

Article

Anirban Sadhu

Films, Not on Film - Indian Post Millennial Cinema

I started searching the meaning of Post Millennialism and I find its epistemological meaning from some Biblical references.

Postmillennialism was a dominant theological belief among American Protestants who promoted reform movements in the 19th and 20th centuries such as abolitionism and the Social Gospel.

Postmillennialism has become one of the key tenets of a movement known as Christian Reconstructionism. It has been criticized by 20th century religious conservatives as an attempt to immanentize the Eschanton.

But all those are some classical definition of that term of Millennialism.

It has no connection with Cinema. Today, to address our Cinema we will go with these classical phenomena in a more tactile way to be entertained and try to transcend the classical meanings of each term with modern aspects.

Post Millennialism is a kind of cultural engagement. It is a transformationist approach to culture.

Fallen Culture must not only be challenged by the Gospel and God's words.

And now a day it's come from the God to more and more of People's participation.

Movies are a part of Popular Culture. We know today about the power of a story with the power of a movie and how does it affect our culture.

And to do so we must be able to discern critique and rebut the fallen world views presented today by movies.

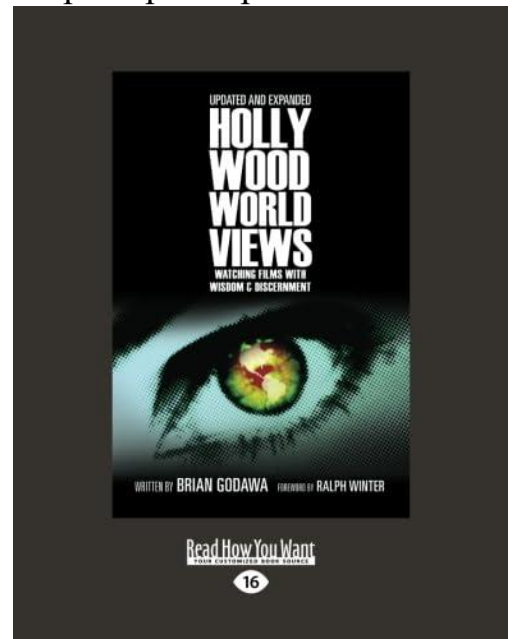
A reference book in this context is Brian Godawa's "*Hollywood, World Views: Watching Movies with Wisdom and Discernment.*"

And through the classical meanings of Post Millennialism are the Places of Redemption and a spiritual discipline requiring for watching movies.

But we are fallen as per Gospel when we watch movies.

Because from its start, Movies are Magics. Art artifices.

We create Art with artifacts. Art is artificial. And thus being with art means being with an artificial and thus with a fallen culture.

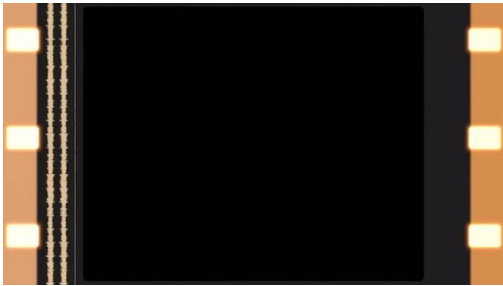


Whether we watch a movie, we celebrate the Falses, The Untruths, the humanly created artificial Worlds, and the Worlds of Dreams.

In this article we will be with a current part of a culture, evolves 128 years earlier, traveled with Capital and created a different World which fills us with some possibilities in true senses.

It is the World of Cinema.

Cinema is synonymous with Film. But we all know Film is the name of a medium. It is transparent celluloid strips coated with silver halide photo sensitive layers. And we blow up the images recorded on it after developing it on separate celluloid transparent strips when we project them through light on screens. And we did it for last 100 years. Christopher Nolan is making his Cinemas on Celluloid Films only even today. Thus, the subject called Cinema gained its generic name as the name of the medium on which it has been recorded, The Film.



A gate of a film as married print



Film roll, as the medium

And we arranged the marriage between two types of Human communication i.e. Audio and Visual through this tool of 20th Century, which saved the God. Today, God is synonymous with Capital. Cinema saved Capital in 1929 from its great depression in economy.

And our films run with their films, means Indian Cinematic Culture rolls with Western Cinematic Culture, hand in hand from the first day of its birth. It is a unique phenomenon compare to other industrial advancements.

But Post Millennial Movies are much more of it.

And it triggered me to nomenclature this article, as Films, not on Film. It means today's Cinemas are not made on films, mostly. We entered in Digital Era with this Millennium; an era started in 2000 and crossed its 25 years as of today.

Here I like to restrict my edges of communications temporarily in the era of post 2000 Cinemas.

Because I started working as a cinematographer, as a cameraman, as a recordist, as a visualizer after 2000. I think it may justify my words as I am a worker in this World of Cinema in this modern age and I am wondering for last 20 years with newer and newer technological advancements in the World of visualization.

I learned Cinematography on an Arri 2C camera filled with 16 mm Films and today I use an Arri Alexa of 16 bit recording codec.



Arri 2C Film Camera



Arri Alexa Digital Camera

On the other hand this Millennium is the executional area of “Studies”. Studies such as Film Studies, Gender Studies, Woman Studies, Environmental Studies started their journey from Mid 70s of last century as epistemological discipline in World of Education. Last left block was organized by the students of Sorbonne University in France in 1968, against, The Gaulle, the then President of France. All those left block intellectual people come more and more into epistemological issues in 70s. Anglo American School started its journey in mid 70s with Gender as an issue, and it opened the paths of research and thinking in the lights of post structural ways with all those disciplines of Studies. Schools for those kinds of Studies started their journey in 80s of last century and they have become important areas of thinking and research in the Universities and in the forums of discussion from 1990. We all know that intellectuals around the World have come together and started their major contribution in these Studies from 90s of last century.

Post Millennial Studies also have come under major schools from 2000. And it included all kinds of intellectual expressions in the fields of literature, music, drama and film, majorly within their courses.

The subjects got their importance under post millennial studies like Gender Studies, Environmental Studies, Film Studies, Comparative Literature Studies etc.

We know that Rainbow Movement for LGBTQ people started in 1972 in Colorado and in many Cities of the United States, in some places around jungles and people started their major gathering for peace, harmonies, respectful behavior with each other, equal rights and with a stand of counter capitalism. State powers were forced to address them. Important and effective people in every fields from the societies around the World started gathering with those movements.

And from here I like to come to our topic directly within Indian diaspora.

LGBTQ people fought a battle in Supreme Court of India for their rights and owned their rights in a verdict by Delhi High Court in 2008 for the first time. It goes with their rights in multiple shades throughout the last decades and we got many films addressing the issues.

My brother Nikkhil by Onir in 2005, *Margaritta with a Straw* by Shonali Bose in 2014, *Aligarh* by Hansal Mehta in 2016 and *Kapoor and Sons* by Karan Johar in 2016 are some examples of these kinds of expressions in fiction category of films.

Onir or Anirban Dhar, the '69 born director started playing his hammer from 2001 with “Rahul”, “Daman”, “A victim of Marital Violence”, “Bhoot”, “Bas Ek Pal”, “I Am” in 2011 and 2022 he made “Pine Cone”.

I watched *Pine Cone* in American High Commission in New Delhi last year with Keshav Suri, owner of the Leela Group of Hotels and a strong supporter of this LGBTQ movement.

And I have experienced the vibrant protest of the LGBTQ people in New Delhi by 2018.

Despite the setback, when Supreme Court reversed the statement of Delhi High Court in 2013, several curative petitions were filed in the Supreme Court asking for this case to be reconsidered. While this was happening in 2016, five individuals from LGBTQIA community-renowned Bharatnatyam dancer Navtej Singh Johar, restaurateurs Ritu Dalmia and Ayesha Kapur, hotelier Aman Nath and media person Sunil Mehra-filed a fresh writ petition. Their goal was to scrap Section 377 IPC, specifically in cases where it criminalized consensual sex between same-sex individuals. The fruits of this petition would be seen two years later in 2018.

I have seen people are dancing, protesting and film making in Bhagwandas Road, Tilak Marg and Mathura Road and the way people are using their film making tools were new, unique and innovative.

As an example I saw one placed his I-Phone in front of the giant mirror used for road safety in the crossing of Bhagwandas Road and Tilak Marg in India Gate Circle and started capture videos with 50% of his screen of that huge wide angle vision and 50% with of real normal angle vision. Means, a single frame with two angles of views at a same time and within a single real video. For me it was so unique and so simple at a time. I got mesmerized.

May I call this visual effect experimentation as a Post Millennial Camera!

Next I like to come to an equally important Post Millennial Cinema genre of environmental studies.

Farida Pacha made a documentary named, “*My name is Salt*” in 2013 and it breaks the barrier between fiction and nonfiction.

Kartiki Gonsalves’s documentary named, “*Elephant Whisperers*” in 2022 won the Academy award in this course.

And I must say of the documentary cinema (a true post millennial form) of Shaunak Sen in the same year named, “*All that Breathes*”.

Shaunak and his companions made this film around Wazirabad Waste Ground and Wazirabad Colony in New Delhi for four years of effort and what a brilliant film it is.

All those cinemas are a form of expression which can’t be categories as pure fiction or pure documentary. Post millennial directors weaved their narration in a new form of expression which caters sense of ‘true’ as pure truth though they are made artistically.

Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidwani produced the “*Fukrey*” series of Fictions and in its 2023 version of “*Fukrey 3*”, directed by Mrighdeep Singh Lamba, we see the great water tanker scene in Delhi which shook the World.



“*The archies*”, which was released on an Over the Top (OTT) streaming platform in November 2023 was an widely talked about film, amid all the dancing, singing and romance, the protagonists were seen fighting with authorities to save ‘a park’ in their locality.

Another box office successful film, “*Kedarnath*” by Abhishek Kapoor, released in 2018 depicted the impact of the 2013 flash flood in Uttarakhand, on the lives and livelihoods of people and on the devastation of biodiversity.

The action packed film “*Lakadbagha*” by Victor Mukherjee released in January 2023 deals with the rescue of a Hyena from wildlife trafficking.

“*Sherdil: The Pilbhit Saga*” by Srijit Mukherjee, a 2022 film release, was a part of the trend of environmental narratives, too. In this film, a Sarpanch of a community goes to the forest to get killed by a tiger to gain a state compensation.

And all those films were inspired by some true events, some true facts relating environmental issues.

Before this Post Millennial era, Cinema (Fictions) were made with climate as an issue like ‘*Mother India*’, ‘*Pather Panchali*’ and the one of the biggest commercial hits of 1971, ‘*Hathi Mera Saathi*’. At that time these films were viewed solely from a social perspective.

But in this era of Post Millennial Cinema many Indian Films have been released in which serious efforts have been made to portray the impact of the changing environment, on screen.

These include

Kadvi Hawa-2017-discusses draught

Kaun Kitna Pani Me-2015-depicts the water shortage problem

Iraada-2017-that touches upon the issue of underground water getting contaminated because of factories

Jal-2013-highlighted the water crisis in Kachchh

Sherni-2021-that spotlights the human-wildlife conflicts.

Another issue I must say under Post Millennial Cinema is the studies driven cinemas for Human Rights. It will include the issues against racial discrimination, Dalit's rights and Fights for Equality.

The film "*Joram*" that was released in December 2023 highlighted the very contemporary, "Nature versus Development" issue. While it was critically acclaimed, it didn't have commercial success. The film could not even recover its costs.

While talking about the challenges in making films like '*Joram*', director Debashish Makhija told, "This has been happening for Years. By and large, the audience is neither ready, nor very keen to watch such films. We make these films because we want to..." He says that

both serious and entertainment-oriented films can play an important role in taking to the public if those various environment-related issues that the country is facing now.

Such stories, while jostling for space in theatres, are getting the support of OTT



platforms. An Indian Climate fiction series, "*The Jengaburu Curse*", which was released on an OTT platform last year and shows the impact of mining on humans and nature. Nila Madhab Panda, the director of this series and the creator of more than 70 films, documentaries and short films on social and environmental topics, told, "When matters related to climate change appear in newspapers or are shown in documentaries, people do not take them seriously. People tend to think that it is something that is not affecting them, it is impacting other people. So, I thought that if I made a climate fiction, it would have a better impact".

Post Millennial Cinema says against oppressive community rights as in appear to be entering a new age of Dalit representation, agency and self-assertion-at least in the emerging and imagined India of New Dalit Cinema. Directors like Nagraj Manjule, Debashish Makhija, Neeraj Ghyawan who come up and started saying against the violence on Dalit's by Major Casts of India in different manner. Even Box Office is addressing these issues and we have seen the same "Natthu" in recent King Khan release of "*Jawan*" by director Atlee and Red Chilies entertainment. In 2010 a film shook the silver screen named "*Piplee Live*" by director Anusha Rizvi and its main protagonist Natthu played by actor, Omkar Das Manikpuri. After 14 years his appearance in a block blaster and carrying the same role in reality thrives me to salute this tendency.

Violence in these films serves its function not only as a response to majoritarian, dominant caste violence inflicted upon Dalits but as an instrument of retributive justice and the

catharsis it offers. In most of these films, the Dalit protagonists redeem themselves not as heroes, but as anti-heroes scarred by the Brahminical power structure, which they aim to and often succeed in subverting in these cinematic imaginations of Dalit power.

Post Millennial Films carries cultural pluralism in India. The impetus for this change came from the regional film industry, especially the Marathi and Tamil Cinema that offered exceptionally brilliant artwork that not only caters to the interests and concerns of the marginalized social groups but also offers quality entertainment to the general audience.

Nagraj Manjule's, "*Fandry*"-2013, "*Sairat*"-2016 and "*Naal*"-2018 set an impressive example of films that are socially sensitive and commercially successful. Later Marathi films like *Uchlya*-2015, *Jayanti*-2021, *Kasturi*-2019, *Zollywood*-2022 etc., kept the momentum on, building a crucial dialogue on cinema's responsibility in offering socially responsible films.

This success was further cultivated creatively by new filmmakers, especially Mari Selvaraj (*Karnan*, 2021 and *Periyerum*, 2018) and Vtrimaran (*Auran*, 2019 and *Veduthalai*, 2023), substantiating the arrival of 'Dalit Genre' in Indian Cinema. By offering nuanced Dalit characters bestowed with mainstream heroic credentials (like Rajnikant's character in *Kabali*, Dhanush in *Karnan* and Udhayanidhi in *Maamannan*), it breaks the conventional 'Victim' stereotype attached to the representation of Dalit characters on screen.

In these ways, diverse topics like surrogacy (*Mimi*), live-in-relationships (*Ok Jaanu*), Police comedy drama (*Kathaal*), life of migration workers (*Ayothi*) etc. are some interesting characteristics that carry with these Post Millennial cineams.

Some filmmakers even go the extra miles to direct controversial subjects like religious and political drama (*Laal Saalaam*).

New genres such as dark comedy (*Jailer*) and dark romance (*Haseea Dilrooba*) are sprouting up.

Thappad (2021) by Anubhav Sinha is a movie against gender atrocities and this film circles round an issue which turns dangerous in our cow belt.

Bheed (2023) again by Anubhav Sinha is a movie says an entirely post millennial issue after Lock down during Covid Pandemic in 2020 which is interstate migration on foot. It is entirely an issue that emerges from the migrant workers of our country.

We know people are being uprooted from their own land for diverse needs of employment are issues of this new millennium. Studies are yet to come on this but today's cinemas are addressing these issues in a serious note.

These are the trends of Post Millennial Cinema of India and I think with those examples I can establish a category with specific kinds of cinemas under this genre.

Now let us look into some technical aspects of this media. As a cinematographer of this era I like to highlight in some changes in techniques that is also very much Post Millennial.

In a traditional way of film making one have to hire, pre-production crews, have to hire shooting equipments and to shoot for some days and to gather rushes...next comes the post production part...one need to hire a post-production studio to process the rushes and to come up with a print of working footages...then he/she needs an editor to edit the film in an edit

suit with dubbed audios and with folly sounds and other sound effects...finally after graphical works and certification process he/she needs a distribution partner to show, his/her work to the audience. It was pre millennial common task for pan international makers.

But just after 2005 it changes. Now we can shoot, edit and distribute even our films just by using our smart phones. Color correction is a complex term till 2020 which needs a professional monitor to observe and correct the true colors. After the 9th version of the software, The Vinci Resolve, we are working on CC from distance. The Vinci resolves has been upgraded in its 19th version now a day.

Pre millennial film viewing was an event for an individual and film viewing was a subject of community viewing. We need to go to a cinema hall, need to buy a ticket to watch a movie. I am not talking of television now, as a “film is film is a film”-Jean Luk Godard.

And now irrespective of our will we are bombarded with Reels and Films in our smart phones. I see in traditional theatres, today, audiences are using their smart phones even while viewing a movie.

The traditional ways of Film making, of Film distribution, of film viewing become “Vintage” today.

The concept of Multiplex is a Post Millennial Film distribution process, as well as the online distribution circuits like PVR, Qube etc. comes in as Post Millennial Film distribution agents.

Thus Films, not on Film is not only a concept of using celluloid strips for recording and projection, it is more. More in the senses of incorporation of epistemological studies disciplines into act and incorporation of technological advancement which liberated an individual to express him/her, both as maker and observer. And we are living in this era with an ease.

Some characteristics of Post Millennial Cinemas are

1. These Films challenges the social norms. They dare to question and critique societal norms, sparking important conversations about gender, caste, religion and more.
2. These Cinemas explore themes. These movies delve into intricate themes like identity, morality and human relationships, making viewers think deeply.
3. These cinemas showcase realistic storytelling. Construct of the Real is easier with technical advancement. Offbeat movies often prioritize realism over glamour, offering a genuine representation of India’s diversities and complexities.
4. These films are highlighting social issues. They shed light on pressing concerns like inequality, injustice and human rights, raising awareness and encouraging change.
5. Post Millennial Cinema celebrates diversities. These movies often feature diverse casts, crews, and stories, promoting inclusivity and representation.
6. Films are experimenting with storytelling ideas. Offbeat movies frequently play with narrative structures, cinematography and music, creating some unique cinematic experiences.

7. These films are encouraging critical thinking. By presenting unconventional perspectives and themes, these movies inspire viewers to think critically and challenge their own and traditional ritualistic beliefs.

Some specific messages and features that stand out in offbeat Indian movies include:

- Strong female protagonists and feminist themes.
- Exploration of marginalized communities and their struggles.
- Critique of Social and political Systems.
- Use of satire and dark humor to address serious issues.
- Experimentation with language, dialects and regional stories.
- Focus on human relationships and emotional depths.

Here sighting a particular category as “Diversity of Narratives” I like to give some examples with names of some films as

Ship of Theseus-Anand Gandhi

Hotel Salvation-Shubhashish Bhutiani

Masaan-Neeraj Ghaywan

Court-Chaitanya Tamhane

Piku/I want to Talk-Shoojit Sircar

Dhobi Ghat/La pata Ladies-Kiran Rao

Pink-Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury

Trapped/ Udaan- Vikramaditya Motwane

And post millennial Cinema gains a new platform which is OTT. Television started showing cinema in India in the last decade of last century. Many Television channels launched after private intervention in Telecast arena of India after 1995. But in this Millennium, we got some new forms of cinema as Telefilms, Mega Serials and in current past we got OTT (over the top).

Movies in OTTs are not like mega serials. Those are quite sophisticated in making and looks. Spectators get compatible entertainment values from both OTTs and high budget cinemas.

And one more thing happened. Distribution platforms like YouTube emerged with Google like search engines in 2014 in an all pervasive way. We used to see foreign participation in cinema through Film Festivals, in Film Societies Screenings and a little in recording formats such as VHS Cassettes, CDs, DVDs, BRDs after 1990 when common citizens could afford a personal media player and a personal screen.

YouTube like platforms open up the World Cinema in fingertip. We are watching International Media in Internet and it is open to all of us. This distribution is celebrating a Global Cinema Viewing Culture and it is absolutely a post millennial characteristic in Cinema.

Post Millennial Cinema announces the death of classical formula films. Post Millennial Cinema announces the death of our Heroism. Heroes and Heroines are Capitalist products and Capital Economic structure commoditized them throughout the last century. But we hardly can find an emerging Hero/Heroine today, tickets will sold out on their names.

Those are Post Millennial Cinema which I wrote as Films not on Film. And how can I close this article not mentioning names of some Bangla (my mother tongue) Cinemas of this post millennial era!

Sthanio Sanbad/-Moinak Biswas and Anil Kuriakose-2008

Asa Jaoar Majhe/ Once Upon a Time in Kolkata- Aditya Bikram Sengupta-2014/2022

Bicycle Kick/Aranyadeb-Debasis Sensarma-2016-2019

Bakita Byatigato/ Birohi (Series)-Pradiptya Bhattacharya-2010-2023

Kia and Cosmos / Tasher Ghar-Sudipto Roy-2018-2022

Smriti / Satta / Khettra-Subhadeep Ghosh-2022-2024

Bilu Rakkhos/ Parcel / Pupa/ Niharika-Indrasis Acharya-2017-2023

Dostojee- Prasun Chaterjee-2022

Priyo Chinar Pata,Iti Segun-Kumar Chowdhury-2023

Manikbabur Megh-Abhinandan Banerjee-2022

Midnight to Lime Light-Bipuljeet Basu-Yet to be released.

Those films are Post Millennial Films. The utterances of these kinds of expressions are trembling in the air but maximum of these films are not successful commercially.

And at last we like to close this article on Films, not on Film saying something regarding AI. In this era of AI which is obviously is a tool for Post Millennial Cinema is challenging the Humane Values. I used to say AI, not as artificial intelligence but as artificial indexing system.

Data banks are the vaults of new economy. Virtual markets are new markets. The tactility's of raw stack of films makes me nostalgic. The smell of raw stack of films grabs my attention towards the magnificent history created by our pioneers.

We are under surveillance capitalism. We are monitored in each of our activities. Crony Capital is not the future but some four or five companies like Google or Tesla are going to make a World where dreams will not come up through films. Realities will be changed like cinema and the journey from real to reel will be reversed as reel to real. We will be forced to live in a virtual world where existence of common working class people will be replaced by some non-creative, capitalists who shall try to live theirselves in smaller numbers.

Post Millennial Cinema is fighting against these odds. Let us celebrate Post millennial Cinema with Post Millennial People like most of us.

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Anirban Sadhu is a Cinematographer and Visiting Professor of Camera and Film Studies. He is the founder member of Silhouette film Society in Kolkata.

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