

An Analysis of Auteur Theory: Vetrimaaran as an ‘Auteur’

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to highlight the uniqueness and identity in films which are examined with the limits of ‘Auteur Theory’. The study focuses on the personal style of a director in a peculiar way. It is a French film theory that discusses about the philosophy of Auteur notes. The director reflects individual style, vision, techniques, innovation, personality and creativity in making a film. This theory considers that the director is equal to literary writer. The entire paper analyses the various aspects of a Kollywood director Vetrimaaran’s movies and also it evaluates his commitment from Polladhavan to Asuran in which he stepped out from the common Kollywood principles of making a film. Particularly, this paper focuses on Vetrimaaran’s unique aesthetic, technical style and the psychology of the audience that has made him fame in Kollywood

Keywords

French film theory, Auteur Theory, Vetrimaaran, Uniqueness, Kollywood

Article Received: 10 August 2020, Revised: 25 October 2020, Accepted: 18 November 2020

Introduction

Film making is not definitely a work of an individual. Writing is the biggest platform where writer is the entire sole of story and characters. However, film being a powerful and specialized medium that can’t be evolved as an individual work. According to ‘Auteur Theory’, it is a reflection of a director’s artistic view of making a film. Hence a film directed by a film maker will have a constant uniqueness and individualistic style that flashes the audience to know about the director’s common artistic identity. Vetrimaaran is one among the contemporary directors of Kollywood. Cinema is a profound community movement including numerous people, spaces and other aesthetic expressions. From the earliest starting point of hypothesis, a few observations and perspectives on who is actually dragging an inventive vision behind seems to be the director of a film. Likewise, questions are raised regarding who is liable for the achievement or disappointment of a film. The responsibilities of making a film wholly relies upon an individual soul and accept the fame and criticism whether it hits success or not. Vetrimaaran’s directorial debut was *Polladhavan*, released in the year 2007. Though it is his first film, it hits a huge success and marked a trend set for a bike which is still a passion among people. The hero, Dhanush dwelt together with Vetrimaaran to attain the hits. Later on, Vetrimaaran gave four films such as *Aadukalam*, *Visaaranai*, *Vada Chennai*, and *Asuran*. These are the movies that flashed the light on various issues that portray the regional problems and showcases the custom of life. It targets some of the sufferings and chaos of certain communities. For example, in the movie *Asuran*, he daringly highlights the ill treatment of downtrodden and the struggle between the elite and the poor. Here the quality of director’s uniqueness has revealed. Through this film he conveys the message that only Education can bring m a peaceful and a

dignified life. Thus, this paper will figure out Vetrimaaran under the frame of ‘Auteur Theory’. He has created a signature style in Kollywood not only with his artistic delivery but also with the technical prospect. The director has given importance to acting and storyline despite the affluent family, songs and other embellished surroundings. He portrays the protagonists as an ordinary creature who live a basic middle-class life and encounter all kinds of internal conflicts. The research problem of this paper is to scandalize the concept of the “director” and portray his image as “an author”. A true film maker will bring genuineness to his subject instead of producing a tasteful precise delivery of the original material. As it reflects in the ‘Auteur Theory’ Vetrimaaran has unique approach and followed a specific style in his movies, which paved way to consider Vetrimaaran as an ‘Auteur’.

Literature Review

The French magazine named *Cahiers Du Cinema*, established in the year 1951, explains the function of director in film. In 1960, Jerry Lewis, one of the classic Hollywood actors who later turned as director, is considered as an ‘Auteur’ by his eminent style used in films. His thoughtfulness regarding both the business and inventive sides of creation, like composing, coordinating, lighting, altering has matched with the emerge of ‘Auteur Theory’. He acquired the appreciation of the French critics for his ability behind the camera and listed with Howard Hawk, Alfred Hitchcock, Francois Truffaut, Satyajit Ray, Akira Kurosawa, Jean Renoir et.al. In 1960s and 1970s, the movie making industry was renewed by the entry of new directors, where a new Hollywood era introduced with an expanded view to let directors bravely face challenges.

‘One man writes a novel. One man writes a symphony. It is essential that one man, make a film’

(Mather Philippe 111). According to Kubrick, the entire credit goes to an individual person, because the director has more responsibilities for the quality of the movies than anyone. Either the film hits the success or failure the whole and soul credit will be held by the director. Andre Bazin and Alexander Astruc with reference of film criticism approach, the director is considered as an Auteur of the movies directed. 'There are no good and bad movies, only good and bad directors' (Jasbir Jain 39). Truffaut provocatively denoted, not every director can be considered as an Auteur, because they have to fit in the frame called 'Auteur Theory'. Predictable and individual style in a movie creation unquestionably brings a director near the Auteur status. Such directors are Quentin Tarantino, who has a unique mark that can be known for long, serious discourse, hilariously sensational brutality and oftentimes nonlinear contents; Steven Spielberg projects the recognizable content, dramatic theme song and the peculiar frame.

Kanika Kachroo Arya (2017) describes the contemporary Bollywood director, Imtiaz Ali whose genre is romantic tales, has a free flow of experimental love stories in major movies to his credit. Some of his bench markers are 'Jab We Met', 'Rockstar', and 'Tamasha'. His narrating is not exclusively very much supported but his individualistic style, uniqueness and the utilization of procedures of film are also experimentally tested. He understands the needs of psychology of his audience that drags him towards an authentic place in Bollywood, considering as a director of romance. Donald E. Staples (2020) re-examined the auteur theory and portrays the wholeness about auteur theory from the original French sources. He also explained about 'la politique des auteurs' which means the policy of the author that suggesting the director as an author. David Tregde (2013) showcased the problem of authorship, auteur theory, writer theory, collaborative theory. He elaborated the differences between the 'Auteur Theory', solidifying that the creative force in a movie is 'director'. In addition to that, he also emphasized on the Schreiber theory, where the author regards screenplay writer as an Auteur. This explores the theoretical and practical perspectives in the production of a film. Albert Sbragia (2015) construes the Federico Fellini's films and status amongst auteurist critics which held a decline in critical interest that linked to the decline of historical auteurism as a critical practice. At last Fellini explained that the director, who engaged with innovative ideas exposed in movies are viewed as an Auteur. Geetha Ramanathan (2020) disclosed the authority of the actor in movies, and the authorship of male and female directors; focused on a singular auteorial uniqueness, and also succeeds in diminishing the controlling command of the conventional director/ auteur. Vamshi Vemireddy (2011) examined various perspectives of Ram Gopal Varma's films where he dealt with personal style; control overall elements in making a film, but his films are not studied under any assumption to prove him as an auteur but to analyze the various aspects with the French and American theoretical framework in his movies. Baradwaj Rangan (2011) critically reviewed Vetrimaaran's film *Polladhavan* and *Aadukalam* compared with Shakespeare's 'Othello'. In *Polladhavan*, the missing of bike and in *Aadukalam*, the missing of money whereas in 'Othello' the character Iago missing his

innocence. So, Ragan criticized and compared *Polladhavan* and *Aadukalam* with the literary work.

Vetrimaaran as an 'Auteur'

Director is responsible for the final credit of the movie, 'Auteur' related to 'Author' and 'Author' related to 'Authority'. The auteur is the one who originally holds the copyright, as they are the creator of the film. The 'Auteur Theory' is the concept of a director imposing his own style and personality on a film. The director is considered as an auteur in a film, where the films will be clearly recognized as their own themes and motifs are easily distinguished from other film makers. They will have a distinct style that run through most of the films and in some cases, the visual elements will convey the film more successfully than the narrative, camera shots, lighting, mise-en-scene and scene length. Similarly, the 'Auteur Theory' has carried out the director Vetrimaaran, who has created a unique identity in Indian Tamil Cinema. Vetrimaaran completed master's degree in English Literature, later his interest diverted towards Visual Communication where he took up and decided to direct films. This led him to work under the Tamil director, Balu Mahendra and learnt techniques about making films. Eventually he executes the detailing in movies which is taken from Balu Mahendra. He details the emotion of a character in every movie. Whereas, Vetrimaaran details the story and theme in movies, this technique and lesson learnt from Balu Mahendra that he follows in movies. He always focuses on a dark side of issues in the society and reflects it without any hesitation to flash the light on the real which is prevailing in contemporary. Even though he has only countable movies on hand, they regarded as first-class movies with much significance that without projecting director's name the audience can get to know about Vetrimaaran and his uniqueness used in his films. As it reflects in The Hindu news journal, Vetrimaaran revealed, the milestone of film industry and also, he scrutinized the journey of direction as 'A film should enrich me as well as the audience' (J Nath Parshathy. Oct 19,2015). From *Polladhavan* to *Asuran* all movies had hit the success.

Exploring Tortuous Storyline

According to director Frank Capra, 'you give them something to worry about some person to worry about and care about and you have got them involved' (Claudia Hunter Johnson 12). Thus, Vetrimaaran involves the tortuous storyline and most of the characters engage the whole runtime of a film. Vetrimaaran always indulges two dimensional stories in a film. For example, the movie *Polladhavan* had a liner timeframe of two stories, where the hero, an easy-going lucky boy longed for a bike and a villain smuggling the drugs, which is finally meshed up together and had a problem-solving end. *Visaaranai* had a straight course of events with two stories of police and innocent boys impacting mid-way in the story and had a conflict with each other where the innocent boys had to accept the undone crime. The next movie, *Aadukalam* begins in the same way, a prestigious problem raised between the hero and his

master. The director has given a positive ending where the characters realize their mistakes. The next, *Vada Chennai* bounced around time, hopping forward and in reverse with a voice over, where the reality hit the current situation. In the story the fight between two groups, where the hero himself involved in a group and gave his support to opposite one. At the end of the story, he realized that the violence will make an individual to face the psychological sufferings. So, he left everything and walked away from violence to have a peaceful life. Thus, Vetrimaaran has a unique tortuous storyline and characters in his movies bring a strong impact among the audience by showcasing the contemporary darker side of the society.

Shades in different scenes

Vetrimaaran often makes use of blackout shots in most of his movies. In *Polladhavan* he drained the color when the protagonist found his bike missing and got lost in the memories that he had with his bike. In the case of *Aadukalam* the flashback shots are drained out of color to replicate the memories of violence in the city of Madurai. Then if we watch keenly over his film *Visaaranai*, the colorless shots indicate the life without body; for example, each time when a character passes away, the screen is drained of shading color, showing the body is depleted of life. At the end, he indicates the different shades in different scenes that the life of human being is a mixture of both joy and grieves. In *Vada Chennai*, he drains majority of the color that shades from the scene of shots, when it is taken in the prison, usage of drugs, possession of dangerous weapons, troubled his past life where he chosen and indulged in wrong activities, and a recovery of less violence in future. Later in the movie *Asuran* portrayed with the less usage of colors. Most of the flashback shots and violence are taken as colorless which indicates the violence should be taken away or drained as color drained from the shots portrayed.

An Attempt of Particular Region

Vetrimaaran's uniqueness mostly focuses on regional based real stories, which gives an impact to the targeted audience to feel the importance of a region. The film *Polladhavan* was based on the real story of his friend Andrew where he lost his bike in North Madras. This incident initiated the director Vetrimaaran to direct *Polladhavan*. The movie also gave a strong regional impact of Kasimedu, North Madras. The next film *Aadukalam* was based on the real story of cockerel fighting been the prestigious game of Thiruparankundram, a new town of Madurai. The story inspired from the film 'Amores Perro' in 2000. *Visaaranai* by Vetrimaaran was also based on a real story; it portrays the region of Guntur, Andhra Pradesh and connects with the city of Chennai. The film inspired from a novel 'Lock-Up' written by M. Chandrakumar. *Vada Chennai* that took place in the North Madras shows the regional reality by showing the darker side of the society. The last film *Asuran* was shot in the region of Tirunelveli, elucidates the violence among economically upper- and lower-people's issues that still prevails in contemporary.

Vetrimaaran gives importance for themes, reality-based stories, background score, and characters rather than songs, romance and outdoor locations. He directs films to bring the reality which is happening in the society rather than to receive awards.

Conclusion

Vetrimaaran is a director with a movie of excellence, who has a massive audience watching his movies. His films don't follow any common rules of Kollywood. His sentiments in every movie have equal tracks and flawless characters which make the plot more practical. Introduction of films depicts the contemporary life, which helps the younger generation to identify the physical and mental state in the contemporary society. The director has strong linear narrating strategy, has showcased the impact of region, relationship of characters, setting of appropriate background and theme, editing and camera work. Such uniqueness in style and techniques makes Vetrimaaran as an "Auteur". Vetrimaaran has portrayed practical adaptation of reality and sentimental motion pictures in his movies.

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