THE STUDY OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SUCCESS OF TAMIL CINEMA

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Abstract: The first screening by the Lumiere brothers took place in 1895. In the following year, technicians working under the Lumiere brothers traversed the globe to promote, what was called later as the artistic, industrial and the entertainment wonder of the twentieth century. Maurice Seistere, a cameraman with the Lumiere brothers travelled to Bombay and showed the first film to India. Arthur Havelock was the then Governor of the British ruled Madras Presidency. M Edwards, another technician was showing the first film in the city, near Victoria Public Hall, the present day Rippon Building, in 1897. Two years later in 1899, the first news daily, *Swadesamitran* was launched. Apart from many other symbols the motor car became the status symbol of the rich. In contemporary culture the vintage cars have become the symbol of distinction by the rich. Trams were introduced in the city during the same year when the first screening took place. Telephones found their way only in affluent homes and in companies. The practice of listening to recorded music through the Gramophone started.

In what Walter Benjamin calls, the mechanical reproduction of works of art had begun. Cinema was still in its primary stages. The tradition of screening of short films took place in continuous fashion and, these films were thereafter given various appellations as in *Bioscope* and *Kinemascope*. The venues of these shows were along the roadsides and parks.

In this context, it is very important to study Tamil Cinema to understand the objectives of culture and film industry. The segments on Tamil Cinema are pertinent to understand the relationship between Cinema and contemporary culture. Instead of giving a detailed history of development of Tamil Cinema, attention has been focused on a few important elements of Tamil Cinema. A historical lineage is necessary to understand the manner in which Cinema developed from its nascent stages to a complex institution. In the process, the various social, cultural, political and economic factors that contributed to progress and development.

Introduction:

Films Produced in India – An Analysis: The first Indian film released in India was *Shree Pundalik*, a silent film in Marathi by Dadasaheb Torne on 18 May, 1912 at 'Coronation Cinematograph', Mumbai. Some have argued that Pundalik does not deserve the honour of being called the first Indian film because it was a photographic recording of a popular Marathi play, and because the cameraman—a man named Johnson—was a British national and the film was processed in London.

The first full-length motion picture in India was produced by Dadasaheb Phalke, Dadasaheb is the pioneer of Indian film industry a scholar on India's languages and culture, who brought together elements from Sanskrit epics to produce his Raja Harishchandra (1913), a silent film in Marathi. The film marked a historic benchmark in the film industry in India. Only one print of the film was made and shown at the Coronation Cinematograph on 3 May, 1913. It was a commercial success and paved the way for more such films.

Factors Involved in the Success of Film: The aesthetic theories can be confined to the thoughts of four outstanding thinkers of the twentieth century, viz., Freud, Croce, Spengler, and Sartre. The Spengler's philosophy must start from his concept of Culture, since this for him is the reference frame from which any form of knowing proceeds. Spengler does not attempt to formulate any systematic definition of culture. He cryptically calls it a soul that sets out in the course of its life to fulfill and actualize its inherent potentialities. From this metaphorical saying it can be gathered that the term' culture' in Spengler's connotation refers both to its potentialities as well as the sensible forms that

embody these potentialities. The totality of traditions and beliefs, comprising of ways of knowing the world, language, religion, art-forms and moral and political laws are the sensible forms through which a culture manifests itself.

The aesthetic judgments and their relations to evaluative norms begin with the possible objectivity of aesthetic judgments. To fulfill this task, a clarification must be made regarding the nature of aesthetic judgments. We may adhere to the definition given by Stefan Morawski which is as follows:"By aesthetic judgment....it refers to psychical act of an intellectual character which results in a proposition expressing an esthetic experience and formulating an appraisal based upon certain reasons**.**" *viz*., A psychical act of a certain type, an evaluative judgment or an appraisal and a single or a set of norms that go into the making of appraisals.

Statement of the Problem: Any ardent analytic of Film would accept the fact that there are several factors involved in the success of a film in general, and gaining wider appeal to various audiences, in particular. However, it is of immense significance to find out specific factors that play a vital role in the success of the films.

In this context, a general outlook of the film and the factors that lead to the success and the spectrum of Tamil Cinema, its impact in the social, economic, and political spheres in Tamil Nadu, in the globalized era viz. 1990's onwards is beneficial on several counts. Therefore, the present study assumes significance on varied aspects *viz..* to determine the success of film and audience perception.

Review of Literature: Firoze Ranoonwalla (2011), in his study titled '*Cinema: A reference point for society*', had found out that a part of the socio-economic-cultural transformation can be attributed to the Cinema as films usually generate social mobility, fluidity and an overall sense of oneness among people of different backgrounds.

The study titled, '*The pioneers of Indian Cinema*', conducted by Jag Mohan (2009), listed out the achievements and contributions of the film personalities such as Dadasaheb Phalke, Ardeshir Irani and others.

A.V.Rajagopal (1997), in his study titled, *Tamil Cinema: Yesterday and Today*, traces the golden age of Tamil Cinema and the factors that contributed to the elevation of Tamil Cinema and its significance in the socio-economic and political spheres.

India being the second most populous nation in the world and the largest democracy in the world, the consumption of Cinema among Indians is phenomenal. Home to one sixth of the world's population, which possibly is the population of many established filmmaking nations, go to the Cinema every day, asserts Rajadhyaksha (2008), in his study titled *Globalization of Films*.

Landsberg (2004), in his study titled, *Cinema perspectives* has identified that Cinema has the capacity to carry viewers to faraway places and alternative temporalities as it engages viewers in an act of revelation and transportation.

The study titled, *Tamil Cinema and Globalization*, underscores that a decade after globalization, there was revival in Tamil Cinema where again the directors returned to realistic Cinema. The study reveals that the decades beginning in 2000 saw films venturing back to the villages. "The movement towards realistic Cinema might have begun with 'Kaadhal' in 2003 and by 2007, many script writers had moved in this direction, thus coming up with ventures like 'Paruthiveeran' and 'Subramaniapuram'.

Objectives of the Study:
- To understand the evolution of Tamil Films released from 1990's, and the factors involved in the success of the films.
- To understand the aesthetics in selected Tamil Films which fall under the category as popular and Aesthetics.

- To understand the elements that contributes/enhance the aesthetics in Tamil Cinema and Audience appraisal.
- To understand the perspectives of film personalities/filmmakers/film critics on audience perceptions, on the factors that contribute to the success in Tamil Cinema.

Scope of the Study: Cinema is an inevitable part of people in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to the success of the films shall be useful for general public/ Film producers and others involved in Film making.

Methodology: The chapter presents the methods used to obtain data and also the theoretical framework used in the analysis of the data. It provides the details of sample size, the sampling procedure and unit of analysis in this study. This chapter also presents the plot of the films selected for analysis.

Theoretical Framework: Cinematic representations and interpretations of factors leading to success of films, using media analysis techniques, for the assumptions and ideologies it fosters and reinforces through the medium of Film.

Methods: Both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis are adopted in the study. The Content Analysis method is employed to make quantitative generalizations on the basis of reliable classification and observation. Dual approaches, i.e. humanist approach which studies media content as a reflection of society and culture, and a behaviourist approach which analyses media content with an emphasis on its likely effects, are used in the content analysis of the films. As the research explores media content by employing behaviourist and humanist traditions, a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis methodologies, enriched with the framework of qualitative approach of discourse analysis, is used to fully understand the meaning and possible impact in films.

Content Analysis: Content Analysis is defined "as a systematic and quantitative method for analyzing media content, it involves the transparent and systematic coding and counting of specified dimensions or characteristics of content in selected samples of media output" (Hansen 2010). It is a widely used method in media and communication research, especially in the analyses of media coverage of environmental issues.

Discourse Analysis: A discourse analysis, done on aesthetics from the films chosen formed the variables, backs the quantitative findings of the content analysis with qualitative data. Discourse analysis is one of the widely used social constructionist approaches, which will reveal the hidden motivations behind a text, therefore enabling the resolution of concrete problems, by making us ask ontological and epistemological questions. In other words, Critical or Discourse Analysis is the deconstructive reading and interpretation of a problem or text, which will help in the understanding of the conditions behind a specific "problem" and make us realize that the essence of that "problem", and its resolution lie in its assumptions; the very assumptions that enable the existence of that "problem"

Expert Interviews: Expert interviews from the film makers and film scholars supplements the study as it sheds light on the directional intent in the creation of the text and also the possible impact of creations.

Criteria for Selecting The Films: The population of the study is the Tamil Films during the period 1990-2015. Select films in Tamil with the narrative on various popular and aesthetical aspects are chosen for the study. Only Tamil films which come under the category of popular films noted for their aesthetics released during the period chosen for study. It is to be noted popular Cinema is a style of entertainment usually in the form of a film that the populace enjoys en masse, rather than in select groups. It is made for theatrical release with commercial motive.

Sampling: Non-probability sampling procedure was used in selecting films for analysis. Since there was no documentation of films by any institution in Tamil Nadu, film scholars, film teachers, film makers, film fans and critics were consulted in the selection of films from three decades which deals with the

popular genre. Thirty films were carefully chosen for analysis as all those consulted agreed that these films dealt with popular mass appeal. Thirty films were chosen for the study using purposive sampling. Thirty films were carefully chosen for analysis as all those consulted agreed that these films dealt with popular mass appeal *viz.*, Azhagi, Kadhal, Kadhal Kottai, Poove unakkaga, Roja, Devar magan, Surya vamsam, Avvai shanmugi , Mahanadhi, Vaali, Anbe sivam, Gentleman, Subramaniyapuram, Sethu, Alaipayuthey, Kizhagu simaiyilae, Virumandi, Minsara kanavu, Bharathi kannama, Adakukalam, Peranmai, Paruthi veeran, Thanga meengal, Kumki, , Anjathey, Vazhagu enn 18/9, Pizza, Madras, Naduvula konjam pakkatha kanoom, and Sembaruthi.

Results /Conclusion: The findings of the study within the perspective of the aesthetic theories confined to the thoughts of four outstanding thinkers of the twentieth century, viz., Freud, Croce, Spengler, and Sartre, reveals that the aesthetics of the audience has evolved in appraising the Tamil Films during the past three decades. The significant finding is that the audience had developed a taste for appreciating the films irrespective of the filmmaker. The appraisal for the films have predominantly centered on the popular culture. The study also reveals that the films produced during the 1990's were good in aesthetic value. However, the films produced from 2000 to 2010 have evolved in several aspects including cast, special effects and more importantly the overall aesthetics. Therefore, the response for the films produced during the stated period has received better appreciation from the audience compared to the previous decade. It is also understood that the audience have raised their expectations with regard to aesthetics in films, which are evident in the films released during 2010-2015, as the films released during these years can be compared to the popular films released globally. The audience appraisal is evolving alongside the quality popular Tamil Films during the past three decades, which is a healthy sign for the growth of Tamil Film industry.

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