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A TWO-FOLD STORY: CRITICAL STUDY OF RAKESH OM PRAKASH MEHRA'S
RANG DE BASANTI

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ABSTRACT

Art is not confined to the realms of books and poems. Now in the 21st century art has gone beyond its stereotypes and now everyone who works with a difference can be called an artist. Let me say that if someone cooks and presents a dish artistically then we can label him/her as an artist who is playing with spices and food and is coming up with his artistic creation of eatables. In this paper my attempt is to look at a bollywood blockbuster *Rang de Basanti* to analyze and bring out the artistic method by which two stories of two different times have been intermingled in the movie there by removing the barrier of time.

Keywords: Film, two stories, amalgamation, politics.

Film making is an art form. "Film, also called a **movie, motion picture, theatrical film, or photoplay**, is a series of still images that when shown on a screen create an illusion of motion images" (Wikipedia). According to Oxford Dictionary a film is, "A story or event recorded by a camera as a set of moving images and shown in a cinema or on television." The way the things or the plot is perceived and the way the dialogues are written and delivered all lend an authority to films being an art form. This research paper aims to unfold the artistic technique used by Rakesh Om Prakash Mehra while directing his well celebrated youth film *Rang de Basanti*. This movie released in the year 2006 on the republic day of India that is 26th January and it was the biggest blockbuster not only of that particular year but the movie also broke previous box office collection records. The film is youth oriented and this could probably be the reason for the enormous success the film achieved. But is only being a youth film the sole reason for this film to be a blockbuster. The answer to this question is a big no; there were other reasons as well for the success of this movie.

It is pertinent to mention that this movie was not a single story with a single plot. The story is a beautiful blend of two different stories portraying different characters in different time frames. One story is of modern Delhi youth who are totally into their tension free lives and are joined by a British girl, the other story is of India's revolutionaries and their struggle for independence. The movie has, as its protagonist, a British girl named Sue Mckenley who comes to India with her grandfather's diary in which he has jotted down the atrocities done by the colonizer and the subsequent reactions against the British rulers. Sue wants to make a documentary on the events written on her grandfather's diary but nobody in England was interested in the story of India so she packs her bag and comes to India to shoot her film. Sue has a friend Sonia in Delhi University who assures her to help her in making her dream project.

In the Indian youth of 21st century she was not able to locate even a single character from out of her grandfather's diary. The revolutionaries like Chander Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Ram Prasad Bismil seems to

have been lost in the new generation which is interested only in dance and drama. No individual related to the nationalistic feelings and were not able to deliver dialogues passionately.

There is introduction of Diljit alias DJ, Karan, Sukhi and Aslam who are a group of best friends in Delhi University and Sonia introduces them to Sue. The story further reveals that she manages to get these friends of Sonia to work in her documentary but they were also not that serious about the depth of her documentary. Their carefree attitude hinders their connection to be established with the revolutionary characters. She however finds a true reflections of the revolutionaries in them but the boys do not relate to it as it was old and backward tradition to die for one's motherland.

As the narration move on these boys start relating to the roles they were offered. Their characters start developing viz-a-viz the characters they were playing in Sue's movie. They started drawing parallels with the life of the revolutionaries. There awakens a sense of belonging amongst them all. Still the childish attitude does not gives away.

Past and present have been merged eloquently and barriers of time seems to dissolve in one go. Scene shifts from past to present and from present to past and this transition is beautifully brought out without disturbing the pattern of the film.

The life of the cool group of boys gets more disturbed when Sonia's fiancée Lt. Ajay Rathode dies in a mig plane crash. The defense minister blames the pilot and gets a side. This remark for their friend, who was ready to die for his country, could not be digested by them so they plan to kill the defense minister. Now at this juncture the parallel movie also comes in where Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar plans to murder 'Saunders' the killer of Lal Lajpat Rai. In one go Ajay becomes Lalaji and DJ relates to Chander Shakhhar Azad. Both stories merge into one.

I cannot forget the General Dyré's 'fire' scene where he is replaced by the defense minister of India. How intellectually the scene must have been conceived by Mehta to replace the colonizer with a local government official. And the scene really gives goose bumps. At this junction a realization comes that not only the colonizer but our modern day corrupt politicians are also downplaying the country for their personal profits like the colonizers have done in the past. Patriotic feelings are aroused by this amalgamation of past and present and one starts felling that we must get up and do something for our country otherwise corrupt business tycoons and politicians will rule over it like the Englishmen. History is magnificently re-told by the direction and has been conjoined by present socio-political situation of India.

The boys' killing of the minister turns him into a martyr and the agitating group feels disgusted. They wanted people to know the truth and thus take refuge in All India Radio station where they go live and reveal everything on air. Karan also discloses that even he killed his own father who was a business man and who made profits out of the defense deal. At the end once again parallels are drawn, on one hand the revolutionaries were targeted by the guns of the Empire and on the other hand innocent youth was killed by commandoes in AIR premises.

To come to conclusions I can say that the message the revolutionaries had to give and the message these Gen-next youth gives in the end was same. "No nation is perfect" this dialogue by Ajay Rathore in the film joins the two trajectories of the past and future. In the past the revolutionaries tried to make their nation perfect by getting it free from colonizers and in the present scenario the youth (5 friends of Delhi University) were trying to make their nation perfect. Mehta has done a commendable job of joining two story lines in a single frame and not delineating a bit is the process of narration.

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