Disability, Deficiency, and Excess: A Cinematic Construction of Disability in Popular Odia Cinema

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Cinema for social change is not a new approach. Odia cinema, earlier known as Oriya cinema, has been intrinsically connected to the essence of Odia language and culture in the Indian state of Odisha. Since the inception of Odia cinema, it has been endeavoring to send social messages by employing visual communication for social change and development. Despite riding on the path of social and attitudinal changes, the films representing the disabled characters have raised eyebrows concerning its commitments to outcomes. As the spirit of rights activism and changing public discourses on disability on the rise, Odia cinema industry is pushed to face a decisive test. The disdain for disability in entertainment media is unraveled, and the politics of treating the disabled has become flawed. The current study has attempted to understand the cinematic construction in the light of the model, gender, identity, and societal approach towards disability issues.

Keywords: Odia cinema, disability, representation, marginalized, identity, gender, culture, media, India

Marginalized sections, including disability and society, are interrelated. Disability refers to impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions (World Health Organization, 2011). The disabled population of India, according to the Census data of 2011, is 26.8 million, which is 2.21 percent of India's total population. The locomotor impaired, hearing impaired and visually impaired constitute 20.3%, 18.9%, and 18.8 % respectively of the total number of the disabled. Their population is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. To ensure their human rights, India has ratified the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). As a result, they can break the barrier to some extent and become free from state of-impairment with the-support from the proximal environment. Gone are the days when disability was perceived as individual impairment (Saxena & Abhishek, 2015). However, they are still subjected to deprivations in various fields and governmental interventions that are much warranted. In this context, Quinlan and Bates (2009) claim that the media have the power to influence the perceptions of society towards people with disabilities. Certain studies have proved that media portrayals may affect the perceived self-identity of this community. Hence, media exposure and perceived realism of media manifestations influence the self-identity among the disabled.

Cinema, as a visual medium has the power of expression and construction of social reality, which keeps on engaging the viewers. This rich and culturally embedded

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medium is packed with information in visual forms (Sooryamoorthy, 2007). Possessed with unique characters, it can act, and address varied social issues. It is the reflection of society and vice versa (Deakin & Bhugra, 2012). Hence, it can act as a change agent to achieve development, and the use and promotion of cinema by UNESCO can be contextualized here.

In the global context, cinema in Iran is not an exception to it. Iranian cinema deals with social issues and manages to connect to the audience in a realistic manner. It attempts to stimulate-sympathy in the audience. However, Hollywood cinema remains a mixed bag in representing reality. Going to indicate more on Hollywoood, Dutta (2014) finds that the positive images of women in cinema are relatively meager. Adding to the criticism, Chahdi (2018) claims that Hollywood focuses on cultural imperialism instead of colonizing the people.

When it comes to cinema in India, it has been the largest producer in the world. It continues to be a major positive influence on the Indian economy (Dastidar & Elliott, 2019). Hindi cinema industry, known as Bollywood, has bearings on cultural conglomeration covering the aspects of globalization, privatization, and liberalization. Moreover, previously, the Indian media scenario has started changing in 1991 with the advent of international television (Rao, 2010).

India is home to one of the largest film industries producing Hindi and other regional films in Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Kannada, Marathi, Odia and other languages. Out of regional cinema industry, Odia cinema earlier known as Oriya cinema is popularly named as Ollywood. The cinema industry running from the city of Cuttack has started its first cinema *Sita Bibaha*, (Sita's Marriage) made by Mohan Sundar Deb Goswami in 1936 (BBSR Pulse, 2019). Some popular films have been made on social issues in Odia language. Prominent director Mrinal Sen made the cinema *Matira Manisha* (Man of the Soil) in 1966. Based on the novel by Kalindi Charan Panigrahi, the cinema throws light on human relationships using a wide range of themes. Gandhian and Marxist ideologies, agrarian culture and other similar thoughts are discussed. From time to time, films like *Pahadara Luha* (Tears of the Mountain) on Naxal issues, *Mukhya Mantri* (Chief Minister) on political issues, *Balidana* (Sacrifice) on zamindari (Landlord) problems, *Nirbachana* (Election) on the issue of corruption, *Chilika Teerey* (At Chilika Bay) on social oppression and exploitation, *Bhukha* (Hunger) on tribal problems, and *Ja Debi Sarba Bhutesu* (To that Goddess who abides in all beings) on political corruption and revenge are noteworthy. However, problems like the lack of viewers, irrelevant cinema remakes, vulgar music, and deficit professionalism have degenerated the cinema industry and have pushed its destiny to uncertainty.

The representation has much relevance in the cinema when it comes to content, context, and viewers' acceptance. To Hall (1997), representation is "More concerned with the effects and consequences of representation – its 'politics.' It examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constrains identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied."

Literature Review

In a view to understanding the existing literature on the given topic, selected review of the literature was conducted.

Saikia, Bora, Jasilionis, and Shkolnikov (2016) find that in some parts India, the issues of the disabled are doubled. There is a need to enhance their overall environment. However, there is no end to deprivations because of poor policies and their shoddy

executions. Even their needs and demands are not getting space in poll manifestos. Human rights are grossly flouted, leaving them further in the state of deprivations (Biswal, 2019).

Women with disabilities are subjected to double discrimination. They are the most vulnerable category among this marginalized community. The researchers lay stress on disability issues in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and West Bengal and find that women empowerment is in fragile condition. The issues of this doubly discriminated class have not been comprehensively part of the disability rights movement worldwide. They remain invisible within the disability movement (Camilleri-Zahra, 2016). Also, their sexual identity is missing. There are numerous instances where they are grappling with queerness and instability under the impression of sexuality (Jain, 2018).

Kumar and Dwivedi (2017) underline that the issues of the disability are not well recognised in academic in India. Even though Disability Studies is doing well, there is a severe dearth of such discipline in several colleges and universities. Sometimes, it is not getting due space among other disciplines because of the absence of judicious recognition. There is a lack of understanding and coordination, causing such kind of issues. In this context, Kothari (2012) asserts that understanding the legal and academic understanding of disability is required for the empowerment of the community. Making Disability Studies be part of interdisciplinary study is the need of the hour.

Indian Cinema and Social Issues

Yengde (2018) expresses that India has become a place of making cinema worldwide. The international presence of *Warner Brothers, Fox Star Studios, Sony* and the like have made their presence in the cinema industry. However, it is suffered from caste-based, biased, and unbridled creation of technological industrialization. The representation of women characters arouses cultural unrest and fosters the patriarchal norms (Kaur & Sharma, 2016). The space of Dalits and minorities is limited. Indian cinema industry suffers from varied problems. Even certain filmmakers manipulate social and cultural practices for commercial gains (Kumar & Pandey, 2007).

Similarly, Jaggi and Thirumurthy (2015) find that reckless censorship of cinema is one of the issues that the industry is grappling with. The absence of judicious censorship has become synonymous of suppression. Many times, the power of censorship is being to stifle alternative representations on marginalized identities.

On the contrary, certain regional cinema is language-oriented and tries to create and maintain a regional identity. Tamil cinema can be cited in this context. Similarly, Telugu cinema is more conscious in terms of manifesting local issues and emotions (Rajamani, 2017). However, regional cinema is not keen on highlighting the issues of the disabled on the silver screen.

Disabled Vs. Ableism

The neoliberalist agenda of Hollywood cinema has unraveled the connection between capital and disability. It is cultivating the fallacy of normalcy in society. The cinema reproduces the dominant neoliberal paradigm, accommodating ableism and sameness. Add to this, Rosenberg (2016) confirms that Hollywood's disconnection with a disability is quite apparent. The industry is not interested in telling stories about this marginalized class. There are limited numbers of characters who play the role of the disabled.

Disability as a Metaphor

The disabled are manifested as metaphors through imagery or characters' features. The characters are projected in the format of melodramas and cultivate the stereotypical model of representation. Generally, physical forms of disabilities are often represented as a dismal gaze within horror (James, 2019). Cumberbatch and Negrinne (1992) highlight that this metaphor is used for the character of villain, deprivation, and deviance. This stereotype can be understood to complicate their real-life experience within their actual social sphere. On the other hand, Barnes (1992) finds that a disabled is represented as superhuman, who is generally found isolated from society. In reality, it further deteriorates their condition as isolation in cinema and isolation, in reality, make their lives more complicated.

Yukie (2015) comments that the disabled in cinema invites the audience to discuss and confront disability issues, but in reality, it rarely happens. Representation of their issues is reduced down to quandary of communication. Similarly, Whittington-Walsh (2002) affirms that the cinematic representation of the disabled divides the society into two parts - able-bodied and people with impairments. Out of stigmatization and stereotypes, they are portrayed as for amusement and gain as freaks. Initially, abled-bodied characters in cinema deal with the disabled characters in a delicate manner, later deal in a tough manner. As a result, the disabled character is found in an adjustable and compromised manner. The mainstream film industry has been producing such films over the years. Add to this, Norden (2001) argues that media portrayals of socially marginalized groups are not always accurate.

Models of Disability and Cinema

Darke (2010) protests that generally cinema resorts to the medical model of disability. This model assumes that the body is a machine with a physiological norm - the body is able or not. Privacy and dignity are nonexistent. The portrayal conflates the technological benefits of medicine and fosters the space of dehumanizing. Such model encourages pathologizing disability in cinema. Such kind of cinematic discourse causes social exclusion for a disabled. It further promotes restrictions in terms of dignity, privacy, and freedom. However, Biswal (2017) finds that the portrayals are moving towards the human rights model of disability in Bollywood.

Disability, Gender, and Cinema

Kusuma (2018) underscores that generally, women characters in South Indian Cinema are portrayed, favoring the male gaze perspectives. Cheu (2010) informs that North American films are women sensitive and thus, nullify gender stereotypes. However, the portrayals of women with disabilities are still not from ugly and sexually stigmatization. Kim (2010) and Williams (2003) state that hyperactive visible and heteronormative sexualizing apparatuses indicate the desexualized status of disabled people. In the same light, Jain (2018) further adds that Bollywood cinema reinforces the ableist and heterosexual ethos which have exposed the politics of representation of disability and sexuality. However, Biswal (2017) argues that Bollywood cinema-like in *Margarita with a Straw*, the positioning of gender with disabilities and sexuality has been justified. In general, there is a shifting trend that Bollywood is witnessing male masculinity to female androgyny (Kapur & Sharma, 2017).

Disability, Identity, and Cinema

Zhang & Haller (2013) admit that when there are positive portrayals of the disabled, their identities are perceived as unrealistic. When media is indulged in negative media representation, it leads to denial of their disability identity. Goffman (1963) comments that the way the society perceives the visual dogmas and fragile identities can be related to media portrayals.

There have been studies on the representation of disability in Hindi cinema and Hollywood cinema. However, there has been not a single scientific study conducted on the representation of disability in Odia cinema so far.

Objectives

The current study attempts to explore the cinematic constructions of disability in Odia cinema. The cinematic constructions include – models of disability, disability issues concerning women connotations, disability identity, disability as a metaphor, space of disability in ableist institutions, and disability as social marginalization. The study intends to identify the pity, charity, medical, social, and human rights model of disability. The cinematic constructions cover the positioning of women with disabilities linking to gender, male gaze, and the secondary role played in the cinema. The origin and development of identity are calculated by connecting to personal constructions and formalized supports. This academic inquiry aims to understand the disabled characters in various formats of representations. Disability as a metaphor, mostly indicating stereotypical portrayals come under the purview of the study. Attempts have been made to distinguish the manifestations on the lines of melodrama and cinematic realism. The study is also engaged with umpteen discourses to explore the narratives on the space of the disabled characters in the province of the ableist institution and social marginalization by raising discourses on the dominant neoliberal paradigm. It also tries to understand the influential factors behind the nature of the representation over the years.

Methodology

Steven Hick, Jan Fookand Richard Pozzuto (2005) highlight the marginalization to minority communities because of maintaining and enforcing the dominant model and discourse. Adam Weisberger (1992) states that marginality is a state of structural ambivalence in a given sociological situation. The space of marginality is required to be separated from several concomitant reactions to this structural dialectic. Weisberger coins 'directions of marginality' which is otherwise known as 'social conditions.' Marginality is a structural challenging of multiple ambivalences for its embodied individuals.

In feminist theory, the male gaze is a way in which women are portrayed. It is treated from the masculine and heterosexual perspective which manifest women as sexual objects for male viewers. In visual narratives, it has three dimensions – the man behind the camera; cinematic representations of male characters in cinema; and the viewers gazing the cinema(Devereaux, 1995; Walters, 1995).

The male gaze is a social construct that emerged from the ideologies and discourses of patriarchy. While discussing on the male gaze, Laura Mulvey (1975) asserts there is asexual inequality, which signals the asymmetry of social and political power between men and women. It controls the role of women in cinema.

The current study employed a qualitative content analysis of selected Odia films in which disabled characters are there. Since the space of disabled characters in various films remains very scanty, a good amount of films were considered for analysis. The films like *Chamana Atha Guntha* (1986), *Pua Moro Kala Thakura* (1988), *Suna Panjuri* (1995), *Samaya Kheluchhi Chaka Bhounri* (2002), *Diwana* (2010) and *Sriman Surdas* (2018)) were analysed to understand the disability portrayals in the light of identity, model marginalization, gender, sexuality, male gaze and nature of disability. Traits of disabled characters, dialogues, language, songs and other elements of cinema were part of investigations. To probe further from the dimensions of the timeline, from the cinema *Chamana Atha Guntha* produced in the year 1986 to *Sriman Surdas* in the year 2018 was taken into account. In-depth interviews with the disabled, journalists, cinema critics, research scholars on Odia cinema and media academicians on film studies were conducted to understand the influential factors in the cinema industry and to deliberate on the larger picture of cinematic representation of the disabled.

Findings and Discussion

The cinematic constructions of disability in Odia Cinema demand a thorough analysis of certain films.

Social Exclusion and Models of Disability

Directed by Ashok Pati, *Diwana* (Mad) in the year 2010 focuses on the life of Dilu played by Anubhav Mohanty. Dilu loves Nilu played by Barsha Priyadarshini. However, when he gets to know that Nilu has died, he goes into a psychotic depression. Later, he becomes mentally disabled. He roams with the dead body of Nilu, believing that she is still alive. The song 'Bhuliparu Nahin Gote Dina Gote Rati' (Not able to forget one day and night) in which the disabled character is engaged with the woman protagonist. At the end of the cinema, he kills himself after taking revenge for the murder of Nilu. The larger picture is that along with this song, a good amount of time signals the pity and charity model of disability (Darke, 2010).

Directed by Ashok Pati, in the cinema *Sriman Surdas* (Mr. Surdas) in the year 2018, the disabled character is played by Babushan. This action-comedy genre cinema is the first cinema in Ollywood in which the disabled character is the main protagonist. The storytelling is somewhat different from others as the character is found in a socially inclusive approach. However, the song 'Dusshera re mili jau Balma' (to get a girl friend in Dusshera) and dialogue seem quite a melodrama and suffer from sheer superficiality. Distancing from realism and pragmatism, the character is found fighting with anti-social elements as if he is fostering and contesting (Zhang & Haller, 2013) with abled -bodies. However, the character somewhat signals to some degree of the social model of disability.

Disability and Metaphor

Directed by Rabi Kinagi, *Suna Panjuri* (Golden Cage) accommodates a disabled character Ajay played by Siddhant Mahapatra in a very short period. The main protagonist, Ajay, meets an accident and loses his memory. The portrayal of this form of disability was not dealt with practically. The character is shown in the model of pity and charity. The song 'Mora mana udi jaire' (My heart keeps soaring) is melodious, which could engage the

viewers. However, the cinematic representation of the character, especially in the mentioned song seems superficial (Cumberbatch & Negrinne, 1992). Moreover, when the protagonist gains his memory back, it is a questionable situation and is wrongly dealt.

Disability, Identity, and Social Marginalization

Directed by Parbati Ghosh, the cinema *Chamana Atha Guntha* (Six Acres and a Third) in the year *1986* emerged from Fakir Mohan Senapati's novel is all about a story how a village *zamindar*, Ram Chandra Mangaraj played by Sarat Pujari defrauds a peasant Bhagia, played by Bijay Mohanty of their six acres and the third piece of land. As a result, Bhagia becomes mentally disabled and starts behaving abnormally. In the end, he takes revenge over the issue of a piece of land. The cinema adopts the pity and charity model of disability. The character shows that a disability can be a subject of weak and insecurity. The concept of disability was not a topic of interest in those times when this cinema was produced. The character is reduced to marginalized because of the dominant model and public discourse (Yee, 2005) even though it was not openly accepted. As a result, the story sends the visual dogmas and fragile identities of a disabled (Goffman, 1963). The cinema reflects on the ill effects of *zamindari* (Landlord) system, which was then a grave social system. Moreover, the issue of disability takes a back seat and is used to convey the message on the exploitation of landless peasants by a feudal lord in British India.

Directed by Susant Mani, *Mu Eka Tumara* (I am, only yours) in the year 2013 is the remake of 2003 Kannada cinema *Chandra Chakori*. Raju pretends to be a speech-impaired character played by Sabyasachi. The story adapts to the path of making a fake character of disabled to make it suspense why the protagonist is not speaking knowingly. It is quite apparent that there is a lack of disability identity (Zhang & Haller, 2013) in the story and attempts to deceive the viewers systematically.

Disability, Women and Male Gaze

Directed by Raju Misra, the cinema *Pua Moro Kala Thakura* (my son Is God) was popular. One of the woman protagonists played by Aparajita Mohanty is visually impaired. She is portrayed as dependent but interested in doing many things. The song 'Asibaasibajane dine ta asiba' (A day will come, someone will come) seems superficial and enjoys the state of unrealistic approach. It also raises the issue of the male gaze (Devereaux, 1995; Walters, 1995). The protagonist played by Uttam Mohanty, who is mesmerized of her singing and starts connecting with her. The visual narratives of the male character towards the woman with disability invites criticism. It is the protagonist who somewhat romanticizes with the woman character. Here it crops the initial layers of the male gaze. Also, the viewers' gazing the woman disabled character is also not free from flaws as the depiction suffers from a deficit in disability identity (Weisberger, 1992) and pity and charity model of disability (Darke, 2010). Generally, the portrayal of visually impaired characters often perpetuates and cultivates the ableist notions of the primacy of the physical act of seeing. Viewers believe that visually impaired characters are unable to carry the ability to gaze and hence, become the object of the dominant gaze (Kim, 2010). The disabled woman character in this cinema is doubly discriminated because of disability and gender, which further cultivate the model of social and cultural marginalization. The cinematic representation does lack of identity.

Similarly, the character of the mother played by Anita Das, eventually becomes mentally disabled. A good amount of time is employed to show that a disabled is weak and

a matter of joke and sympathy, signaling the pity and medical model of disability. Mentally disabled and woman are the so-called weaker gender traits, and both are socially devalued, undesirable, and marginalized elements which remain a subject of contest and debate.

Directed by Sudhanshu Sahu, the cinema *Samaya Kheluchhi Chaka Bhounri* (time playing swing) in the year 2002 has a cinematic representation of a woman disabled character. The song 'Tame Jadi Gadhi Dia' (If you build) is melodious in which visually impaired character Pooja played by Anu Choudhury desires to dance and romance with the main protagonist Akash played by Siddhanta Mahapatra. In the song, the disabled character asks the protagonist about her life and security for lasting love. In the song, the male character seems to be more open on the screen than she is. The woman character seems calculated in terms of expression. However, it suffers from portrayal issues. It has the issues in gazing the woman disabled character (Devereaux, 1995; Walters, 1995) who is pretty and dances with the protagonist.

Now, the larger question is raised. Does the Odia cinema industry exploit people with disabilities? The illogical representation of the disabled characters on the screen could be a loaded inquiry. At this juncture, the question crops whether the dominant regime of representation of disability is challenged, contested, or changed.

Manisha Dwivedi, a film director and an alumnus of Film & Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune underlines that the portrayal of disability in cinema in India is not genuine so far. The reason could be many. The story is taken for cinema is not well-researched. Moreover, researching stories for regional cinema is a far cry. It is seen that many times, the actors playing the disabled characters are not well immersed and fail to represent the themes to the viewers. All who are engaged in acting cannot play the disabled characters. Ultimately, the portrayal of the character is getting compromised with a disdain, which results in eroding the essence of social message on disability. It has to be understood in the cinema industry. Certain films are made on the premise of disability issues, but in the overall, the treatment is reduced to mere tokenism. Moreover, it could be an act of misleading the audience in the name of disability issues.

There are certain effective documentary films on disability which act as a powerful medium of communication. However, such type of film runs in a close circle and has a limited audience in terms of penetrating this social message on disability. However, taking cues from documentary films is always worth-emulating. Molding the script and direction from documentary film to commercial film can be feasible and be valued in the light of disseminating message on disability issues in India. It can very much happen to regional cinema industry as well.

Not happy with the functioning of Odia cinema industry, documentary filmmakers state that the cinema industry is marred with numerous problems. Films are being remade without a thorough understanding of Odia cultural context. Hence, the original story is grossly missing in the industry. In the context of producing cinema on disability issues, Odia cinema has failed to portray the justification for the role of a disabled character in the history of its industry. It is found that disabled characters are in secondary roles. Always, there is a dearth of a suitable script to make the cinema effective with this social message.

Moreover, cine-goers in Odisha is comparatively lesser than in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra. Another disturbing trend is developing that cinema producers are creative illiterates. They are afraid that the cinema on disability will incur losses as the viewers have no interest in the subject. In whatever topic the cinema is made, they will fail to convey the desired message to the audiences. To bring awareness to the issue, documentary and short films can be produced. Later, the mainstream Odia cinema directors can take the cues for their productions for mass consumption.

Journalists covering on art, culture and cinema comment that Odia cinema have a history of over 83 years and over these years, it has produced some great films. There have been films of different genres. The films here have been a reflection of Odia society and have also been inclusive in terms of showing various characters. When it comes to portraying disability in Odia cinema, it has been balanced. There have been films that have showed a disabled character as the lead, and the trend started in 1960. Films like *Suryamukhi* (towards Sun) and *Nari* (woman), in the 1960s, had one of the lead characters with physical deformities, and these were romantic films showing the emotional aspect, mostly the romantic side of a disabled character. Even in 1975, the cinema *Samay* (Time) had a similar disabled character. In *Shesha Shraban* (the last rain), Mohammad Mohsin plays the role of a locomotor disabled who was portrayed as a positive character. However, very few films have showcased disabled characters, and a handful of them have handled disability as a subject. In recent years, the cinema *Aalo Mor Kandhei* (Hey My Toy) tries to show the relationship of a character with mental conditions and his daughter. *Sapan Tie* is based on disability and the film actor Maguni Patra, who himself is a disabled person, won the best child actor for his wonderful acting skills in the state film awards. Besides, Sabyasachi Mishra and Elina Samantray starred *Maal Mati Jeevan Mahu* (money soil life and sweet); an upcoming film has several disabled actors playing various roles in this cinema. Sabyasachi, who specially checked the skills of these actors during the audition, was stunned to see such talents and promise to take more such actors to sign his films.

Cinema critics are not optimistic about how the Indian cinema is dealing with the issues of disability when it comes to the cinematic constructions. The directors, who have made cinema on this subject, have not reached the level of empathy. It is not the blockage that the only Bollywood is suffering from. Regional films are no exception to this type of syndrome. In this context, the Iranian cinema *The Color of Paradise* directed by Majid Majidi can be cited. The cinema is a classic example which manifests the level of understanding and empathy of the director. The 90-minute cinema gained rave reviews across the globe. Majidi employs imaginative touches to tell his story on visually impaired Mohammed. However, Indian cinema is inundated with caste, religion and other such topics. The cinema directors are not grounded on such issues. They are not adequately sensitized. Therefore, making a good cinema on this social message is still far away. However, they are in the process of overcoming the problem. So far as any attempt is taken to represent the issue has happened to be in a crude form.

Scholars in Odia cinema observe that the representation of disability in mainstream Indian cinema revolves around the rhetoric of absence and empathy. While the Hindi film industry can still boast of a handful of films with differently-abled protagonists, other regional industries have ignored such characters and narratives for long. To sell such characters while exploring their truth of existence is difficult and is not considered conducive for the economics of a film. Shahrukh Khan Starrer *Zero* is a classic example of how the mainstream viewers conveniently ignore to engage with narratives focusing around differently-abled characters.

The regional cinema industries like the Odia industry, which produces around ten features a year barely has a history with films on disability or centering narratives around such characters. Social marginalization and ostracization of differently-abled people and their lack of representation in Odia cinema is reflective of our collective lack of empathy, sensitization, and awareness. We often end up with characters having physical or mental challenges being used to entertain the audience and for the comic effect, which unfortunately reinforces the stereotypes and puts a stigma on a continuum.

Both creators and audiences' direct experience with a disability could help employ ideas to break societal stereotypes and offer relatable and powerful characters. If the makers look at different types of disabilities from the perspective of differently-abled people, they could come up with sensitive portrayals of such characters and their stories. The Odia public sphere which produces or consumes mostly mainstream films, regularly also needs to have a dialogue with the disabled and understand the nuances of representation, which is truthful and inspiring at the same time.

Academicians in media and film studies state that with time, the attitude of people towards the disabled has slowly changed. Of late, society has realized this. Sympathy and Empathy are growing as there has been enhanced sensitivity towards this marginalized class of the society. Public discourse is slowly changing and favoring the community to make them more inclusive in all the layers of public policy and governance. So in the light of portrayals of disabled characters in Hindi and regional cinema, to some extent it has become positive and pragmatic, resulting in attitudinal changes among the viewers. The kind of projection, language used, and stories taken show the acceptance of the human rights model of disability. However, there should be continuity in addressing this social issue. So far as the media education is concerned, it should incorporate certain contents which will make the students, the future filmmakers, to be equipped with contemporary knowledge on disability and human rights. The pedagogical changes in course curriculum will make the cinema more effective in sending this social message. In this context, pedagogical upgradations are warranted. Also, researches should be conducted in making message-oriented films to mainstream the disabled.

Conclusion

The want of a disabled is a choice. It is a proven fact that the Odia cinema as a medium of communication which has umpteen capacities to serve as a rallying point for actualizing the objectives of equalization and full participation of persons with disabilities in society. However, the choice is disappeared in the plethora of 'normal body' images. It is found that the cinema attempts to exploit and does not resort to required of advocacy for the disabled through its representations within varied forms of narratives. However, the cinematic constructions have remained in a precious and debatable position, which further warrant investigations.

When Odia cinema comes under critical examination, it manifests cultural machinery which endorses the narratives crammed with ableist themes. It signals and instills that social Darwinism is the rule in society. The point here is not to play a blame game by pointing out to certain films, rather film as an institution is to be held for accountability.

When we posit Odia cinema as an ableist institution, we tend to debate on the cultural meaning of ableism. Meaning of ableism should not be misunderstood. Meaning should be culturally adhesive and acceptable. However, stories used in the films are providing space for shame and marginalization in society in many folds. The disabled and the members of their families also suffer from social marginalization.

Certain films attempt to portray the disabled characters in a comic manner, which is sheer undesirable in the light of achieving equality in the world of marginalization. Any endeavor on celluloid disability crossover and comic self-reflexivity cannot be regarded as self-confidence for a community. There is a dilution of community identity, which keeps on negotiating with society. The narratives in cinema have manufactured the disabled as minor characters by using them to move the plot forward. Many times, they play supporting roles, serving as a marker for larger narratives about normalcy and legitimacy.

732

Many Odia films adhere to the model of charity, pity, and the medical model of disability. In very few films, the space of the model of social and human rights is meager. Certain characters on the screen attempt to herald in social change, but the archetypal and stereotypical persist. The representation of reinforcing the excesses of medicalization; non-existence of privacy and dignity of the disabled; and pathologizing the disabled have been the message from the silver screen. Moreover, the story combines the technological benefits of the medicine with the excessive potential for dehumanizing. This unjust representation is questionable to the whole cinema industry. Hence, a paradox exists in addressing this marginalized class on the silver screen. The disabled characters are being indulged in melodramatic styles of narration. The representation attempts to deliberate on this social issue to make the impact of cinema on the formation of shared public sentiments.

Certain Odia films have exhibited patriarchal stereotypes and have pushed the problem to a double discrimination zone. The character portraying the woman with disabilities are not free from disseminating an orthodox image that demeaningly homogenizes the cultures and identities of the disabled. However, there is a ray of hope coming out in the latest film which endorses the social model of disability. Still, the overall the journey of this regional film industry from *Chamana Atha Guntha* to *Sriman Surdas* remains stereotyped and fuels the sense of social marginalization which is very much ingrained in the society.

Like many other regional cinema industries, Odia cinema reflects an ableist social structure. Freakery, cult films, and the problem of ambivalence exist. Contesting disability identity in cinematic constructions has become a growing concern. Inclusive cinema has the answer to multiple problems when it comes to the issues of disability portrayals. Concerted efforts are required to make the Odia cinema inclusive. Few indicators - matching, likeability, celebrity, incidental inclusion, and educational/information 'shorts-are worth mentioning.

Matching occurs when in cinema, disabled characters demonstrate intrinsic qualities that both a disabled person and a non-disabled person can relate to. Likeability is all about the ability to create emotional connections through the portrayals. It facilitates both the disabled and non-disabled society to share certain common values. It has been a debatable opinion that the disabled characters should be played by celebrities to gain more public attention. Incidental inclusion refers to the disabled to play all sorts of characters, not hero, villain, or comedian. As a result, the disabled representation will be all genre-friendly. Last not the least, educational/information 'shorts is about taking a particular specific disability issue and represent the feeling from the disabled community. When all these elements are assembled, the cinema can accelerate the acceptance in different genres representing the disabled. Hence, all these triggers have to be kept in mind while making Odia cinema inclusive, which could bring in attitudinal changes in society.

Apart from the political economy of Odia cinema industry, there is a dearth of academic research on Odia cinema and disability. Academic research on the given subject should be a larger area of investigation and concern. In the process of contesting the images of disability, a society can become more self-reflexive and can question the normative position. It can lead to a larger public discourse, which may construct the space for alternative representations of embodied experience. The cinematic interventions are the need of the hour. Such interventions should alleviate individual bodies of their socially derived stigma. The representation laden with social messages should seek to target the rightful site of meaningful interventions.

Scope for Future Research

The current research has attempted to explore disability representation in Odia cinema. However, it has thrown discussions on other similar topics. Firstly, the area on gender and sexuality about Odia cinema remains unexplored. Secondly, the remaking of the film on disability issues can be studied. Thirdly, other creative aspects like directional assessments on cinematic constructions of disability can be investigated. The construction of disability characters and issues in films by the directors like Raju Misra (*Pua Moro Kala Thakura*), Debu Patnaik (*Tora More Jodi Sundara*), Ashok Pati (*Diwana*), and Sudhanshu Sahu (*Raja Jhia Sathe Heigala Bhaba*) can be studied. Fourthly, audiences' response to cinema can be probed. Also, understanding the business aspects of Odia cinema based disability issues could be a potential area which is worth probing for further understanding.

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