

Critique

**Anustup Roy**

***Blood of Condor (1969)***

An indigenous Bolivian community is fooled. In the name of giving medical care, the American agency *Cuerpo del Progreso* ("Progress Corps") secretly sterilised local women. The film begins with Ignacio lamenting over the fact that his wife is unable to bear his three children. The women becoming barren is a general scenario in the village due to the sterilisation by the Progressive Corps. The Bolivians who protest against the foreign agency are rounded up and shot by the authorities. And Ignacio, the native leader of the community gets injured in these protests and is taken to La Paz, the capital. He lives with his brother Sixto in La Paz who helps him get medical help. Sixto desperately seeks medical care for his brother, but due to lack of money, Ignacio dies.

The film shows certain situations elaborately like the fact that life is so different in the countryside and in the capital. Sixto is ashamed of his Amer-Indian identity in the city. Even when he looks out for help, the influential people are too reluctant about them though they are the real natives of the land. Influential people are generally outsiders and settlers, having apathy towards the Amer-Indians. At the end of the film, Sixto is seen to have returned to his native place, to his roots, to take up his brother's unfinished act.

The lives of the brothers are distinct from one another. One stays in the city, completely muddled up in the individualistic approach of the West, though having faith in his community. Ignacio lives with his people. He is the leader of the people. Paulina stuck in the middle of these two gets surprised in a scene. She asks her brother-in-law as they are having food, why aren't they habituated to offering it to nature first? Sixto replies that no one obeys it here. Paulina also quickly adapts to it. The use of Cocoa is also significant in the scenes. They use cocoa leaves for their rituals. They chew it while their discussions are running, signifying their traditionalist habits.

In a sequence, Sixto is sent to a doctor in search of blood. He is kept waiting at his home and then taken to the banquet by his wife where the doctor has organised an event. Sixto is left in the car. They aren't allowed on such occasions. He wonders about the life of influential people. A shot of people playing tennis and a swimming pool is shown, from his point of view. In the meantime, the audience is introduced to the specificities of the seminar, regarding the

welcoming of four new doctors in the healthcare service. It's ironic, as they go on to a large extent to boast about an efficient healthcare facility but can't arrange blood for a dying person. Sixto loses patience and invades the banquet, but to learn that his brother died. The scene in the hospital corridor is dramatic. A nun and Sixto are shown via inter-cuts. The black veil of the Nun possibly signifies death! This sequence portrays the paradoxical condition of society. The film speaks about the indigenous people of Bolivia. Jorge Sanjines and his Ukamau collective were formed to show their struggles. The film has a realistic approach. It is shot mostly outdoors, with many non-actors, for example, the actor portraying Paulina is a mine worker. Even indoor shots were filmed in real locations with minimal crew. The interesting structure of the film is, that it includes a parallel flashback: Peace Corps arrive in the mountain village, bringing clothes, and medicine. In reality, a forced, covert sterilization program is in operation. The final shot of the film is of upraised rifles, which are freeze-framed; an undoubted call to armed rebellion against the imperialist aggressors.

The film's narrative had a 'to and fro' movement which wasn't familiar to the audience. Flashback sequences juxtaposed with cross-cutting scenes were difficult to understand for native viewers. For instance, Sixto wanders around La Paz in order to raise money for his brother's treatment, which is juxtaposed with the flashback of Ignacio. Jorge Sanjines, and his collective, 'failed' formally with their narrative structure. They did succeed in other formal ways, of communicating the topic. They abandoned this form of narration in later films and adopted a simpler form. As an immediate effect, the film was banned to protect international diplomacy with the United States. But another remarkable thing took place. The Peace Corps was sent away from Bolivia

### References:

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