

A Study of Auteur Theory and Director's Psychology: Gautham Vasudev Menon as an 'Auteur'

Ms. Rudhra TS¹, Dr. P. Tamilarasan²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of English and Foreign Languages, College of Engineering and Technology, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, SRM Nagar, Kattankulathur-603 203, Kancheepuram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

² Assistant Professor (S.G), Department of English and Foreign Languages, College of Engineering and Technology, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, SRM Nagar Kattankulathur 603 203, Kancheepuram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

This research paper is to highlight the limits of 'Auteur Theory' which are scrutinized through the commonality and identity in selected films. The study shows cases the personality of a director in a novel way. 'Auteur Theory' is a French film theory that discusses about the personality, technical competence and interior meaning in films that dealt with philosophy of Auteur notes. While making a film, the director should focus on individual style, vision, techniques, innovation, personality and creativity that makes a film more interesting. 'Auteur Theory' considers that the director is equal to a writer, because both have an individual style in making their own art. The research paper analyses the various aspects of director Gautham Vasudev Menon's selected movies to show case his commonality. Particularly, this paper focuses on Menon's unique aesthetic, technical style and the psychology of the audience that has made him famous in Tamil Cinema.

Keywords: French film theory, Auteur Theory, Writer, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Commonality, Tamil Cinema

Introduction

Auteur Theory is the most important theory in all of cinema. Even if we have hard away its probably affected how to view the movies filmmaking and some credits of how much emphasis put on the director as the Auteur of a movie. Auteur Theory is the idea of the director as the primary Auteur or Auterist of a film and that film reflects the director's screen of vision. A distinct director creates a voice from style, story and subject matters. Some directors notice more commonality right away from the films of Anderson, Spielberg, Hitchcock and John Ford. It is obvious that they mean cinematic voice through their films. The director using a camera is almost like a writer using a pen.

Auteur Theory is mainly derived from two essays from two different critics. First from Francois Truffaut in 1954 from his essay 'A

Certain Tendency of the French Cinema' in a French magazine called Cahiers Du Cinema. Second from an American critic Andrew Sarris from his essay 'Notes on Auteur Theory' in 1962 and his book 'The American Cinema Directors and Directions 1929 – 1968'. Both gave an acknowledge to a director as an Auteur. But also gave recognition of the best of how Hollywood directors is equal to painters, writers and composers where they had a commonality in his own films. It is not easier to simply show and establish that the director as an Auteur in films. It is also to show the director's creative vision into making a film like Akira Kurosawa, Stanley Kubrick, Tarantino, Satyajit Ray are Auteurs who recognized on their own and have their commonality in their films. Gautham Vasudev Menon is one amongst the contemporary directors of Tamil cinema. His films will always have strong depth and aesthetics, where

he is inspired by American films. He is famous for his portrayal of female characters, that break the boundaries of other films. Because there is a lot of difference while comparing Gautham Menon's films to others, that made him a special place in Tamil cinema. He has many commonalities in films that considers Gautham Menon as an Auteur, because he uses his own signature style in every movie that can be easily attracted by the audience. His female representation, romantic scenes and dialogues, male characters representation, urban middle class family and their problems, portrayal of antagonist's specific madness and narration serves as a uniqueness that makes him as an Auteur in films.

Literature Review

"I think cinema, movies and magic have always been closely associated. The very earliest people who made film were magicians"- Francis Ford Coppola (2014) Film makers were magicians because they create wonders in their own style of art. The improvement of Auteur hypothesis, through its development in the pages of the French film magazine, *Cahiers Du Cinema* and the mind-boggling changes, goes through in this way. This history will support researchers who are anxious to get familiar with this significant zone of film hypothesis that empowers methods of translation and finds levels of significance in any case inaccessible. According to Stephen Putnam Hughes (2013) in "The Production of the Past: Early Tamil Film History as a Living Archive" explains the progression of inquiries regarding the connections between authentic source, chronicle practice, and the creation of film history about Tamil film of the 1930s. So, it considers how the issue of admittance to verifiable sources has created different sorts of master information and how do these documents establish their own authentic accounts. Furthermore, by what method may we start to think

fundamentally past these restrictions to compose elective narratives of early Tamil film. This research paper explains that these inquiries are crucial that film history as a continuous, incomplete, and open finished venture that is a piece of the living present.

Brinda Bose (2011), this research paper explores that the cinema as a text is especially well suited to play with the dynamics of this fraught space. Often a film context and narrative identify the film text itself as a signifier of the liminal spaces that it proposes to explore, enacting both their limitations and their possibilities. And it also talks about the non-normative sexualities have always occupied a liminal space in socio-political configurations. Davis Thomas (pp 34-39), this article explains that if the director fails to show off his uniqueness in his subsequent movies, then he/she will not be framed under the theory of Auteurism. If so he/she will not be considered as an Auteur of their framed work i.e., movies. Because they have to show case their uniqueness in their movies, so that audience can identify their personal signature style of filmmaking and that helps the audience to know about the director without their name.

Directors and their commonality as an Auteur

Steven Spielberg, an American film director and a true Auteur, is famous for his amazing craftsmanship and his cinematic techniques and styles helped in the era of blockbuster. His movies are groundbreaking because of the way they are filmed.

Quentin Tarantino, an American film director, creates movies with his unique personality, creativity and imagination as well as constant repetition is always present in all his movies. And the main thing Tarantino maintains a common thread throughout his movies which elevates his status as an excellent director, screenwriter and

producer that includes an excellent Auteur as well.

Martin Scorsese, an American film director, is famous for slow-motion, freeze-frame, long tracking shots, silence and powerful music are standout signature of most of his movies.

Zack Snyder, an American film director, is famous for unique blend of low cultures references that made him to elevate the status of acclaimed Auteur. Most of his movies are certainly indulge in sensory overloaded and cathartic blood lust.

David Fincher, an American film director, is famed for his techniques of low-key lighting and shadow usage in most of the shots. This combines together with his use of restricted narration lifts his individuality to a great extent.

Taika Waititi, a New Zealand film director, is known for his regional slides of life. His most movies have a sense of longing for companionship and an affection for innocence, this commitment to tone and style has begun to construct a solid filmography of consistent quality.

Akira Kurosawa, Japanese film director works under three distinctive authorial signatures, the active involvement of nature, the strong sense of stage-performance and the editing on movement. He is known as an Auteur for his specific recurrent themes and classical trademarks in most of his movies.

Ingmar Bergman, Swedish film director, is famous for his intense close-ups of a character in a profound state of existential despair.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder, German film director, is known for framing of characters in doorways or behind doors. Images of men driving the road from city to city takes place in

most of his movies that paved as a signature identity.

Satyajit Ray, an Indian film director noted for humanism, versatility and detailed control over his films and their music considered him as an Auteur.

Gautham Vasudev Menon as an Auteur

Gautham Menon's films always have a strong depth and aesthetics where he is inspired by American films. He is known for his portrayal of female characters, that break the boundaries of other films. Because there is a lot of difference while comparing Gautham Menon's films to others, that made him a special place in Tamil cinema. He has many commonalities in films that considers Gautham Menon as an Auteur. He uses his own signature style in every movie that can be easily attracted by the audience. He has some commonalities like Female representation, romantic shots and dialogues, male characters outlook, portrayal of urban middle class family, methodological madness in villain characters and narration serves as an individual uniqueness that makes him to stand different from other directors.

Male Character Representation

Male characters in Gautham Menon's films are totally different from others, because they have an outlook which is very neat and dignified. Male characters in his films are mostly good profiled jobs with neatly shaved and has a common formal outfit. Qualification of hero in movies are mostly engineers. Male characters pay attention to female characters, they are active listeners in all the situation and they respect the opposite gender to express the equality. In most of Gautham Menon's films male characters walk with their female together. They treat heroines equally while walking, like neither behind nor before them. Male characters often give

honest compliments to their lady love. The most important representation in Gautham Menon's films is that the male characters both protagonist and antagonist cry equally breaking the line of masculinity. Menon's view on male characters is even wider when comparing with others, because most of the people failed to show man's tears as fellow human being. Male characters also have equal emotion and impact that is clearly portrayed in Gautham Menon's films. Emotion is common for every individual; it doesn't rely only on one gender but equals all.

Usage of Tamil Titles

Gautham Menon has some commonality in his films, one among them is usage of Tamil titles to movies. His debut movie is *Minnale* followed by this he named movies in his favorite language where he is working which has a special mention. His Tamil title movies are *Minnale*, *Kaakha Kaakha*, *Vettaiyadu*, *Vilaiyaadu*, *Pachaikili Muthucharam*, *Vaaranam Aayiram*, *Vinnaithaandi Varuvaayaa*, *Nadunisi Naaygal*, *Neethane En Ponvasantham*, *Yennai Arindhaal*, *Achcham Yenbadhu Madamaiyada*, *Enai Noki Paayum Thota*.

Divine Female Characters

Gautham Menon's films portray his heroines and women like a divine. When comparing with others, he has a special shot where the male characters touch the feet of their lady love to show their dignified way of treating her like a queen. His most movies show case that a man who portrays his heroines like a divine to make them feel comfort and to show them respect and equality where others failed to do so. Some statements from personal and professional life are, 'I have miles to go and promises to keep', 'There is nothing wrong to touch the women's feet', 'Some men feel if they touch a women's feet, it will be against their masculinity', 'Touching her feet doesn't mean she enslaved, it is like he is lifting his baby's feet to show the

height of caring love', 'I am a man too but I feel proud and blessed touching my women's feet, because she's my everything. Sometimes she acts as my wife, my mother, my sister, my daughter and my best friend too'. So as per these statements Gautham Menon's most of the films show the important of female and nothing wrong to treat her in a dignified way.

Antagonist with Methodological Madness

Antagonist in Gautham Menon's films have methodological madness portrayed to create a strong impact for the character to uplift the role of antagonist that creates a hype for the audience. In his most of the movies, all the antagonist has some special reason or a significant method for their madness or being in the negative shade. But according to them, they suffered a lot for a reason that tend to turn themselves against the protagonist in their peculiar way of handling crimes.

Protagonist Narration

Gautham Menon's films always have a narration portion, which is narrated by heroes in their movies. From the start of the movie till end, we can listen to the narration part that travel along with the story. The whole film has narration, so that the audience can easily understand and they travel along with the story while watching his movies. A voice that took the audience deep into the story to avoid misunderstanding and keep them in touch and engage for next run time of the film. So, narration plays a massive role in Gautham Menon's movies that elevate him to the next level.

Other Commonalities

Most of Gautham Menon's movies will not have much comedy tracks. He pays less attention to comedy while comparing with other genres. His movies mostly focus on urban-middle class family's life style, struggles and it will relate mainly to

their personal life, because maximum number of percentages in the society is urban-middle class, so they can relate the story with their personal life. His movies have a strong conversation between hero and his lady love that is more intense, creating an impact for the audience and gives them pleasure while watching his movies. Because the intense of respect and romance dwelt together to show case the strong bond of togetherness and he makes sure that it won't affect their relationship in any way. At last, his movies have a powerful music score, he spends much focus on songs that creates a hit for his movies.

Conclusion

Gautham Vasudev Menon is a director with an excellence of romantic movies. His movies are so realistic at the same time it doesn't follow any rules or criteria. Besides his romance, the perfect characters, music, background everything makes the plot realistic. The lifestyle and the plot setting portrayed the contemporary metropolitan life, which makes the audience relate physically as well as mentally while watching his movies. The director has perfect narrating technique and unconventional editing that makes the audience travel with the story without any distractions. Gautham Vasudev Menon is undoubtedly a contemporary Auteur, whose films has perfect commonalities that creates an individual style in movies he direct. To him goes the fame of creating different concept which is beyond the followings of the society and especially making a realistic version of romantic movies till date.

Works Cited

1. Aurier, Phillippe. "From Book to Movie: An Investigation of Adaptation and its Impact on Spectators Evaluation Judges." Guergana Guintcheva, www.afm-marketing.org
2. Achcham Yenbadhu Madamaiyada (2016). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon. Produced by Venkat Somasundaram and Reshma Ghatala
3. Bordwell, David. "Art-Cinema Narration." Narration in the Fiction Film. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, pp. 211
4. Bose, Brinda. "Cities, Sexualities and Modernities: A Reading of Indian Cinema." Thesis Eleven, Saga journal. Volume: 105, issue: 1, 2011. University of Delhi
5. Butler, Judith. "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity". New York: Routledge, 1990
6. Bywater, Tim, and Thomas Sobchack. "The Auteurist Approach: Analysis of Filmmakers and Their Films." An Introduction to Film Criticism: Major Critical Approaches to Narrative Film. New York: Longman, 1989, pp. 51-79
7. Caughie, John. "Preface." Theories of Authorship: A Reader. New York: Routledge, 1981, pp. 2
8. Chaudhari, Aneek. (2013). "Auteur Theory and its Implications". International Journal of Advancements in Research & Technology, Volume 2, Issue 11, 77-89
9. "Director Tim Burton and the Auteur Theory" 29 July 2009. Web. 22 march 2021
10. Dudley, Andrews (1993). "The Unauthorized Author Today". In Collins, Jim (Ed). Film Theory Goes to the Movies: Cultural Analysis of Contemporary Film. New York: Routledge
11. Enai Noki Paayum Thota (2019). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon. Produced by Ishari K. Ganesh, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Venkat Somasundaram and Reshma Ghatala
12. Hughes, Stephen Putnam. "The Production of the Past: Early Tamil Film History as a living Archive." Saga journal, volume: 4, June 11, 2013. University of London

13. Kaakha Kaakha (2003). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon. Produced by Kalaipuli S. Thanu
14. Kachroo, Kanika Arya. "Analyzing Imtiaz Ali as an Auteur." *Amity Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, Vol 7, No 1, 2017, Amity University Rajasthan, <http://amity.edu>
15. Minnale (2001). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon. Produced by Sunanda Murali Manohar
16. Morrison, James. "*Auteur Theory and My Son John*". United Kingdom, Bloomsbury Academic, 2012
17. Nadunisi Naaygal (2011). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon. Produced by
18. Reshma Ghatala, Venkat Somasundaram, Elred Kumar and Madan
19. Neethane En Ponvasantham (2012). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon.
 - a. Produced by Elred Kumar, Reshma Ghatala, Gautham Vasudev Menon and Venkat Somasundaram
20. Pachaikili Muthucharam (2007). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon. Produced by V. Ravichandran
21. Phillips, Patrick (1996). "*Genre, Star and Auteur: An Approach to Hollywood Cinema*". In Nelmes, Jill (Ed). *An Introduction to Film Studies*. London: Routledge
22. Pramaggiore, Maria, and Tom Wallis. "*Film Authorship.*" *Film: A Critical Introduction*. 2nd ed., Pearson, 2008, pp. 397-413
23. Sarris, Andrew. "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1970." *Film Society of Lincoln Centre*, Vol 6, No 3, Fall 1970, pp 6-9. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43451162
25. Stoddart, Helen. "*Auteurism and the Film Authorship Theory.*" *Approaches to popular film*. Eds. Joanne Hollows and Mark Jancovich. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995, pp. 38-57
26. Thomas, David. "*The Missing Auteur.*" *Film Comment*, volume: 18, no: 4, pp. 34-39.
27. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43452852
28. Vaaranam Aayiram (2008). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon. Produced by V. Ravichandran
29. Vemireddy, Vamshi. (2011). "*Ram Gopal Varma as an Auteur*". *Journal of Creative Communications*. 6, 1&2, 195-202
30. Vettaiyadu Vilaiyaadu (2006). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon. Produced by Manickam Narayanan
31. Vinnaiyaandi Varuvaayaa (2010). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon. Produced by Elred Kumar, P. Madan, VTV Ganesh and Jayaraman
32. Yennai Arindhaal (2015). Directed by Gautham Vasudev Menon. Produced by A.M. Ratnam and S. Aishwarya
33. <https://www.slideshare.net/jseliab/session-11-auteur-theory-film-appreciation-course>
34. <http://www.newwavefilm.com/about/la-politique-des-auteurs-bazin.shtml>