RECEPTION, DISTRIBUTION, FANS AND STAR CREATION OF THE MOVING IMAGE

Mr. Debasis Chakraborty*, Dr. Rashmi Kumari**
*Associate Professor, **Assistant Professor
Department of Visual & performing Arts*, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication**
*Mangalayatan University, Aligarh, (Uttar Pradesh)
**Usha Martin University, Angara (Jharkhand)

ABSTRACT

When there is disconnect among audiences and spectators, it poses an essential question. What is the nature of the relationship between audience groups and the spectator, and, by consequence, what role, if any, does the spectator have in the development of and interaction amongst the many cinematic publics are discussed. Let me begin by posing a question that is critical not just for this paper but also for the study of various types of industrially generated (or 'mass') culture in general: what is culture? If the meanings of film are not those that are made available to the audience when they are circulated, then why studies of cinema should be concerned with the audience in the first place? I'd want to refer back to three cases that I've already described in order to demonstrate the difficulties that might arise from the inclination to mistake the real watcher for the spectator.

KEYWORDS: Spectator, Mass, Culture, Audience, Film, Cinema.

I. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of this research is to provide a theoretical framework and analytical tools that will assist us in better understanding how films are seen and what viewers, located in certain historical and geopolitical situations, contribute to their interaction with the cinema. When considering the importance of the audience as a category in a research such as this one, which concentrates on the circulation and reception of cinema, it is important to consider how the audience should be conceptualized. Because there are so many disparities across audiences groups, such as those based on class, caste, and gender, as well as the popularity of powerful narratives that highlight and essentialist these distinctions, can we talk of the audience as a single entity with a purpose? As a result of the unique circumstances of the state of Andhra Pradesh, these issues are brought into even greater focus. By the 1980s, the categories of mass-audience and class-audience had risen to unprecedented importance in terms of influencing public perceptions of Telugu film. Since the beginnings of cinema, the audiences denoted by these words have existed as separate subsets of society. There were distinct enclosures and seating arrangements for lower and upper class/caste audiences at touring and permanent theatres, the first of which was the Maruthi Cinema in Vijayawada, which opened in 1921 and was the world's first permanent cinema. They appear to have been used before the 1980s, notably in casual talks about Telugu cinema rather than in serious film critique, and they are still in use now. The eighties, on the other hand, were marked by the development of the ability to give explanatory explanations of cinema, particularly when used in conjunction with two other
words that were becoming increasingly popular around this time: mass-filing) and class-film (s). The term 'mass-audience' alludes to the lowest socioeconomic classes. The origin of the referent's lower caste is never explicitly mentioned, although it is implied. The term 'mass' connotes tastelessness, the lack or rejection of culture, with the mass-audience allegedly watching mass-produced films and rejecting meaningful cinema as a result of this. The 'class-audience,' on the other hand, is comprised of people from middle-class (and upper caste) backgrounds who see class-films, which are considered to combine tasteful enjoyment with a social purpose.

During the eighteenth century in Western Europe, the commercialization of cultural production resulted in a move away from the court aristocracy, which had funded cultural creation up until the seventeenth century. "The transition... resulted not only in a change in the composition of the public, but also in the creation of the concept of "public" itself," writes Habermas. When the public sphere was thus established through cultural consumption, it was used to "influence the choices of state power," "to legitimize demands," and "to appeal to an authority to which an appeal might be made" in matters of common interest. As a result, coffee shops in England, for example, which began as gathering places for literary debate, 'became the "seedbeds" of political discontent', according to the author. Habermas' study is historically distinctive, as well as specific to the class and area of the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie of Western Europe, as well as to the period of the investigation. When it comes to students whose work deals with different settings, his conception of the public realm would need to be considerably altered. For Habermas, the terms "mass1" and "public" are fundamentally opposed to one another. Consequently, in order to embrace the Habennasian framework, we must acknowledge that cinema results in the development of a mass, rather than the formation of a public, rather than the production of a nonpublic.

II. FANS AND THEIR PUBLIC SPHERE

The phenomena of fans is an interesting subject of investigation. He becomes a figure of the most unusual 'impact' of popular movies because of his exaggerated emotions, exaggeration, and fascination with (what is so clearly) minutiae about the star's life and films, as well as his proclivity for crime. Fans pique my attention because they can assist film theory in addressing some fundamental questions linked to cinema, such as what viewers see at the cinema and what they remove from their experience with the medium, which I find fascinating. By concentrating on what appears to be a clearly defined portion of the audience that is marked by highly visible behaviors, I hope to question the concept of 'audience,' as well as its givenness in general. In addition to highlighting the need of seeing the cinematic audience as a plural entity, the existence of the fan demonstrates how individual viewers create collectives that interact with one another while remaining different from one another. Because only organized fans are included, it is less difficult to trace down those who are participating in the event. Except for those who live close by, FA members are typically the most visible and loud supporters, and as previously said, they are the most vocal and visible component of the lower-class audience as well. Furthermore, FAs are mostly concentrated in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. The fan phenomenon in these states is significant precisely because supporters in these states are organized, in contrast to fans in the majority of other areas of the country. Even in Andhra Pradesh, there are considerable distinctions between the actions of organized and unorganized fans, with the most notable distinction being the level of public exposure enjoyed by the former. 'Non-fans' (who openly disavow their random even as they engage in fan activities) and crypto fans (who publicly disavow their random while engaging in fan activities) do not need to be visible to the general public. Another group of people, despite engaging in a
lot of FA events, do not consider themselves to be members and instead believe themselves to be supporters of the organized kind. My assertion that fans constitute a public is based on the ability of members of FAs to respond to the celebrity, the medium, the film business, and members of various socioeconomic strata. By conversing amongst themselves and with others, fans transform into a public. FAs offer the necessary institutional space for this to occur. Andhra Pradesh is home to hundreds of thousands of FAs, according to the adoring public of various celebrities. Chiranjeevi is the subject of three thousand organizations, each with a membership ranging between 10 and five hundred members, all dedicated to him. They may be found in all three areas of Andhra Pradesh: coastal Andhra, Telangana, and Rayalascema. They are a diverse group of people. The bulk of financial institutions (FAs) are located in metropolitan regions of coastal Andhra Pradesh, with the highest concentration in the East and West Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts, respectively.

Chiranjeevi's fan clubs were modelled after the fan clubs of prominent performers of the 1970s, such as N T Rama Rao and Krishna, among others. FAs affiliated with the Chiranjeevi family inherited the organizational structure, activity, and liveness of the FAs affiliated with the seventies. A significant growth in the number of fan associations occurred throughout the 1980s, with the development of associations for famous stars as well as the formation of associations to promote smaller stars among the public. The events that followed N.T. Rama Rao's entry into politics in 1982 had important consequences for FAs in general, and they played a key part in molding Chiranjeevi FAs, who rose to prominence with the success of Khaidi in 1984. (A. Kodandarami Reddy, 1983). From 1982 until the founding of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), fans were seen to be a source of free publicity for a star's films, in addition to serving as repeaters (Hardgrave and Niedhart 1975 use the term to refer to audience who watch a film more than once). The introduction of NTR into politics, followed by other stars such as Krishna and subsequently Kumar Raju, both of whom had a considerable following (as well as a number of others who didn't), resulted in followers becoming a political investment in the eyes of politicians as far as celebrities were concerned. This is a significant development, despite the fact that not all famous performers have taken political positions. By the late 1970s, Krishna enthusiasts in Vijayawada were already actively involved in politics, as supporters of the Congress Party and other political parties (I). In contrast to the stars' personal political participation, the political allegiance of FAs was less obvious before 1982 and had little to do with their own political involvement. Once celebrities began running for office, not only was a political affiliation imposed on football associations, but political involvement also became an official role of supporters. It is interesting to note that even NTR fans did not become political cadres of any significance, despite the fact that they fought furiously for the TDP during the 1983 and subsequent elections. A few of them, on the other hand, founded or joined Balakrishna FAs, which are not necessarily officially affiliated with the TDP. Some non-Kammanna dropped out of NTR FAs because the celebrity, who happens to be a Kamma, was regarded as just looking out for the interests of his caste. Similarly, when the TDP was created, several Congress supporters withdrew their support for NTR FAs.

In the 1980s, the caste and political allegiance of FAs (at least in coastal Andhra) became visible at the same time, which was unprecedented. Furthermore, involvement in politics was made feasible for fans in Vijayawada, regardless of caste, by the patronage of leaders such as Ranga and his Kamma TOT opponent, DevinemRajasekhar (also known as Nehru), who were longtime leaders of criminal gangs before entering politics. Involvement in politics entailed connection with criminal elements inside political organizations. As a result, in the 1980s, fans gained "At the same time, caste, politics, and the
image of the rabble are discussed. In light of the connections between crime and politics on the one hand, and the (reorganization of FAs along caste lines on the other, journalists and others have claimed that FAs deteriorated fast during this time period. This is not entirely correct. By virtue of their inception within the time period under consideration, the Chiranjeevi FAs gave the most definitive evidence of the evolution of fan groups. After the TDP administration introduced new entertainment tax laws in 1983 (which went into force in 1984), the importance of fans for stars and stars for the film business rose significantly. The slab system, as it was known in the film business, was a new tax regime that levied a fixed amount of entertainment tax on the gross collecting capacity of theatres, independent of the actual number of tickets sold.” The effect was that as the number of tickets sold fell, earnings decreased dramatically since taxes were charged on the entire number of seats in the theatre. On the other hand, even for a few weeks, having a full house meant paying less in taxes than under the previous administration. As a result, repeaters gained in prominence, and fans who were repeaters became more important than ever before in the film industry. In his argument, Dattatreya of the Andhra Pradesh Film Chamber of Commerce in Vijayawada claims that distributors began sponsoring FAs after the dab system was implemented because they wanted fans to do their part to secure maximum collection during the first few weeks of a film's release. As a result of a variety of different, sometimes unrelated developments in the years following NTR's entry into politics, fans not only increased in number and importance (for the film industry), but also served as sites for the formation of caste and political alliances and acquired a criminal image in the minds of middle-class people. These changes were seen as signs of hazardous deviance by journalists and representatives from the entertainment business who were able to observe fan behavior up close and personal.

III. STAR, SPECTATOR AND MASS-FILM

Mass-film is the term used by unfriendly critics of Telugu cinema, whether professional or not, to refer to a broad variety of films that are allegedly favored by lower-class or lower-caste viewers, as well as by the film business. While the word may have originated prior to the 1980s and remains to be in use now, it was most widely used in the 1980s and early 1990s to designate a certain type of film during that time period. I would want to suggest that these films may be considered to be part of a genre with distinguishable thematic and stylistic characteristics. In the case of Chiranjeevi, the mass-picture acted as a "vehicle" for the star's production from one film to the next, and so on. In the words of Richard Dyer, a star vehicle may give 'a character of the kind identified with the star..., a situation/setting/generic context connected with the star..., or chances for the star to do her/his thing...' Dyer, in this way, reminds us that films starring a certain celebrity share certain characteristics that are the consequence of the movie's attempt to announce the presence of the celebrity. It is also crucial to highlight that a star's oeuvre does not form a genre and does not elicit a certain set of expectations from viewers, but rather a collection of films that may be considered very legitimately as distinct generic entities. I'd want to take it a step further and inquire in the following chapter (in which I analyses films that cannot be categorized alongside the mass-film due to the absence of any valid generic criteria) as to what the celebrity carries with him when he switches genres. According to its detractors (as opposed to its backers), the mass-film is distinguished by its 'vulgarity and violence' as well as its appeal to its intended audience, the general public. However, while there is no justification for adopting this definition at face value, it can provide insight into the wider mechanisms at play in generic classification. According to Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, genre categorization does not derive from some inherent formal or thematic qualities of a specific group of texts, but rather serves as "an intellectual grid of intelligibility" through which texts may be read.
"Genres may be seen as sets of expectations through which the possibilities of reading are structured," they say, using Stephen Nealc (1980). David Bordwell, like many other critics, believes that genres "justify an expectation or influence" on the side of the audience. Furthermore, he argues that such expectations are trans-textually based in the sense that they draw on the spectator's understanding of other texts that are recognizably comparable. Mass-production cinema is a genre in the sense that it allows itself to be "read in specific ways." In other words, it creates a spectator position that favors some frames of intelligibility at the expense of others, therefore constructing a spectator stance. The stylistic and thematic themes of a mass-produced film can be identified, but these characteristics alone are not sufficient to establish that the picture belongs to a certain genre of filmmaking. As an example, the 'Telugu western', which had Krishna and Chiranjeevi in the major roles in the 1970s and 1980s respectively, has been created. However, the formal similarities between these two "westerns" do not suggest that they were produced by the same studio or belonged to the same genre; the mass-film is composite, having multiple generic tendencies that are not recognized by their viewers as belonging to distinct genres. In particular, I'm thinking about genres such as stunt films, which have been absorbed by the mass-market cinema. The Chiranjeevi western is more likely to be classified as a mass-film than as a western, in part because it was made and distributed during an era when the mass-film was considered a supergenre. Similarly, the thematic concerns of the mass-film, such as the collapse of the family as an institution, are shared by the class-film, which, according to all available evidence, is diametrically opposed to the former. Because of this, the distinctions between genres have more to do with what is expected of them than with the formal or thematic problems that they address.

The opening sequence of the mass-produced film sets the stage for the exchange of glances between the audience and the star. This procedure, which permits the star-protagonist to serve as the narrative's ultimate agent of action, is critical to the narrative's growth. The star's role as an agent of action is founded on the fact that he serves as the looking agency for the audience. What should be highlighted in this context is that the contract of gazing generates the spectator since, in order for a storey to be intelligible (in any film, not only the mass-media film), it is necessary to have a constitution of the real viewer who will function as a spectator. A spectator is a watcher who engages in eye contact with the celebrity. In retrospect, we may argue that the exchange is the first operation performed by the spectator (to use Bordwell's terminology). Retrospectively, since the person who is addressed by the screen is the real viewer, as if she had been the spectator from the beginning of time. The opening scene of a mass-produced film is critical in facilitating the product of &ctf's star protagonist in the position of agent (of looking and action). Additionally, this is the process through which the observer is transformed into a spectator. During the opening sequence (which can last anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes in a two and a half-hour film), it is often necessary to pause the narrative in order to facilitate the exchange in which the star's agency and the viewer's spectatorship (or ability to act in accordance with a given protocol) are signaled. This may be shown by looking at the techniques that were used to introduce the main protagonist in the story. As an example, in Slate Rowdy and AlludaMajaka, the actor is introduced in a sequence of tilt-up close-up views, beginning with his feet in the first film; in the latter, these shots are alternated with pictures of throngs of enthusiastic diegetic spectators scrambling to get a better look at him in the former. To elaborate, the idea is that even before the star's face is revealed, the viewer knows the star as Chiranjeevi and as the film's protagonist, therefore completing the most important operation required by the audience. As a result, the actual viewer takes on the role of the spectator. The star and protagonist of Chiranjeevi appears in an empty frame in close-up and slow motion, with a smile on his
face as the camera pans over him to reveal him. As the protagonist enters the story, the arrival of the star into the frame, physically filling it, not only indicates the arrival of the protagonist into the narrative, but it also serves as a cue for the gift of the attention to him. The arrival of the star-protagonist typically causes the story to come to a halt, whether or not the star-protagonist looks at the camera. The exchange of glances, the nomination process, and the construction of the spectator are all considered complete when the star protagonist kicks off the story, which by this point has established him as the narrative's driving force.

IV. REFORM, SELF-HELP AND CITIZENSHIP: THE CLASS-FILM

Baskaran (1981 and 1996) as well as Ashish Rajadhyaksha (1993) argue that patriotism gave film the respectability (as well as the ability to expand its profit margin) that it would have lacked if not for patriotism. The mythical, for example, was a certain method to draw local audiences' and disassociate them away from American and British films, but it was also promoted as patriotic cinema in the United States. The non-cooperation movement (1919-1922) helped to elevate the status of both theatre and film, which began to convey the message of nationalism as a result of the movement. In addition to its thematic issues, respectable cinema is distinguished by the type of audience that it attracts to its screenings. The debates over Telugu cinema have made it very obvious that the film industry is corrupt because its audience is either already depraved or perceived as being prone to corruption. By the 1980s, film critics and industry watchers (some of whom had been directly connected with the business) were united in their assessment that the medium had become 'degenerate, corrupt, and dangerous. There has been no other time in the history of Telugu film than after its encounter with nationalism in the 1930s when allegations of this magnitude were levelled against it. Every passing year brought the allegations closer and closer to the mid-nineties (if there is a turning point, I propose the AllulaMajaka dispute, which will be explored in the following chapter) as the accusations grew more serious with each passing year. It was during this time period that the mass-film emerged and consolidated its dominance over popular cinema, which reached its zenith in the early 1990s but has subsequently been in a state of decline since then. In a way, the history of the 'collapse' of Telugu cinema may be interpreted as the history of the mass-film industry in general. If the decade of the 1950s may be characterized as Telugu cinema's "golden period," it was in the latter half of the 1960s that "the decline" (in terms of quality) was officially declared to have started. In this time, crime flicks influenced by the James Bond series and other formulaic films dominated the box office. They signaled the beginning of the period of cabaret dances in Telugu cinema. Additionally, the obscene comedy tune' and the vamp' are both contributions from this time period. The upshot was that a small number of significant films were created throughout the 1960s, despite the fact that financial triumphs were totally erasing reality. (This level of agreement among observers and critics is such that Kannala moves the release of Nageswara Rao's DasaraBullodu [1970] forward by a few years in order to bolster his case.)

This clear allusion to fan culture (in both Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) appears to be a commentary on the shortcomings of that culture. Consequently, the cut-outs call attention to the 'original' while simultaneously delegitimizing it. However, it is not stardom itself that is being criticised, but rather the manner in which it is being used. The cut-outs are not absurd in and of themselves; in fact, their appearance is justified by Suryam/commitment Chiranjeevi's to change or advancement. This means that by extension, the class-film isn't bothered by celebrity in general or by the audience mimicking their favorite actress or actor. However, because the general public is likely to copy his actions, it is critical
that his job does not send the wrong impression. To put it another way, the goal is to harness celebrity for the benefit of society. In a similar vein, fan culture is acceptable as long as supporters contribute to society in a productive and beneficial way. The spectator of the class-film is the polar opposite of the fan-spectator of the mass-film in that s/he sees the latter as a target for reform while the former does not. The character of the fan is critical to the construction of the mass-film as a corrupting, even criminal, agent by the class-film because he symbolizes the hostility that exists within the movie hall and transfers it to the public sphere of cinema, the 'outside,' where it may be seen by the general public. This social criticism, or rather, the politicization of the public sphere, is mediated via and expressed as an attack on popular culture through the mass-narrative, film's which is inherently unstable due to the star-spectator relationship formed by the film's narrative. In the previous chapters, we saw how a common object such as a star in circulation became the focal point of a public sphere that broadened the reach of the debate on rights to include non-citizens as well. The result was the articulation of the language of lighting via organizations like as fans' groups that had not previously been regarded as "political." In the next chapter, I will go into further detail on how the mass-film is perceived by its critics as contributing to the current crises in the social and/or public spheres of society. Accordingly, the narrative of degeneration is concurrently generated across discursive venues such as class-film, mainstream media, and, as we will show later in this chapter, political pamphlets. Based on the idea that mainstream cinema accepts and, in fact, actively contributes to the politicization of the public realm of cinema, this narrative is formulated as follows: Finally, the fan inhabits a place that is homologous and coterminous with that of the rowdy, but he poses an immediate issue for the class-film since he is a disruptive presence within the cinema's confinement space. Reforming the fan, who is often shown as a lumpen, is therefore an essential element of the reformist mission of the class-film, and the genre makes an effort to bring about a significant shift in the star. With the recasting of its main character, the class film tries to alter the star-spectator connection, as well as fan culture, in order for the fan to lose his lumpenness both inside and outside of the movie hall.

V. CONCLUSION

The imagined multitudes (they are just a collective in the sense that a viewer believes they are) help actual viewers to comprehend-why there is obscenity in the picture, why it shouldn't be there-and connect with the film. Furthermore, the projection of the spectator into the theatre enables actual viewers to form into collectives by either completely dissociating themselves from it (as in the case of the film's critics) or by insisting on a gap that exists while acknowledging wide resemblances (recall Venkateswara Rao's assertion that he liked the film but was ashamed by the indecency in the film, for instance). 3 Another instance of the 'fourth gazing' among actual and simulated viewers is at play when the spectator, who has already been projected into the theatre, 'looks' at the simulated viewer in the audience. For example, during the obscene moment, Vijayalaxmi's extreme sensation of shame at being observed by an unknown guy in the crowd is a case in point. Because the spectator is a product of the story, it is hoped that banning the film or removing sections of it will prevent this appearance from being achieved. However, s/he is also a genuine human individual who is physically present in the hall.

REFERENCES


