

Critique

Utpal Datta

Anuroop



Anuroop, Bengali, 55 mins, Kankana Chakravarty

An aged stage-play director lives alone in a small flat, faded with a downward economic state. His theatre business is passing the lowest ever phase; the theatre hall where he used to stage plays is on sale. Even his wall clock has stopped. The camera slowly pans from right to left; the next scene starts with the same flow of panning; from right to left, a depressed young girl is drawing on a canvas, looks dissatisfied with the work and wants to destroy the canvas out of anger. The 55-minute film 'Anuroop' starts like this.

Two characters of different ages, with both having various problems. Both are far from their respective families and aren't expressing much in the film, but an unseen bonding between the characters becomes apparent. The lyrical panning shot helped in creating this bondage. This panning technique is a mere technical work, but the aesthetic contribution associated with the film's spirit announces the director's skill and sensitivity. The film's opening sequence features this girl sleeping on the bed, frighteningly dreaming of a theatre hall. Ignoring the

ringing phone, she tried to sleep, pushing her face on the pillow. This thirty-two-second scene shows that drama-theatre halls etc., will play a vital role in the film, and the girl is disturbed and anxious by this.

The film's first shot shows a man filling a hip flask with alcohol. He is the director of the theatre. He refuses to direct a play for unknown reasons, even after repeated requests by the producer. His conversation with one of his junior team members reveals his plan to sell the theatre hall.

The girl is his daughter, who fled from her father's theatre group six years ago, and has lived a lonely life. Her mother died in a hospital in the negligence of her director-father. Another woman has replaced his mother, whom she hasn't accepted, and so has left her father. The girl works in a company, and that company was supposed to produce the production. The girl reached the theatre team to ensure the show was a success.

She takes over the responsibility of the play from the director, who did not want to direct the play because of his old stubbornness. His daughter had to take responsibility. The girl fled while the same play was taking place six years ago, and after six years, the gap between the father and the daughter disappears through the re-staging of the same play. The girl is similar to her father in passion, stubbornness, and passion for art. This passion can flow from father to child, from one generation to another. Here the writer-director says that this passion will flow no matter how much space there is, no matter how much you want to deny it.

The director, Kankana Chakravarty, narrated this story in the language of film- this narrative style is the film's major strength. After providing little information with a minimum dialogue in the first few scenes, the director has attained her narrative style. She constructed the class with a merger of images, metaphors, blending of different colours, words, camera angles, and movement to reflect the soul of the philosophy of the writer-director. The man changed the dead battery of the clock with a new one. The clock breaks the room's silence and gives life to the tired room; the tall man hugging the clock in his chest tries to find something in the almirah. Maybe he was searching for some memories of the days he left. The man is wearing a white shirt at home, but he was in a blue shirt while going out with the promoter. The colours of the shirts played a vital role in creating the mood of the scenes and the character.

Similarly, for the girl, the director is the first to use red, and towards the end, the colour has changed to a heavier tone as the character moves forward to exceed the level of realisation. The screams of women from the background added dimensions to the visual experience. The tick-tick sound of the clock also makes the scene more visual and intensifies the stiffness of the scene. These are two randomly picked examples. The director visualised the executed the film in this narrative style. This planned and balanced pace of the film allows the feeling that the director has shot the film only after proper and detailed paperwork. This approach signifies that the director has built up their narrative style with dedication and imagination, fresh and vibrant. Though the basic

narrative pattern is traditional, the use of minute ornaments of film language coherent with the director's philosophy reflects the director's actual thought process.

From the very first scene, a kind of excitement and anxiety surrounds the film. The characters and their physical spaces of existence are narrow in size. This small space metaphorically represented the confined mind spaces of both characters. The camera beautifully captured the confined environment of the rooms. The stage play's presence, importance, and symbolic meaning in the film are almost at par with the central characters. This stage is the constant witness to the life of the two main characters, and the director composed the scenes of the stage play in a static frame to visualise the stiffness and stubbornness of the significant characters. The camera movement was in line with the speed and appeal of the scene of the father and daughter's conversation. In the beginning, the camera looked at them and gradually changed its angle and the content. The camera captures the character from the side and slowly comes to the front at the ultimate moment.

The writer-director knows the strengths and qualities of the film medium. Her priority is visuals, and the supporting catalyst is dialogue. Dialogues are brief and meaningful, with over one dimension to a possible extent. This restraint is genuinely commendable. Yet more visuals could have supported the main reason for the father and daughter conflict. Undoubtedly, the narrative focused more on reactions than actions and was written with a crafty hand.

But the supporting characters, especially the character of the lady in the father's life, need to be more explicit. The amount of dialogue in the film is minimum in comparison. But the director used more conversations to establish this character. More discussion looks like one of the significant weak areas of the narrative. Similarly, the woman's position between the father and daughter is also less explained by visuals.

The film has less dialogue on the lips of the character. The director has used 'sub-text' instead of direct events to express and develop the essence. The actor has to contribute a lot to such narratives. Veteran actor Sabyasachi Chakraborty has done this responsibility well as he plays the father of the film. Especially while acting with expression only in the non-dialogue part, he is grumpy and arrogant, expressing the body gesture correctly. Director Konkana Chakraborty, as the daughter, beautifully covers the character with sadness and the heat of the fire burning inside the mind. The director's work is quite worrying, yet Konkana's ability not to express that anxiety in her performance is another example of her acting skills.

The film's first scene begins with liquor; this is his reason for vitality. At the film's end, the girl took the hip flask from his hand. The girl's gesture is strong, but on the contrary, Sabyasachi Chakraborty's performance did not respond to the surprise of the unexpected incident. The director had an intelligent plan to create scenes about the hip flask. Still, veteran and competent actors like Sabyasachi Chakraborty did not take advantage of taking those moments to more incredible excitement. The performance starring other actors in the film is also good, in tune

with the film's tone. The music and editing of the film - both these organs have helped the director build her voice.

The uncertainty made the exterior of the climax of the film of the play's staging. The climax scene could have been more visual instead of merely explaining the successful stage of the play with a hint. After the show was over, in the scene where the cast greeted the packed house audience, those audiences in the out of focus does not hugely reveal the play's success. A scene of loneliness followed this scene, and to make this tone deeper, the previous scene needed to be more spectacular.

Both father and daughter have similarities in significant points. Both are stubborn and lonely and do not want to break down in the war of life. The gap between the two grew because they did not openly communicate. The film has turned into a social story as it speaks about minimising the gap between two generations.

On the other hand, the film will also benefit film school students as an example of the focus shown in the preparation and production. This competent writing is also another feather in the cap of Konkana.

Mr. Utpal Datta is a film-critic and film-maker, presently working as the Dean of the Performing Arts Programme at Assam Downtown University, Guwahati.