



Equarity in brutality and stupidity

After seeing this film I dare not doubt that our film makers do indeed try their best to make socially relevant films so that they can show the path of justice and virtue to the ignorant and confused masses who flock to see their films. It is quite another matter that the creator has filled the heads of these film makers with rubbish instead of grey matter. But many interesting things may be learnt even from rubbish. For instance, let us consider the question of law and justice as worked out in this film.

Most people know that injustice and exploitation give birth to a lot of crime. This is how Geeta alias Jwala alias Parveen Babi turns a dacoit. Most people also know that a few of the oppressed do turn rebellious and instead of burning themselves in the fire of revenge, begin to set fire to village after village. So far so good.

But dacoits too, at least filmi dacoits, come in two brands. One kind are those who are born evil like Duryodhan in this film while the other are those who, in the tradition of Lord

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Krishna, are born to establish justice on this earth. Geeta and her adopted uncle fall in this category. They do not become dacoits of their own desire. They are made dacoits by social injustice.

Unfortunately, however, our police fail to perceive the vital difference between these two brands and therefore harass both kinds indiscriminately. It would be unfair to expect the police to distinguish between good and bad. Had they been so discriminating, why would they have become policemen in the first place? So today, we find ourselves in a situation whereby battles between policemen and dacoits rage fast and furious but the problem is nowhere near being solved. As the newspapers bear witness, dacoities are on the increase and lawlessness is spreading throughout the country.

Our director deserves appreciation for having suggested a truly *Bhartiya* solution to the problem. In our country of *thai biradarivad*, kinship ties are like magic charms which unlock all doors. Why not try to reform dacoits with the same charm? Whether it is a job we want or a ration card or a railway ticket do we not look for some paternal cousin who, through his maternal cousin, can discover a relationship with some MLA or minister to pull the right strings? Why, even when our Prime Minister solicits votes, she does so as the mother-in-law of Punjab, the daughter of Kashmir and the daughter-in-law of Maharashtra or some other province. This film too upholds this national ideal with utmost sincerity.

It is not easy for the police to catch a dacoit like Jwala. Even in real life, the police cannot catch dacoits. After all, they have a longstanding *bhaibandhuchara*, a fraternal relationship, with them. But this film shows us how simple the operation can be. If the dacoit is a woman and a police officer charitably allows her to fall in love with him, and also charitably establishes sexual relations with her, as Sagar does with Jwala, that solves the problem in a jiffy. It does not take long for a woman to transform herself from a Jwala into a Sita. She even surrenders herself to the law in order to further Sagar's career. Her child by Sagar is adopted by a Muslim police officer. Jwala's

adopted uncle too was a Muslim. Thus two birds are killed with one stone. The communal problem too is solved by the expedient of cooking up kinship ties.

The conclusion is simple. To reform women criminals, a number of handsome, romantic looking male officers, who are charitably disposed, especially hi sexual matters, need to be recruited into the police force, and to reform male criminals, a number of pretty, smart policewomen. If this simple and inexpensive pro-gramme led to the taking away from the police of all the'ir deadly weapons and to the preventicm of b\oodshed, I for one would consider it worth supporting and propagating.

This film makes yet another valuable suggestion in response to the crying need of the times. Remember the scene when Jwala is wounded by a tribal in the forest and a merciless deity chooses that moment to send a deluge. Poor Sagar is at his wits' end to revive the semiconscious girl. Try as he may, he is unable to stop her shivering with cold. After much anguished thought, he decides that the only way to save the life of this woman is to warm her injured, shivering body by having sex with her, for which he does not trouble to ask her opinion. Instead, he just goes ahead and performs this duty^» this social responsibility, in the best traditions of Manhood.

How can one help being overwhelmed by such generosity? Though she was unwell and perhaps shy to ask such a favour, Jwala spends the rest of her life showing her gratitude to him, and repeating the magic *mantra* which every man yearns to hear, even when he is visiting a prostitute whom he will not recognise the next morning : "A woman belongs to the man who first touches her body." According to this formula, rape disappears from the dictionary. Another category of criminals reformed out of existence ! Also, every man in the audience learns what his social duty is if he happens to find a woman wounded and shivering with cold in a semiconscious state. If he condescends to force sex on her, he will be amply repaid for his kindness since she will worship him all her life, and he can worship her after her death as Sagar and his wife worship the dead Jwala's picture at the end of the film.

Another point which suddenly became clear to me like a revelation was that while some of the poor who are unjustly treated by society become dacoits, some of the rich who are unjustly treated by society doubt-less become film makers and actors. In every scene, I felt that the anguish and rebellious feelings simmering in the film maker's mind were emerging in the form of pathetic sexual fantasies. Since the poor director cannot openly depict sex, since perhaps in his own life too he has to be secretive and hypocritical about his sexual activity and fantasies, he tries to resolve the resultant mental perversions and neuroses by using such symbols as "*Mein banduk, turn goli, mein botal, turn daru*"

When scene after scene bombards one with sickly, distorted and wriggly images of sex, one cannot help but feel that the poor film maker suffers from some terrible mental illness which makes his sexual fantasies assume such pitiful forms. If we have the slightest sympathy with the men of our society, instead of criticising them and condemning the films they make, we ought to help them get psychiatric help.

Yet, given their anguish and problems, the poor fellows do their best to project the idea of women's equality with men, and even outdo many feminist types in this effort. Is Parveen Babi in this film any less violent, vindictive, vulgar or mindlessly histrionic than is Amitabh Bachhan ? After all, if women insist on being equal to men, they will have to learn to be equally monstrous and inhuman. Men can give us an equal share only in what they have so far acquired in their murderous tussle for power with each other..

And is the director really to blame if a woman dacoit turns into a whimpering, longsuffering beloved and mother as soon as she reforms ?

Finally, this great reform campaign does not stop at human society. It. goes on to reform Nature too. Nature has been very unfair to men in that they have no way of ascertaining paternity. In spite of bind-ing women in monogamous marriages, putting them in *parda* and locking them away even from their own fathers and brothers, it is unfortunate that a man can never feel sure a particular child is really "his." Since science, male dominated though it is, refuses to come to men's aid in this matter, the director reforms nature to fulfil male fantasy. Sagar's illegitimate son has never seen or had contact with his father since he parted from his father's body as one tiny sperm on the day his mother was honoured with a rape, yet this child has developed each one of Sagar's acquired habits and skills to the level of a mania—from digging his ears in. an unhygienic fashion to firing a police rifle as if he was born to do nothing else. All this so that the father if he chooses to do so, can acknowledge his son at an appropriate and convenient moment, particularly since his legitimate child happens to be only a girl and his-wife is unfit to produce any more children.

In one area alone was the helplessness of the director to help himself apparent—in the tribal village scenes. Though most of our film makers have seen only a few cities like Delhi and Bombay or maybe Pune and Lucknow and a few hillstations, they feel a laudable compulsion to reform the whole of Indian society. To this noble cause they dedicate the sum total of knowledge they have acquired from reading: *Indrajal*, *Chandamama* and other comic books.

Once the hero and heroine have reached the jungle, they must be involved in adventure. Since wild animals can be seen in city zoos, an adventure involving them might have been a little more realistic. But tribals are not to be seen in museums so the film presents us with a new species—Bombay manufactured tribals. This species speaks a new language: "*Yudham arambham, ha ha, ho ho, hatyam karnam*", and so on.

On the whole, one can conclude that not only is the Bombay formula film maker touchingly innocent regar-ing the life of people outside a few big cities, but he is also unjustly intimidated and rendered a coward. The poor fellow is unable openly to present his sickly and violent sexual and power fantasies as his own. He has to present them in the name of tribal culture—so afraid is he of being labelled "obscene" by civilised Hindu society

—Madhu Kishwar
(translated from Hindi)