

State Level Seminar
on
History and Films: An Ongoing Dialogue
Department of History
Diamond Harbour Women's History
10 May 2019

Concept Note

History is the one of the most eclectic and dynamic among the traditional disciplines. It is continuously expanding its periphery and incorporating newer and newer vistas of research and scholarship. History has long ceased to be the study of politics, diplomacy, wars and governance. Cinema and media are some of the newly emergent fields that have entered the arena of historical scholarship.

The proposed seminar is an attempt to probe the various facets of the intriguing and ongoing dialogue between history and films. It is an attempt to see cinema, both a form of artistic creativity and a medium of mass communication, through the historian's lens. It will re-examine, using the historian's toolbox, the history of films in the Indian subcontinent and also the representation of the past in Indian films, especially Hindi and Bengali films. The medieval period of Indian history has especially seized the imagination of generations of Indian film makers. The aristocratic extravaganza and its subsequent decadence in colonial times, the various strands of the freedom movement and the political upheavals of the twentieth century such as the Partition and the Naxalite movement are some of the other motifs recurrently addressed and probed in both Bengali and Hindi films. The seminar will seek to explore how the past has emerged as a important protagonist in Indian cinema.

The seminar will further delve into the representation of women in Indian cinema, unmask the sexual politics implicit in such representation and also appreciate the more gender-sensitive depictions of women in some films. It will look at the portrayal of conjugal and familial relations, of love, romance and gender based violence, and issues related to the LGBTQ community. It will

also examine how caste and community issues are addressed in films. It will analyse how films reinforce, interrogate and challenge the dominant norms in these respects and posit alternative ones. A seminar on films cannot be complete without a critical re-examination of the oeuvre of the great directors, their style of creative expression, with the arclight especially on the stalwarts such as Ritwik Ghatak, Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen, Tarun Majumdar, Tapan Singha, et al, and also the directors of recent times such as Aparna Sen, Srijit Mukherjee, Kamalleshwar Mukherjee and others. It will probe the vicissitudes of the struggles of women directors and script writers to carve out a niche in a male dominated sphere. Finally, it will also throw the spotlight on popular cinema, the reasons behind their appeal and wide acceptance and examine how they make and break stereotypes and norms. The day-long foray into films from a historical perspective will serve as a prelude to a more rigorous academic engagement with films in the near future.

As far as the overseas market is concerned, Indian films are performing well in Box office collections. Bollywood films have contributed a lot to India's rising soft power in the world, especially in the neighbouring countries. Indian cinema is keeping pace with the times and increasingly portraying India as a global power player. For a world influenced by the perception of India being poverty stricken, the rising Bollywood films in many ways transported the idea of a new India into the minds of cinema enthusiasts.

The proposed seminar would like to deliberate on following issues, however, paper presenters are free to contribute on any other relevant theme.

Themes:

- A history of Indian films.
- Historical films: representation of the medieval, the colonial past, the freedom struggle, political upheavals such as the Partition, Naxalite movement, etc in regional language films.
- Representation of women, gender relations, love, romance, violence, transgender issues in Indian cinema.
- Caste, community and religion in Indian cinema.
- The marginal and the disabled in Indian cinema
- The great directors: Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Tapan Sinha, et al
- Women directors, script writers and actresses.

- Popular cinema: making and breaking stereotypes.
- The making of films.
- Films as a source of history.
- Literature and Films.
- Environmental awareness in Indian cinema.
- Indian films as a soft power in the world.
- The changing perceptions of India in films.

Abstracts within 300-500 words are invited on any of the above mentioned subthemes. Abstracts may be written either in English or Bengali. Abstracts in Bengali should be sent as PDF attachment. Abstracts may be mailed to:

callforpaperhistdhwu@gmail.com

Deadline for the submission of abstracts: 30 April 2019

Date of communication of acceptance: 3 May 2019

Registration fee:

Teachers: Rs 1000 only

Research Scholars: Rs 500 only

Students: Rs 100 only

Paper presenters are requested to submit their full papers on the day of seminar. Papers written in English should be types in Times New Roman and those in Bengali should be typed in Abhro.

Papers should be not less than 3000 words. Endnotes should be provided at the end of the paper. The references should be in accordance with the style prescribed by the Indian History Congress.