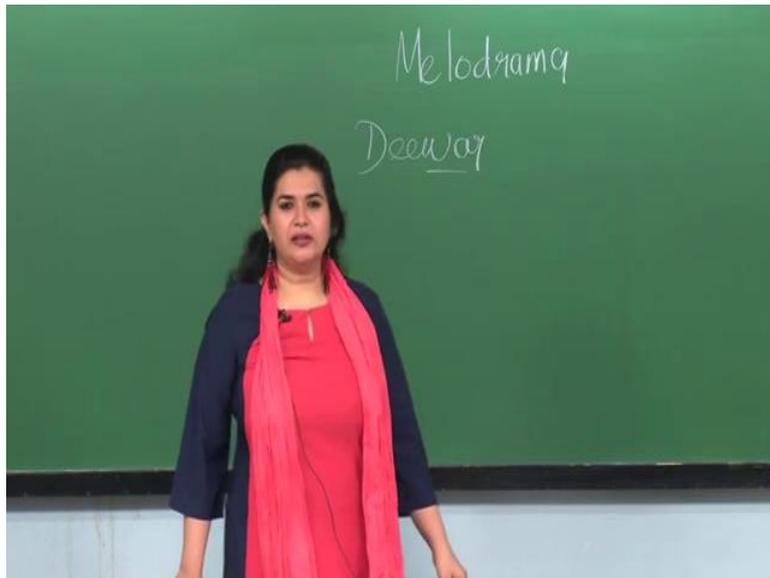


Film Appreciation
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Lecture - 13

Deewar

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Good morning everyone. So, today's class, you will find little different from whatever we have been doing so far. It's on melodrama and I will be discussing a very popular Hindi film. I am sure all of you have heard of it or you are familiar with it; this is Deewar, 1975 film, directed by Yash Chopra and written by the great screenwriter Duo Salim - Javed. The movie star Amitabh Bachchan and Shashi Kapoor, and Nirupa Roy, who played their mother.

Now, why Deewar? Generally, when we talk about popular cinema, which impersonates a national myth; we talk about Meheboob Khan's Mother India, which is one of the milestones in Hindi cinema. I would like to talk about Deewar, which I think, you know, came at a particular time in Indian history. Also, it was the time of certain national upheaval especially, the emergency in India, during that periods. So, it was a turbulent time. It was also historically, a very important period in our history. So, this is the significance of Deewar and of course, the fact that it gave birth to it, consolidated Amitabh Bachchan's position as one of the greatest superstars or leading men in Indian cinema.

It is still referred to very frequently, seriously and sometimes, frivolously, particularly in

a Hinglish movie called Loins of Punjab and A.R.Rahman too in his academy award, acceptance speech, quoting the famous line from Deewar mere paas maa hai .

So, what I would like you to do is watch that particular scene... go to the You tube and please watch two scenes from Deewar and then, resume watching this video. I want you to watch two scenes; one is the scene, which where Shashi Kapoor says mere paas maa hai and also, the scene where Amitabh Bachchan refuses to sign a particular document that Shashi Kapoor, his brother, who is a cop now, and he wants him to sign.

So, he says that I am not going to sign unless and until, you get signatures from every crook, who has committed various sins against him. So, these are the two scenes that I want you to watch and then, resume watching this lecture. We will be talking about, discussing those two scenes also, with reference to what we are doing now. So, let me continue. Deewar is a allegory of the partition of India. This is not something very new. This was done in Mother India. It was also shown in Yash Chopra's blockbuster, Waqt, which is again, about the great joint family particularly, Hindu joint family that is scattered. Also, Manoj Kumar's Upkar, where he plays his iconic character, Bharath, just come to be identified as character Bharat, where again, the dichotomy, the binaries between two brothers; the good one, the bad one, the wayward one.

The wayward brother goes away; he is westernized; he is educated; city brought and born ... not born exactly, but city bred and influenced by a corrupt, forces of city, you know, morally a decadent system. The good brother, is the older brother, as played by Manoj Kumar, who is called Bharat. In the film, he is home grown; he is the son of the soil; he is Bharath. So, the allegory is very clear and he is the essentially, good man. Also, he represents the rural India. So, all the virtues of the rural are represented or embodied in his character. So, at the end, wayward brother is brought back to the family. The point is that all these films are like allegories of the partition of India. At the end, Bharath loses both his arms very significantly, and there is a metaphor. You can read; there is a subtext there, which remains to be read there. He loses both his arms, but then the wayward brother, as played by Prem Chopra, he comes back and he says, you know, Bharath can never lose his arms and he offers both his arms to this wounded hero of ours.

So, the idea is that the wayward brother will always return. There was an imagination; there was a hope that the wayward brother would return, would come back into the fold, into the family, great joint family fold. So, this is what we are talking about, you know,

the romanticized nation.

Coming back to Deewar. Now, this was a period of the emergency and there was a feeling of deep disillusionment with the system. It was also a period, when society was getting corrupt politically, morally. There was an overall atmosphere of fear, which is often reflected in the dialogues. It has, Deewar has some of the greatest dialogues and greatest scenes of all time. As you have just watched, the phenomenal scene, and look at the framing of the scene; the two brothers, they are standing under the bridge; the bridge access a metaphor.

This is the place from where, they started of in the beginning sare jahan se achha where the little boy Vijay, you know, who rose up to become Amithab Bachchan. He stands there and listens to the songs that this anthem that school children are singing. So, this is what we are supposed to read into the film that the bridge acts as a kind of a symbol, which was in the beginning, it joins them and later, they stand under the same bridge and now, they are both in; there is a fracture; there is a rupture between the two brothers; so, great scenes. Again, look at the facts that the movie mother is the central figure. It is the story of a mother and her two sons. It is very interesting. The leading ladies or the love interest of the two sons; they do exist, but they are peripheral characters. They, even if you remove them particularly, Shashi Kapoor's leading lady, it wouldn't really make much of a difference to the movie.

She is there just for the song and dance routine, but the brothers fight for the love and affection and recognition by the mother; this is significant. Like most Indian epics, we also come across the trope of the absentee father, you know, this was very much brought about in Mother India; absentee father; and it is all up to the mother. So, mother is the motherland. That idea is very clearly brought about in Mother India as well as Deewar. There is also the scene with a tattoo; the son is marked forever, my father is a thief, you know mere baap chor hai scene and which leads to migration. So, migration from rural to the urban; it becomes an important theme in Deewar, because that was that point. Newly developing and industrialized countries such as ours, where the migration from the rural to the urban was becoming a major concern.

So, Vijay and his family, they are small town people and then, you know, they come from this mining town and after that, they are brutally treated by the owners and they are forced to leave and the father just disappears; the absentee father, where very symbolic

scenes in Deewar. For example, Vijay and Ravi in the beginning and also, when the first meet and then, when they come back together under the bridge. You find them walking off in two different directions; this is very telling. They are two brothers; they love each other, but how different are their ideologies. One of the most memorable scenes of Deewar and which perhaps, established Amithab Bachchan as the angry young man of our times, was his confrontation with the dockyard goons. These goons, they collect certain amount of money on a weekly basis; it is extortion money, and from the dockyard workers.

The poor workers don't have a choice, but they have to give up the money, till Vijay can't take it anymore, and then, he rises up in protest and confronts the evil dockyard goons. So, the idea is that one man can always do that. This was also, something very new for the Indian audience; however, the movie does have certain resonance of Elia Kazan's great *On the Waterfront*, which is also about the goons and extortionists that exist on the peripherals, you know, in the dockyard and in the backyard of our homes, where everyone is so terrified of the arm twisting tactics that they have a no other choice. So, idea is that we need a hero of that power, that stature, that strength, who can confront these people and deliverers of them. So, that idea comes and that what also, the central theme *On the Waterfront*, Elia Kazan's directed, where Marlon Brando's character stands up to the mafia, to the dockyard mafia.

Deewar is full of great lines and at one point, the little Vijay tells one of the gang lords, mafia men, who is a good guy at heart, played by Iftekhar, and he says Vijay is a shoe shining boy. So, he and wherever this mafia lord, he goes up to the races; he stops at a particular point and Vijay is a little boy, who always polishes the shoes. So, he is the shoeshine boy, regular one for this character. When this man throws a coin at little boy, a little boy gets up and he says :I don't pick up coins; I am not a beggar and this scene is repeated. There are lots of repetitions in Deewar; scenes and lines are repeated; metaphors are repeated; symbols are repeated. So, this is something that you know, we are doing a course in film appreciation. So, this is something that you should be sensitive to.

I just told you about the fact that Deewar doesn't have a leading lady, which is true in the case of a Shashi Kapoor's love interest, but interestingly, Parveen Babi's character, which is there for and she is the love interest of Amithab Bachchan, and very interesting character. She plays Anitha, who is a morally, ambiguous heroine. Now, this was

something, very unusual for those times; she smokes; she drinks. You know they have a living relationship; Vijay and Anitha, and there are known judgments pronouns there. We a talking about a movie, which was made in 1975. So, they share a cigarette; then she gets pregnant with his child; they drink, but they smoke and she is still, a heroine and it was played by Parveen Babi, who was you know, if you remember; she is one of the heroines, leading ladies of Hindi cinema, who can be credited for breaking the shackles of the conventional traditionally, portrayed or represented the good girl kind of Hindi film heroine.

So, she is definitely not the good girl in the conventional way, but she is still the heroine. She is the one, who he loves. Of course, you know, mother is the woman, he loves most in the world, vies for her affections and attention. She is the one, she is a catalyst for causing a change in him. He is willing to give up his criminal base in order to start a family with Anita. So, therefore, she is important and at the end, when he murdered someone, it is because he has lost a love of his life. So, Anitha is a character, you know, some of you are interested in doing work like representation of women on Hindi films. So, you can look at the 70s, very important period as far as, representation of women is concerned. Another great scene is the point, where Vijay and Ravi, they that a realize that their father has died, very anonymous death, and Vijay's mother or Ravi's mother, as she is applying the vermilion dot on her forehead, Ravi comes and pulls her hand away. This is a symbolic that she is no longer entitled to she has lost the right to call herself, a married women, in the sense that she is a widow now.

Again, we think we talk about the family, where the older brother has all the rights and Vijay, although he is a strange brother. He comes and serves the funeral, fire ablaze. Now, this scene is done very quietly. You don't find too many dialogues, too much of hysteria, but it is still what we are talking about; still fits the melodramatic movie. The way that director sets the mise-en-scene here; the music; the clause; the costumes; the framing of the scene; this is important. So, at the end, when he extends his arm to set the funeral fire ablaze, you find the same old tattoo on Vijay's arms. That is permanently, etched on his arm but more significantly, on his soul. It has scarred him forever; that is mere baap chor hai ...my father is a thief. This was done to him by a group of the town people, who believe that father has sort of, sold them of the rights of the workers, have been sold off to the mine owners, which is not true, but this is a stigma that this family has to live with.

Again, bridge serves as a memory, as a motive or memory and also, song, the song that sare jahan se acha which plays constantly, in the background. Ravi has almost erased the past, but Vijay remembers; this is important. You also have echoes of Elia Kazan's East of Eden and Elia Kazan, strictly speaking, is a social realist, but his movies are also known for very refined melodrama. So, if you watch that so, his brand of social realism, his brand of allegiant melodrama; I am very sure that it must have impacted the writers and directors of that period. It was very relevant to that period.

So, East of Eden is also referred to in certain scenes, where the two brothers compete in East of Eden for the father's affection and here, the gender is reversed. The two brothers compete for the affections of the mother. The mother, you remember the scene, where mother is hospitalized and Vijay goes to the temple for the first time in years and confronts God. He stands before the statue and then, the famous monologue aaj kush to bahut ho ge .So, Amithab Bachchan, you know, he has delivered a series, a number of monologues, great monologues and one of his greatest most often, quoted monologue of all time when he confronts the Gods. So, he is the hero; who not only just scared of a standing up to the mortal goons, but he can also stand up to god themselves. So, he is like our captain Ahab the character from Harman Melville's Moby Dick. He is a Marked man, but he is also hero; a hero of an immense stature and who can confront any one. He can look at sun in the eye and interrogate; that is what Melville talks about and that is how Melville describes his hero in Moby Dick and in Vijay's character also; we find echoes of similar pride.

His pride is important, He is a man who wouldn't allow, won't allow anyone to hurt his pride. We are talking about the social situation and the emergency period and there is a scene, very melodramatic scene, where Ravi opens fire on a little boy and then, he realizes the boy; what was the boy stealing? It is a piece of bread, you know, the family has been starving for a couple of days, and here is a teenage boy, and he shoots him in the leg, but he realizes that the boy is innocent; he was just taking food for his family. Ravi is then, cursed by his mother, by the boy's mother. She says that you know, there are bigger goons in this society, in this country, and all that you could do was to shoot my little boy.

So, now, this is a condemnation of Ravi; does it upstage Ravi as the moral voice; we don't know. So, Deewar is a very interesting study in moral ambiguity. All characters have this touch of ambiguity. If Ravi is morally, a pride, doesn't he go too far? At the

end, he is the one who open fire on his brother and shoots him, and mother is the one, who has blessed him, is mirroring the ending of Mother India, where the mother herself, shoots her son dead, because she feels that he strayed from the righteous path (from the righteous path and that path, Ravi also does, as he is urged by his mother to do; he kills his brother. This is also a movie and you can also read melodramatic readings into it. The motive, you know, 786, the batch appears quite frequently, and Vijay treats it as a lucky mascot So, many scholars have seen this motive as playing to the gallery, , like a tokenism is there for communal harmony.

So, he is always wearing his batch, wearing the numbers 786; this is his number when he is a worker at the dockyards, but once he comes up in life through crime, he always keeps the batch close to his heart and often, in the movie, that batch saves his life, but again when he loses the batch, gets killed by his brother. Vijay is denied, a complete family, because of the death of his pregnant girlfriend and mother is a lawgiver. She is the one, who hands Ravi a gun, and gives blessings. The idea is she tells him the woman has done her duty. Now, a mother will do hers Then she goes off to meet her son at the appointed place, which is the temple, where the three of them use to go together, once upon a time. Vijay dies in his mother's lap, and again it reflects crisis in the state.

The family has been prevented from coming back together; again, a metaphor, and crisis of the state. So, there is an internal schism of the modern state, where the coexistence of the law and the community is a conflicting, terrain and here, I quote you form Madhav Prasad Ideology of the Hindi Film. We should also know that there is the, mythologically speaking, the good brother, the favored brother and also, the brother who sacrifices more and gets killed at the end, but the brother, who is conventionally, the good brother. Deewar is also interesting, because there are certain experiments. I just told you about a morally, ambiguous characters, morally ambiguous heroine, and the absence of songs. Now, there were six songs initially, in this movie, but three were retained and none of which appeared consequential to the narrative at all, even if you remove that, those songs, it really wouldn't matter to the overall narrative.

So, thank you very much.