



Research Paper

The Chronicle of 5W and 1H in Visual Narration- Textual Analysis of P Sheshadri's Film

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ABSTRACT

Indian film industry stands world's largest producer of films contributing 1.82 trillion rupees in 2019 (FICCI-EY, 2020), however the turnover post pandemic is awaited to be analysed after the current financial year (Keelery, 2020). The century old film market is popularly dominated by Hindi films called as Bollywood globally, while approximately eighty-four percent of films are contributed by regional films from various segments of country. The southern parts comprise of four different languages, among them is the eighty-six-year Kannada film with many credits producing close to two hundred films annually. However, majority of Kannada films lack adequate critic from academicians, renowned scholars and fraternity, few films which are categorically termed as "Art Cinema" stands to represent amidst world cinemas. Among the most renowned art film directors, P. Sheshadri, has always been acclaimed with best film awards both at national and international film festivals. The distinct virtue of Sheshadri films reflect on choosing the subject stigmatic to different sections of the society. This article attempts to engage in analysing Sheshadri's visual representation to native culture, practices and human emotions through textual analysis- thematic to the Syntagmatic, Diachronic and Synchronic scenes.

KEYWORDS: P Sheshadri, Bettada Jeeva, Munnudi, Vimukti, Kannada Cinema, Art Cinema, Film Semiotics.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

The first silent motion picture "Bhakta Kabir" shot in Karnataka was by Veteran theatre artist Gubbi Veeranna in 1924, with his theatre troupe. This was an attempt made over a decade after the first Indian motion picture "Raja Harishchandra" was made by Dada Saheb Phalke in 1913. However, there were attempts to produce couple of silent movies in Karnataka which have no records, hence Sati Sulochana (1934) records to be the first talkie film made in Kannada language (Rego, 2011) (Puttaswamy, 2009).

Indian films since its initial days, are related to Hindi films globally, and later with four languages of south Indian states. Marathi from the state of Maharashtra and Bengali from the West have not gained the momentum along with other twenty-one regional languages in India. The total number of regional films produced comprise of over eighty percent of the total Indian films, however, the twenty percent of the Hindi films gets in to the global limelight.

While each language of films has its own established bigger market, unlike the Hindi, Telugu and Tamil films, the market size of Kannada films is relatively smaller, though it produced close to 200 films in 2019. Early film makers hailed from the theatre play troupes and adopted to produce plays in to films. The slumber progress of producing Kannada films until 1950, later saw the golden age with good number of quality films. While plentiful directors have made movies in Kannada, a few are recognised for their films for that to be the subject and the style of narration. A majority of film makers later followed the commercially and economically viable aspect of film making, which is the main criteria even today. S R Puttanna Kanagal donned in making films which were artistically commercial followed by Nagabharana, and a few directors stick to only make the off-beat films also popular as art films. Film makers B V Karanth, M S Sathyu, Girish Kasaravalli and P Sheshadri tops the list of film makers who are recognised among the international film festivals and fraternities for their meaningful artistic films.

The films selected for this study are *Munnudi* (Foreword), *Bettada Jeeva* (Mountain's Life), and *Vimukti* (Salvation) directed by P Sheshadri as perceived by the authors.

P Sheshadri- Brief Biography:

Born on 23rd November 1963 in the village Dandinashivara, near Tumkur, Karnataka, P Sheshadri holds master's degree in literature and Diploma in Journalism. He designed cover pages at Navakarnataka Prakashana (a popular book publishing house) during his initial years and then produced featured articles and film reviews for a daily editorial, which gave him an understanding of the Kannada Film Industry. Sheshadri then associated to write scripts and assist the veteran director T S Nagabharana for both television and film projects.

P Sheshadri made his directional debut with "*Inchara*"- a teleserial for national broadcaster Doordarshan in the year 1995 and five years later in 2000 ventured with his debut movie *Munnudi*"- an adaption of a short story "*Muttuchera*" authored by Bolwar Mahammad Kunhi, which conferred him with the National and International Awards. With no turn-back, Sheshadri has won the State and National and International recognitions in either of the categories viz., Best Director, Best Film, Best Screenplay awards for all his twelve films and is accredited to be the first director to win the National Award consecutively for eight times.

Films selected for study are accredited with

a) *Munnudi*- National Award for Best Film on Other Social Issues and Karnataka State Award for Special Film of Social Concern

b) *Bettada Jeeva*- National Award for Best Film on Environment Conservation/ Protection and

c) *Vimukthi*- National Award for Best Feature Film in Kannada.

The films are selected for the study based on the content showcasing social and individual concerns among distinct subjects.

The Society

The Indian society and social diversity are vast as its demography, culture and traditions. Until the mid of nineteenth century, the British had domination on India, but little had its effect on the social, cultural and economic life. The DNA of social system in India is primarily categorised on the caste system. The caste system in the Indian society has been observed with recording since the third century BC (Milton Singer, 2007). According to the literary scripture Bhagavad-Gita on the history of the land, the ancient social institution classified caste as *Varnas* based on their professions, as in *Bhraman*- who guides the society and makes policy in right direction with their intellectual thoughts. *Kshatriya*- one who rule and protects the subjects in the society and borders of the land, *Vaishya*- the individuals who are in trade which runs the economy of the society and *Shudra*- one assist all of the above with all their professional and social needs. However, this has been observed changes in various aspects currently with community-based caste system branching in to various sub- castes. The Varna system has transformed in to a mix of professions among all the caste and sub caste the individual belongs based on their profession, geography but on the same category of the Varnas. While a Bhraman (as per community) can be a Shudra (assistant as per Varna) assisting the Vaishya (Trader as per Varnas), who belongs to the Kshatriya (as per community) and a Shudra (as per community) can be a Bhraman (as per Varna) guiding and making the policies. The present caste and sub-caste classifications exist due to the influence of British rule during pre-independence, which continued post-independence and transformed by dominantly classifying for political gains.

However, the state of Karnataka is nevertheless different from the Indian society with regard to the caste-based system, though have a different cultural facet. The Indian social and caste system has cascaded to all across its states with geographical diverse.

Social Viewpoint of P Sheshadri in Films

The director chooses subjects which are relevant to the existing society. The film *Atithi* (Guest) deals with terrorism and the psychology of a terrorist, while *Beru* (The Root) attempts to give a wake-up call to raise the consciousness of society about degradation of moral values, apathy of public service, political manipulations and corruptions. Efforts in portraying to raise conscious on the issue of the need of playgrounds for children in each locality was highlighted in the movie *Tutturi* (The Bugle) and the film *Bharath Stores* deals with the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the Indian retail industry due to the Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation and the impact of multi-brand retail outlets on small and native retailers. *December 1st* explores how the common man faces the embarrassment in a tiny village of North Karnataka region when the Chief Minister visits the protagonist's family with a political agenda of humanitarian grounds. *Vidaaya* (Farewell) narrates on the mindset of a couple, where the husband requests and wife oppose for euthanasia- mercy killing and how the media, court and other functionaries in the society behave when this is heard. Like *Munnudi*, the film *Beti* (The Girl Child) was written by Bolwar Mahammad Kunhi, which showcases the array of a Beary family (a sub class in Arabian sea region) after a mute girl gives birth to a girl child after wedding in a Muslim community, wanting for a boy child.

P Sheshadri's endeavour to film *Mookajjiya Kanasugalu* (Dreams of a mute granny) based on the novel by the same title by Dr. Shivarama Karanth, narrates the dreams of eighty-year-old lady, who turned-out to be

widow before attaining her puberty. The story opens when her family gets to know about her extrasensory perception of sensing the history behind the any object or person she touches. The latest film *Mohandas* is a biopic film about the childhood of Mahatma Gandhi based on three books *Papu Gandhi* by Bolwar Mahammad Kunhi, *Bapu Gandhi Aada Kathe-* The story of Mahatma Gandhi and *The Story of my experiments with Truth-* autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi.

While the director's ventures are majorly based on short story, novels and books, P Sheshadri draws social angle in each of his films. However, the three films chosen for the study are pertaining to that impacted mirroring the society.

Munnudi (Foreword)- exemplifies the revolt of a Muslim woman against the practices misusing the Shariat (Islamic Law) by opportunistic men, and the manipulation of the testaments on *Nikah* (agreement to marry) and *Talaaq* (agreement to divorce).

Bettada Jeeva (Life of a Hill-based on by Jnanapeeth Awardee (highest literary award in India) novelist Dr. Shivarama Karanth) depicts the contrasts of habitation & culture of habitats in remote areas of Western Ghats and their connect to the urban world during pre-Independence India, and the contrast scenario post decades of independence.

Vimukthi (Liberation)- subtly illustrates the possessive feelings, emotions, behaviour and psychological anxieties among shades of romance, anger, lust, ignorance and realisation of a woman facing electra complex.

Analysis:

The three films are categorised in three aspects of film analysis viz., Syntagmatic, Diachronic or Diatopic and Synchronic classified to 5W (What, Where, Who/ Whom, When, Why) and 1H (How) of narrating the story retaining the visual grammar.

Syntagmatic is the structure of the film associating with the dialect words used in dialogues, aptly to the situations developed as per scenes in the story. In simple sense I refer it to as *What?* meaning *What* happens between characters in a particular situation, giving the structure of the story, characters, situations and actions.

Diachronic view point of analysis involves linguistics as a study of a phenomenon and keep changing through time. The study of visual linguistics analyses the shots portraying the theme, this I denote to *Where? Who?* and *How?* Meaning *Where* would the acts take place, between *Who* or *Whom*, describing the characters and *How* character acts in the narrated situation, in relation to the Syntagmatic approach. This comprises the locale's background and activities, properties, atmosphere, culture, characterisation, costumes, makeup hairstyle and so on.

Synchronic relates to time of occurring which I signify as *When?* and *Why?* Meaning *When* would the situation happens at different places at the same time or same period and the reason *Why* would the act happen. All the six elements are deeply interconnected in a visually narrated story. To proceed further, we must primarily know *What* is the story comprising diverse situations.

Syntagmatic- What? The Structure Munnudi

Day-to-day practice of any religion goes as per the customs evolved through interpretations of religious tenets which, in essence, strongly advocate certain basic values for enhancement of quality of life for all beings. However, we do find instances of "intelligent" interpretations of these very tenets by unscrupulous people to serve their own interests. One such instance is the exploitation of woman for the sheer thrill of man in a male dominated society taking advantage of the 'custom' of 'marriage' particularly when the woman is struck by ignorance, fear and poverty. "Munnudi" is a preface written by the waves of Arabian Sea on the plank of the sand. An untold pain of a woman in a pictorial parody, a mirror to an open mind.

The movie based on a short story depicts the first Muslim woman to raise the voice against the heinous act of a man carried against their religious law Shariat. In *Sheriah* (Islamic Law) prostitution is deliberated as the worst crime on earth, which solicits heavy punishment to culprit's life after death. "Munnudi" makes an attempt to discuss the misuse of '*Sheriah*' by certain canny men, who maintain that they could elude both 'Crime' and 'Punishment' for transgression on woman by sheltering themselves beneath the testaments on '*Nikha*' and '*Talaaq*'.

The story revolves around a tiny village *Muttuchera*, located in the coastal region of Arabian sea, with dominance of Muslim population. This is the story of a mother of a teenaged girl who lived in a small village on the coast of Arabian Sea, who raised the first dissident cry against the barbarian act of man, the act that every folk was made to believe, that cherished the sanctity of the Holy Book. '*Munnudi*' is the story of the first woman who burnt her silence against this ritual, wherein every woman of the village was to go to bed as temporary wife with a new alien annually, decorating herself in trousseau.

Hasanabba- played by veteran actor *H G Dattatreya*, makes his living by brokerage he earns by espousing and marrying the teenage girls of the village to Arab men, who makes short visits to the village to trade with sawmill business and spices. Being the only person who can speak Arabic, *Hasanabba* negotiates the

deal with commissions for both the trades- sawmill & spices and negotiating the temporary wedding for the physical pleasure of the foreigners during their short stay of six months. The Arab men divorce before they return to their country and make one-time monetary settlement for the women's living and to raise their off springs born out of their intimate nights.

Rukhiya- the protagonist played by *Tara*, is a victim of Hasanabba's act and had experience with an Arab who never divorced but promised to come back to her. Her wait continues as her daughter grows up attaining puberty. Rukhiya finds herself to be helpless in raising her voice against the dreadful act of targeting teenage girls of the community.

A group of teenager's revolts against the Hasanabba's act and complaining to chief of the community, but none dare to put an end. Hasanabba gradually finds difficult to attract young girls for the Arab's and plans to get one from the nearby village to strike a deal and earn good money for his daughter's marriage, who opposes her father's business.

Rukhiya, had safe guarded her teenage good-looking daughter from the evil eye of Hasanabba, until the day she accidentally collides with him in front of her house. Rukhiya by then would have fed up trailing down his numerous attempts to pacify her for her second marriage instead of waiting for the one who married and had not divorced her.

Hasanabba's thoughts sway to negotiate Rukhiya's daughter for his next client and attempt for a fool-proof plan making her helpless. On the day, her daughter's wedding is planned, Rukhiya decides to raise her voice to save her daughter from this ill practice and to bell the cat thinking "If Not Now, Then When", which is the climax of the movie. The audience are left with thoughts of women empowerment with independent living and lifestyle of their own.

Bettada Jeeva

A novel that honoured the writer Dr. Shivarama Karanth with Jnanapeeth Award- the highest Indian literary award, sets the pre-independence scenario during early forties surrounding the Western Ghats of Karnataka. Shivaramu- a young freedom activist buzzed the independence revolutions among the city, towns and nearby villages. He experiences a contrast lifestyle with habitats staying amidst the hills far from the city, when he attempts to escape from the police arrest during one of his revolution, bringing him to the nearby jungle. Two passing by villagers helps by escorting him to a home owned and lived by Gopalaiah and Shankari in Kelabailu (lower area/ fields) near Kaatumoole (Corner of Forest).

Shivaramu's deep concern to the freedom revolution activities and his early dawn dreams of getting caught by police wakes him from his sleep-in shock. While he hurries to leave the place and reach the nearby town, Gopalaiah requests him to stay for the day as there are no vehicles to ferry him. With peer pressure of the old couples and the local villagers Shivaramu agrees and explores the surroundings with Gopalaiah. He sprains his leg while walking on the uneven hilly path and happens to stay for couple of days.

The characters depict on the unawareness of each other's world. The villagers are unaware of the freedom struggle and Shivaramu gets mesmerised by the nature view. Shankamma refers Shambhu, her lost son looking at Shivaramu while Gopalaiah shows the fatherly affection. In the meanwhile, Narayana (who is like an adopted son of Gopalayya) and his wife Lakshmi are in apprehension assuming Shivaramu as Shambhu's friend who has come to inform about Shambhu's return and there could be a situation of vacating the place. Each of them reveals their perspective of why Shambhu eloped from home to Shivaramu. Gopalayya narrates how he developed and expanded cultivation along the hills and offers to develop a hill for Shivaramu, who feels attached to the nature. However, Shivaramu continues his journey after four days of stay at Gopalayya's house assuring the old lady to get her son Shambu back.

Over five decades later, Shivaramu arrives in search of Kelabailu asking for Gopalayya. Shivaramu notices the drastic change of Kelabailu transformed to a town vanishing the hills, influence of modern trends and gadgets and none would be aware of Gopalayya and his family. Upon enquiring up on Kaatumoole, and Kumaara Parvatha (Kumaara Hill), Shivaramu is navigated to the view point at nearby and looks at the Kumaara Parvatha mesmerizingly and feels sad for the vanished Kelabailu, Gopalayya's family while recollecting his earlier experiences. The movie ends with a thought to the audience on the need of developing of landscapes and endangering natural destruction.

Vimukthi

Man-woman relationship is of great profundity. It has defied the logic of philosophy, wisdom of spirituality and the inquisitiveness of psychoanalysis with all its subtlety and complexity which are beyond time and space. The mystery of the relationship caught the imagination of great philosophers and writers since the time of Sophocles, Aeschylus, Shakespeare, *Kalidasa* and has continued to mesmerize their forerunners living in the present times. *Vimukti*' is an attempt to explore the enigmatic man-woman relationship from a completely different perspective.

A story which captures the human feelings, reactions and responsibilities of a daughter who suffers from electra complex and the salvation she attains.

Madhavi (played by actress Bhavana) is a sole daughter of Keshava Rao (played by actor Ramakrishna), a master of the traditional Mysore paintings. Madhavi develops a strange romantic feeling towards her father during her influential age and due to her possessiveness, she is deprived of motherly love. Keshava Rao recognises Madhavi's behaviour at the initial stage and consults his psychiatrist friend, who reveals her state of mind as electra complex- as defined by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud it is a daughter's unresolved attraction towards her father. Though Keshava Rao avoids Madhavi's advances, her feelings do not subside with time and remain dormant in her inner self even after her marriage. Though her husband Vibhin (played by Arvind) is aware of her psyche, and tries to help her overcome, Madhavi would have not changed her behaviour and is overcome by jealousy and a sense of insecurity when Nava a foreign girl approaches her father to learn the art of traditional painting. Madhavi's assumptions grow indefinite and doubts both of them. Having understood Keshava Rao leaves his home forever with a note which shatters Madhavi. Vibhin offers to support her morally and their closeness results with a daughter being born. Yet, their family life collapses and both gets separated, though the daughter craves to be with her father. While Madhavi makes efforts to find her father, one day Nava comes to meet Madhavi and gets to know about her guru Keshava Rao's missing for eight years. Accidentally, Madhavi finds her father's painting in an advertised photograph of a Mukthi Bhavan (Salvation Home) in Varanasi and immediately makes arrangements to her journey with her daughter.

At Varanasi, while Madhavi meets people and enquires about her father, Keshava Rao on the other side meets Madhavi's little daughter and develops a friendly relationship. The mysterious happenings and the people longing for death in Mukthi Bhavan with a belief of attaining salvation, creates a sense of disenchantment in her. Keshava Rao, gets to know that the little girl is her grandchild who has come with her mother in search of him. Madhavi comes in search of her daughter at her regular hangout Hanuman Ghat and gets to know about the old man who is supposed to be her father. Madhavi's fear of her daughter getting electra complex which made her to be away from her father and unites her daughter with Vibhin. Looking at Keshava Rao, sailing faraway on a boat, she attains the salvation realising her mistake of assumptions and electra complexity.

Diachronic- Where, Who/ Whom and How

The film maker has aptly chosen the diachronic for all the three films analysed here. The story of Munnudi happens around the coastal region around the Arabian sea, showing the scenes and culture of Muslim community. The scenic backgrounds portray the locale as remote village around the sea shore with unelectrified huts, small houses show the poverty, the untarred roads give us the understanding of development and the costumes of each character depict the core of the local community as well. While all these are visual, the director portrays the underlining intensions of the characters which could be observed in their actions, expressions, dialogue and thematically composed shots. The film ends enduring the audience to think on the abuse of women as a commodity and the revolt when all her subdued pain and anger erupts as volcano to make a harmless living and to save her child.

The film Bettada Jeeva narrates the story on how the nature is been demolished in the name of development comparing to the present time to that of the pre-independence era. The director portrays the freedom struggle in the urban areas while those staying deep in the forest amidst the nature aren't aware of the situation. While the picturization of urban areas are designed with those characters wearing pre-independence costumes and old buildings, the people residing in the forest amongst the hills are observed in a different costume which are in use even today. While the film maker depicts the shots thematically depicting the culture and living of people around the hilly region along with their dialect, the feelings of the old couple are depicted showcasing the love of both father and mother towards their lost son with expressions, dialogues and actions. The protagonist who is an activist by virtue, is showered with unfound love and hospitality which puts him in a dilemma which is expressed fewer by dialogues but complemented by expressions. The love between the old couple, his and ambitions to develop each of the hills with natural vegetation is filmed with subtle actions, expressions and dialogues. The protagonist observes the developmental changes during his visit nearly after five decades and gets astonished when none of them were aware of the history of the place- people (old couple) and their vegetation around the hills. Few hills were turned to resorts and other modern landscapes except the divine hill Kumara Parvatha. The strength of the director is depicted in every character through their subtle actions, expressions and minimal dialogues throughout the film. The film ends with a thoughtfulness for audience on how the nature and its habitats has been exploited by the people instead of preserving them.

Sheshadri continues his style of film making in Vimukti as well. The story set in cosmopolitan city Bangalore, revolves around Madhavi- the protagonist who suffers from electra complex of romancing her father. This unusual intricate is social stigma in Indian society, and expressions have spoken more than words. Madhavi's desire to romance her father than her husband, the jealousy feelings when her father goes with his student; assumptions that her daughter might inherit the same electra complex keeps her separated from her husband and her agony in missing her father continues. Madhavi's search for her father at Haridwar in the

northern region of India also has more of expressions than dialogues. The ghats (burial place) in Haridwar, her fathers' emotions of quietness, the atmosphere at the Mukthi Dhaam is captured thematically. The film is visually narrated with the dialect of silent emotions and reactions than expressing with dialogues. This style of narration continues even at the end of film leaving a durable sentiment among the audience.

Synchronic- When and Why the act happens

Sheshadri has chosen three different stories which happens during three different times. The act in the story Munnudi takes place during those under developed era of the post-independence and the results of actions of a person with ill thoughts. Munnudi narrates the practices of certain period, which is relevant even today around the region of Hyderabad. However, Arabs are portrayed in their traditional attire in the film, which is not in the present era.

Bettada Jeeva is picturised during the pre-independence era and finally shows the development after six decades of post-independence in India. Vimukthi develops the scenario during the 21st century and the actions of an individual with electra complex. Bettada Jeeva showcases a locale during two different period which is not parallel to each other, while

Vimukthi displays the parallel connection between the husband who is waiting for his wife to come back during the life time of a protagonist.

II. CONCLUSION

The films display three different genres and stories. Bettada Jeeva seems to be relevant to the present age and future, while Munnudi is pertinent to the present practices at remote areas. However, Vimukthi is about germane to all times on individuals with a specific complex.

Munnudi re-counts the harassments on women and her revolt against the practices. The visual narration cores how the loop holes in the religious practices are encashed by Hasanabba's crooked thoughts of playing with others life. It underscores the illegal act of prostitution with the legal religious norms of Muslim community. While soft and helpless Rukhiya dominantly demonstrates extent of mother's role in protecting her daughter from the evil practice. The director makes an attempt to engender conversation on the

- a. Clash between the true spirit of religious views and condescending customs.
- b. Ignorance, fear, and poverty forcing women into the trap set by dodgy men.
- c. Exploitation of woman for the sheer thrill of man in a male dominated society.
- d. Sanctity of this oppressive system which cannot be questioned because everything is done as per the "custom" of marriage and divorce.
- e. Gender discrimination and oppression accepted as a way of life by some women for ages. But one woman dares to explode the system.

Bettada Jeeva relates to the distortion of nature for the development of community at the surface level, however the pictorial description underlines the growth of population and the social change of distant relationships among the people. The sea change after decades of independence astonishes with unhappiness to the protagonist, with a sense of philosophy on the days spent as an accidental unexpected guest and the reminiscences he was left with. The director's makes his effort to engage the viewers on

- a. Beautiful minds of people living in the hills and forests; their innocence-hospitality- native wisdom- rituals- culture; their living in harmony with Nature.
- b. Simple life of Gopalaiah and his wife Shankari and the love between the old couple.
- c. Gopalaiah's sensitivity for life and his wife's constant longing for their son Shambhu, portrays the characters of a practical father and mother.
- d. The guesses, apprehensions, sense of guilt leading then to introspection, opening new awareness to Shivaramu.
- e. Complex social issues and development, strengthening the bond between human relations, nature and development.

Vimukthi accentuates relaying on an instance which makes a woman realize on her feelings of electra complex at her later age. The narration of this story demonstrates the feelings of Madhavi, suffering from electra complex and how distance created between the relationship brings in maturity of feelings. The film leaves the audience to

- a. Understand the psyche and characteristic nature of a woman with electra complex.
- b. Discuss on the support system rendered by peers.
- c. Debate on the medical care and personal counselling.
- d. Self-effort to overcome electra complex.

While all the three films are extremely well visual craft, Bettada Jeeva and Munnudi conveys on social views, Vimukthi exceptionally communicates the feelings of an individual who resides in the society. However, each film clearly depicts the 5 W's and 1 H in the visual format.

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