

Hindi Cinema in a Post-Colonial India: A Study on Guru Dutt's Self-Expression in 'Pyasa'

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Abstract : This study aims to explore the film 'Pyasa' directed by actor-director Guru Dutt, filmed during the 1950's golden age of Hindi cinema. 'Pyasa' was filmed after a decade of India being a new nation and narrates the world-view of a poet dressed in western ideals, tasting modernity, uprooted from his familial and social moorings causing friction of being between survival and self-expression. The research is based on literature review to study the attitudes, particularly the post-colonial, informing the film. In terms of the structure, the relational study of the film and the historical background of that time came first. Further explorations deal with the use of image making, dialogue, and poetry in the form of songs facilitating the central theme of the human plight of poverty, not of material but of thought. The literature review establishes Dutt's style of expressing melodic melodrama through a dance between light and shadow majorly in the form of song sequences signifying the greys of the society. It was found in this research that melodrama is created by the changing contrasts and use of close-ups. The song sequences convey the tensions of being a contemporary liberal educated youth and having to deal with the societal-ills of this world, which highlights the theme of compulsion towards self-destruction. It is concluded that Dutt's 'Pyasa' is an autobiographical commentary on the state of a nation doing away with a borrowed identity and refashioning its own.

Keywords : cinema, Guru Dutt, post-colonial India, self-expression

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