



FILM SEMINAR

SPEECH BY SHRI H. N. KUNZRU

OUR social system assigns an inferior position to women but here is Shrimati Devika Rani who has literally imposed her will on me and compelled me to come here. Why? I do not know. I have no knowledge really either of any side or any aspect of the cinema industry. I know hardly any thing about producers or distributors or exhibitors. She asked me only to say what I, as a member of the Indian society, expected of the cinema. Well, you all know that we are trying to create a new India. The Five Year Plan is reaching its end. The Second Five Year Plan is now on the anvil. We have to develop our material resources and along with it our other resources too but I wish that greater attention could be paid to the mobilisation of our human and moral resources than has been paid so far.

In order to achieve a revolution not merely in economic matters but also in our modes of thought, it is necessary that we should turn to various educational agencies of which the most powerful perhaps is the cinema. Whether we like it or not, cinema, is a world force today. It is a means of entertaining, it can be of very good instrument to education, it can be a social force and it can indeed help and bring in people of different races, nationalities and creeds together. It may be compared perhaps to atomic energy which can be a constructive and building force and also unfortunately a

destructive force. The cinema will be used in this country—it is being used more and more recently for this purpose—to create a higher average level among our countrymen today.

We all want more schools to be opened. We want more universities to be opened, we want standards of education to be raised but I think that there is no other method of achieving this purpose than by utilising the cinema in the right way. Not merely for the education of children but also for the education of adults it can be used on a large scale. Really a good method of imparting education to adults has so far not been found. Various methods have been tried in India but they have not proved effective. They have not been able to hold the attention of the audience but here is this method of audiovisual education which can prove instructive and interesting at the same time. The cinemas here, for instance, can tell us not merely about the manners and customs of people in different States but can also tell us something about the new economic development that is going on in different parts of the country but it also powerfully influences our minds.

Tell me whether there is any more powerful agency for uniting the people of this country than the cinema. Can anything affect the minds of men, can it alter their habits of

looking at things more than the cinema? I do not need to tell you the habits of the cinema stars, their dresses, their manners are imitated by the people. Therefore how great the responsibility of those who are engaged in this business? I am not a frequent cinema-goer, in fact, I have seen very few films but I know that many good films have been made in this country which have delighted audiences not merely in this country but also outside.

I therefore thoroughly agree with the last speaker that there is no reason why those who have produced good films once should not be able to produce them again and again if the necessary encouragement is given to them.

I take a special interest in the children's films—films suited to children. As Mr. Chairman has told you, I had been trying for some time to persuade members of your profession and also the Government to take a more serious interest in the production of films suitable for children. Happily, the Government have now awakened to the importance of the problem and, realising that the cinemas combine both amusement and instruction, have established a society called the Children's Film Society. This is different from the Cultural Film Society, of which Mr. Sircar spoke to you. That is certainly doing its work. It has done a pioneer work, I think, in drawing the attention of the public and the Government to the importance of using cinemas for providing healthy amusement for children. The Children's Film Society is not yet in working order.

I hope that it will soon be in a position to set about its work. Its objective as its very name shows, is to encourage the production of films suitable for children. What encouragement it is going to give, is well known to you and I do not therefore want to go into details. But there is no special subject which can be depicted in the films. Cinemas can be used to entertain and instruct children in so many ways. You can show good schools here in the cinema. You can give them information about birds and about beasts. You can give information about other countries. You can tell them what good music is. You can show them good painting. You can show them good Indian reading and thus improve their taste and health in the spread of Indian culture.

Therefore, you will, when you set about this work, note this—what we have to do in order to help the children of India. All that I want is that we should give more attention to

this than has been done so far. We cannot ignore the commercial aspects of the business. It is inevitable. The films should pay their way; but there is no reason to suppose that if good films are made, they will not attract large audiences. In fact, most pictures produced in India which have been appreciated by the people, give the lie direct to this fear. Why should we suppose that pictures which appeal to our prejudices and passions only will attract audiences? We should be thinking ill of our country if we thought that they cannot appreciate better films.

During the last International Film Festival, there was a Japanese film. The scenery was the simplest and the plot too was of the simplest character. This shows really how ordinary home life can be depicted in such a way as to enable us to have more fellow feeling and to think more of others than about ourselves. The only requisite is that we should regard the people who come to see our Indian pictures as our brothers and sisters, and if we can honestly say that we are placing before the public what we should like the other blood-brothers and sisters to see, then we can say that we have done an honest piece of work.

Our country which has recently become independent and which looks to all those who can help to bring about a change in the mentality of the people, to come and cooperate with those who are trying to create a new India, have a right to get your help in this matter. India has been placed on the map of the world in many respects. I hope that in the educational sphere, it will soon be regarded as one of the most advanced countries of the world. With this purpose, I think, our pictures can be the best means if they are exhibited outside. What better medium can there be for informing the people of our culture of Indian life in general.

I am sure, this will do more to raise India in the estimation of people abroad than any number of speeches. You take the moral and material side of the plans that are being made now in order to create a new atmosphere in this country, in order to alter the psychology of the people, to give them hope and make them feel their responsibility for one another. It is of the utmost importance that the cinema industry should give the greatest assistance at its hands and I make bold to say again that no agency can help more powerfully in this matter than this cinema.

Thank you very much.