

Reflections of Radical Political Movements on the Silver Screen: An Analysis

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Abstract

Jean – Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni described film as a particular product, manufactured within given economic relations, and involving labour to produce. This is a condition to which ‘independent film-makers’ and the ‘new cinema’ are subject, involving a number of workers and as a material product it is also considered as an ideological product of the system. No film makers can by individual efforts, change the economic relations governing the manufacture and distribution of her/his films. The radical political movements which culminated from the peasant uprising in 1967, spread like firestorm and eventually turned out to be an urban phenomenon. Films invoke current evaluations founded upon new criteria which are marked by the representation of power structures, authoritative institutions, engaging contestations and ideological apparatuses frozen in a specific time and space. Film reproduces reality that is an expression of prevailing ideology and seeks to re-interpret or find inferences and possible explications of the discourse from the past. In the context of radical political movements, the paper seeks to understand and analyze cinematic portrayal of Naxalite movement not only as peasants uprising but as a socio-economic approach arising as a response to the exploitation and subjugation prevalent in the semi-feudal and semi-colonial socio-economic structure. The interpretational method for politicized silver screen contemplates and deliberates on the function of the pictures in a particular period as an agent of transmission of political memorandum, as an ideologised and discursive vehicle of political message.

Introduction

It is usually noticed that Cinema gets affected by the subtle changes in the socio-political, historical and economic situations in the society, which in turn reflects the psyche of the nation. Politics plays a crucial role in democratic countries like India and has a significant impact on every walk of life. On the other hand, Cinema has been one of the most preferred modes of entertainment that have a tremendous influence in shaping the inner consciousness and living conditions in society. It bores in mind that Cinema and politics seemed to relate to each other in the long and thereby tries to influence each other's reflections in the society. This particular aspect of mutual interaction seems to adopt political content in portraying reality on the silver screen.

Cinema or film is a medium of mass communication that has its language where viewers try to decipher as per their knowledge and understanding. The language of film has a structure or form consisting of texts, visual cues and sound that requires special attention. Film structure follows a system of relations or grammar of its own that viewers try to perceive as per their socio-cultural context. The film embodies various ideological principles through its text that tries to communicate a set of values and ideas that may have political or apolitical threads that seek to translate a dominant ideology into easily “read” text.

Cinema as a creative field tries to reflect an underlying philosophy, and sometimes more than one philosophy is also portrayed through a film (Wartenberg and Curran, 2005). In this regard, Marxist Philosophy has been a recurring subject that was picked up by several filmmakers in their film making process. The Marxist approach to film making begun with the onset of the twentieth century but gained popularity throughout after World War II with the pioneering works of Sergei Eisenstein. Sergei Eisenstein, one of the most influential Soviet filmmaker, started his career to convey political messages. At the same time, he served in the Red Army at a time when the fate of the October Revolution was undecided. Eisenstein's practical experiences and encounters as an active member of '*Prolekult*' (an independent organisation of communist artists) and his essay on the "montage of attractions" for the radical art magazine with the *L.E.F.* (Left Front of the Arts) where his ideas of usage of 'shocks' to shape the consciousness of the theatre audience drew him to the art of film making.

This Marxist concept to Cinema was carried forward by several filmmakers like Jean-Luc Godard, Alfred Hitchcock, Federico Fellini and several others. However, one of the most iconic personalities of the French New Wave, Jean Luc Godard, who left an indelible mark in every aspect of film by transforming several dominant approaches to Cinema. The centrifugal

idea reflected by Marxist centric Cinema revolved around socio-political movements that emerge from the crisis in socio-political and cultural situations that somehow seeks to relate the idea of development and policies of the government that is gradually challenged by the common mass that seeks transformation. The characters and events associated with deeply rooted frustrations and class struggle against the oppressive measures of the bourgeoisie class and its related orders of the Governments. The 1960s marked a shift in the cinematic approaches to Marxist politics and its reflections as the filmmakers became politically active and tried to make films for the common man. Filmmakers felt the need to raise their voices through their Cinema by shifting their concern from a profit-oriented commercial Cinema to the independent low budget cinema by employing non-professional actors in their Cinema and also using different means to spread their political ideas that challenge the fundamental concern of capitalist framework to Cinema (Kendrik, 1999) (Burns, 2015).

Radical Movements in India: The Historical Context

The Naxalite Movement or Naxalism as it is usually known as an armed political peasants uprising that took place in post-independent India, attracting widespread attention not only inside the country but also from several international levels. It depicted the inherent contradictions in socio-political and economic structures by individual sections of people across the nation. The Movement originated from Naxalbari Village in Darjeeling District of West Bengal (which geographically located at the junction of India, Nepal and Bangladesh) in May 1967. The Movement led by a group of members of the Communist Party in India. They had ideological differences from their parent organisation, and they guided by the thoughts and principles of MaoTse Tung. The uprising soon transformed it in a militant movement and tried to spread its extremist thoughts and ideologies in several parts of the country. Militant members of the C.P.I. (M) who either participated in the Naxalbari peasant uprising or actively supported it expelled from the Party as the C.P.I. (M) leadership disowned the movements in Naxalbari. Many other protesters who supported their thoughts and ideas also left the Party. These dissidents and expelled members later formed a separate party, the “*Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)*” or “*C.P.I. (M.-L.)*”, although all the members who had broken away from the C.P.I. (M) I did not join this new Party (Chandra, 1990).

The theoretical dimensions of this new communist Movement tried to follow the ideas of Mao Tse Tung and his Chinese Revolutionary paths. The ideas of Naxalism emerged amidst the negotiations in the world of abundance and scarcity and located between the

constant manifestation of acute poverty, uneven development and political insularity. The Movement raised its head under the leadership of extremist comrades Charu Majumder, Kanu Sanyal of Bengal, Nagi Reddy and Vempatapu Satyanarayana of Andhra Pradesh, Kunnikal Naryanan and K.P.R. Gopalan of Kerala) who unhesitatingly declare their constant faith in the indomitability of Maoism. The Naxalite movement aimed at upliftment of the poor and waged extremist struggle on behalf of the oppressed masses against the conventional feudal orders of the society. Communist The clash fired off between peasants and feudal landlords, where the latter forcibly tried to evict a poor peasant from his land, and the Movement took an ultra –extremist shape waging an armed struggle against the 'enemies of the state'. (Johari.J.C, 1971) (Rana et al, 2015). The Movement received exceptional publicity in the national press. Though this Movement regarded as unsuccessful, still just like any other movement the Naxalite Movement left significant impressions on the socio-political situations, the repercussions of which can be seen even in today's society; and for which it will always have a special place in Indian history. It affected and continues to affect many well-known intellectuals, who have given it a very profound reflection in literature, art and of course films.

Review of Literature

The Mahar movement that originated in Maharashtra in 1910 paved a path for collective protests movements of the Dalits. The oppressed sections specifically the Dalits raised voice against the class and caste-based exploitations that opened new directions to social movements in India. In the year 1917, the Dalit movements not only struggled to rise above the 'socio-political stigma' and 'injustice' prevalent in our society but also tried to attain social equality in treatment and opportunity. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr B.R. Ambedkar played a significant role in the upliftment of the Dalits and later made them join the National Freedom Movement against the British rule. In the meanwhile, the Tebhaga Movements of 1946 raised head. They sought to involve a socio-political struggle and aggressive campaign of the peasants, who raised demands to lessen down crop sharing percentage of Landlords or Zamindars from 'half to one third'. Later the nation witnessed several posts modern and posted colonial movements like the Naxalite Movements, the Women's Movement, the Labour Struggle and the contemporary social media movements (Shaw, 2016). The issues of social inequalities, caste atrocities, uneven economic progress and oppressions gave birth to several forms of uprising, protests, movements and revolutions 'at both societal and individual levels' which found expressions in works of several literary authors, artists,

playwrights, singers and filmmakers. Several Indian Writers and Novelists like *Munshi Premchand*, *Mulk Raj Anand*, *Mahashweta Devi*, *Arundhati Roy* and some others “reflected the problems of the oppressed sections of the society” and tried to bring their struggle and protests on the reading tables of the urban intellectual society.

Munshi Premchand's novels (*Gaban* 1931 and *Godaan* 1936) revolved around the central theme of class oppression in Indian society. In his most influential novel {*Godaan* (1936) 1968}, the author tries to depict the pathetic reality of poor farmer, Hari Ram whose struggle with poverty and starvation for a better future and the exploitations he faces in the society to achieve it. Author *Mulk Raj Anand* wrote in his novels ‘*Untouchable*’ (1935) and his popular trilogy ‘*The Village*’ (1939), ‘*Across the Black Waters*’ (1940) and ‘*The Sword and the Sickle*’ (1942) mirrors a tough a struggle of his various characters “against various socio-political and cultural inequalities and injustices present in the Indian society.”

Mahashweta Devi's (*Hazar Churasir Maa*, 1974; *Aranyer Adhikar*, 1979 and *Chotti Munda Ebong Tar Tir*, 1980) works to represent her keen involvement with the problems of the underprivileged. Her approach to gender oppression entangled within its class and caste dichotomies. Devi's literary works do not present a glorified picture of the oppressed but reflected their lives amidst hardships and revealed their strength to resist any form of social oppression. The effects and impact of the Naxalite Movement were evident in her work 'Hazaar Churasir Maa' which was later translated and dramatised by her as 'Mother of 1084'. Samaresh Basu author of *Mahakaler Rather Ghora* (1977) represented the struggle of Ruhitan Kurmi, a "subaltern activist", who disillusioned with the popular left leadership of elitist middle class who made grand speeches but offered no concrete action, which led to the emergence of new political selfhood for him. According to Shishendu Chakravarti, "upper-class revolutionaries were immersed in theoretical debates informed by the literature of communism while the illiterate, landless peasant understood the same historical situation from his practical experience" (Sinha, A. 2011).

Rabindra Ray, in *The Naxalites and their ideology* (1988), describes the twin ideologies that guided the Naxalite Movement as the literate and existential. One of them tries to portray the poor and landless peasants struggling for political power. The other tries to identify the Movement as a socioeconomic uprising as a reply to the constant exploitation and suppressions prevalent in the semi-feudal and semi-colonial, socioeconomic structures (Ray, R. 1988). Biplab Dasgupta in his book, *The Naxalite Movement*, challenges the necessary theoretical foundations of the Naxalite movement and indicates broad differences based on theoretical and practical philosophies of Mao Tse Tung by the Naxalites (Dasgupta.B, 1974).

Manoranjan Mohanty in his seminal writings, *Revolutionary Violence: A Study of Maoist Movement in India*, tries to reassess the movements through a different standpoint and points out the ideological deviations of the Naxalites from the principles led down by Chairman Mao. He recognises the ideological stagnation and pre-organisational character of the Movement as causes of the setback of the Naxalite Movement (Mohanty. M, 1977).

Research Objectives

1. To understand the radical political movements, especially those influenced by Naxalism and its ideology.
2. To analyse the cinematic portrayal of Naxal-centric radical political movements in Indian Cinema.

Research Methodology

The analysis tries to understand the portrayal of radical movements and its post-colonial negotiations in Cinema. In order to do so, the study uses the qualitative research methods of content analysis for analysing extremist movement centric Indian cinema that has made in the context of the Naxalite Movement in India. Since most of the Cinema has been commercially made to charm the common interests of the viewers and therefore it is usually noticed that these films have somewhere tried to fictionalise or distort the political movements generally portrayed as secondary or tertiary ideas associated to a central theme. For this reason, several cinemas that have chosen for the study tend to involve severe works of Directors who were bold enough to reflect realities without glorifying the cinematic portrayals. With these views, only seven cinemas have selected for analysis since the 1970s to contemporary times.

Analysis of Naxalite Extremism and its Reflections in Indian Cinema

The extremist movements, especially the post-colonial negotiations inspired by the Naxalite uprisings, have influenced the content and forms of several Cinema made in India since the 1960s. Several films have been made on the theme directly and indirectly. The themes of films in which poor peasants challenge upper-caste zamindars and their right to oppress and exploit, including their right to caste-based oppression shown to reflect the influence of nature and the purpose of the Naxalite movement, and in general, the Movement of peasants against feudal landlordism under the guidance and leadership of communist philosophy and parties. All the films on Naxalism focus broadly on resistance against social inequality, corruption, poverty, injustice and associated socioeconomic evils. However, the negative aspects of such films brought to notice when the directors tend to commercialise the films by

mixing romanticism and not intend to highlight the naked reality of society on which the Naxalite Movement-based.

In Ritwik Ghatak's *Jukti, Tokko aar Golpo*, Naxalism has been spoken of like the frame of Bengal, misguided, successful and unsuccessful at the same time. After the late 1970s, however, the movies of this genre started deteriorating, both in quality and in quantity. In the year 1980, Gautam Ghose brought his first Film: *Maa Bhoomi*, one of the best-made films of the genre. The film speaks of the Telangana uprising, but as it had roots in the late 1940s, it somewhere misses out to strike the idea behind the Movement. In the same year, *Aakrosh* was made by Govind Nihalani, which is relevant in understanding the exploitation of the poor and the Dalits. *Grihajuddha (1982)*, made by Buddhadeb Dasgupta, is the story of the nexus among corporation, media, Police and politics. In the year 1986, John Abraham's *Amma Ariyan* talked directly of Naxalism; however, it delved more into the life of one murdered member, and through his life spoke of Naxalites as ordinary people whose lives forced to take a huge turn. This movie is one of the best movies in the south, related to the topic.

Asok Biswanathan's '*Sunya Theke Suru' (1993)*, speaks of the life of an ex- Naxalite. It starts in the early 1970s and then moves to the late 1990s. Biswanathan says that the ex-Naxalites who have become confused and idle seeing the apparent failure of their dreams, need to start from the beginning.

In the 21st century, the numbers of Naxal feature films have gone down further. *Hazaar Khwaishein Aisi (2005)* by Sudhir Misra, often referred to as the most important film of the genre post-New Wave period. *Kalbela(2009)* by Gautam Ghose, though attempted well, is often slammed by experts for misrepresenting Naxalism as a personal grudge against the system. *Chakravyuh (2012)* is another critically acclaimed recent film of the genre. It based loosely on the Telegu film *Sindhooram(1997)*. However, other than these, there are many other movies which take references from the Naxalite Movement. *Ankur (1974)*, *Duratwa (1978,)* *Anu (1998)*, *Herbert (2006)*, *Tara (2010)*, *Ko (2011)* are a few of them.

Though Indian Cinema has done a remarkable job in the bringing Naxalism on screen, much is left to be said. For whatever reasons, the directors (barring the pioneers such as Ray, Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak) have shown the ultimate defeat of the revolutionary. Also, the role of women is highly understated. There are some other limitations too. However, from the movies mentioned above, many have managed to bring the theories of Mao Tse Tung alive on screen. Some have done so better than others.

Pratidwandi (1970): Pratidwandi means competitor. Pratidwandi is one of Satyajit Ray's landmark movies that try to show pressing times of competing situations. The protagonist of Pratidwandi is Siddharth, a middle-class youth and a medical dropout, who is looking for a job after his father's death. However, his efforts go in vain as his answers seen 'politically incorrect.' Siddharth has one brother and one sister. He is a moralist, once a part of the student union, who sold two of his course books to buy one written by Che Guevara. His sister is a survivor, making adjustments with the middle-class morality. His brother is an activist of revolutionary politics. Ray has excellently portrayed the middle-class mentality in which a member tries to adjust with one another. Ray has also shown how changes in socioeconomic situations tend to transform the relationships between siblings. Siddhartha's sister defies him for not being practical; his brother ignores him for his political inactivity.

Siddhartha's confusion shown in various ways. He wants to kill his sister's boss, who allegedly exploits her. He protests for a co-interviewee, who faints since all the 75 contestants for a single position clustered in a single room with a single fan. Finally, he was frustrated to take up a job as a medical salesperson and finds his refuge in the love of his girlfriend. Ray points out that the primal cause of any social upheaval is unemployment; which soon leads to exploitation. Pratidwandi depicts that the class of the society, which forms the backbone of the population who were thriving in confusion. They want a revolution, but they are also concerned about giving their families a respectful life.

Interview (1971): Mrinal Sen directed 'Interview' which regarded as his first cinematic creation that happens to be a part of his Calcutta trilogy. The Cinema '*Interview*' starts with some interview questions on the title scene, followed by the removal of colonial status in the opening scene. Ranjit, educated youth in a low earning job is the central character. His father meets with an untimely death when Ranjit is the only earning member in a family of three. The uncertainties of low paying jobs make him aspire for a better job in a mercantile company. A family friend promises him a lucrative job offer in his firm, but for this, he needs to dress in 'appropriate attire' that is in a western manner or rather the colonial manner. At first, it sounded like a straightforward job, but sometimes later, it did not seem to be that simple as it sounded. However, his destiny has kept it otherwise as ongoing Labour union strikes by workers from both organised, and unorganised sectors obstructed him to get his suit back from the laundry. He thought to wear his father's old suit, but then it would not fit him, and it would have ridiculed his personality in front of others. Then he tries to borrow a

suit but could not manage to get one. Finally, as fate would have it, there is no option left for him but to appear in a Bengali traditional dress: dhoti and kurta.

The streak of revolution is seen at last when he later defies his family friend on this entire dress issue. More than two decades have passed since independence, but the legacy of colonialism continues. As we know, Naxalism is not only referring to political protest but also a cultural one; one where the traditional values, norms, rituals questioned. Ranjit's unwillingness to wear a coronet during the marriage is one such example. After the peasants, the youths identified the Movement with their realities. They went on to form the revolution in the cities. It was a form of colonial hangover that touched upon the diverse issues which led to the growth of the Naxal Movement: anti-establishment, middle-class cowardice and unemployment.

Calcutta 71 (1972): Mrinal Sen's another landmark creation in 1972 was '*Calcutta 71*', where he tried to recall specific moments from the 1930s to 50s to trace the historicity of the 1970s and depicts Calcutta in those changing times. It regarded as the second Film in Mrinal Sen's *Calcutta Trilogy*. The movie shows four films depicting the post-colonial negotiations, the hungry masses and exploitative role played by the socio-political corruptions. The movie starts with a news bulletin which says that an unidentified body found at maidan with bullet injuries. This was not common in the then Calcutta, where youth-related to Naxalite politics were killed either in the name of encounter or were falsely released from jail at isolated places and shot. The first story shows a lower-middle-class family residing in a small cottage in a slum area and once on a rainy night when they forced to leave their home and take shelters in a safe house. However, on arriving, they find that many have already taken up the place before them. These were the situations in Calcutta in the 30s when people left their homes due to some calamities or some human-made problems in society.

The second story revolves around a poor helpless mother and her two daughters, who struggled with dire poverty and starvation and in such situations, a mother forced to send her daughter to prostitution. Later their cousin brother Nalinakhya visits them from Delhi and after facing the hard reality inhumanly leaves for Delhi without helping them in those crucial situations in their lives. These particular sequences are seemed to be based on a short story 'Angar' by Probodh Kumar Sanyal.

On the other side of the then, Calcutta depicted in the third story, which shows the lavish lives of the bourgeoisie. Some people belonging from the upper class of the society seen to be enjoying cocktail drinks in musical parties completely unaware or not bothered to

know the grim realities of the common mass. The director tries to show the disappointment of people through a conversational sequence of man who shares his disappointment about the real conditions of the poverty-stricken people in India and bestows other such philosophical viewpoints. However, shown to be a hypocrite who earns money by exploiting the poor workers of his factory.

The fourth story shows the chasing and killing of a young man, who, we can assume to be a kind of a revolutionary. There are four stories, each story having independent characters and set-ups, but each one of them harping on the same reality, poverty and degradation. Mrinal Sen has tried to depict the conditions which were responsible for turning the ordinary people towards Naxalism. The commoners struggle for a living, they fight for each meagre meal, even going as far as to sell their self-respect for it, and the rich and famous enjoy their life not being aware of it. In the end, the youth dies, representing the death of a struggling generation and the end of hope that strikes the emotional chords in the viewers.

Jana Aranya (1976): Another masterpiece by Satyajit Ray, it is based on the novel written by Mani Shankar Mukherjee. The film portrays the helplessness of the middle class, educated, urban youth similar to that in *Pratidwandi*. Somnath, an educated guy, is a victim of the widespread unemployment in India. After making numerous attempts, he finally decides to start his own business as a middleman in exchange for a commission. His friend, Sukumar, who is also a literate guy like him, faces similar circumstances but finally resigns himself to his fate on securing the job of a taxi driver.

However, soon his job becomes limited to petty dealings, which is the ambitious guy he is, appear unsatisfactory to him. One day, Somnath gets a once in a lifetime opportunity; he gets his shot to success by almost getting an order done with a big client. However, there is one catch. In order to secure the deal, he must supply the client with a prostitute. Somnath hesitates against his conscience, but putting his aim before his hesitation, starts looking through brothels. Failing initially, Somnath finally finds a girl for the purpose. The twist in the tale when he finds out that the girl in question is Sukumar's sister. Tremendously embarrassed, and at a complete loss, Somnath offers her the money promised and requests her to leave, but the girl refuses. She denies taking a hit on whatever self-respect she has and says that this was her purpose, to earn money. Somnath delivers her to his client and lands the big order he was hoping for but is filled with self-loathing on his wrongdoing.

Hazaar Chaurasi ki Maa (1998): Hazar Chaurasi ki Maa, a film by Govind Nilhani who takes the story from the famous Bengali novel "*Hazaar Churasir Maa*" written by

Mahashweta Devi. It is a film that depicts the state's atrocities and the political inhumanity of that time. Bratin a Naxalite youth along with his four comrades are murdered by political goons, presumably of the ruling rightist party in front of the parents of one. Bratin, youngest son of Dibyanath Chatterjee and Sujata Chatterjee, a middle-class family is residing in the then Calcutta in the 1970s. Bratin, like all other youths, finished off his schools and joined an undergraduate course in a college. His parents are shown as a caring and quite concerned about him and so regularly enquire about his life.

The film shows the plight of Bratin's Mother, who loses her son in the violence as a result of adopting a political ideology that was against the mighty ruling power. The sequence that strikes everyone was when Bratin's mother was called by the Police to identify Bratin's body. In the morgue, a number is attached to each body, and not their names. Bratin is no. Is 1084. Suddenly, a person reduced to a number! There Bratin's parents were treated with cruelty instead of sympathy. They know their lives will never be the same again. When the initial bout of sorrow wears off, Sujata is shocked to hear the Police referring to her as 1084's mother, after the 1084 tag that placed on her son's body. She realises that this was all hers and her son's identity reduced to now.

Sujata struggles to come to terms with her son's passing, as well as understand the circumstances that led to it. She tries to meet her son's friends and comes to know that he had a girlfriend named Nandini Mitra and this is also when she finds out that her son was a part of the rebel group referred to as the "Naxalite", a radical leftist group. Nandini, through her conversation with Sujata, brings Bratin's revolutionary ideas as well as his inner contradictions to life. Nandini tells her that Bratin was disturbed by his father's behaviour towards his mother. Through this, he had begun to question the hiding hypocrisy, inequality and immorality under the shroud of respectability. Perhaps his intense desire to free his mother from this daily exploitation caused him to change the entire system.

She also meets Somu's mother, a poor, illiterate Bihari woman, who also lost her son on the same night as Bratin. The two women unite in the sorrow and Sujata connects with Somu's mother in ways she could never connect to her family members who shown busy to hush up the news of Bratin's death in fear of public humiliation. As she delves deeper into her son's former life, she comprehends her son's situations and his viewpoints and decides to be a part of his struggle,

Hazaaroon Khwaishein Aisi (2003): The Cinema released in post-Indian new wave era, but set on period undergoing radical students movements of the early 70s. The backdrop of the

story of this film based on a love triangle between a young girl and two young boys during the period of National Emergency in India. It is a thought-provoking, complex and sensitive film that revolves around three student characters, namely, Siddhartha, Geeta and Vikram, all classmates at St. Stephen's College in Delhi. Siddhartha is a son of a retired judge, Geeta is a London-returned South Indian girl, and Vikram is a son of a politician of the Gandhi-Nehru era. Siddhartha and Geeta love each other, and Vikram has a crush on Geeta. Three friends are ideologically different: ideologically Siddhartha is a radical leftist, Geeta once associated with the radical students' movements is now reluctant, and Bikram is a careerist.

The film depicts the recklessness of this time, where youths indulge in social debates to bring socio-political transformations at several levels in the society. Siddhartha and his friends once visit the rural hinterland, and they decide to realise their freedom. Siddhartha later chooses his ideological aspirations over love and moves to Bhojpur in Bihar to join the peasants' struggle.

Here Geeta does not take much interest in their adventurous Naxalite politics. She decides to go abroad and study for her Masters, but she gets married to an I.A.S. officer and settles down. She is not fascinated with the life of the I.A.S. officer husband and feels bored and alienated. One day she meets her friend Bikram, who is working as a middle man and earning a lot at a party. He tells her that Siddhartha is in Bhojpur and somehow they manage to communicate their views through letters. Siddhartha writes to Geeta from Bhojpur, about the real India: exploitation, poverty, the violence of the upper class and state atrocities. In the course of Movement, a new face of Indian society revealed to him: A landlord's son rapes a *Dalit* woman, and when the Dalit family with the help of the revolutionaries demand justice, ignored.

However, each one is unhappy with how their lives shaped. Vikram is devoid of the love of Geeta. Geeta is cheating on her husband by meeting Siddharth on the sly. Finally, Geeta gets a divorce from her husband, and decides to live with Siddharth in the village and work for women of the weaker section of the society and also teaches the children in the village. Meanwhile, they have a child out of this relationship, and she sends her child to her parents in London as she believes that a village is hardly a place for a child to grow up.

During the emergency, the police arrests Geeta along with Siddharth and others, tortured and sexually assaulted. Her ex-husband decides to rescue her and brings her back to Delhi. Siddharth faces the police brutalities, but nobody helps him. Requested by Geeta, Vikram also starts for Bihar to free him using his influence in New Delhi. On his way, he is injured in a car accident and taken to the same hospital where Siddharth admitted after

torture. One night his comrades rescue him from police custody, and the Police mistakenly assume that Vikram is responsible for this. Vikram tries to flee but fails. Police almost kill him, but he is saved by a political leader, who knows Vikram. Vikram is paralysed due to torture. Finally, Siddharth goes to London to study medicine, and Geeta returns to the battlefield. Their relationship does not end but does not remain the same. Geeta's love for Siddhartha is not without his ideology (Sarkar, 2012).

Sudhir Mishra maintains this supposed duality of the ideological positions of the two male characters. Their lives are shown in separate shots, explaining their ideologies- Siddhartha with his socialist and Vikram with his existential struggle. The movie has the perspective of the participant's class background, human relationship, and the state's brutality. The story also has a subtext of communalism, which has erupted in Meerut, a city nearer to Delhi. During partition, the city had not experienced a riot similar to that in the early 1970s. This riot brought the various ruling groups to play their role; they got mischievously involved, with the communal forces to help them remain in power.

Chakravyuh (2012): This Prakash Jha directed movie has its backdrop in the current political scenario, while loosely taking references from Nandigram-Singur case files. The story portrays a young and dynamic Police officer, who is posted in Nandighat after a horrendous massacre killing of 80 police officers. After a few days of enquiry, Adil comes to know that a section of political extremists known to be Maoists are behind such horrifying massacre and led by a charismatic personality Rajan. Despite holding enormous power and information, Adil as a Police Officer felt helpless in the continuously growing extremist activities in the areas. Here enters Kabir, rootless, rolling stone guy whose only strength and source of faith in life is his friendship for Adil. The maverick strategies to join Rajan's gang and acts as a double agent as Adil's informer. Adil, though unwilling at first, agrees to the plan proposed by Kabir. As per the plan, Kabir gets in the Maoists gang and very shrewdly gains their trust and confidence. From there he used to secretly inform Adil, who starts hunting down the Maoists with great success. Within a week, the duo of Adil and Kabir turn the game, with a cache of arms raided, killing off many influential comrades and the capture of Rajan.

However, Kabir begins to discover different kinds of reality. The wretched conditions of the rural people and their continuous struggle with class and crisis brutally displaced in the name of urbanisation; their houses, their land, their forests been snatched by their governments in the name of development; exploitation and capitalisation is going on and on.

With the constant rise of poverty and desperation, the cry of anger and frustration gave birth to the Naxalite who believes that the only way to assert their rights and overcome oppressions is through armed struggle. Soon Kabir identifies their problems and gradually understand their problems from their perspectives. Kabir finds himself in a state of utter confusion, and in such dilemmas situations, his soul questions him as whom to support?

Moreover, against whom shall he fight? At this juncture, Kabir finds himself in a situation similar to Chakravyuh, where one could not escape and feels helpless in that situation. Before Kabir could solve the whole matter with his friend Adil, situations and certain events push him into the war within his soul. As Shilpa Shaw mentions that “Chakravyuh portrays aggressive cinematic tone with sufficient stock of blood and action to the dole, but is nothing more than an average action flicked in the garb of relevant cinema.”

Findings and Discussions

In almost all of the movies, we can find an enraged youth who is grieving for a personal loss and takes up arms for vengeance. Very few movies have portrayed the Naxalite Movement in entirety as a collective protest. Mostly, some deprivation in the protagonist's own life goes on to provoke them to rage war. Also, the directors never forget to leave their statements in the films; which most definitely is, that violence can bring about no good at the end. In almost all of these films, we can find a character, a voice of reason, which goes and finally manages to convince the protagonist to lay down his/her arms and give up the fight. However, on thinking clearly, we do get logic behind this. Just like any other militant group, Naxalites were also enemies of the government, and to release a movie. It becomes impossible to ignore the censor board.

From Satyajit Ray to Mrinal Sen to several others who came after them, the Movement managed to touch all in some form or the other. However, the first acclaimed film of the genre can be said to be *Pratidwandi*. It tells the story of Siddhartha, a graduate, formally a supporter of Naxal, who is looking for a job. *Pratidwandi* can be called the first of the trilogy of Satyajit Ray in this genre; which also includes *Seemabaddha* and *Jana Aranya* (Sarkar.K, 2012). Ray's approach to Naxalism has been quite different from Mrinal Sen's. Instead of delving right into the heart of the revolution, Ray has explained how the Movement came to affect the middle-class people. While the Naxalbari Movement was a peasant uprising, it affected all sections of the society, mostly the middle class. It is with this in mind that Ray has directed his films.

Mrinal Sen considered being India's most influential director of the genre. Three of his films: *Interview*, *Calcutta 71* and *Padatik*, commonly referred to the Calcutta Trilogy, are the most influential films to understand extremist ideology inspired by Naxalism. Mr Sen has not only portrayed Naxalism, but he has also given us an overview of the heart-wrenching conditions of the poor and deprived, which pushed them into the revolution. Experts have claimed *Calcutta 71* as that one movie which is sufficient to turn you towards the ideology.

- **New wave Era and the post-new wave Period:** The Naxalbari Movement was in its full phase from the years 1967 to 1975; the new wave period lasted from 1952 to 1976. This leads us to the conclusion that the Movement was coincidentally set right in the heart of the new wave. This was the time when art directors like Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak made their movies. Since the representation of the Movement, as done in these movies, could not be better. These films not only showed the Naxal but also quite surprisingly refrained from over glorifying it by portraying the abject and heart-wrenching conditions which gives birth to a Naxal. Not only that, but these films have shown the other side of the coin too, that is, how the section of the youth which was not directly involved in the Movement, but was forever affected by it. As in *Calcutta 71*, a twenty-year-old youth, who has seen the history of poverty, the history of deprivation and the history of exploitation. After that, a distraught girl showed listening to the radio news of a dead 20-year-old young man. Mrinal Sen is indicating that under these conditions, is it that shocking that the youth picked up arms? Similarly, *Pratidwandi* shows an educated youth who is not able to secure a job for the simple reason that their views are not 'politically correct.'
- **The plurality of Perspective:** Directors of the above movies had their unique ways of presentation; so truthfully, it would be unfair to compare their films. However, here compared is their ways of portraying Naxalism. Their perspectives to particular Movement were different, and this is what has been talked about here. Mrinal Sen's films of the period perhaps represent the most strident endorsement of militant radicalism in the period, and his approach towards Naxalism becomes clear. He has delved right into the heart of the matter and has taken the liberty to explain the root causes as to why the youth forced to turn towards Naxalism. He has shown the poor, the deprived and the exploited, who has seen this for several years and now, is finally compelled to take up arms and resort to violence. Sen's telling of his stories is faithful to the tenets of realism, but the devices he employs to frame and link these stories are either frankly didactic or satirical. In his films, the Naxal is the hero, where he has not directly talked of a Naxal but has

spoken of the conditions which forced him into it. Satyajit Ray's approach towards Naxalism in his films is more from the middle class 'bhodrolok.' Though he sympathises with Naxals, his approach is more openly middle class. Ray deals with a class he is familiar with, and he restricts his view to the experience of the class. The plurality of perspectives will enhance the range of interpretations and enable the viewers to nurture original thought process.

- **Constant contradictions of the urban middle class:** The emergence of a collective protagonist - the unemployed, confused urban youth, struggling between ideology and social realities. In *Pratidwandi*, the protagonist, though agreeing to the ideology internally, has to concentrate on finding a job to earn a living. However, his hatred towards the bourgeoisie seen when his pity for a driver blamed for a hit and run accident immediately changes to rage on noticing that his car is a Mercedes Benz. Directors of these cinemas successfully portrayed the contradictions that arose in the middle-class families during the Movement, with the young blood inclining towards the revolution, but the other fearing for their survival. Ray in *Jana Aranya* questions through the father of Somnath what the boys can do if they do not get a job? Either they will take the wrong path or join the revolution. Ray comments on the Naxalites that those who sacrifice their lives must have a strong ideology.
- **Transitional Female Characters:** Women played a significant role in the revolution. Experts go on to say that during the Movement, if it were the men who were the torchbearers, then it was the women who lighted it for them. In *Hazaar Chaurasi ki Maa*, we are brought face to face with Sujata, Nandini and Somu's mother, who are all compelling characters in their domains. However, Sujata and Somu's mother are fighting for their sons, whereas Nandini, though involved, is only a flag bearer. Their genuine commitment to the ideology is only based on the men's that they cared. Similar is the problem with Geeta in *Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi*, where she flees from the revolution as soon as she can. Though she later returns to the revolution, Siddharth's love is the primary catalyst. Juhi of *Chakravyuh*, whose character was improved to make her stronger, just seem to cannot get out of things without Kabir's help; not to mention stereotypical framing of women who just looked at as an object of love thereby forming a love story between her and Kabir.

Women who were involved in the revolution were not forced to, neither were they "caught in the middle", as the movies try to show. They joined the forces on their own accord because they felt connected to the cause. Bela Dutta, the wife of Saroj Dutta, had

joined the revolution even before he did. Lila Majumdar Sengupta, the wife of Charu Majumdar, played a critical role in the achievements of the Naxalite Movement. There were many others like them. It is miserable that the female characters in the movies have reduced to being side-kicks, until very recently.

- **Representation of ‘Foot Soldiers’:** Naxalbari Movements was a ‘peasant uprising.’ Though leaders like Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santhals and Saroj Dutta headed the Movement, it was the unrest among peasants against unequal land distribution and labour exploitation that started it. This is a severe flaw seen in the movies. Just like the women, these actual heroes of the Movement have taken a side role to the glamorous ones. E.g., *‘Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi’*, *Chakravyuh* though vividly portrays the essence of Naxalism, the focus is on the three young people from the urban society. The hundreds of dead people are still nameless; their sacrifices unrecognised. Similar is the case with most of the other movies. In *Hazaar Chaurasi ki Maa*, the Naxalite is a college guy belonging from a middle-class family. There were many foot soldiers, shot down, many who rotted away in jail, without a single trial whatsoever; however, most of the movies show their protagonists to be an educated, smart guy who joined the Movement even though he did have to. However, to be fair, it is not only the filmmakers who are at fault; the historians of our nation have not done much research on them; documents on their lives lost never to be found.

Conclusion

Various directors have had different ways of presenting the revolution. While some dug directly into the core of the matter and tried to make people understand the conditions of poverty, oppression and maltreatment at the hands of the bourgeoisie that created unrest among the people, others have talked about unemployment being the most significant issue among the middle class, and how they were affected by the Movement. With the years passing by, the focus has set upon on the happenings more than the causes. However, since the Movement's end was not exactly successful and it failed to bring about all the changes it had aimed at, directors have also taken up to adding their personal opinion that ultimately violence does not pay off.

Though Indian Cinema has done a remarkable job in portraying extremist movements inspired by Naxalism, it is not like there is no room for improvement. There are areas where the directors and hence the movies have concentrated on surprisingly little. The brave women have received surprisingly little footage, and where they have their roles bargained to being

the male characters' side-kicks. The real flag bearers of the revolution, i.e. the peasants, have hardly or instead never got the importance of the protagonist in the movies. There have been cases of misrepresentation too where the Movement seen to taken up by the protagonist after a personal loss, turning it into more of a personal revenge story. These types of distortions seen in several movies that try to depict the Movement but in a different light of their own.

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