

Article

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Aamir Khan as the Figure of Rebellion, Resistance and Satire: Reading the Representation of Youth in *3 Idiots*



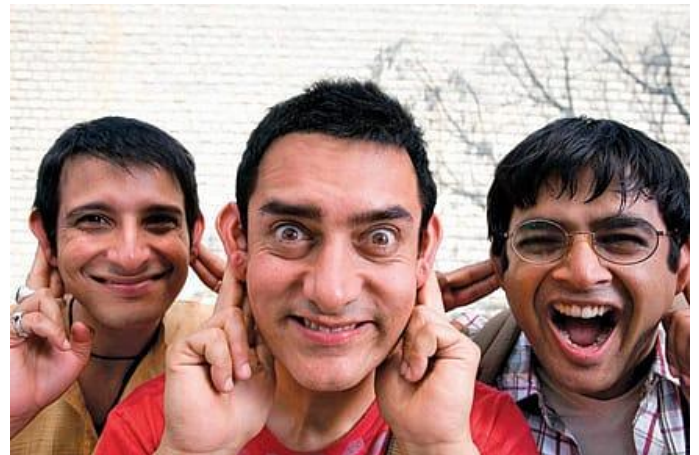
Indian cinema has long been experimenting with the socio-cultural themes to gain the attention of the critics and the box office as well. Bollywood is not an exception in dealing with the contemporary issues of the society. The cinema directors are fascinated with the concept of youth and they try to capture the journey of becoming from youth in their cinematic media. *3 Idiots* (2009) is such film that demonstrates how youth is displayed, redefined and reconstructed on the

basis of mediation and negotiation with the society, tradition and modernity. In this coming of age movie, the director has examined how the young bodies of the youth become the sites of arguments, contestation and hegemonies for the formulation of the modern responsible men. Youths are supposed to be the future citizens of India on whose shoulders lies the responsibility of transformation of a nation. Youths are predominantly of rebellious nature who go

through the process of becoming. This particular movie intensifies the process of becoming by reconfiguring youth along with its rebellious sentiments. Youth and rebellion go hand in hand. Therefore, the coming of age movies tend to be satirical in nature which also promotes the message of the film. Throughout the film, one can find the temperament of resistance to transform the society. This paper attempts to study how the director of this movie captures the perilous, cinematic journey of becoming from youth to the polished, modern men.

Aamir Khan is one of the critically acclaimed Bollywood actors who loves experimenting with the characters and the stories of the films. He is known as Mr. Perfectionist for his meticulous nature and ability to portray the real life characters. A rebel is someone who defies the societal structure, corruption, laws and the dictatorship of the government. That person attempts to subvert the status quo by questioning the rules and stereotypes. This rebellious person believes in freedom, free will and autonomy. This kind of rebellion occurs against any kind of injustice, inequality and oppression. Satire is a tool that discloses the follies of the society and the corrupted human nature. All the satirical texts tend to have a rebellious figure who resists against any kind of subjugation. This rebellious character is a figure of resistance who claims for reversal of the situation and a new dawn. Satirical texts produce laughter although they depict the tragic conditions of the society or the faulty system. Under the guise of satire and laughter, the concern of the satirical texts is to promote awareness through which a new kind of system can be established. Rebellion calls for

destruction or the demise of the existing situation/ system which is usually followed by the inauguration of the new system. Therefore, the rebellious figure can be considered as an iconoclast. In *3 Idiots*, Aamir Khan is a rebel or an iconoclast who is in conflict with Virus, a Professor played by Boman Irani. Boman Irani represents the faulty education system/ society whereas Aamir Khan is a rebellious citizen. Aamir Khan is an image or a prototype of youth who happens to go through transformation for becoming a true, perfect version of himself. For being the metaphorical figure of youth, Khan embodies the feelings of angst, jealousy, passion and sentiment. Along with Khan, other two personalities are also the embodiment of youth who question the authoritative, oppressive education system for demolishing choice, abilities and needs. This movie shows the conflict between the individual and the society and how one triumphs against the invisible war.



3 Idiots is a rom-com movie that investigates the conflict among individual will, societal pressure and expectation. Under the disguise of comedy, the director, RajKumar Hirani has depicted the societal problems, critical concerns like the battle between passion and profession, identity

crisis, fear of the young adults, suicide, unemployment, faulty education system, abuse of power by the autocratic authoritative figure, illness and poverty and crisis of the middle class. This movie also raises questions on love, marriage and friendship.

- How does the director represent youth in the film?
- What should be the real definition of love?
- What is marriage? How does one approach marriage?
- How should one approach the concept of friendship?
- How does Aamir Khan act as a figure of rebellion and portray the theme of satire against authoritative system?



Although it is a mild comedy, it satirises the burning problems of the contemporary society with the intention of rectification of the system. It is not only a biting satire on society but also a sharp criticism of higher education. The main concern of the movie is on the education system and how it exploits the students in the name of higher education. This movie shows how education limits itself to an abstract idea without extending into its practicality. The education system is all about marks, certificates and degrees and does not guarantee anyone real education which is based on improvement, progress and upliftment. This education system creates

degree holders but fails to offer those souls jobs and employment. The movie from the beginning to the end circulates the messages on how to build a proper, beneficial educational institution. To tone down the seriousness of the movie, the director uses the trope of romance and by doing so, he reaches the mass audience. The target audience of this movie is mainly the youths, students, parents and teachers but it crosses the boundaries of these categories. By concentrating on the lives of the three students, he shows the intricate, diverse lifestyles and ideologies of different students especially youths. He also comments on the importance of diversity in education system as it is student-centric. All the students coming from different socio-economic-cultural background along with their different needs and abilities assemble together to get education and degrees but the faulty system turns them into the artificial machines instead of responsible individual and citizen. This movie has a hero named Aamir Khan whose brilliant performance invokes a sense of hope of resurrection, growth and change in the dark wasteland. He is the mouthpiece of the director whose characterization is subtly autobiographical. The movie has other male protagonists who are termed as 'idiots' along with Aamir Khan. Although the director has named them as idiots, he shows how they debunk the societal rules and expectation and follow their dreams and passion. In this society, to chase passion and turn it into a profession, one needs courage and they are the symbols of such determination and spirit. At the end of the movie, they become the flag-bearers of the youths who call for transformation and revolution in the society. Literally they are the

idiots to the eyes of the society for not following the crowd but metaphorically they are the beacon of new dawn. Pia, played by Kareena Kapoor has a sister who suffers from child birth. Pia's brother has committed suicide due to the invisible pressure from his father, played by Boman Irani. The movie shows how Aamir Khan led by his short team transforms himself from an engineering student to a practising doctor who knows the process of child delivery. Most of the students are the victims, sufferers at the hand of 'Virus' but Aamir Khan proves to be an exception. His knowledge of child-delivery and his activity at a stormy night makes this authoritative figure understand his mistake. He gives him his most wanted, cherished, expensive pen as a mark of his genius. The advent of dawn marks the change in Virus' attitude as it means self-realization.

The movie primarily centres on the lives of three college students who attempt to win against their parents' demand or the societal expectation. Three of them make their lives successful by opposing the peer pressure and by focusing on their individual needs. They are different from the crowd. Here, the crowd refers to the obedient citizen who follows the faulty education system. They are rebels. Youths are naturally rebels. One of them studies engineering but later makes a professional career of photography. One who worships the God for overcoming the fear of exam, declines the job offer from the college campus. He also stops wearing metals and rings. The recruiters were glad to see such a soul and they offered him the job. Aamir Khan can be addressed as the gang leader who enkindles the hope of freedom and pursuit of excellence and the fire of rebellion in their

souls. Later in the movie, it is shown that he has transformed himself into a well known scientist. The entire nation wants to get him. The name of the movie is metaphoric as they are not the comic characters and the stupid followers. Instead, they are the flag bearers of change. The movie ends with a happy note incorporating the message of the individual struggle and victory. It also shows how science becomes a force of rebellion against superstition. The director beautifully paints the picture of youths who can make their own decisions instead of perishing away into oblivion.



This movie also talks about self-discovery and how it shapes an individual by giving him insight and a new horizon. Pia is a doctor who is engaged to a rich businessman. But, she finds love in Aamir Khan. Later, the two 'idiots' help her to run away from her marriage and elope with Aamir Khan. Thus, it sheds light on the theme of love and marriage. It subtly criticises the institution of marriage as a social agreement and contract. Thus, it undergoes a journey from a film located on the campus life to a film of intense criticality and layered meaning. The movie produces laughter only to rectify the negative sides of the concerned subjects. Although it is a fun watch, it mirrors the gaps of the society. Aamir Khan in this film attempts to change

the education system that costs precious human lives. He tries to show how the bookish knowledge can be applied in the daily life. Satire is a tool that the authors, artists use to depict the follies of the individual as well as of the society. Like a comedy of manners, this movie criticises the bizarre personalities of the human beings and the faulty system. Interestingly, this movie does not allude to any other high-brow, sophisticated films or texts or impart slogans of any kind and justifies itself to be a successful Bollywood film both critically and commercially.

The primary intention of Aamir Khan is to show how the education system is a machine that kills the wish, need, abilities of the students. *3 Idiots* projects the campus life of the college/university while the another film, *Taare Zameen par* locates itself in school. *3 Idiots* attempts to examine the emotional turmoil, psychological crisis of the students. Some can handle pressure while some remain neglected, unnoticed. Aamir

Khan acts as a social reformer who imparts the same theme in his two films. Though this film is highly commercial in its tone and style, it remains true to the aesthetic and artsy nature of the theme. It narrates the real life stories of the people. This film carries the sense of empathy throughout the movie. It preaches the idea of love, humanity and kindness. This particular movie becomes the saga of the suppression, surveillance, struggle and survival. To survive in this cruel world is a daunting task and this movie tells the tale of how to fight and how to sustain. This movie reflects the individual struggle and how one overcomes the problems to embark on the journey of self-discovery and the formation of identity of the youths. Therefore, *3 Idiots* must be re-read time and again for its universal theme and unique art of storytelling and demonstrating the problems of youth. In this way, Aamir Khan, the leader becomes the rebellious force who is the symbol of resistance.

Works Cited:

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Srijani Dutta is a writer and an independent researcher.