
Cinema as an Effective Tool for Teaching Human Rights Issues and Problems: An Analytical Study of Samuel Goldwyn’s Film: “The Whistleblower”

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"No one lights a lamp and covers it with a bowl or puts it under a bed. Instead, it is put on the lamp stand, so that people will see the light as they come in."

Luke 8:16 GNT

Good News Translation

Cinema is a manipulation of reality through image and sound.

Alain Resnais,
Film Director
(“Hiroshima Mon Amour”, 1959)

INTRODUCTION

As teacher educators, we often believe that our classes are changing the way students think and act regarding important social issues. While films may increase students’ knowledge on a subject, we may be incorrectly assuming that their attitudes and actions are changing as well. While some researchers have found evidence of changes in attitude and actions after viewing a film we challenge that there are probably many factors that need to be examined before assuming that this will generally occur in a classroom setting.

Cinema is thought to be an effective tool for achieving certain educational goals and providing information about various historical events and periods, films are thought to be effective tools for sensitizing students to issues of cultural diversity, equity, and fairness. This study proves the use of films for instruction purposes particularly as films relate to influencing social and political attitudes towards sensitizing human rights issues and problems and on the positive effects of the film. The questions to be answered from this study are: whether cinema acts as an effective tool for teaching students about the human rights issues and problems. Can cinema as a medium portray reality? Whether cinema is socially responsible? Whether cinema can influence human rights agenda? And to what level cinema impact on society?

HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONCEPTS

The term ‘Human Rights’ referred to the fundamental rights that humans have by the fact of being human, and that are neither created nor can be abrogated by any government.ⁱ Its concept has arisen from that of natural rights of all human. The existence of human rights has been recognized and accepted as a necessary component for the well being of civilization. Even, a king should uphold the highest ethical standards and rule through his leadership and not by his authority (Global Insurance Services Pvt. Ltd., 2009). The concept of human rights can be traced back thousands of years from the Vedas to the Hammurabiⁱⁱ Code to the Magna Carta. Every person by virtue of his humanity is entitled to certain natural rights is a recurring theme throughout the history of mankind.

The duties, rights and responsibilities of the citizens are seen even in every Religious document – the Vedas, the Bible, the Quran and Analects of Confucius. As in the bible Jesus tells his disciplesⁱⁱⁱ to “Go into the entire world and preach the good news to all creation (Mark, 1979) in the gospel according Mark. The press today is the fourth pillar of democracy and carries huge responsibilities for people as the disciples of Jesus did in their times. The disciples of Jesus were perhaps medium between the people and Jesus to spread the message of love as in 21st century acts the radio, televisions, print and new media to highlights the issues of human rights. Cinema plays a very important role in creation of public opinion. Docu-drama is found more effective as simultaneously communicates and entertains.

THE STUDY

My study focuses on the effectiveness of cinema as medium of communication in influencing society to work on human rights agenda. This study interprets and analyzed cinema particularly the film I have chosen as a text from different disciplinary perspectives such as **Psychoanalytical perspective, Semiotic interpretation, Ethical perspective, Aesthetical perspective, Feminist perspective, Marxist or communist perspective and Sociological perspective.** The method I adopted for the study is simple it’s a focused group screening of a film to forty students followed by discussions about the content of the film which later led to identification of the issues related to one’s own everyday life that they see. Finally I asked

them few questions on whether such kind of incident occurs in each of their societies if yes what should they do?

SUMMARY

Cinema acts as a medium of entertainment, information, communication and education. The film "The Whistleblower" Samuel Goldwyn Films release, directed by Larysa Kondracki has successfully portrayed the violation of human rights. Society remained silent for years despite of knowing the fact thinking their voices would be suppressed. They have not only successfully portrayed the issues but creatively convinced the world despite of others remaining silent on the issues of violation of human rights. This film therefore worked as a catalyst to transform society generating attention creating awareness of the human right issues, building interest through its persuasion giving full freedom to people's opinion and take action.

"The Whistleblower" is about an American in Bosnia discovering the horrors of human trafficking and is rated R^{iv}, *it contained explicit visuals* including a brutal sexual assault, graphic nudity and language. The running time is 1 hour 40 minutes; the film is about *One Woman's Fight For Justice*. This film is made based on the true story of Kathryn Bolkovac^v—follows Nebraskan cop Rachel Weisz as she takes a contract as a UN International Police Force monitor in Bosnia. In 1999, Nebraska police officer Kathryn Bolkovac noticed an ad for jobs with DynCorp, a government contractor that was setting up monitors in Bosnia to work with local police officers and United Nations peacekeepers. The money was good, and Bolkovac, a recently divorced mother of three, was looking for a change. Little did she know what she'd find in Bosnia: a widespread seedy underbelly of UN officers and American military men participating in the trafficking of Eastern European girls.

Bolkovac's story was made into a film, *The Whistleblower*, released in 2010. Following a film screening of "The Whistleblower," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opened a panel discussion on sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict and post-conflict situations. The filmmaker and senior UN officials addressed issues raised in the film, including human trafficking and forced prostitution as well as the Organization's effort to combat sexual exploitation of women and children. The film reveals stigma about prostitutes, and what

many people don't understand were the circumstances in which many women go into prostitution — this goes for U.S. prostitutes as well. Bolkovac believe that the number of women who were doing that for fun were very small. The idea that Eastern European girls or Filipino girls or anyone else is making it all the way to the U.S. via a trafficking organization to perform as a prostitute is beyond most people's realm of imagination.

The Whistleblower and Human Rights: Analysis and interpretation

Technically speaking, there is a difference between analysis and interpretation. Analysis generally is held to mean taking a text apart and considering how its various parts relate to one other (BERGER, 1995). Interpretation on the other hand involves the use of some method or disciplines. “The Whistleblower” can be viewed from eight disciplinary perspective as texts in order to discuss the issues of human rights; Semiotic perspective, feminist perspective, psychoanalytic perspective, literary criticism perspective, aesthetic perspective, sociological perspective, ethical perspective and Marxist perspective.

The Whistleblower and semiotic^{vi} interpretation

Semioticians are interested in how meaning is created in texts, and thus would be interested in the facial expressions of the characters, in the lighting and music used in the film, and in its narrative structure (BERGER, 1995). One could clearly see the facial expressions of the young girls who are sexually assaulted, tortured, beaten and brutally killed. In addition Semioticians use the notion that meaning is connected to relationship and that texts generate their meaning, in part, by setting up a hidden elements. It was due to the objects and symbols such as blood stains in the bar, marks on the body of the tortured Muslim woman and chains in the rooms through which the lady police officer learned about the violation of human rights and so the audience. Semioticians suggest that texts are often related to other texts, a concept known as inter-textuality (BERGER, 1995), example wound for torture, smile for happiness and tears and cry for sorrow and pain

The Whistleblower and Psychoanalytic Interpretation

The film is a violent one and involves an attempt by the traffickers to forcefully assault, rape and killed Raya in front of other girls to set example to kept the other girls quite. The spiral of silence: a theory of public opinion(BERGER, 1995) explains that people who think they represent minority point of view tend to keep quite. People are afraid of isolating themselves so they do whatever the powerful or majority asks them to do. This is clearly seen in the film how the girls despite of knowing obeyed the wicked ones. Using Freuds's id/ego/superego typology we could say the traffickers are id dominated people killed Raya.

The Whistleblower and Marxist Interpretation

A Marxist critic would focus on the social and political factors that shape the behaviour of various characters. We have confrontation between the antagonist of the films and the protagonist of the film. We also come across between the class of the people who are being trafficked and who commits the acts as business. There exist a good police officer, Bolkovac of higher class and Raya a teenage girl who is forced to work as prostitutes and other women were coming into the International Police Task Force station reporting that they'd been beaten and raped and held captive at these nightclubs and bars with American-sounding names and UN vehicles frequenting the places.

A feminist Interpretation of The Whistleblower

From the feminist point of view, what is of central importance is the fact about rape, sex and human trafficking for sex. The girls were abducted and sold, they were told that they must work off their debt and then they will be let go but it never happened. The girls were made to play typical role, that of sex object for desiring males. Since the end of the war sex trafficking has spread like cancer since half of the men in Bosnia are dead. The film reflects the tendency of many people, brainwashed women as well as men to blame the female to either consciously or unconsciously looks for sex as in the case of Kathryn Bolkovac herself a divorce having three kids having casual physical relationship with a man having family. However we could see the girl slaves and were treated like dogs, thus revealing men of responsibility for their actions(BERGER, 1995).

The Whistleblower and sociological Interpretation

When sociologists look at individual texts, they concern themselves with the ways they can apply such concepts as roles, status, gender, power, class, deviance, stereotypes, uses and gratifications, values to specific text (BERGER, 1995). The traffickers are portrayed as a kind of animals who do not have the hearts. They abused, tortured and sexually assaulted and even killed the girls. The film is full of violence and conflict even in the official life of Kathryn Bolkovac by the higher officials. The films include rape, corruptions, human trafficking and killing.

The Whistleblower and Ethical Interpretation

Moralistic or ethical criticism has a long history (BERGER, 1995). The focus of the film lies in the moral approach of the beliefs and actions of different characters. The contradiction of the Global Displacement Agency's act and the interview of Kathryn Bolkovac in BBC tends to debate between good and bad and suggest positive moral approach. The police were supposed to take the girls from the raid to the Zenica Shelter home but they never arrived. The raids were just for show, the owners pay off to the police and the girls were taken back to the bar. Following her conscience Kathryn Bolkovac was trying to move to the court to rescue the girls and punish the wicked but she suffered instead.

The Whistleblower and Aesthetic interpretation

Aesthetic analysis involves the interpretation of aesthetic elements in a text such as the use of lighting, sound effects, music, shot selection, cutting, editing, and flashback on the technical side and the power of the work of actors and actresses on the performance side (BERGER, 1995). Here in the films the creative use of characters and realistic visuals display, characterizations and the selection of the location between the indoor and the outdoor has given realistic representation and visual appeals. The best part was the realistic representation of Kathryn Bolkovac's interview by BBC that blows the mind of the audiences.

CAN CINEMA AS MEDIUM FREELY PORTRAY REALITY?

Cinema plays a fundamental and leadership role in the dissemination of important socio-political, economic, cultural messages in 21st century. The success of cinema as medium of communication in protecting human rights is achieved through the integrity and rhetorical representation between the medium and society, its effective role in communicating right messages through its modern techniques without ignoring the issues of censorship^{vii} and entertainment law^{viii}.

The freedom of the press is an important issue in considering the role of the media in society. When the Indian national Congress under the leadership of Gandhi launched the Satyagraha movement in 1930, the Government of the India issued the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Ordinance, which empowered the government to demand security from printing press and newspapers. The ordinance was made into a permanent Act in 1935 (Parthasarathy, 1989). In 1949 after India gained her freedom from the hands of British the framers of the Indian constitution adopted article 19/1/A in the constitution as it reads, “All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression; which in itself include the freedom of press as a necessary condition for the media to be effective in carrying out their functions. The press is also one of the most important sources of information for politician (GRIGG, 1992). Existence of free press is important to highlights issues and problems of human rights and media organizations need to be independent in order to carry out their positive roles in society. It was press reporting of corruption in the state of Gujarat, of the behavior of a congress back-bencher, and of the car plant Indira Gandhi licensed her son Sanjay to set up, which lit the flames of the Jayaprakash Narayan or JP movement in the first half of the seventies (GRIGG, 1992). Citizens have the right to receive and disseminate information, but the term freedom of the press is never mentioned only right to freedom right to speech and expressions. Ironically, freedom of media is limited due to the existence of different media systems in different countries.

There is a system that used to be found in the Soviet Union and other Communist countries and People’s Republic of China. This system allows the Communist party to operate or control and the media and to use them to indoctrinate the public with Communist Principles and ideas (BERGER, 1995). There are three more media systems, the libertarian system, the social responsibility system and the authoritarian system. Hence representation of reality by

media is possible in the case of the second system, the libertarian that allows the so called free media, in which private corporations are allowed to control channels and operate networks under the supervision of various government agencies(BERGER, 1995). Thus, freedom of media to portray reality in the form of cinema to is limited.

However, in the case of cinema being the source of entertainment, education and information portraying of reality is possible through the creative use of modern techniques and styles appealing the audience by the realistic emotional appeals. The Whistleblower” Samuel Goldwyn Films release, directed by Larysa Kondrackisuccessfully portrayed the violation of human rights. Society remained silent for years despite of knowing the fact thinking their voices would be suppressed. They have not only successfully portrayed the issues but creatively convinced the world despite of others remaining silent on the issues of violation of human rights.

Media and social responsibility

Whether we are film makers, journalist or owner of a media, we are born with responsibilities. According to Philip W. Chetwode, “*The safety, honour & welfare of your country comes first, always & every time. The honour, welfare & comfort of the men you command, come next. Your own ease, comfort & safety come last, always & every time.*” The media often take a stance on the question of guilt before a verdict has been made. The police and the prosecutor are often very willing to express themselves because it gives them a Public Relation to gain and an opportunity to ask the public for help in solving crimes(Saxena, 2009) media is having various roles in democracy, it plays a very important role in creation of public opinion. Saxena in his book suggests media to be socially responsible in number of ways, such as during the crisis of war situation, at the crisis of internal disturbances and internal emergencies, when the communal and caste conflict and riots erupt in the nation, when there arise conflict between states over territorial disputes etc(Saxena, 2009). In the course of analytical study of the two films we shall be coming across media’s social responsibilities on the above mentioned points.

Along with social responsibility came social functions of media such as surveillance, integration and correlation, entertainment and play, cultural continuity, mobilization and

socialization. Socialization is a process by which individuals are taught the rules and roles and mores they need to function in a given group or society(BERGER, 1995). Media can make people aware of their rights, expose its violations and focus attention on people and areas in need of the protection of human rights and pursue their case till they achieve them. Media also teach us to socialize and in the process we learn to become member of our society. In the study of the film, “The Whistleblower” we see how media, particularly BBC dealt with media setting of an agenda that tends to focus upon news media that highlights the issues and problems of human rights. It had highlighted the issues and set agenda for the people that brought social and personal changes in people’s lives.

DISCUSSION AND OBSERVATION

“The Whistleblower” has shown about a police officer obligated to crime reporting. She has take statements describing their physical, psychological and emotional torture. This is shown through audio visual in the form of entertainment. The film also shows how the girls on arriving Bosnia they were sold and forced to provide sexual services. Their clientele consist of SPOR, IPTF, local police and international employee. Worse they became involve in the trade itself. Cinema reflects reality and made people realized that the time has come for stopping a serious organized crimes of flesh trade. The film also persuaded people to work with heart and save humanity.

The Whistleblower depicts the power of news channel, BBC in highlighting human rights agenda by publishing and broadcasting human rights programs, disseminate human rights information, mobilize human rights NGOS, strengthen popular participation in civil society, promote tolerance, and shine a light on government activity. Media also give publicity to the individuals and organizations, which are engaged in securing human rights. Media can inform and educate the people of their rights and suggest ways and means by which they can solve their problems and thus empowering them to protect their rights. Since media plays the role of communication between the state and the public, it can also play an effective role of making the authorities aware of their duties. Media’s new role today is reporting, analyzing and commenting.

CONCLUSION

The film is ineffective in highlighting the issues and problems of human rights acting as a catalyst in persuading and providing knowledge and feeling of mankind. In order to provide the outline the types and nature of effects cinema leaves on society it is important to distinguish between the intended and the unintended and between the short term and the long term. It is borrowed from Golding (1981) which to help distinguish different concepts of news and its effects.

Thus from the study conclusion can be derived on the effectiveness of cinema on the basis how propaganda is defined as the systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct the social behaviour to achieve further result. Messages that were designed also influence the attitude and knowledge. There is several media campaign throughout the film. They are used in an organized way to achieve a persuasive or informational with a chosen population. The film also highlights important element about the news learning on how the short-term cognitive effect of exposure to mass media news as measured by tests of audience recall, recognition or comprehension. There is an element of agenda setting by which the relative attention is given to the issues in news coverage that influence the rank order of public awareness. One could find the framing done by media which describe the influence on the public on the angles of the messages and issues of human rights. There are reactions as an individual, collective reaction response could also be seen on the basis of common way of reaction. The most effective way how students perceives the film is the nature on how reality is defined and meaning is constructed. This is similar way to social control but different in having more to do with broad structures of cognitions and frames of interpretation than with behaviour. This very extensive kind of effect is also different in the process of constructing their own meaning.

Endnotes:

ⁱthese include cultural, economic, and political rights, such as right to life, liberty, education and equality before law, and right of association, belief, free speech, information, religion, movement, and nationality.

ⁱⁱHammurabi is known for the set of laws called Hammurabi's Code, one of the first written codes of law in recorded history. These laws were inscribed on stone tablets (*stelae*) standing over eight feet tall (2.4 meters).

ⁱⁱⁱIn Christianity, the term disciple refers to a follower of Jesus and is found in the New Testament only in the Gospels and Acts.

^{iv}Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

^vKathryn Bolkovac is an American former police investigator from Nebraska. She worked as a U.N. International Police Force monitor.

^{vi}Semiotics is the science of signs, which are defined as anything that can be used to substitute or stand for something else.

^{vii} It occurs in a variety of different contexts including speech, books, music, films and other arts, the press, radio, television, and the Internet for a variety of reasons including national security, to control obscenity, child pornography, and hate speech, to protect children, to promote or restrict political or religious views, to prevent slander and libel, and to protect intellectual property. It may or may not be legal

^{viii}Entertainment law or media law is a term for a mix of more traditional categories of law with a focus on providing legal services to the entertainment industry.

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