

A STUDY ON ECO BASED DOCUMENTARY FILMS IN MALAYALAM

SUMMARY

Introduction

Documentary films are an expression of reality. They do not just portray reality, but interpret and analyse them. Therefore a film maker's point of view on documentary subject is much relevant. Each documentary movie demands commitment to the topic and clarity of thought.

Documentary films are as old as film history. Documentary films became one of the strongest mediums of social resistance now, from the first documentary film exhibited by the Lumiere Brothers in 1885 Paris. Documentary films have served as the driving force for many social movements internationally. Remarkable documentaries such as *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), *Crude* (2009) *The 11th Hour* (2007), *Flow for Love of Water* (2008), *Up the Yangtse* (2007) and many more have come out in recent years. Serious study of documentaries as a social driving force has to be carried out.

Relevance of the Study

Documentary activism has gained the greatest momentum in the ecological sector. There have been numerous documentaries around the world focusing on

environmental issues. In Malayalam, such documentaries are the cause of much social upheaval. They act as a strong support for the social movements and environmental consciousness that have strengthened in Kerala since the Silent Valley Movement. Documentary films of M. A Rahman in connection with Kasargod's Endosulfan issue and the films of Sharath Chandran and Jayan which focus on the struggles in Mavoor and Plachimada have been the subject of much debate. Such documentaries deserve serious study on the level of praxis and treatment. But in Malayalam, an academic study is not yet made. There are only a few hilarious articles. The relevance of the study is in fact this.

Objectives

The study is based on environmentally oriented documentary films released in Malayalam in the first half of 2016. It is intended to study the theme, treatment and experience of such films as it is an art and media that control the social consciousness. In the transactional capacity of documentary, the role of visual language as a discourse needs to be analysed.

Methodology

This study attempts to analyse the documentaries that have come out in Malayalam from three levels. 1. Relevance of the Topic. 2. Nature of Treatment. 3. Visual Experience

Thesis Format

The study is proposed in four chapters. History and Development of Documentary Filmmaking will be detailed in the first chapter. The second chapter will review the Environmental Documentary Films in Malayalam. In the third chapter the

Conclusions and suggestions will be presented.

Findings

The environmental documentary movement in Malayalam has a rich and powerful history. Though an art form, at the same moment, such movies are a political act too. Globally, many of them have turned to be Kerala versions of powerful video activism. With the transition from video documentaries to the digital age, documentary films are becoming part of a much more powerful media culture. The following are the conclusions drawn from the study based on the selected environmental documentary films released in Malayalam in the first half of 2016.

1. Documentary films have been instrumental in creating ecological vigilance in the Kerala society. The energy generated by these films has given birth to many environmental organizations.
2. Early environmental documentary films in Malayalam -specially the films of M.A Rahman, Sarath Chandran and Baburaj - have been instrumental in transforming environmental awareness to a public sense. The filmmakers, who were in the agitations with the victims of the environmental rebuffs had extended their struggle to the outside society through their documentary films and garnered a large following.
3. Often, Malayalam documentary filmmakers have maintained a horizontal relationship with the subject of the film. It is a process by which the film maker becomes a part of the subject. These film makers do not view it as a mere environmental issue, a natural habitat exclusion and resistance to pollution with an

outsider and loftier attitude. Rather, the process of filmmaking itself is a political practice that shapes the struggle, goes along with it and documents it.

4. There have also been documentaries that capture the beauty and uniqueness of nature. It is in this area that people like Babu Kamprath intervened. But they are not merely copies. The camera is open to the possibility of a life that is in harmony with nature. Keenly they expose the evolutionary changes in nature due to the unfair human interventions.

5. Along with the invasion of nature by human beings, the victims of environmental rebuffs are also the subject of Malayalam documentary films. These documentaries reverberates the human scream along with the flora and fauna. The themes of these films are the lives of many people, including the Endosulfan victims, the people in Plachimada who were helpless in drinking water and the people who have suffered from the pollution of Mavoor and Kathikudam.

6. Documentary films in Malayalam display the characteristic of an alternative media. These films have embarked on the subjects that either the syndicated media have prejudiced owing to some vested interests, or only the approved interpretations of the dominant classes. These documentaries were competent to give voice to popular views, and to create popular defences.

7. Environmental documentaries in Malayalam give prime focus to conditions of stronger responses than the aesthetics of its treatment. The camera in these films does not position itself in neutrally safe grounds, an attempt to explore into the facets of reality can be seen in them through authentic footages and interviews.

8. Documentaries transform the experiential intensities of visuality into the potential

for social actions. The montage resulting from the visual cuts converts vision into a shocker of readings.

Scope for Further Studies

The study of documentary films needs further investigation. The development in technology also results in the increasing number of documentary films. The changes in world order and political awareness also affect these movies on the grounds of praxis as well as treatment. Studies on such areas are to be attempted yet.