

Portrayal of Kolkata(the former capital of India) in the 'Kolkata Trilogy'- A Comparative Study of the Films by Mrinal Sen and Satyajit Ray

Authors : Ronit Chakraborty

Abstract : Kolkata, formerly known as Calcutta, is the capital of West Bengal state and the former capital of India (1722-1911) of British India. Located at the heart of Hugli river (one of the main channels of Ganges river), the city is the heart of the state, which forms a base for commerce, transport and manufacture. The large and vibrant city thrives amidst the economic, social and political issues arising from the pages of history to the contemporary times. The unique nature, grandeurs, public debates on tea-stalls and obviously the charismatic scenic beauty and heritage keep the city to be criticized in all horizons, across the world. Movies in India are a big source of knowledge, which can be used as a powerful tool for political mobilization and to indirectly communicate with voters since cinema can be used as a tool of propaganda as it has a wide range of public interests. History proves the fact that films produced in India have been apt enough in making public interests be deeply portrayed through their content in a versatile manner. Such is the portrayal of India's first capital, Kolkata and its ultimate truth being organically laid over by the trilogy of two international fame directors-Mrinal Sen and Satyajit Ray, through their 'magnum opus- the 'Kolkata trilogy'. Mrinal Sen's Interview(1971), Calcutta 71(1972), Padatik(The Guerilla Fighter)(1973) and Satyajit Ray's Pratidwandi (The Adversary)(1970), Seemabaddha(Company Limited)(1971), Jana Aranya(1976). These films picturized the contemporary Kolkata trends, issues and crises arising amidst the political set-up both by the positive and negative variables attributing to the day-to-day happenings of the city. The movies have been set amidst the turmoil that the nation was going through during Indira Gandhi's declaration of Emergency, resulting from the general sense of disillusionment that prevailed during that time. Ray wasn't affiliated to any political party and his films largely contributed towards the contemporary conditions prevailing in the society. Mrinal Sen, being a Marxist was in constant search of the bitter truth that the society had to offer through his lens under the prevailing darkness through his trilogy. The research paper attempts to widely view and draw a comparative study of the overall description of the city of Kolkata as portrayed by Sen and Ray in their respective trilogies. By the usage of the visual content analysis method, the researcher has explored the six movies; both the trilogies of Mrinal Sen and Satyajit Ray and tried to analyse the differences as well as the similarities pertaining to understand India's first capital city Kolkata in various dimensions along with its circumference.

Keywords : Kolkata, trilogy, Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, films, comparative study

Conference Title : ICFMS 2022 : International Conference on Film and Media Studies

Conference Location : Barcelona, Spain

Conference Dates : March 03-04, 2022