

Engaging with Cinema: A Pedagogical Perspective

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Many artistic aspects continued to be added to the due course of human development history. Cinema is one of them and the most popular art form of present time. Cinema has assimilated many aspects and contexts of art forms that have developed earlier, for example, theater, literature, painting, music, etc. The aesthetic features and originality of all have created cinema itself, and shaped its own identity. The period is only a little over a century, yet it has been influencing the cultural aspects of society as a very important factor. Cinema has also benefited directly from the achievements of modern technology. Today it is an important means of entertainment, art-expression and education.

Cinema today is probably one of the most powerful cultural mediums, reaching to millions of people across the world. Cinema is one of the most modern mediums of human expression. It gives a chance to interact with various dimensions of human experience and the variety of imagery.

"Cinema is not just a reflection of the object, but also the reality of reflections." Cinema is such an effective medium that mentally, it makes you feel inside the scene. In this context, cinema gives a chance to have a subjective context and it offers an infinite potential for subjective imagination.

It allows us to mentally feel ourselves inside the scene, which makes cinema such a cultural tool that millions of people buy tickets without any understanding of film language and technology, watch movies and understand them according to their needs, desire and point of views. Literature or other art forms do not have this facility, we cannot feel it unless we have a thick understanding of grammar. The power of cinema is not only that we watch events as they are or as have happened. Rather mentally, we are also inside events. In fact, in any scene, it is necessary for the brain to interact with the eye and ear of the audience. The specialty of cinema is that the more it appears in front of us, the more it becomes in our mind.

For academics and psychologists there was concern that children spend more time in

different forms of cinema than they spend in school. Studies show that from the early stage, when children start learning their mother tongue, they also start receiving messages through audio-visual mediums like television and cinema. Cinema today is included in our lifestyle like our other day to day practices of eating food, sleeping, going to school, etc. Thus, cinema has become an essential part of life.

It is a pertinent question: what kind of socio-cultural political environment does contemporary popular cinema display? What form of humiliation, terrorism, stereotyping etc. does this create on the psyche of children? With the exception of some serious cinema, cinema has exploited many aspects of the social context continuously for many decades and has established the insensitivity towards those social concerns (gender, caste, religion, inequality, identity) as a natural phenomenon. The lack of intensive academic discourse in schools has further expanded its co-operation. There is a challenge on many levels in establishing sensitivity in the classrooms where there is a tradition of academic discourse.

The article "Let Go to Films: Rethinking the Role of Film in the Elementary Classroom" written by Michele Whipple (1998) argues that we should expand our definition of "lesson" to include film, a valuable instructional resource. Students come to class with a great deal of knowledge and familiarities about films that teachers can use cinema as an effective pedagogic tool for the teaching-learning process.

I usually interact with my students in the classroom with a movie *Two. Two: A Film Fable* is a 1964, black-and-short film directed by Satyajit which showed two boys from two different economic



backgrounds, duelling with each other, showing off their toys to compete with each other, with emotions of loneliness, happiness and rivalry.

Despite being a simple tale involving two young boys, *Two* showed allegorical representation of loneliness, socio-economic divide, the philosophy of happiness, consumerism, oppression and freedom. The movie has no dialogue but still it gives us a chance to explore and reflect on these issues and establish a dialogic relation between our subjective point of view and dominant discourse. *Two* like cinema is the sort of film that stays with you for a long in your conscious mind.

It is very important how we use film in our classrooms. It is necessary today to develop a critical thinking about cinema among teachers, to develop the ability to recognize pedagogic potentiality of cinema so that on the one hand they engage to understand the world through cinema and at the same time, also understand the possibility, concerns and challenges of cinema as a pedagogic tool.