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Class Consciousness as A Manifest and Latent : Celebration of Jalsa



Class as a concept denotes invariably the division or grouping on the basis of economic status. Besides money and economy it also informs various other associative elements and those are the areas which determine the significance of some basic preliminaries. The distinctive qualities of base and superstructure would anyway be not able to signify much of the complex relations these notions have between them. But none the less this often rises to the surface and regulatory dissertations of aesthetic apparatuses could be applicable to many of the artistic expressions. The inferences deduced wouldn't be simple and lucid enough and art and life with political economy would intersect and also overlap.

The 2022 release cinema titled Jalsa by

Suresh Tribeni is a remarkable film from the point of view of storytelling, treatment of cinematic suspense, pace and pauses. The scenes from the perspective of life experiences do claim curious unpredictability, suspenseful disbelief and a cathartic resolution at the end. But as one who observes the subtleties and barrenness of class relationship in this story, the dialectic at various quarters could be softening compromises and also characteristic traits of tough obstinacies. Here in this respect the two women protagonists, Maya and Rukshana (representatives of opposite social hierarchies) do expose themselves to different economic statuses, resulting separate responses to same stimuluses.

The test of fire is not common for both

of them, they have separate pain, trepidations, fear and ambition and hence the presence of the pressure of conscience is definitely different for each of them. The start and finish of the film is most curious and nerve wrecking and this quality creates a unifier to the disparities and differences of class, temperaments and societies.

The disparities of classes, economies and temperaments would of course entail difference and separateness in each case, but what is more important than that is to read how the cinematic effects portray characters generally from a specific collective. Class consciousness is a tortured, subversive egotism and perhaps the correct word to use here would be the ideologies. The grimly political character of class consciousness always diverts glances, thwarts focuses and creates situations which are either charades, or blatant primitive drives. When the celebrity journalist Maya Menon causes the road accident and almost mortally wounds the victim, a teenaged girl who later is identified as the daughter of her house help, Rukshana, the central climax of the narrative is brought in and around it narratives are built in to accentuate the gravity of social issues of corruption, inside stories of media houses and also social responsibilities of persons of different classes. Perhaps one of the focuses that the director attempts to read is to observe and differentiate the responses of the prime two protagonists, Maya and .. The hypocrisy and ambivalence of the bourgeois are evident in the journalist senior who also has a prototype in Rohini the junior apprentice of the media house.

What are the social commentaries proffered in the film that narrates well but not

authentically and that is evinced in every single sequence with seemingly dense emotional representation, but that simply fails to evoke. Opportunism of all petty bourgeois characters like Maya in the first place and also her media colleague/boss is deliberately harped in. Existential crisis for persons like Maya is simple avoidance and escape into bloated self love. If she can offer monetary assistance to the victim thereby escaping her conscience, everything seems to have worked. And when Rohini unwittingly refers to the retrieval of the cctv footage she loses her complacency again. But one glaring truth unraveled in this film of class dialectic is this that simple commoners represented by Rukshana her husband haven't lost their integrity. It is like her informing Maya about the thelawalla who brought the victim to the hospital. The very corollary, which is also antithetical is that Maya herself caused the accident and left the victim in the spot for her fate to take over! The enormity and crudity of the situation itself is the most important comment on the callousness and indifference of the bourgeois.

As a lay reader or appreciator of cinema one basic question which rises to the surface after seeing this film is , why is the director more focused on telling the story in a straight manner ? Because from the very beginning apart from using excellent camera work , he is less interested in adorning the shots or misc en scenes with subtle messages or metaphors. Aren't the pathos and tragedy portrayed deep enough or is the director leaving the story to talk for itself as blatantly as it can with its inherent merit? In this connection let's get back to Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children*. The

stoical self complacence evident in Mother Courage, Anna Ferling in the play even after her unwitting sacrifice of all her children, Eillif, Sweet Cheese and Kattrine to war is not praised or blamed by the dramatis. It is professed and projected as a class characteristic. Perhaps the same idea is used here in Jalsa, which is a name of celebration of life! The other female protagonist of the opposite class ,Rukshana , delivers her characteristic self in the patience, courage and self respect she contains and expresses. Unlike Mother Courage she doesn't lose her daughter (who is treated well in a private nursing home or hospital, courtesy Maya Menon). That is a relief compromised at the alter of great storytelling. Because the modern capitalistic bourgeois society cannot simply afford a tragedy which has all the depth and width of emotion of the common man . Maybe ironically that's why a tragedy calls for a king or an aristocrat !

The female cast of the film, Vidya Balan and Shefali Shah with the male counterparts do their job creditably enough, but one pertinent point to notice here is the impassiveness behind the emotion portrayed. Whether it is the nervous tremor of Maya after the accident or the straight glare of Rukshana at the world , after she experiences the nearly fatal accident her daughter suffers from , signifying shame and awkwardness at the irresponsible action of the young girl going out at the dead of the night. The junior journalist is shown to be in the making of the celebrity Maya Menon, whom she follows and admires. But she betrays in her innocent persistence of stories to promote her career a definitive cunning and selfishness. The young actor Vidhatri Bandi , playing Rohini ,

does her role really convincingly. The accident victim Alia , played by Kashish Rizwan ,surprisingly is not passive though besides a few scenes, she is shown to have undergone treatment in a near coma state at the hospital. But she happens to be the momentum of the narrative. Because she keeps the story alive. The compromise at various levels on part of the characters forms the backbone of this narrative which exposes the class discrepancies, loss of moral and also of personal integrity . The police constable remains silent even after knowing Maya to be guilty because he has to upkeep his duty as a father (he has to marry off his daughter without any hassle). The driver of Maya after knowledge of his boss being involved , doesn't open his mouth, because he has accepted a heavy bribe from Maya. These blatant examples in the film reflect the ferocity of the system and the weakness of the individuals. In these days of advanced industrial capitalism, class hierarchy is a subsumed , subterranean reality , active with all the weapons, and apparatuses and appears as a cruel impersonated perpetrator.

Much has been written about the twist at the end of the story , explained with various elemental and social aspects but what weighs after the narrative is almost played fully , the ending actually celebrates simple joys of life and also basic human love . It also very fairly articulates the pristine human emotion which Rukshana as a proletariat dares to reflect because she is no hypocrite like Maya Menon, typical petty bourgeois, who professes truth but does not practice it. Actually the end needs to be commended for another reason. The end unequivocally equalizes everything. The class differences,

specific human merits and follies are subsumed and what emerges is a bond the two caregivers build around an autistic child who sees and enjoys life as it is, maybe he realizes the glory of life and the earth.

Cinema itself is an art meant for the people and it is always dependent on the common men. The historical period of Italian neo realism in cinema celebrated common

lives, common emotion and feelings. Films like Bicycle Thief and Satyajit Ray's Pather Pachali in actual practice delineates common life, common anguish and pain of common people. Jalsa does not boast of such excellent portraiture of course, but surely attempts to highlight common men and their responses in certain significant moments of their lives.

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