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Abstract

This research has been an effort to understand issues and concerns related to the field of learning, teaching, and pedagogy. I had set out with a long genealogy of questions and attempted to seek answers through the representation of these issues in films. They included:

What is the purpose of learning? Is it only to acquire knowledge in order to pass examinations and to eventually find a job or a place in society? Or is it to enable a holistic education that develops all the planes and parts of one's being? What and who directs learning? Is it driven by the goal to transmit information useful to get along in the world and directed by the teacher or is the student trusted to direct her or his learning in the field of her or his choice? What is our understanding of learners needs? Is it predetermined by the teacher based on her or his understanding and beliefs or is there a process of listening that helps the teacher understand what the students need and want to learn? What is the nature of learning offered? Is it only mental or does it touch upon other domains of being?

The research advocates looking beyond education as just cognition and development of mental faculties. It recommends holistic education that brings together the consciousness of the mental, emotional, vital and physical being. Education and the pedagogy used then should pay attention to all of them together. This takes us to the main argument of this research, to look at education as a preparation for life, a journey from learning to living and not for just making a living.

Pedagogy through cinema offers education through an experience based learning. Films as a pedagogical tool offer media literacy that facilitates critical thinking and acts as an important source of political education. This research has attempted to bring out a more nuanced understanding of education through the critical pedagogy of media literacy and audio-visual communication.

Critical attention to Indian popular films is on the increase. Bollywood is an important source of popular culture in India and the impact that it has over millions of viewers across the globe is significant. The three films chosen in the study helped to focus on different learning contexts and needs of learners. The films, *Chak de! India* (2007), *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) and *3 Idiots* (2009), were box office commercial successes and had captured the public's imagination. Stars have played an important role and the research looked at the star phenomenon and its impact on the reception of films. The stars persona of Aamir Khan and Shah Rukh Khan has benefitted the films portrayal of the intended

messages. A large number of Indian and international audiences including their fan following, has led to increased circulation and popularity of the films.

The portrayal of various issues related to education in these films triggered a wide public discussion. By looking at the educational experience in these three popular Hindi films, I explored a range of themes like types of teachers, teacher student relationship, learner centered pedagogy, needs and aspirations of learners, creating of conducive learning environments, parental support and understanding, state of higher education, the state of education for those with learning disabilities, different abilities and recognizing & nurturing multiple intelligence.

The methodology adopted is an eclectic approach in which I triangulated the following methods. Using the procedures provided by textual analysis, I attempted to extract and understand the meaning and ideologies inherent in moving image content of three films, *Chak de! India*, *Taare Zameen Par* and *3 Idiots*. I studied various views of the people involved in the production of the films such as script-writers, creative directors etc. This was done through analysis of posts and interviews available on the internet and in-depth interviews with them. I also interacted with some audiences directly and through the medium of a questionnaire. I engaged with the concept of the citizen-viewer or public/citizens and that of the public sphere. This research was not aimed at providing a representative sample of a collective truth but instead, through thick description explored audience research along with textual analysis of the selected films in the study.

This thesis is organized into six chapters. It begins with an introductory chapter which outlines the purpose and design of the study. The second chapter is on the film *Taare Zameen Par*. It focuses on school education, and learning disability. The third chapter is on the film *Chak de! India*. It explores the field of sports and physical education and the sports pedagogy facilitated to empower training to young sportswomen (hockey players). The fourth chapter is on the film *3 Idiots*. It tries to understand youth aspirations, needs, dilemmas and phenomena such as student suicides. The fifth chapter, on mapping audience responses, includes teachers, parents, special educators, counselors, and people from all walks of life interested in watching films. The discussion is based on responses received through an online survey and online responses posted on various public forums such as blogs, IMDb and YouTube.

The sixth and final chapter, is the conclusion. It presents the findings of the research along with the strengths and limitations of the study and further suggestions.

The findings of this research indicate that the audiences of these films have been active in interpreting the films in the light of their life experiences and world views. They have actively engaged with the text of the films and commented on the portrayal of several issues related to education in the films. Even after seven to nine years of the film's release, audiences continue to revisit these films and find these films a source of pleasure and education. It has also brought out the role of the stars in drawing large number of audiences and helping the films' commercial and pedagogical success.