

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions and Future Scope of Work

There are very few such fortunate people in the world who manage to experience the accolades for their contributions within their life terms, others are generally known by the terms like maverick underrated genius and Ritwik Ghatak is unarguably one such person. He was one such prodigy who, in a relatively limited work-span and lifespan managed to hold grounds atop alongside the other Mozarts of the filmmaking craft. In his almost 50 years lifespan of which the work-span was even more restricted, he mesmerized the audience with his version of realism that was filtered through his sociopolitical outlook which was a result of the hardships he faced during his lifetime.

Despite being one of the finest gems in the area of filmmaking that India has produced, he only had eight full length feature films to his credit. This speaks volumes of the impact that his eight films made in comparison to the tons of films made by his contemporaries. It can be argued and debated as to if he has been the best filmmaker India has produced but his contribution in the field of filmmaking cannot be sidelined when discussing the best of Indian cinema.

Ghatak's movies takes the audience on a voyage that dwells through emotions like sadness, aloofness, drama, amusement, love on socio-politico-cultural and other themes running in between. His contribution played an important role and became even more critically important due to heightened ideological and political awareness visible in Ghatak's work. His works brought to the fore the fading traditional and regional identities in the wake of the Bengal partition and segregated homeland. Since he himself lived through the pain of partition, like millions other, he underwent the partition of heart and mind as well and that made him use the medium of cinema as a means to convey socio-political crises making him one of the very rare species of filmmakers till date. He was one of the earliest artists to employ various innovations in film movements.

Several objectives pertaining to Ghatak's contributions and his filmmaking craft were explored through the study of his partition trilogy films, namely, *Meghe Dhaka Tara*

(1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961), and *Subarnarekha* (1962). One major objective of the study was to find out if pain and reality are essential elements of Ghatak's films. The study was also aimed at discovering if human values and sufferings depicted through Ghatak's characters are representative of the suffering of masses at large. This research work also tries to investigate how Ghatak's ideological beliefs have been incorporated in his films.

Pain and Reality in Ritwik Ghatak's Films

The study of Ghatak's trilogy revealed that each of his films and their plots have a strong story connection with the realities of post-partition Bengal. Ritwik Ghatak was a victim of partition and a refugee himself; so naturally, the impressions engraved on his mind and thoughts allowed him to empathize with the refugee crisis and hence that became a central theme of the films he made which included life of refugees, their sufferings and abject poverty etc. But, simultaneously, Ghatak became Marxist at very early age and his ideological bending provided him a vision that encompassed the pain and reality of partition with the pain and reality of the common masses of the country. Ghatak used melodrama in a vivid manner in all his films to highlight the tragedy during those conditions more intensely. This allowed the inculcation of touch of the tragic realities of partition which evoked heart touching emotions among its viewers.

Content analysis of Ghatak's trilogy revealed the various emotional dimensions in his films. *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960) exhibits the dutifulness and dedication of a daughter towards her family despite conflicting and contradicting social norms perpetuating in the conditions of abject poverty and selfishness of the era. Era of 40s was a rather conservative one with typical minded, stereotypical people where allowing daughters to be the bread earners of the family was not a common sight. However, in *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, Neeta works as a teacher in her village also and earns a living for her family. This indicated how hardships of post-partition and poverty led women to break the patriarchal shackles. But, then one mustn't undermine the struggles Bengali intellectuals' and reformers' did during 18th and 19th century to improve the situation of women. Nevertheless, Neeta's character seems to amalgamation of hardships faced by post-partition and poverty led women

of Bengal. Ghatak's movies were not just representative of perpetual social realities, but also those of the changing times.

The story of *Komal Gandhar* (1961) based on IPTA depicts the conditions of present situations of theater everywhere. Through an innocent love story, Ghatak presented realism and exploitation in the society as faced by characters in the film. Anusuya, strong head, faces exploitation by her aunt and family, which she has known since birth, for not joining their group. While she is in pain of getting parted from her fiancé (samar), she never lets it become her weakness. She puts up a fight wherever needed and eventually gains success in theater. Unlike, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* female led character of this film doesn't seem like defeated in life despite her (Neeta's) hardships.

Subarnarekha (1962) is a story of a brother and a sister experiencing caste-based discrimination. The film depicts the struggles of a lower caste boy grown up in an upper caste family after having parted from his family in post-partition period. This film puts forth reality of a society divided by caste and shows that caste is not mere a tag but a harsh reality which is itself is a manifestation of pain and suffering. Aviram, hailing from low caste, falls in love with a Brahmin upper caste girl, Sita. The film showcases the struggles and social realities of casteism through various means. On getting to know about the caste status of Aviram, his friends abandon him, however, Sita takes a leap of faith by running away with Aviram on the day of her marriage, only to be doomed by society later. Ghatak's films seems to integrate various experiences and realities of life together through the characters and story of his films.

Each of Ghatak's movies reflects a subaltern reality jam-packed with an emotional story which directly impinges on emotions of pain, exploitation and social reality.

Human Values and Sufferings of Ritwik Ghatak's Characters

The first glimpse of Ghatak's films can reveal that they are entrenched in social realities. The storyline, plot and every scene of his trilogy are connected with an underlying social issue. Basic human needs, requirements, feelings and emotions are the core of the themes of Ghatak's cinema. All his films depict poor and lower

middle section of the society and displays a torn identity of characters, whether it is due to partition, caste division, class division or cultural alienation.

In *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), protagonist Neeta gets stuck with tuberculosis, a disease without a proper treatment in those times. Myths prevalent in societies about the disease like untouchability, maintaining distance, secluding the person, etc. are shown lucidly. The contrast between Neeta's sacrificing dedication to her family and her want to live a full life upon diagnosis of the disease, is representative of most social problems which are paid heed to only when it's too late. Then, there is a running theme of the downsides of giving love to those who might not be deserving of it represented by Sanat and Neeta's failed relationship, Sanat's marriage with Neeta's younger sister, constant endeavors by Neeta's mother to break the bond between Sanat and Neeta so that money can keep pouring in the family, Neeta's mother's coldness towards Neeta's future while behaving differently for Mantu (another earning member of the family). Another social theme which comes out of the movie is that of an artist's struggles, represented by Shankar, Neeta's elder brother, who is trying to make it big in music since it is his passion, but impediments from stressed financial conditions and society's taunts (embodied by the shopkeeper). So, we witness human values and sufferings in abundance in this film.

In *KomalGandhar* (1961), Ghatak shows prevalent conditions of theatre's bleak future in the post-partition period. The film shows two different theatre groups, one run by an egoistic boy Brighu, and another by selfish Shanta who would do anything to gain success. Shanta's nephew Anusuya (a bright girl) joins Brighu's theater group which gives birth to their love story. The story focuses on the story of the life of a young girl, Anusuya. The play deals with the 'Why' of partition and ends with a conclusion that all those born on the banks of Padma are probably cursed and thus the tragic times of partition befell on them. The theme of refugee crisis and story of millions stripped of their nationalities runs rampant in the movie.

Subarnarekha (1962) is one of the trilogy films which focus on the social evils of the menace of casteism. Ironically enough, the country till today deals with the issue as one of the biggest problems. This is an interesting plot where Aviram, a lower caste boy, is sheltered by an upper caste family. The story takes a turn when Aviram, a lower caste by birth but reared by an upper caste family, falls in love with an upper

caste woman. Ishwar, a good-hearted upper caste person who sheltered Aviram, turns into the society and people he despised when his younger sister falls in love with Aviram and his insecurities about caste distinctions surface. This theme is as relevant for today's masses

Ghatak's Ideological Beliefs and their Application in his Films

Revolutionary filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak mirrored the pain, suffering, post-partition trauma, exploitation, casteism, social divide, etc. through his famed trilogy beginning with *Meghe Dhaka Tara* in 1960. For him, art meant war. He successfully managed to showcase even the cruelest of social realities through his films. He had Marxist leaning since early age and this had a deep impact on him as a filmmaker as well. Characters of most of his films are downtrodden, exploited, marginalized, poor, helpless people from poor and lower middle class of the society. He was not only a director but also an actor and often stated that cinema is the only medium with which the people can easily connect to and share their thoughts on a common level. His life experiences and distinctive lens of seeing society gave him a unique directional and cinematography style.

Meghe Dhaka Tara and *Subarnarekha* show condition of a poor family with meager mediums to survive. In these films, Ghatak has shown his stands and perspective on caste-based issues and other conditions prevailing in then society. In *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, it has been shown that women, though due to all the wrong reasons, came equal to men in those times. They are financially independent, but still need emotional liberation to be truly liberated. Neeta symbolized all women who were forced by the harsh realities of partition to come out of their homes to support their families. In *KomalGandhar*, he shows the condition of IPTA in the Bengal after partition and factions which emerged at that point of time. It was a real time event which affected theatre in partitioned Bengal. This is also the story from Ghatak's viewpoint of how IPTA lived the times when on the verge of culmination, but eventually survived and moved ahead.

Ghatak's films, particularly the films selected for this study, exhibits as stark division or gap between the material level of existence and their dreams. Though this might sound a common thing, however the effect of this contrast drawn in Ghatak's film

compels the audience to relook into the existing and rotted social structure and to draw hope from the human values of the common masses' despite of their unending hardships, sufferings and struggles. Ritwik Ghatak was an uncompromising filmmaker. He meticulously and beautifully weaved the fiction based upon his experience with reality and with his ideological beliefs.