

PERIYAR VISUAL THEORY: DEMAND, DISPUTE AND DISPOSITION OF DRAVIDIAN CINEMA



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Abstract :

This research examines the impact of cinema, in the Indian subcontinent, especially in the Dravidian society. It is a two-phased qualitative content analysis using the methodology of grounded theory, through the interpretation of structuralism. Phase-I is Theorization: Conceptualizing Periyar's views on cinema and Phase-II is Classification: Finding the roots of the term 'Dravidian Cinema'. The first phase analyses the demand of the 'Self-Respect' movement in the cinema of 1929, and to develop 'Periyar Visual Theory' on the Aryan dominated visual culture, through the depth of his words coined in his research article in 1944. The second phase examines the 'Criticisms' set by the bourgeois and people at power, on the works of Periyar's followers C.N. Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi, such as Velaikkari (1949) and Parasakthi (1952), thereby attempting to determine the classification within Tamil cinema.

Keywords:

'Periyar Visual Theory', Aryan myth, Self-

Respect Movement, Dravidian Cinema, Tamil Cinema, Aryan Images, Velaikkari, Parasakthi.

Introduction:

The human life is surrounded by narrations, which are transformed by either its basic institution or social group. The process of narration is intended to educate and inform the progenies to preserve the social system, folkways, and taboos; in short, it functions as a cultural agent. Oral communication became a permanent record when it was turned into written form on a surface. The ideas transformed from caves to wood, paper, film, and now a digital device to record social interactions. Narration and its surface that are connected with the evolution of science and technology, have expanded from the traditional surface to the modern scientific surface as photographic images during the middle of the 19th century. The collective phenomena of projecting, screening, and viewing the 'motion picture'/ movie created the event of 'Cinema'. The 20th century's marvellous form of 'Cinema', is a contemporary dynamic narrator for every society.

Cinema, Society and Politics:

After World War I: At the dawn of the 20th century, cinema was adopted by nations, as a medium of entertainment. The development of cinema and its uses varies according to the cultural, political, and economic conditions of each country. After World War I, the American public experienced an exalted position, where cinema was a new source of entertainment. But South American people were exploited by colonial cinema. Russia proclaimed cinema as a scientific form of social progress, by using it as a tool to tap into people's emotions. While the French enjoyed cinema as a beautiful poetic form, Spain was subjected to military repression until 1931, and hence it was unable to develop its cinema. While Arab cinemas grew parallel to Egyptian cinema, many countries in Africa did not even have cinema sheds/ space for people to sit and watch. Japan, which had cinematic cultures similar to those of the United States, subjugated its dominance in Korea and China to the point of not learning the art of cinema. In colonial India, aside from the quest for liberation, people were enjoying myths and religious content through cinema.

After World War II: The modern narrator, cinema, known as the world's greatest entertainment device, became an 'Intellectual Apparatus' after World War II. The world powers began to abandon their colonial rule. Many countries used cinema to seek their own identity, to formulate national policies, and to support nationalism. One of the examples of cinema for nation-building and asserting oppressed rights, include Korean cinema, which stands as an example to understand cinema and nationalism. Korea was beginning to breathe the air of freedom and sought to shape the modern society through cinema during the 1950s. The films directed by renowned director Shin Sung-ok showed

national integration, hope, and new paths for people.

When the country was divided into two, the structures of cinema in North Korea developed into a communist ideology that was very weak. However, the new government was keen to create its national cinema. In 1962, emergency law was passed requiring film companies to produce at least 15 films a year. Unable to produce new-minded films, North Korea kidnapped South Korean director Shin Sang-ok during the 1970s and ordered him to make films for their nation. On the other hand, after the Cuban revolution, the Latin American thinkers began an intellectual war against the cinemas of the United States of America and Europe, which dominated the continent of Latin America. The result of amalgamation was 'Third Cinema' for decolonization and liberation from oppression. In the United States of India, after independence, the Films Division was launched by the Congress government during the 1950s for the development of film culture and was engrossed in national integration through films like 'Bhakra Nangal' and 'Good manners', while the Dravidian intellectuals used cinema for their historicity, cultural identity, and ethnicity. Thus cinema, which has become an essential fragment in the formation of modern society, is desired by thinkers and ideologues in many parts of the world.

Tamil Cinema, Dravidian Society and Politics:

Tamil Cinema in the Silent Era: The history of Tamil cinema has a strong connection with Tamil drama and politics. The 'Suguna Vilaasa Sabha' started by Pammal Sambandha Mudaliar in 1891, was staging stage-plays all over Tamil Nadu, while the people of the country enjoyed the movies of the Lumiere brothers in the 1890s. Vincent Samikkannu, a Tamilian, screened many films and spread

the cinematic film experience all over South India from 1905 onwards.

'Keesaka Vadam' was the first Tamil film produced by Nadaraja Mudaliar in 1916. A political movement named 'South Indian Liberation Federation' emerged in the same year to oppose Brahmin hegemony, and the movement was popularized and called as 'Justice Party'. The trained actors from 'Suguna Vilasa Sabha' and 'Boys Drama Company' took part in film production companies during the mid of the 1920s. The films produced during the period were meant to reflect mythology.

Self-Respect Movement/Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) and its genealogical strands: DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) and AIADMK (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam):

The leader of the Madras Presidency unit of the Indian National Congress Party, who actively participated in the Satyagraha and Non-Cooperation Movements, a social activist, political philosopher, Erode Venkata Ramasamy (1879-1973), affectionately called 'Periyar' by Tamil people (hereafter Periyar), observed that the motto of the party was concerning the interest of the Brahmins. He opposed the stand of Congress, as it only expected freedom from the British rule to obtain political power, rather than exterminating the humiliation of castes and social evils from the society.

Periyar left the Congress Party and founded the 'Self-Respect' movement in 1925. The 'Self-Respect' movement's first provincial conference was held in Chengalpattu in 1929 and thirty-four resolutions were passed. Subsequent conferences took place in forthcoming years respectively at Erode and Viruthunagar in 1930 and 1931. Periyar was elected as the head of the 'Justice Party' in 1938. In the same year, C.N. Annadurai (aged

30), joined as an associate editor in 'Kudiyarasu' weekly magazine and 'Viduthalai' newspaper associated with the same movement. In 1943 M. Karunanidhi (aged 19) joined as a sub-editor in 'Kudiyarasu' magazine.

At the 18th provincial conference of 'Justice Party', which was held in Salem in 1944, the 'Justice Party' and 'Self-Respect' movement were merged and re-named as 'Dravidar Kazhagam' (DK) by Periyar, on a resolution proposed by C.N. Annadurai (hereafter Anna). Anna became the general secretary of the 'Dravidar Kazhagam'.

After the independence of India, Anna formed a new political party - 'Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam' - DMK in 1949. Under the headship of Anna, a few more leaders from DK, including 'Kalaingar' M. Karunanidhi (hereafter Kalaingar) joined the DMK and carried forward the philosophy of 'Self-Respect' and leveraged political power through public meetings and cinemas. Anna and Kalaingar used cinema as an effective tool to make political consciousness on the public. The actor M G Ramachandran (MGR) shined as a protagonist of the DMK cinema. DMK assumed power in 1967. After the sudden demise of Anna, the AIADMK party was formed by MGR. The DMK and AIADMK governments have been alternating in Tamil Nadu in the path of 'Self-Respect' thoughts. The DK has been serving firmly for social upliftment in the united states of India and abroad.

Tamil Cinema in the Talkie's Era: The first Tamil talkie, 'Kalidas' released on 31st October, 1931 contained 50 songs. N.S. Krishnan (NSK) was a pioneer of influencing Self-Respect thoughts with vernacular descriptions in mainstream Tamil cinema, through comedy stripes along with the plot. Ex. The film 'Uthama Puthiran' (1940). The activists of the 'Dravidian Movement', Anna

and Kalaignar were instrumental for the formation of forward-thinking apparatus on the concrete of 'Self-Respect'/Dravidian Movement's thoughts. The narrative form of Anna was based on contemporary social issues, with literary etiquette and rhythmic Tamil prose. Velaikaari (1949), Nallathambi (1949), Or Iravu (1951) are milestones of Tamil-Dravidian cinema. His literary etiquette on Velaikaari, set a new path for the Tamil film world, and Self-Respect thoughts with a literary flair were enjoyed by cinema-goers for the first time. After 1954 his screen journey ended due to serious political involvement. Despite this, his stories were used by many filmmakers in the future days. Though Kalaignar's career began as a scriptwriter in Rajakumari (1947), Abimanyu (1948), his talent emerged in Marudha Nattu Ilavarasi (1950) and Parasakthi (1952). His narrations illustrated the roots of social problems and suggested solutions. His contribution to the Tamil cinema continued from Rajakumari (1947) to Ponnar Sankar (2012). By the influence of these two legends, Directors Muktha Srinivasan, Bharathiraja, T. Rajender, K. Bhagyaraj, and other have narrated 'Dravidian Ideology' via their films.

Background of this research:

After independence, in the discourse of a 'Hindi-nation', the Congress government immediately absorbed the autonomous boards of regional censor centres: Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay, into 'The Bombay Board of Film Censors' (1947), later changed to 'Central Board of Film Censor' by the Cinematograph Act of 1952, to control the three varied cultural cinemas into a single umbrella as 'Indian Cinema'. Writer and film director K.A. Abbas recalled in an interview about the uniqueness of the censor boards that existed before independence.

"The five censor boards (Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Rangoon, and Lahore) examined films separately, and each had its own set of rules and local pressures. Often, a title passed by one would be rejected by another" (Abbas, 1970).

According to the column of Baburao Patel, it seems that the hegemony of Hindi is conceived from the beginning of the talkies.

"In the Bombay Calling column in February 1949 issue of FilmIndia, Baburao Patel praised in his combative way, a recent development: "We have been asking for this for the last 15 years," he wrote of the move to centralize film censorship" (Bhatia, 2018).

After the re-organized Central Board of Film Censor, the narrations of Dravidian intellectuals met with fierce opposition from the Congress party. Despite having a rich tradition of film culture in the Madras presidency, the Board has been considering Tamil cinema as regional cinema, after independence. Emphasizing Hindi cinema as national cinema, is connected with linguistic imperialism. From an international perspective on Indian cinema, framed through the window of Hindi cinema, the contribution of other cinemas of India became marginalized. On this perspective, Selvaraj Velayutham (2008) gives a strong point to the contribution of Madras cinema.

"When cinema arrived in British India in the late 1890s, it took root in the three major metropolises, Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. The cultural hegemony and dominance of Bollywood within the Indian film

industry, have both marginalized and erased the rich complexities and ethno-linguistic cinematic traditions of India. The Tamil film industry begins about the same time as Hindi and Bengali cinema in the second decade of the 20th century. Although the Tamil film industry was less known and acknowledged, it rapidly emerged as a key player within Indian cinema”.

On the other hand, Bengali cinema produced films to satisfy 'Bhadurloke' (the Educated middle-class audience), as an extended medium for expressing their artistic, poetic, literature-valued imageries under the subject of Poverty and Partition of Bangladesh. This was recognized around the world under the banner 'Indian cinema'. But Luis Ospina, the iconic filmmaker of Colombia observed the filmmakers from the third world countries and states that:

"Some of the third world filmmakers peddle the third world poverty and misery at festival sites in Europe and North America and do not approach their craft as a tool for social transformation"(Ospina,1978).

This brilliant point - 'craft as a tool for social transformation' - means that cinema is not only for artistic expression but also for social change. The same was advocated by Periyar (in the silent era), that the filmmakers should reflect on 'Rational thinking' and 'Self-Respect' thoughts in cinema. After the 'Article of 1944' (in the talkies era), the Dravidian intellectuals and followers of '**Anna**' and '**Kalaigar**' expressed the importance of Tamil language and the legacy of Tamil history through their narrations. Out of such attempts, were born

ideas to eradicate superstitions and Aryan myths. A strong protest by the ruling Congress party was made against their narrations, particularly the 'criticisms' on Velaikkari (1949) and Parasakthi (1952) respectively by 'Kalki' Krishnamoorthy, the editor of 'Kalki' - a Tamil magazine and C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji), the then chief minister of Madras Presidency. These two cinemas were distinguished from the mainstream Tamil cinema.

In this case, this study looks at the structuralist, scientific inquiry on the observations of Periyar, Kalki, and Rajaji. Therefore after '*The Demand of 1929*' in the silent era and the '*Article of 1944*' in the talkies era, '*Criticism*' against Velaikkari (1949), Parasakthi (1952) are subject to rational analysis. It is a two-phased analysis: 1) Periyar's '*Demand of 1929*' & '*Article of 1944*' to be analysed in Phase-I and 2) the '*Criticisms*' of Kalki & Rajaji in Phase-II.

Analysis:

Phase-I: Periyar's 'Demand of 1929' And 'The Article of 1944'

The art form of cinema gives two kinds of experiences to the audience. First, it gives the viewer emotional satisfaction. Second, it stimulates the intellectual ability to re-think. Periyar approached cinema through the second of these two aspects in mind, considering it to be a stimulator for intellectuality. To do so, he demanded in 1929 at the Chengalpattu conference that

"The principles of Self-Respect should emerge in Tamil Cinema and Drama" (Rathinagiri, 1997, pp45).

The world's first film educational institution - Moscow Film School, established in 1919, used cinema as a tool for social change and

produced notable works only after 6 years of its establishment. But, Periyar demanded cinema for social change in the 4th year of the foundation of the Self-Respect Movement. While the American USC School of Cinematic Arts (1929), Italy Centre for Experimental Cinematography(1935), German Film Academy Babelsberg (1938) were started after Moscow, they only taught the techniques of producing cinema. It can be established that Periyar was the first to sow the idea of using cinema for social change in colonized India and second after Russia.

He published an important article on music and cinema titled: 'What should Tamil music and the Art of acting do next?'. This article was written 15 years later in 1944, after his previous demand at the Chengalpattu conference in 1929. The article begins with the contemporary syndrome of 'music and acting forms' of cinema and drama, and then explains the cause for the social problem, and then concludes with solutions and finally ends with, "This is what I found after my research". This research article shows that the Indian cinema has not done the job for social change, that Periyar expected.

The Contemporary Syndrome of 'Music and Acting forms':

Periyar's article begins by pointing out that:

"The 'visual systems' of cinema and drama which is worse than music, are detrimental to the Tamil people", "it would be better if both were eradicated from Tamil Nadu".

"Music poisons the body through the ear, but 'acting style combined with music' spreads the toxin into the bloodstream through both the ears and the eyes"

"Can bhajan songs and God's lascivious scenes be the solution for this country and its people, who are so deficient and disgraceful"? (Periyar, 1944).

His expression of 'eradication of cinema and drama' is not in a general sense, but it emphasizes the 'visual settings'. It shows that there are misconceptions in 'visual settings'. And he mentions that the 'sound' from the musical systems of cinema and drama are poisonous, despite the way people enjoy them. He further explains the collective form of cinema, that 'when 'music' and 'scene' combine, it mixes with the blood'. Cinema functions in two ways to attract the audience. The first one is a tool for emotional satisfaction and the second one is a stimulator for intellectualism. Periyar observed that, most of the Tamil cinemas function only as entertainment operas, for emotional satisfaction with reflections of the Aryan guileful myths.

"In the first six years (talkies era) of Tamil cinema, ninety-nine films were made, of which, as many as eighty-eight were based on well-known episodes from various mythologies'..."The choice of mythological subjects also resulted in the popularity of cinema as an entertainment form as it dealt with a subject which was familiar to the people and appealed powerfully to their sense of religious piety"(Bhaskaran, 2013).

Traditionally, the musical performances of the Devadasis happened at the premises of the temples and other private places. The general public was restricted to enter those programs according to the long-rooted rule of Varnashrama established by most of the

Aryans. When the same settings became images and visual culture in the performing art, Periyar indicated that it is a poison to the ears, a toxin in the blood, and a detrimental syndrome for the development of the society. That underlines the impact of 'sound and image' in our everyday activities, turning into sub conscious action. Periyar has brilliantly observed that, at a time when contemporary problems are prevalent in the society, instead of resolving them, mere portrayal of Aryan God's libidinous scenes and bhajan songs, will lead towards submission to myths and not towards the development of society. Even in the 1940s, he had so much understanding to interpret the impact of cinema. Periyar's view on cinema seems to be consistent with the film historian and theorist professor Susan Hayward, from the University of Exeter, UK.

"Cinema constructs a 'reality out of selected images and sound" "An interpretive claim involves a more complex intellectual response than descriptive claim. Interpretive claims present an argument about a film's meaning and significance. These claims address a film's themes and abstract ideas". (Hayward, 2006).

Another evidence of Periyar's interpretive calibre on cinema, is the comment he made on the 100th Day Success Ceremony of the film "Suriyakanthi"- held at Chennai in the Rajeswari wedding hall in 1973. Muktha Srinivasan, the director of the film shared a few titbits about the incident,

"He hardly watched films, but agreed to come. His message at the function—about the suppression of women's talents—met with great response. What I had tried to convey in around 150

minutes, Periyar did in just a few."
(The Hindu, 2016)

Periyar had an academic view on the structure of cinema like the present-day academicians. As he had an in-depth analytical connotation on cinema, he identified that the impact of 'sound' and 'image' among the audience is connected with the actual living experience. He argued that, as the Aryans' guileful myth influenced our physical environment, in oral and written forms when watching the drama or cinema, those forms are consumed as visuals by the audience.

The Cause for the Syndrome and Development of Periyar's Theory:

Periyar has observed that the reflective effects of visuals in the minds of the audience will lead them to be ignorant, and immerse themselves happily in those scenes, without understanding what truly caused them their misery. He divides the visual language effects into two—1) the place where the action takes place, and 2) the place where the consequences occur. He interprets two types of actions at the scene. The first one is **libidinous scenes** of Aryan Gods, and the second is the **reflection of incarnate characters**. He notes that when these scenes occur on stage/screen, the audience react too according to the **'Performed Visuals'**. When the gods indulge in a libidinous manner (*வள்ளியைச் சுப்பிரமணியன் காதலித்து காதல் சேடடை செய்யும் போது..* (Periyar, 1944), this desire infects both men and women, and lascivious gestures occur particularly among those who have fixed the space for their craving. And when Gods appear as incarnate characters (*விஷ்ணு தூணிலிருந்து வெளிவரும்போது மக்கள் கைகூப்பிக் கும்பிடுகிறார்கள்* (Periyar, 1944) the audience worship the screen by raising their hand in cusps.

"While the Aryan mythology is portrayed in drama and cinema, the viewers' hands bow when the Gods are portrayed as incarnate Purushas, and while the Gods are doing their libidinous acts, many men and women look at each other. This will give any kind of pleasure, happiness, and satisfaction to any age. This is natural. Can this be made a habit for children and young people who are exposing the adult content and do not have enough strength to protect themselves? The people are using theatre sheds or cinemas, making it a convenient place to settle a love affair to some extent and to enjoy a bit of romance. Psychologists may say that the people need these kinds of pleasures. Don't you want to change that performance to a little bit of rationality and respect while doing so?" (Periyar, 1944).

Thus, Periyar presents a psychological perspective between the stage/screen and the audience. He refers to the above-mentioned libido action and reflective action as follows: "The lustful orgies and the incarnate characters of Aryan myths". Also, the fact when he talks about the impact of the 'Performed Visuals' and the 'Audience Space'- shows that Periyar had been researching the stage/screen and its effects on the audience since the 1930s. But it was not until the 1970s that Western researchers began to study the relationship between the Screen and the Audience.

"Film theorists Baudry, Bellour, Metz, Mulvey (all 1975) making psychoanalytic readings of the dynamic between the screen and the spectator have drawn on

Sigmund Freud's discussions of the libido drives and Jacques Lacan's of the mirror stage to explain how film works at the unconscious level" (Hayward, 2006).

The British feminist film theorist, Laura Mulvey has described the libidinous behaviour of the spectator, in her essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975) on the Freudian idea of phallocentrism and the political use of Psychoanalysis. She argues that the idea of images of women and corresponding narrations are inadvertently built in the patriarchal society. But Periyar described that the patriarchal environment is created through the '**Reflective**' forms of incarnate characters, and the '**Libidinous**' behaviours of Aryan gods that were deliberately implanted by the Aryan's guileful myths.

First, the myths were formed in the external environment through oral and written forms, to suppress the Dravidian society. Then the myths were formed as visuals in temples and performed as music, drama, and cinema. Periyar argues from a psychological perspective that - (மக்களுக்கு இந்த இன்பம் அவசியம் என்று மனோதத்துவ நிபுணர்கள் சொல்லக்கூடும். அப்படிச் செய்வதானாலும் அதிலிருந்து சிறிது அறிவும் மானமும் பெறும்படியாக அந்த நடிப்பைத் திருப்ப வேண்டாமா? (Periyar, 1944) -it may give a kind of 'pleasure to the audience' but there is also a need for an alternative form in the performances according to contemporary social issues, instead of mere visual pleasure.

According to the argument of Periyar, I have coined the term "**Periyar Visual Theory**" with the connotation of the '**Libido Action** and '**Reflective Action**' model. Periyar mentions that Aryan works of literature in whatever form they arrive, "it is all our foes". The term 'whatever form' shows that, they arrive via two forms - external and internal.

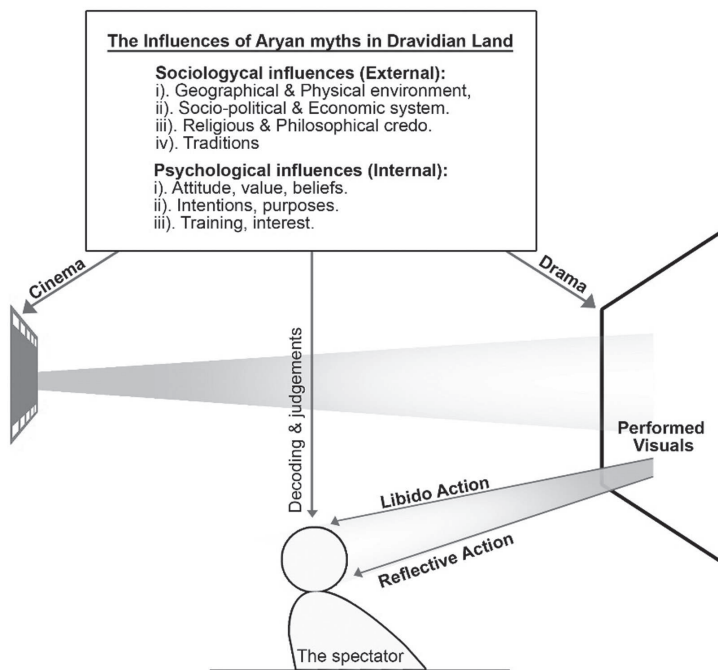


Fig 1. "Periyar Visual Theory" 'Libido Action and Reflective Action' model

The *External / Environment*: shows the natural surroundings of an individual and the web of social settings. The consequences of Aryan literature and mythologies in the society, create inequality at birth and thereby divides human beings: to make manoeuvres to be always at the top of the socio-economic ladder, to create and propagate philosophies in the name of religion, and to fabricate the same as tradition.

The *Internal / Psychological*: interferes with one's mood, values, beliefs, purpose, anticipation, interest and training. The word '**Libido**' is used by Sigmund Freud for sexuality, sexual desire, or the drive of sex, and '**Reflection**' is extracted from Jacques Lacan's mirror stage philosophy.

Drama is a non-staging art form and **Cinema** is a projecting art form. These arts, cinema and drama, are created with **external** and **internal** contexts, as well as those who watch cinema and drama and understand its

concept through the experience of **external** and **internal** contexts. The **Spectator's Interpretation & Judgments** are perceived according to the factors of **Internal** and **External** influences with the **Performed Visuals**.

Affected by the aforementioned circumstances, these contexts manifest themselves in arts under people's beliefs. When viewers see erotic scenes through cinema, they are transformed by the feelings they have inside. Similarly, they clasp their hands when God appears as incarnate Purushas on the screen. When they see appropriate visual settings, they bow down and believe the visual as God. It is

because of all these, Periyar argued that the Aryan myths are of greater danger to us, in the form of drama and cinema than in the written form.

Periyar's Solution for the syndrome:

Cinematic screen studies using Sigmund Freud's sexuality, and Jacques Lacan's mirror stage philosophy, were done by Western researchers. Periyar also emphasizes the need for psychologically oriented cinema. Here I relate Lacan's term "méconnaissance" which implies a false recognition; the product of misunderstanding in the mirror stage of a child (Lacan, 1962) can be compared with Periyar's view on child's exposure to adultery scenes; he mentions "how children and the vulnerable cannot protect themselves when they watch these mythological scenes". At this point, he demands that a change is needed in those visual settings. Though the Cinematograph Act of 1918 was implemented for film censorship in British India, it only controlled content

that was against the Crown. The censor certification with grading, was issued after several meetings with higher officials, after the amendment of the Cinematography Act 1952 as follows:

- U: Unrestricted public exhibition (Suitable for all age groups)
- U/A: Parental guidance for children under age 12
- A: Restricted to adults (Suitable for 18 years and above)
- S: Restricted to a specialized group of people, such as engineers, doctors or scientists.

It can be seen in the diagram of 'Periyar Visual Theory' that the libido action that Periyar had mentioned, led to this graded certification system, before the independence of India. Despite insisting on children's cinema, his main aim seems to be, to prevent the Aryan influence from being imposed on the minds of the Tamil people. In particular, the main purpose of his article was to clarify on the sense of language, and to preserve the Tamil literature from Aryan influence. This is because Periyar, despite his lifelong efforts to eradicate superstitions, has written in detail in the conclusion, about how the cunning story systems of the Aryans have been impregnated into Tamil literature.

The Conclusion of Periyar's Research:

This essay on cinema and drama, in the light of literary emphasis, has also given equal importance to literature. Periyar's reference here is to prevent a mixture of Aryan stories from entering Tamil literature. Therefore, if Tamil literature must be preserved, Aryan literature is to be destroyed. Not just that, but he aimed to create a Dravidian identity in the

plays and cinemas against Aryans. He wanted a pure sense of Tamil-ness in the literature and the art forms in Dravidian land.

"If we are not aware that the myths and scriptures of Aryan literature have been subtly inserted into Tamil literature, especially in musical drama and cinema, that is a huge closure. So, we must destroy Sanskrit stories and epics in whatever form they are inserted. Will untouchability be eliminated by the history of Nandanar? Take a closer look at whether the moral / non-moral qualities grow / decrease due to the Thiruvilaiyadal Puranam Shiva Leela? Will prostitution increase or decrease due to Krishna Leela? Let me tell you the truth, realize that Tamils can never live with human rights and dignity, unless these stories are eradicated, no matter what form they take, or whether they have entered automatically or inserted by Tamil people themselves. To the best of my knowledge and research I have concluded that: the Aryan myth being in Tamil literature, is harmful than being in Sanskrit, and they are more harmful in the form of art, music, drama and cinema than in the form of mere story, epic and myth" (Periyar, 1944).

Therefore, Periyar emphasizes that it is necessary to reject Aryan myths, if Tamils are to live with dignity and human rights. He advocates bringing alternative ideas in cinema and drama and the need for new changes in the art of acting, which transforms the theatrical and cinematic use of ideas free from Aryan influences.

Phase-II: The Criticism on Velaikkari (1949) And Parasakthi (1952)

Periyar's essay on the demand for preservation of Tamil language and in fulfilment of his idea on alternate forms should be produced against Aryan myths, 'Anna' and 'Kalaighnar' created stories incorporating Dravidian ideals. It is important to note here, that Periyar's passion to preserve Tamil language, were at a time, when struggles against Hindi hegemony were aggressive in Tamil Nadu.

The strongest opposition to the narrations of Anna and Kalaighnar arose from the Aryan press and the ruling class. Two of them, Velaikkari (1949) and Parasakthi (1952) were seen by a team of government officials and subjected to harsh criticism. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to revisit those two movies, through the lens of those harsh criticisms, and inquire its content with the 'Periyar Visual Theory' to identify the disposition of the narration.

Criticism on 'Velaikkari' (1949):

'Kalki' Krishnamurthy, the editor of Kalki Tamil magazine, criticized Velaikkari (1949) in the same magazine published on 19th June 1949, as a general opinion and objection as follows:

"Complaints were made about the 'Velaikkari' being an objectionable film that promotes atheism. Due to these complaints, two ministers of the Madras government saw the film. I happened to watch the film with them too. Before discussing the complaint, I would like to say a few things about the film in general.

General opinion: *Velaikkari is one of the best films released*

in Tamil Nadu. The reasons for its speciality are the following features; many ideas in the story will captivate the minds of the general public. A story about the cruelty of the rich towards the poor. They have spoken in traditional Tamil with emotion appropriate to that situation. They have taken the picture using good technique. The camera & soundtrack are top-notch.

Opposite opinion: *Most of the scenes in the film, carry out a campaign against the Hindu religion. But as an atheist propaganda, I consider this attempt a great failure. I have no hope that the atheist campaign would succeed via this film. Our Hinduism is not such a feeble religion. Hinduism has withstood anti-campaigns thousand times stronger than this and has survived to this day".*

In the general opinion, Kalki talks about the plot, and mentions that it shows the suffering of the poor vs. the rich. This view shows that the story is structured around the basic tenets of the Self-Respect movement, that economic and cultural oppression must be fought. In the opposite opinion, Kalki opines that the ideology of the story, emphasizes the emergence of anti-Hindu propaganda. It is already proved that the demerits of Hinduism, have been narrated in the perspective of Self-Respect principles against the monolithic structure (Manu), which must be eradicated, as it is a great force that sows inequality in society, and degrades people by birth.

Both Kalki's general and negative opinions distinguish Anna's 'Velaikkari' (1949) from the mainstream Tamil cinema into the Dravidian ideological product. He says that the technology of the film and the phonetic of the language are of high standards. He adds on the elegance of the acting also. So Dravidian Cinema is not just about disseminating its ideas, but the progression of technological and linguistic developments.

Since Kalki's opposite opinion reveals that the content of the narration is against Hinduism and atheist propaganda, it satisfies the expectation of Periyar, in the context of the resolution passed at the Chengalpattu Conference in 1929. Anna's 'Velaikkari' (1949) should be called 'Dravidian cinema' which embodies the principles of the Self-Respect movement.

Criticism on 'Parasakthi' (1952):

Ten days after Parasakthi was released, the secretary of State for Madras, O. Pulla Reddy made a plea to the Government Intelligence officers, to review the film 'Parasakthi' and to give details about it to the Madras Police Commissioner J.S. Devasakaya. Accordingly, on 27th October 1952, a group of intelligence officers reviewed the film 'Parasakthi'.

Government officials and intellectuals had to view 'Parasakthi' due to a series of complaints made about the film to Rajaji, the then Chief Minister of Madras. Wealthy people who were known as the upper castes in the society, caste-based organizations that uphold caste sentiments, supporters of the Congress, and those who were holding government posts, protested and pressured the government to ban the film 'Parasakthi' which denigrates Hinduism. The magazines run by the Brahmins lashed out at 'Kalaingar' on this issue.

Rajaji, who was waiting for the film to be banned, was shocked at the statement given by the intelligence unit. The shock was that, they wrote in praise of 'Parasakthi'. The praises of the people, even government intelligence officers, are true historical records for the Dravidian Cinema.

The Report of the Intelligence Team:

"The dialogues for the film have been specially written in a forceful manner by Sri M Karunanithi, the well-known leader of Dravidian Progressive Federation... The film graphically describes the sufferings and hardships that a young-widow, with her baby in her arms, has to face due to poverty and how cruelly the society treats her, or illtreats her", "The substance of the story by itself is not at all objectionable. The plot is interesting and the story has a powerful moral appeal, namely that there will be ups and downs in a man's life and that chastity is the most precious jewel of womanhood".

'Objectionable' features of Parasakthi:

"The dialogues for the story written by Sri M Karunanithi, however, are full of subtle satire. The dialogues cleverly veiled the criticisms against the government, the exploitation of the Tamilians by the North Indians, and chicanery of persons who dupe people in the name of religion, god, etc. The famine and poverty in the country are attributed to the indifference and lack of proper handling by the government. The one scene that appears to be out of place and rather strange is that of the 'poojari' trying to seduce the helpless girl in the precincts of the Parasakthi Temple. A section of the public feels that such alleged rascality by a poojari is only one in a thousand, and that giving prominence to such a scene is likely to reflect generally on places of

worship, temples, and the priests in-charge. The scene appears to be essential and it does not appear as though any such conclusion could be derived. The film contains a lot of Dravida Kazhagam ideals and sentiments, in a cleverly camouflaged manner which may not easily strike a casual film-goer. There appears to be no anti-Gandhian propaganda except when Gunasekaran taking the law into his own hands and attacking the poojari, with a statement alleging that Gandhiji himself has recommended 'mercy killing' - in the case of certain incurable ailments in animals. The other veiled criticisms against North Indians are (1) the scene depicting the North Indian camp officer refusing admission to maimed Tamilian refugees, while he admits hale and healthy refugees from Delhi. (2) A North Indian dealer in second-hand clothes running his own business in Madras, offering only eight annas for a good pair of tweed pants, and (3) A north Indian using harsh words to Kalyani to collect money due to him for provisions supplied to her (Pandian,1991).

Although the above is said to be the oppositional opinion for the film 'Parasakthi', the film still expresses the misery of Tamil society. It has been said that the dialogues of 'Kalaingar' created an in-depth meaning of condemning the power, that the ordinary cinema fan could not understand. It shows that the Dravidian activists have taken cinema to a place of knowledge, as it was evidenced by the report of the intelligence officers. The report against Parasakthi is like praising the film without going against it. While the anti-government rhetoric, the dominance of the North, etc. may sound anti-national, it is still the voice of the common people. 'Parasakthi' seems to have fulfilled Periyar's intention to use cinema for social change through intellectualism.

Rajaji realized that, although the report submitted by intelligence officials had two parts - appreciation and opposition, they both reinforced to appreciate the film's concept. Therefore, he did not accept the report, but rather states his criticism as follows.

"Rajaji noted that: I do not think we should honor this cheap attempt to destroy the faith of the people by elaborating the review of high personages. The position is clear enough. It is the introduction of a fictitious incident to show that rascality is practiced in high places & by 'holy' men. People write cheap stories, long & short, how lawyers cheat, how doctors practice fraud, and how men and women poison and kill. These incidents are not true but on them, literature is built. Reading does not impress so much on readers, as pictures do on picture viewers. This is what makes people object. There is nothing to be gained by our sense of seeing the picture. That it is designed by wicked people is obvious, but the course of freedom cannot be damned now. These things must go on until people themselves learn that these are worthless".

Rajaji points out that Parasakthi's story structure is inferior, untrue, and fictitious. But in the Dravidian point of view, it is a truthful narration. The purpose of the scene in which the temple priest tries to mislead the widow, is to reveal the truth i.e., how the temple stands as a sad symbol, of how women have been made 'Devadasi's and enslaved in temples for years and the long-standing atrocities perpetrated on Tamil women. So, it is not a mere fiction, but a revolutionary Dravidian narration against injustice. Through Parasakthi, Periyar's principles are further strengthened by the fact, that social events are slowly getting symbolized, instead of mere Aryan myths.

Conclusion:

The powerful art form of the twentieth century – cinema, is used by many countries around the world as a story telling weapon, and as an excellent form for enriching people's awareness, and to create a well-organized society. Periyar wanted Dravidian principles to emerge in cinema, and cinema should be used for social change. When his expectations were not met, he also voiced the need to change the nature of cinema in Tamil Nadu, through his article in 1944. Through the analysis of Phase-I, the influential ideas of Periyar's article caused to coin the term 'Periyar Visual Theory'.

The word 'Dravidian Cinema' has been stated by a few scholars here and there. It can also be seen in recent times, that a few Tamil film historians are writing history, to uncover the contribution of Dravidian Cinemas. The term is used by writers to refer to the films made by those associated with Dravidian politics. AVP Asaithambi ran a weekly magazine called 'Dravida Cinema'. On that basis, a book contains the contribution of Dravidian filmmakers - written by R. Pavendan and V.M.S. Subagunaranjan, and was published in 2009 under the title 'Dravida Cinema'.

Phase-II of this research was aimed to apply and study the term 'Dravidian Cinema' on 'Velaikkari' (1944) and 'Parasakthi' (1952) through the 'Periyar Visual Theory' and to fit them into the Dravidian ideological frame. As these two films were subjected to severe criticism by 'Kalki' and 'Rajaji', which in turn only strengthens the Dravidian ideology, it seems that these two films are taproots for Dravidian Cinema. In this context, it is clear that these two films have brought about a change in social environment. The stories of both the cinemas talk about social trauma and show that a change is taking place, as the 'Periyar Visual Theory' rightly refers to the situation of the society.

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