Contours of Caste allegories in South Asian popular film ‘Bahubali’

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Abstract: Film exercises a greater impact over the minds of people, especially in a country like India where cinema has an indispensable role to be played. Film Sector in India seems to be more vibrant and eventually occupies significant space in the global arena by producing over One thousand films in more than dozen language every year. Indian Film industry seeks to have constant and rapid growth in the recent years. In India, the southern states are enormously responsible for film production and especially Tamil Nadu which has started film production in the pre independence period. Secularism is widely identical in Tamil Nadu also and Films made in this region is soberly prone to community and caste identity for many decades, which systematically symbolize culture and community to the minds of people. So it would be really inappropriate if there is no research study proposed in this realm. The researcher clearly intends to make a qualitative analysis on the indulgence of Caste and community in the regional Films. The film taken for analysis is Baahubali, the epic historical film and the highest grossing film of the year 2015.

Key words: Films, Caste Reference, Baahubali, Inequality, democracy

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Cinema: Perianayagam Jesudoss his research article titled Tamil Cinema in the journal Communication Research Trends, 2009 discussed on the broader perspective of films as, Cinema as a popular medium of entertainment is now more than a century old. Comparatively only recently has society realized cinema’s great potential as an instrument of entertainment, instruction, motivation, and construction. Developing countries in their effort to accelerate the processes of economic and social change have taken this popular medium as their best means of supplementing or replacing the traditional communication forms. Even with the arrival of radio and television, satellite and Internet communication, the crucial role of cinema and its myriad possibilities in social change and development have still to be explored (Hopkinson, 1971, p. 5). The whole world identifies with the cinema and thus it becomes a universal medium. The truth is that the global community is aware of and accepts the influence and impact of cinema on the society (Subramanian, 1990, p. 6).

B. Impact of Cinema: Cinema has been one of the greatest influences in our modern life, and it’s also a form of art, the seventh art along with photography, architecture, literature, play, painting and music. It’s the combination of technology, business, entertainment and aesthetics, each and everything of these four has important role in present day world and it’s also visible in the variation of its forms, Film is technology (picture taken in the celluloid camera and editing), movie is the business and entertainment, and cinema is the aesthetics. Cinema, popular or parallel, a visual art of story-telling with rich inputs of music, screenplay, cast and script, mirrors the contemporary society in which it functions. From emotional dramas to candy-floss romances to action-thrillers, cinema derives its sustenance, ideas and imaginations from its surroundings. The images cinema creates, surreal or tangled wave of deceit, need to be in sync with societal aspirations and basic urge of humanity to recreate and have fun and entertainment. In its long journey of more than a century, cinema has transformed itself from being a taboo and absolute no-no to a virtual way of life. Social dynamics have always regulated the content of cinema. For the globalization around the world media and art has opened throughout the earth. Now it’s possible to get an American movie today in Bangladesh which has released there yesterday. By this availability trends about thinking and total lifestyle has changed a lot. (Istiak Mahmood, 2013)
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Cinema in India:
According to Arjun Mandaiker, The Hindi movie industry based in Mumbai, popularly known as ‘Bollywood’, has influenced daily life and culture in India for decades now. In fact, movies are the mainstay of entertainment and almost a religion in the nation. Attend any Indian wedding and you will find the ladies attired in the finest garments modelled after Bollywood fashion and revelers dancing to throbbing hit songs during the ‘baraat’. Bollywood has for long exerted a deep influence on popular Indian fashion. Any outfit adorned by an actor or actress in a hit movie immediately becomes a prime sartorial trend for tailors to reproduce.

B. Cinema in Tamil Nadu:
Perianayagam Jesudoss, 2009 argues that Cinema going in Tamil Nadu depicts people from all walks of life and their problems concerning need and hunger. Need is that which can be met by a specific and unchanging object. As for example hunger may be satisfied by food only. Cinema too meets specific needs of the society. The producers and their productions are justified by the demand of social needs. While the other sectors of society like the economy and politics have often failed to meet the basic material needs of the masses, the cinema industry has succeeded in effectively meeting the demands that are placed on it. These basic needs of the masses are very important. People are hungry and the commercial cinema is the best food for them (Prasad, 1998, p. 108). Hunger is evoked by the failure of the cultural structures (“mother,” “home,” “man,” family, economy) that presumably fulfill or entirely circumvent women’s needs (Hastie, 2007, p.299; Youngblood, 1970, p. 112). Many people especially those who are deprived, exploited, and poor in society seek to find solutions for many of their needs that spring from their uncomfortable situation in society, and cinema is an easily accessible source to which they turn for relief if not solutions. From the perspective of cinema, the need or hunger is at the heart of all basic human problems.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the various denotations and connotation elements of shots referring to the representation of lower castes, caste difference, caste dominance in film Baahubali
- To analyze the construction of different types of dialects (dialogues) in the film which metaphors to caste identities, caste difference, caste dominance, caste discrimination using linguistic structuralism.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The researcher has envisioned to analyse different shots in film Baahubali which carries caste related identities. Also the researcher employs linguistic analysis to study different dialects in the film to understand and examine the reference caste metaphors.

Linguistic Analysis:
Linguistics is the scientific study of language, and is a close part of semiotic analysis. Structural linguistics is an approach to linguistics introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure. Linguistic analysis is further categorized into i) semantic ii) pragmatic

Semantics is primarily linguistic and focusses on the relationship between the signifiers and their denotations. Pragmatics is a sub field of linguistics and semiotics that studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning.

A. THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

Film narrative theory:
Film narrative theory emerged from the concept of narratology which refers to both the theory and the study of narrative and narrative structure. Modern narratology begun with Russian formalist, Vladimir Propp (Morphology of Folktales, 1928). Film narrative theory seeks to uncover the apparently “motivated” and “natural” relationship between the signer and the story-world in order to reveal the deeper system of cultural associations and relationships that are expressed through narrative form.

V. ANALYSIS INTERPRETATIONANDFINDINGS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic I</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baahubali (kid) : Kattapa enakum oru vai kudu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kattapa       : Ilavarasae (shocked and stands up)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baahubali (kid) : Yenezhumuthu vittergal amarungal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kattapa       : Ilavarasae neengal ingu vanthathae thavar , engalodu sernthu utharuvathu Athai vida thavaru</td>
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<td>Baahubali (kid) : Ilichai saapital thavaru enna</td>
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Pragmatic I : Analysing the context pragmatically, “Kattapa enakum oru vai kudu”, Kattapa is the name of the Commander in Chief of the Army… the kid Bahubali calls the commander in chief with his name Kattapa, where in Tamil Nadu calling an elderly person by their name is commonly perceived to be disrespectful. The word enakum which means me too, for me in colloquial Tamil. The phrase “oru vai kudu” in Tamil which means “grab me a bite”. The word “Illavarase” which means Royal Prince. The commander in chief is shocked and stands up in response to hearing kid Bahubali’s words. The phrase “Yenezhunthu vittergal” which means why you stood up… and amarungal denotes “sit down”. The context pragmatically describes the royal prince intended to have food with Kattapa and intentionally asks for a bite. The shocking response of the word “Illavarase” from Kattapa denotes that he is shocked or surprised by the visit of the royal prince and the kid Bahubali, asks Kattapa and his soldiers to sit down which shows the soldiers’ and the commander are very much obedient or respectful or submissive to the kid Bahubali, who belongs to the royal dynasty. The phrase “Illavarase neengal ingu vanthathae thavaru” pragmatically denotes illavarase means royal prince, neengal means you, calling a person with respect and ingu means here, varuvathe thavaru means coming itself isn’t right which means Kattapa with respect or obedience or submissionness says to the kid Bahubali that the royal prince is not supposed to enter or engage or acquire with the soldiers. The sentence “engalodu sernthu utkaruvathu Athai vida thavaru” explains engalodu in colloquial Tamil means with us, sernthu uckkaruvathu means to sit together, athai vida thavaru means it is twice a mistake where this context clarifies it is not right for the royal prince to sit together with the soldiers and acquire with them. The sentence “Ithai saapital thavaru enna” explains what is wrong in eating this? Where the kid Bahubali asks the commander in chief Kattapa what is the mistake in having his food. The sentence “Thavaru enna vendru ungalukke theriyum ; Neegal Rajakudumbam, Naangal Keezh Jaathi” explains the word thavuru in Tamil means mistake and enna vendru engulukke theriyum means you know what it means. This explains the royal prince will be aware of the mistake and the mistake here refers to entering into the place of soldiers’, sitting together with soldiers, talking with the soldiers and eating with the soldiers and the kid Bahubali after knowing all these factors as a mistake intentionally does this. The phrase “Neegal Rajakudumbam, Naangal Keezh Jaathi” denotes neengal rajakudumbam which means kings’ family or royal dynasty or regal society or rich family or high class. The word keezh jaathi explains the word keezh in colloquial Tamil means low and jaathi means caste, combinedly describes low caste. So, the pragmatic analysis of the entire context, even the kid belonging to a royal family or royal dynasty or kings’ family or high society are presumed not to enter into the places of soldiers’ and acquaint with the soldiers or dine with the soldiers. The commander in chief Kattapa who is considered as the chief of the soldiers, represents himself as lower caste which denotes that the entire group of soldiers would also belong to the community of their chief Kattapa and the hesitance and emotions of Kattapa explains that the royal community or high social order people or high class are superior to the lower caste and the royal class will not acquaint with the lower class people. The concept of untouchability or untouchables is subtly identical under the linguistic components analysed pragmatically.

Semantic II 

| Baahubali: | En thaayaiyum, thai naataiyum, entha pagadaiku piranthavanum  
|            | thoda mudiyathu, endru ethirkalai kizhithu, senkuruthi kudithu  
| Arivika   | pogiraen!!........  

| Soldiers : | Silence (highly motivated and ferocious)  

Pragmatic II : On analysing the context ‘En thaayaiyum, thai naataiyum, entha pagadaiku piranthavanum, thoda mudiyathu’ were the word En thaayaiyum which in colloquial Tamil means my mother and en thai naataiyum which denotes my mother land or my mother country or my country. The word entha in Tamil means which or who, the word Pagadai means dice or caste. Pagadai has common meaning as dice also it refers to a caste in Tamil Nadu.  

On interpreting this word, as per Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950 at PART XVI. in the Tamil Nadu category , the 48th case is Pagadai which is deemed as scheduled caste. Pagadai is officially mentioned as Scheduled caste in Tamil Nadu as per Scheduled caste order 1950 by Constitution of India and Pagadai also called as Sakkiliar or Chakkiliiyar or Arunthathiyar which is considered to be one of the most marginalized social groups or castes from Tamil Nadu. 

Analysing the context ‘pagadaiku piranthavanum thoda mudiyathu’, were the word ‘piranthavanum’ in tamil means born to and the word ‘thodamudiyathu’ means could never touch and combine it explains that anyone born from the pagadai (dice) could never touch or anyone born from the caste Pagadai could never touch. 

The sentence ‘endru ethirkalai kizhithu, senkuruthi kudithu, Arivika pogiraen’ pragmatically means the word ‘ethirkalai’ in tamil means opponents of enemy , the word ‘kizhithu’ means tore apart or kill brutally and the word ‘senkurithi’ in tamil means red blood and ‘kudithu’ in colloquial tamil means drink and ‘arivika’ means announce and ‘pogiren’ mean going to . The context interprets to strong dimension of meaning were the
protagonist says ‘No one born from or as Pagadai can touch my mother and mother country and I am going to announce this by tearing and drinking their blood the enemies’

The magnitude of the dialect (dialogue) is intense that it interprets two dimension of meaning were anyone born from the loss of Pagadai (dice game) or anyone born from the community or caste of Pagadai could never touch the protagonist mother or mother country. The protagonist belongs to Royal dynasty or higher class is noticeable and the enemy of this royal family or dynasty or class or society is portrayed as people born from the loss of game Pagadai or People born in the caste of Pagadai is finely indistinguishable . Also the subtle attempt to portray or represent or characterise the Schedule caste or lower caste or Dalit is elusively identical

VI. CONCLUSION

Cinema being one of the integral part of communication from its origin. Films steadily perforates the knowledge, perception and awareness level of people, where it travels much deeper emotionally and psychologically into the minds of the audience. In this study, the imageries of subaltern castes or Dalits and upper castes or dominant groups is portrayed subtilety, directly and dominantly in most of the linguistic elements (dialogues or discourse or conversation) analyzed through semantics and pragmatics. According to researcher Mey, 2001 “pragmatics studies, the use of language in human communication as determined by the condition of the society…” As Theodore Baskaran rightly argues, the impact of Tamil cinema on its socio-cultural factors is phenomenal and film is not just viewed as films it is much more and in connection to that as per Udhav Naig, Deepa Ramakrishnan, 2015 A theatre screening the film Baahubali in Madurai was attacked with petrol bombs because a line used in the film was perceived as an insulting reference by a sub-caste of the Dalit community. In coherance to that films are so impactful that it might kindles violence in the society or community or culture, if a portrayal or depictions or imageries is subjected to humiliation or defamation or discrimination to any group in society. Through analysis it is understands that there are undistinguishable linguist components (dialogue, narrations) , iconographic elements and different indications of signs and symbols were the caste identification of the lower caste or subaltern or Dalit is so surreptitiously attempted to portray and the caste discrimination and dominance between Royal class, high class and lower caste or subaltern is predominantly identical with the conventional used of words in most of linguistic elements went through the analysis. The so called popular cinema or mainstream films of Tamil Nadu are being the dominant factor influencing the socio, cultural and political aspect most of the times, also Films made in this region is soberly prone to community and caste identity for many decades, that systematically symbolize culture and castetism to the minds of people, which serves to be really menace to the democratic nature of the system.

VII. REFERENCES