1957) in storytelling (Romantic garner) with melodious songs and realistic acting and inspired many directors to make movies with cultural identity.

**4.1B** Tamil cinema songs as supportive element for storytelling and ideological apparatus for message: Tamil cinema songs have been written for storytelling, to stiffen the plot, and to conjoin their ideology. The song lyrics are essential ingredients for the storytelling in Tamil films. Most of the Tamil directors, from 30s to the present, (Krishnann Panju, Sridhar, Neelagandan, Balachandar, Mahendran, Bharathiraja, Maniratnam, Ram etc.) rely on the strength of lyrics to support their plots. Subsequently, the song lyrics perform as strong gadgets to communicate to the audience storytelling and messages. The lyrics of the Dravidian Movement's films were written expressly for protagonists to persuade and hold the audience throughout the movie. The poets were treated like prodigy who want the audience to think and respond in some way. The song-writers impart to the audience through the protagonists, "the message" which they anticipate to say through their songs. It relates to every part of human life that is destined to motivate, teach, encourage, inform, influence, inspire, and to brace the characters to the society. Meanwhile, C V Sridhar structured storytelling through lyrics with semiotics to connect the plot. The main element of song semiotics is the content or the lyrics of the music, but it is necessary to analyze the contextual elements of songs in a particular movie-Dr. Sony Jalarajan Raj, Dr. Balakrishnan Muniapan (2012).

#### 4.2 The theory of 'Third Cinema' and the Tamil cinema:

The 'Third Cinema' normally encompasses Brazil's Cinema Novo, Cuba's Imperfect Cinema, and Argentina's Third Estate ('Third Cinema'). The term 'Third Cinema' was coined by Argentinian filmmakers **Fernando Solanas** and **Octavio Getino** through the essay "Towards a Third Cinema" (1969) with the Brazilian director **Glauber Rocha's** most propound essay "An Esthetic of Hunger" (1965) to denote revolutionary cinema existing outside Hollywood (First Cinema) and European auteur cinema (Second Cinema). "Any story any subject can be taken up by Third Cinema. In the dependent countries Third Cinema is a cinema of decolonization, which expresses the will to national liberation, anti-mythic, anti-racist, anti-bourgeois, and popular"- Solanas (1978 CinemAction). According to Solanas's statement, a narration about one's own nation's condition, myth, can be 'Third Cinema'. The Indian society fought against the domination of colonial political pressures and Varnashrama's casts & classism. At the same time the Tamil society fought against the same and for Tamil identity. Therefore, though the concept of First, Second and Third Cinema are conceived from the spectacles of tricontinental, 'Third Cinema' theories are applicable for Tamil films (the other film industry of India-Selvaraj Velayutham-2008), which used cinema as an ideological apparatus from 1940s to the present. And the injustices of colonial dominants to Latin-American people are the same as that of Indians who are affected by the monolithic structure of 'varnashrama' (formed by Aryans), which is clutches of casteism and classism that are roots of inequality.

#### 4.3 The 'Third Cinema' practices in Tamil cinema before and after its evolution

"Films succeeded in bearing witness to the decay of bourgeois value and testifying to social injustice"- Octavio Getino (1965). If the films bearing witness to social injustice in a society, it is a common truth to be applied in every social group of a nation. In 1915, a political movement '*Justice Party*' was formed by non-brahmin leaders. E V Ramasamy (Periyar) headed the party in 1935 and changed its perspective from politics to social reformation, insisted the film makers of Tamil film industry to make movies on Tamil identity, gender issues and the conflicts of cast & classism with rational thinking. The '*Justice Party*' was re-named as '*Dravidian Movement*' (Dravidar Kazhagam DK), also called '*Self-Respect Movement*' in 1944. The film makers and followers of '*Dravidian Movement*'(DK), and the '*Dravidar*

Munnetra Kazhagam' (DMK) the genealogical strand of 'Dravidian Movement', produced several movies on social and political issues during 1940s and onwards.

N S Krishnan (NSK), the theatre artist, playback singer, writer, film director, actor-comedian contributed a comedy strip against casteism in 'Uthama Puthiran' (1940) with a unique style. 'Nallathambi' (1949) and 'Velaikkari' (1949) are generally referred to as the films that distinctly marked the intervention of Dravidian ideologues into Tamil cinema. C N Annaduari, the founder of the DMK Dravidian Progressive Federation, who believed in the potential of cinema for the advocacy of Dravidian ideology, particularly in its critique of caste and superstitious beliefs and its aspirations for an egalitarian society where there would be equality and justice for women and the downtrodden, and its imperatives of rationalism and self-respect, was involved as a writer in both of these films. – Swarnavel Eswaran Pillai (2015 pp 261).

The DMK used cinema to persuade the audience toward Dravidian Movement's ideology through storytelling. It is notable that the DMK activist and screen play writer, M. Karunanithi's screen play and sharp dialogues for Manamagal (1951) and Parasakthi (1952). The screen play and dialogues which were used in Parasakthi were against Hindu customs and orthodox practices, full of the power of literal and film languages, was a weapon against the social, political and cultural inequalities. "Its role in the battle for the complete liberation of man is of primary importance. The camera then becomes a gun, and the cinema must be a guerrilla cinema" - Solanas (1978). Likewise, the narrations and dialogues of M.Karunanithi became a gun and created 'New wave' which appeared as guerrilla cinema to the socio-political situations. The theories of 'Third Cinema' focusses on the traditional, social and cultural values of the natives, to emphasize against colonization and handling cinema as a battle ground. The most forcefully articulated dialogues in Parasakthi are:

- "Hey priest! when has the goddess ever spoken?",
- "It is a meagre stone if the stone could talk with you, wouldn't it have spoken when you tried to rape my sister?"
- "Why do you cry for human help when your goddess has the weapon on her hands?"

It reassures the ideology of 'Self-Respect Movement' and remains in the history as a germane fuel to the 'Third Cinema' in Tamil film industry. "The plot of Parasakthi is very ordinary, it was the screenplay and dialogues that gave it a cult status. – V.Madhimaran (2018) The activists of the DK and DMK initiated rebellions against cast, class, feminist issues, divorced women's rights over their sexual, physical, re-marriage, reproductive choices and gender relationships. The structure of Paasa Malar-1961, (Bheemsing), Pathinaaru vayathinile-1977 (Bharathiraja), Aval appadithaan-1978, (Rudraiyya), Uthri pookkal-1979 (Mehendran), Kaadhal 2004, (Balaji Sakthivel), Merku Thodarchi Malai-2008, (Lenin Barathi), pariyerum Perumal-2018 (Mari Selvaraj) are the notable films for the evolution of storytelling from formalistic to melodramatic and then to realistic structure in Tamil films.

#### 4.4 The traditional and neo-form of 'Third Cinema' storytelling

The song 'Azhagumalaraada' in Vaidehi kaththirunthaal (1984- music by Ilayaraja and lyrics by Vaali), is a strong storytelling for the plot. It conveys the social, cultural, religious taboos on woman. It portrays the physical and psychological struggle of a lonely young widow. The young widow wears the Tamil traditional anklet which referred to as key prop in the great Tamil epic Silappathigaaram and sings the song while dancing in front of her father. The song illustrates the urge of her body and inabilities. At the end of the song, her anklet breaks and her father dies after hearing her lamentation and she stands like kannagi with an anklet and great anger. This song portrays the cultural and religious suppression on women.

The structure of Peranbu-2019 (Ram) is a sensitive portrayal of a father and daughter relationship and the struggle of a father who is unable to handle his spastic child including her adult age needs both physically and psychologically. The 'Third Cinema' storytelling is a revolution against any kind of domination and circumstances. In this movie the father understood the needs of his daughter and fulfils it in many ways. For her sexual urge, he makes the decision to find a male prostitute. This is a strange/new approach to the Tamil storytelling.

#### 4.5 Storytelling among 'Social Club' to the 'Digital Kinetoscope'

The experience of movie watching, (sight, sound and Light) the audio-visual medium, obtained through Edison's kinetoscope (1880's) could allow an individual viewer to watch. Lumiere Brothers' cinematograph exhibition centres (the space between the projector and the screen) allowed a group of public to watch. This led to theatre culture and audience. The permanent cinema theatres functioned as social clubs. It was agreed upon that everyone would chip in equally for rent, and it would run sort of like a Social Club. - Amanda Katz (2018). The storytelling became institutional and is controlled by the governments of every nation. The certification of film for screening categorizes and controls the content for a particular group of audience. Due to the impact of media convergence, the smart phone has become 'Digital Kinetoscope', a term which I have coined, and the user, a mono viewer like Edison's traditional Kinetoscope. The content in traditional Kinetoscope was the same for all the individual viewers whereas in the Digital Kinetoscope, it differs from viewer to viewer. Likewise, the social clubs have a controlled content but the viewers of 'Digital Kinetoscope' have one that is uncontrolled. As the result of 'Digital Kinetoscope', the digital citizens (those who use the Internet regularly and effectively, born from 2004-Mossberger, Tolbert & McNeal, 2011) are also often exposed to the un controlled content.

The 'Third Cinema' portrays the reality of any domination, suppression and violation (Hunger and violence is our aesthetics-Glauber Rocha 1965).

## Conclusion

Though the theory of 'Third Cinema' was postulated in the 70s, it was practiced even before then in the Tamil cinema. M.Karunanithi, through his gun-like dialogues and screen play made it possible for 'Third Cinema' to exist in Tamil films. The song 'Alagumalaraada' and the structure of 'Peranbu' are living proofs of the existing aspects of 'Third Cinema' storytelling in Tamil films even in this digital age. The technological evolution has shifted the traditional group communication of social clubs which is being maintained in theatres to one of individual communication by 'Digital Kinetoscope'. As the 'Third Cinema' content is ideological and revolutionary, it is necessary for the digital citizens to be assisted to view it by an institution. Otherwise the 'Digital Kinetoscope' experience will be a challenge to the future of storytelling.

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