



FILM SEMINAR

SPEECHES BY SHRI V. K. KRISHNA MENON

CHAIRMAN, how happy I am to come here to meet a number of people I know and to be allowed to hear the discussions this morning. I am grateful to the Director of this Seminar, for asking me to come here. Having said that much, it appears to me, in this Seminar there is not adequate casting. Otherwise I would not have been called. Perhaps it is a new idea that you will get the views of a raw man. I am very much of an average man called here to say some thing on what is artistic and what is not artistic.

I am an extremely nervous person. Whenever I have to speak I go through trepidation the previous day. My worry is, it will not be possible to consider this question in a vacuum. I must say that we have not entered the realm of national awakening in the same way as Western countries. Ours is a political democracy. In other countries, industrial revolution was followed by economic democracy. But here the position is rather different. We are faced with the tremendous problem of taking up the country from a backward state of economy to modern conditions, and it is in that context that entertainment enters. We have to consider entertainment as an industry. But there are other social ingredients like technology, etc., which essentially form part of the whole scheme. From the social point of view entertainment cannot be dismissed as something which is superfluous or which is out of the pale of social films in the sense that we have got our own doctrine as the object of our social policy.

Not only have we to deal with the problems

of a large population but over four millions of new lives are added every year. Over and above this there are 100 millions who are not wholly employed. Our foremost problem is survival. Unless we survive we would not have any films or anything else. Therefore, it becomes necessary that the whole of our community should be cooperative politically, removing the discrimination between classes, creeds and castes. Men and women in all communities are handicapped by lack of social and other rights.

The other aspect is : employment cannot be produced like rabbits. No Ministry can say "We are going to have employment. We can pass a Bill to that effect". Employment is part of the related structure and it is important to remember that in the most advanced countries, as in the United States, for one direct job, there are 10 indirect jobs. In our country where labour is supposed to be less efficient and there is plenty of it, and since the labourer is under-fed, his capacity, is less, probably it will be more than 10. So, whatever it is, in regard to national economy, it means that every picture that is produced, for one person who has employment in films, there are others connected with him, including the people putting up theatres, men who clear the wastes, who sweep up the cinema theatre, people who run restaurants, etc. A large number of people are being employed by the post offices. They are related to the production of films. Instead of producing 100 films, if 500 films are produced, it means there must be more theatres, more sitting space, more edibles and more programmes, etc. In the whole

context of the greater employment, it plays a very important part as a contributing factor. Government must be concerned about it because they collect taxes. That is one extent of its concern ; so that, this aspect on the one hand of the essential character of entertainment without which it would not be possible to run, has to be borne in mind.

Let us take, for example, the most advanced countries, United States or Russia. Even in those countries where high-speed machines are doing the operation, they have found it necessary to introduce music, to get increased output. This music while we work, is not just attraction. It is only to tone the nerves of the working people, so that the social essentiality of entertainment and its economic character, its economic value, is beyond question. But it must be borne in mind—I am not apologising for anybody—that we are in the eighth year of our Independent Nation. In British days, we would not do so. We have never been a nation independent, until 1947. We had empires ; we found no unified State until now : therefore it takes a little time before all the multiple views that are expressed in this room play one upon the other.

I was very interested to hear Mr. Abbas's speech about the number of Ministries concerned with this industry. It is always possible to play one against the other. You cannot go one way and go another way if it is one authority : so that, previously it would not be impossible in any modern Government for anything to be done by one Minister. If you want foreign co-operation, there is the question of balance of payment, how much foreign exchange is going to be spent or otherwise. The Ministry of Home Security may have to consider what are to be exported and imported. There is always the danger of your remedy proving worse than the disease. The same applies to Government providing everything that is not now provided. The Government provides the money. If it is a Parliamentary Government, there must be Parliamentary control. If there is Parliamentary control, there must be Governmental control, if there is governmental control, there must be bureaucratic control.

In this Seminar, it will be advantageous to all of us if there was discussion from the point of view of objectivity and not merely see what is obstruction. You know, some times we all have headaches, but it is no remedy to cut off our heads. That is the position.

I have heard a great deal about this juxtaposition of what has been called education and culture. Educationists have some idea that entertainment is necessary. That is why they spend a great deal of time and money for sports. Therefore, emphasis should be on the differences between education on the one hand and culture on the other, as culture is the normal healthy reaction of the community to the expressions outside.

I think, the only real deciding factor is what the public will bear. The real judges are the people who go to the theatre. You have the expression of opinion, but that does not mean that one has to surrender to your taste, if that is anti-social. That applies to all sorts of things in the same way that it is possible to work these two things, one with the other, that is to say, from a high standard, if anything is not listened to it would have no value.

I want to say one word with regard to the general side of observations about the deficit character of the development of the film in villages. A majority of our people are rural inhabitants and until we entertain them in this way, and integrate them into the community, we cannot interest them in the Community Projects. The Community Projects are not intended to be a Government Department. Government Departments simply promote their work. In 1954, we had covered 70,000 villages under the scheme. In five years' time all India will be covered—a fifth of the population is developing.

There are good films and bad films. Until we can really take entertainment into the fields of rural India and be able to take up and be able to understand the responses of the villagers, there can be no universal development in this direction. To what extent without all the expenses of cinema and its capital equipment it is possible to take the film to the countryside, becomes of importance.

I remember having seen a film being shown in which some explorers were going to Africa and they were going to be slaughtered by wild tribes. Then the film went on to show some super-natural things. Only such films can interest those people. Medical, educational and other kinds of films would take you into areas the people are accustomed. It is quite right that we have not got the money or technical equipment to open schools, hospitals and all that. Unless we have it, our cinemas cannot

develop. We should turn our attention to something which may be called community halls which may be used to all purposes. It should become a general social centre in the way of the traditional fashion of the villager and used for pictures also. That is the place where the Community Project develops.

I said that we cannot exist in a vacuum of our welfare State any time. Entertainment cannot be nationalised by the most powerful government in the world because it is spontaneous. Even if you do so, there will be reactions. Japan in doing so has been faced with dangerous problems. There is a degree of spiritual expression which cannot be regimented and even if there was State-ownership or control there would have to be an enormous amount of freedom for the person who puts these things together. Therefore, in any discussion, there should be co-ordination and final equilibrium between crude activity and what may be the order of the day with regard to social things. The decision of our country must be related to the rest of the world. I do not think that Indian films are backward in this respect. I do not understand the dialogue of many films. Fifteen years ago I never thought they were bad or they were inartistic. A cinema show was considered very good if there was romance about it.

The other day two great people came here from the artistic world. Unfortunately, I could not be with them at the moment. They saw various institutions and after that remarked "There is nothing that we can teach you". We have certainly got emotions and ideas and all that. I personally feel that it will be a very sorry day for us when we introduce foreign ideas into our country. We are capable of introducing intelligent pieces even from the outside world. If you say we are not prepared to take in anything from foreign source, that is not reasonable. In case they are going to set up a competition, then it is quite a different matter. Over-nationalism can lead you to a lot of danger. At no time than at present is it necessary for the rest of the world to understand you. We need not be understood merely by political speeches or by any other aspect of our policy; The film makes a very great contribution in this respect. In your economy and various other things, one must hope that the Indian films will find a limited market in the outside world because there again a link has to be established. That is the position.

Mr. Vasan referred to the development of the film technique. I am not a scientist, but at the same time it would be very foolish to think that development of electronics is going to upset all calculations. You can think of another 5, 10 or 20 years when that particular technique may not be liked at all. It would not be so far off either. One cannot take a Luddite view about it. Even though there are most up-to-date cinemas somewhere, there would still be room for others as well just as the motor car has not replaced the bullock carts.

These are the few observations that I wanted to make.

Finally, I would say that in this as in everything else we are at the mercy of circumstances. It is a matter of common knowledge that we are very able scientists, politicians, thinkers, etc., who individually can stand up to anybody in the world but one thing we have not and that is the capacity to work together. Normally one plus one makes two, but it is not possible in modern times. These days the individual cannot afford to exist all by himself. The world is too vast. Unless there is common endeavour—and that applies to film industry also—there cannot be great progress. Even in regard to a Government Department unless it is possible to have free discussion among yourselves and find an optimum of agreement on which public opinion can express itself, much progress cannot be made. It is the public opinion that governs in a democratic country, whether it be in the sphere of international affairs or in the domestic field or in the field of education or anything else, our besetting sin is lack of team work in India. We do not mean anybody any harm. We approach everything from the point of view of what is called begging one's neighbour. Another man's prosperity is part of the sum total and far from common prosperity. Therefore, unless, it is possible not to let common energies and common necessities vitiated by the divisions within and to have a degree of co-operation in the presentation of ideals and efforts it will become the field of the buccaneer and not the field of those people who are educated.

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LADIES AND FRIENDS : I need hardly say how happy I am to be here again. The other day I stated about our ideas of realistic films. Today, I will try and think aloud of a few matters directly related to two or three aspects of the art of portrayal about which I mentioned the

other day. But before I do that, some of you will bear with me, perhaps it will be a good thing to finish off with the economics of a Welfare State and entertainment. The other day, I referred to the trouble of unemployment and how in our new planning of economic policy, Government have put the problem of fuller employment on the top. I dealt with that aspect.

There is another aspect of considerable importance in the whole planning of the economics of a Welfare State, the economics of States where there is large unemployment. There must be consumability which does not produce anything, that is to say, if you put a steel plant, you produce steel. But 100 people will produce far more than is necessary for 10,000 and the 100 people are wage-earners and they would not have purchasing power to consume what is produced. I will make it clear. In a condition of better employment, what happens is, there is considerable productive power in the hands of the people. So, there is more money in the country. Not only is there more money, not only the money works more—just as when you work a film studio three shifts, it is three studios. Similarly, if we put more money, it becomes more. It may not be for an individual, but in a society, circulation of money makes for better quantity of money.

Large quantity of money cannot be touched if it is locked. In a society where there is a great deal of employment, whatever currency is issued by the Central Bank, is put into circulation so many times. It is the high value and tempo of this instrument which gets us the goods and services we require. I say this because once we have the tempo of increased production, there will be considerable quantity of purchasing power in the country. Now, if there is that purchasing power, and a limited number of goods, then prices of goods go up. That assumes a hypothetical case. We produce in the country, cloth, wheat, rice, etc., the necessities of life and suddenly the capacity for having these things becomes ten times more.

You get what our Finance Minister always talks about—an inflationary condition. Therefore, it is that larger amounts of wages go down. When you employ more people, you must pay them. Therefore, there will be more money in the pockets of the people and that is why in any scheme of actual planning of

production, not only the quantity of production, but the variety of the production becomes important.

Secondly, therefore, it is only an industry like entertainment where somebody's money can be taken off, in a sense, it is like Government taxation. You may not feel it so. Income is taxed for getting money. Why should this Government tax for getting money? Money comes out of mint. There is no difficulty about getting money. But the taxation is in order to keep that money at a certain value, to prevent you from having too much to spend. If you spend too much, the price of goods will go up.

Similarly, if there is deflation, if the quantity of money decreases, the price of commodities goes down. In relation to the whole process of entertainment, there will be money distributed in the countryside and other urban areas. In olden days, only limited number of goods were produced: there were no luxury commodities. What is a necessity today is a luxury tomorrow and luxury becomes necessity, so that, you see, how closely in any State planning, studying and thinking is essential. Whether you like it or not, you cannot leave it, especially in a country like ours, where we have institutions like prohibition. I am not for or against it. When there is no expenditure on commodities that are not absolute necessities like food and clothing, purchasing power is concentrated on those necessities and the price goes up. Therefore, in spite of all the high wages you pay, there will be shortages in the country. In a sense, entertainment, in the ordinary minds of the people, is regarded as wasteful or rather putting money out for *tamasha*. It really makes it cheaper because it regulates the value of money.

Speaking about luxury production—it depends on the conditions of the country. Take Washington. One department of Government produces cosmetics. They want to modernise themselves and partly in order to absorb the wages otherwise there will be inflationary situations. That is the relation of entertainment to the State. Apart from the psychological and social factors I mentioned the other day, you produce a civilisation where you have high-speed machinery time production. It reduces the mechanical state of our existence. For that, you have to provide safety valves and this is one. It is not possible when you are full of employment to keep the price

of necessary commodities at a reasonable level unless you have let out all this money.

From there, we go back to what we were saying the other day. I said the other day that your organization, if I may say so, is the art of portrayal, and with the art of portrayal, is included the business of portrayal. I said the other day that, in the main, it must be regarded classically as divided into three compartments of expression, of communication and of response. All these things are separate. You cannot say where expression ends and communication begins. Expression is automatically communication. That is the nature of the universe: as such, when you talk of speeches, when you talk of thought or when you talk of anything typical, there is no point at which you can say there is something less.

There is the instance of science. Nobody has seen it. Similarly, it is not possible to separate this territory of expression from the territory of communication and the territory of the responses. For the purpose of learning and understanding, you classify sometimes inaccurately. In each of these things, there are again two divisions, one, the mode and the other, the matter. Mode is what I call technique. It is not possible again to separate mode entirely from matter. Sometimes mode becomes matter just as means become ends. Broadly speaking, one can separate mode from matter.

But it is not always possible, any more than it is possible to separate energy from matter exclusively. You cannot separate energy from matter. Broadly speaking, that is true, but in practical affairs, it will be very wrong to consider that technique is a substitute for matter. No amount of technique can ever totally make up for the lack of contents. And the only way when it does, is when mode has taken the shape of matter, that is, the way of expression itself derived originally.

Now, therefore, when we come to the question of expression let us first take the new school—what is called the realistic school. The great danger a realistic school runs is that it tries to put realism in a strait. Realism includes the unrealistic. But the shadow is itself real in certain contexts. Therefore, you can make much with regard to what is called realism and here, I do not make any criticism. Let us take our own realistic approach. We are living in

this country in a revolutionary age, revolutionary in the sense that it is a great departure from our economic and social political policy.

Therefore when we portray realism we cannot merely be talking while we are in the stage when people want remedies for social evils. It is also necessary to say something more otherwise it creates frustration.

There is another aspect under our realism abstracted from the context of social revolution. It is necessary when portraying something in realistic terms to take the reality of modern endeavour. Man's fashion is a reality. It is not only the goods, it is not only the objective things that you say are realities but man's social urges, Government's plans or urges are part of reality and it is a part of reality because people want to seek happier lives and are prepared to do more and more this year than last year. That does not mean that we must see that evil has been remedied and everything and every problem has been solved. We must look to the modernism of things. The word "modern" has caused a lot of confusion. After all for how long can an age remain modern. So many hundred years ago the Taj Mahal was young. How can you call it modern now? Dynamic processes are going on in our society. Our Indian films cannot escape this.

I will give you another aspect of it. The myth is equally real. First of all it is our national heritage. So long as our natives do not think that the mythical figure and processes are unreal and therefore there is a remedy to all the social evils, there is no anti-social element involved in it. That is not really a matter on which you can do something. That is a matter of education.

Now you come to the question of communication. I said it is not possible to separate them. It is the mode of expression. Communication is born out of expression. You cannot separate them in compartments. There is always something going on inside the human machinery. But when you come to communication, both practical and abstract, the main problem is communication of the art of portrayal. You may not think so, but that is the function of our schools and colleges. Some people collect pictures. They want to draw money from the market. The real function of an art gallery is communication.

We are more happy in a grouse than in a remedy. There will always be loggerheads. I said first of all in the communication processes there are various aspects to be considered. Take them one by one. One impediment is that large number of people look at cinemas as something which is very secret. The fault lies within ourselves. The well-known artists spend 24 hours on the cinema. Why should the world know you when you do not know the world? All of us have to be known as normal human beings. If you are a kind of ivory tower all your own, then you must accept isolation throughout your life, until those who are engaged in the art of portrayal have their own communication with society and have their own reactions with the emphasis on their particular work. A lawyer for example knows only the judge and clients. Until this unnatural stage of things disappears and people continue to know us we will remain secluded as heretofore.

Film executives, film stars, etc., must be known as normal men. The normality of relationship in this way is very important whatever be our creed or colour. Secondly, majority of our people do not go to pictures and have never seen a picture. This is bad. It is necessary to bring them into some relationship, either through cinema societies or lectures or colleges.

It is also necessary that every section of our society should be connected with it. As I said the other day, whether you appreciate it or not, the community projects in this country are going to be the basis of our new civilisation. The national movement of our country has been, thanks to Gandhiji, based upon the peasantry in rural areas because 78% of our population are in the rural areas. Large scale production, to a certain extent, becomes distributed not necessarily by taking the factory to the village but by the manufacture of components in the village. Our industrial sector has developed in the past in this way and you cannot take 300 million people in the factories.

These community projects cover 70,000 villages. In five years' time they will cover the whole of India. They have already covered one-fifth of our population. You may say some of them are not satisfactory. First of all the subject matter of these films must realise the political and social realities of our country. It should not be left to the documentary man who

does these things. These ideas must come in. They must mention of the developments that are taking place or the incidents that relate with the result that you establish further and further contact. The population of our country has increased.

The social awakening has increased. They were not potent before. Now they have become more potent. In the industrial area, organised workers' problems and the remedies to them have to be related. In other words the picture becomes not merely yours only but everybody's. That becomes a co-operative enterprise. Everybody has got a vested aspiration or a vested hope. That is the sort of thing you should think of. If you had a sub-committee of the Seminar to analyse the films and find out how far they have contributed to our population, you will find it will be only a very small proportion. The process of isolation has to be broken down from this end. It is no use saying Government must reform public opinion. The question is what one should do oneself.

The second is a much more concrete problem, that is the removal of social impediments, breaking down the barriers. Over and above that, there is one other thing called the bureaucracy. You cannot get rid of the bureaucracy in the modern state. You cannot produce anything without somebody doing work for it. If it is not you, it should be somebody else. In a modern state, apart from your industry, an increase in bureaucracy is inevitable because the state has become nationalised. In the old days the state was a police state.

Today it is a welfare state which means the state has become national. A bureaucrat is very cautious because he is like the policeman. He has to use force. If he does not use force, there will be disorder. He has always got to evaluate how much he can use and how much he cannot. Therefore the establishment of communications with the bureaucracy, becomes impossible. There is no use of fighting with the bureaucracy. Your people must be able to walk into the ministry not to see the minister because if you see the minister he will put all the officials against you. It is to create a channel of thought.

You should have the right people to do that and the right people are always found. Not necessarily film artists because then all

the servants will look at the artistes and not do their work. This establishment of public relations has significance all over the world. I make no reference to what is happening among yourselves. I am a stranger to a certain extent in these matters. It is necessary to have cooperation. I won't say unity. Unity is impossible particularly in the world of histrionic art. There must be cooperation. There must not be cutting each other's throat because your main interests are the same and unless you can pool all your resources—and where you must differ, agree to differ—you cannot get anywhere because bureaucracy in any country thrives on the division.

Whatever may be the machinery at various levels, various government departments, various social organisations—it may not concern government departments, it may be the religious opinion, it may be the social opinion, it may be the student opinion, it may be that your resources are too small—but a beginning must be made somewhere. If you knock your head against the machine, your head breaks but the machine is very human. It always yields, when you want to win some body else you have got to open the doors of your mind. You must allow the other man's mind to come in.

Unless it is possible to get public relations with the people, whether it be in government department, whether it be in other fields of public opinion, what you do is you state your position, the other states his position. This is like a newspaper. All this means a great deal of hard thinking. Happily for the Indian film industry, there are not at the present moment hard and fast divisions between sections in it.

These are not at the present moment—they may come later on—the hard and fast divisions in the industry. In other places, these divisions are there. For example, if a carpenter is asked to do a certain thing and it is not part of his business, there will be a two-day strike. Fortunately, you have not yet got this sort of problem. You have got to create the necessary public relations. Mr. Abbas is reported to have said that there are far too many ministries with whom the industry had to deal. I think it is a blessing. You would have more gods to worship than one. After all, are there not many gods in our Pantheon? You have more channels of communication than one.

Finally, I must appeal again to all sections

to have good public relations. That is where the importance of the 16. mm. film comes in. When I was High Commissioner in London, Bhavnani used to give us these films. They used to come in the British days also. And they have remained there. These are used for showing in schools in England. This is one of the easier methods of approach to this problem. Of course, it is not a substitute for the other thing. It is only part of a general pattern. The Prime Minister spoke the other day about children's films.

I do not know how much thought you have given to this. It is really important. There is the other aspect that children are the best propagandists. If a film is good, if a film appeals to them, the parent will have no peace. What is more, you cannot stop children from talking about it. Here again, these are unpaid propagandists. You have to get these into groups of little children and also into schools and show them. It requires a lot of thinking. But people do not like thinking. It is an exercise. It is an illusion that there are no wages for thinking.

The other is the relation of people like yourselves to the whole structure of our planning. For example, in the Second Five-Year Plan, the whole pattern of our villages will come into consideration, —whether they should have schools, swimming pools, water-works, hospitals and so on. This is the time for you to get in. It is assumed that you are well-organised. I believe you are quite well off. I think you are hiding your wealth some where. One of these days, they will demonetise and then what will happen to your hidden wealth? It is necessary first of all to learn something about the Five-Year Plan.

No citizen in this country is really civic-conscious unless he knows our economic orientation. Neither foreign policy nor our culture has any value unless there is economic development. Unless we have stability at home and sufficient food supplies, unless law and order is maintained—and for this, economic satisfaction is necessary—you cannot talk to anybody. They will tell you, you prescribe remedies for yourself before you come to us. Foreign policy, cultural programme or any thing else—the base of all this is economics. Policy begins from the stomach; but, of course, it does not end there. You cannot have a satisfied society which is hungry. That is why it is necessary to think

in terms of promoting the welfare of the country.

I do not say that you should all become Five-Year Plan experts. But it is conceivable that you would be able to tell these Five-Year Planners that in the villages, there should be community centres for exhibition—either open-air, or closed places. You may be able to point out what would be the order of finances required for such thing. That is to say, what revenue it is likely to make—for what population there should be an exhibition centre, what would be the intake of entertainment tax and to what extent the expenditure of money on the building of these places is likely to be repaid.

Secondly, there is the question of the production of instruments for film production. For example, there is the raw film. The industry must have the essential raw materials produced in the country—if not completely at least in part. I do not say every country should produce everything, everything it wants fully. If would create national isolation, it would be wasteful. In the Five Year Plan, you should put forward your views to the Government.

You should tell them it is necessary to put up plants for the manufacture of such and such things. Apart from your own requirements, about three crores worth of photographic materials are imported. It is quite a lot of money. I do not see why we should not produce these items in India. There is the whole of South-East Asia which would take this material. There is another item, the manufacture of lenses. If the Japanese can make lenses, I don't see why we cannot make them. There is the manufacture of raw film. There are also a host of new processes. You have to interest the Laboratories in these matters. The Chemical, Electro-Chemical and Physical and other laboratories should be made to interest themselves in these matters. In other words, they should be made to approach this problem as a national concern.

There are some problems of immediate bearing. This Seminar has come about. Will it be a Seven-day's Wonder, or a Nine Days Wonder or will it be much more ? You should form nuclei in different parts of the country and draw other people into it. Five of you might draw another 45 people and meet in Bangalore. If you are not the persons who should initiate this thing, you can put the idea to the Akadami. That is to say, instead of having re-union of the same people and in this way creating isolation from the rest of the family,—here are a few pioneers being brought together. They have found something in this. You can have more people to meet under the same auspices, in Calcutta, Bangalore, Bombay, Madras, Poona, etc., at different times. I do not say discussions should be on the same subjects. Diversity adds points to it.

Take the problem of caste ; take the problem of widow remarriage. It is quite possible to make films about child marriages, about caste. But we should equally portray the orientation that is taking place in other directions. We should not go away from the current of national aspirations. It should reflect things as they are. But at the same time, you should portray constructive endeavours. You should not be cynical. Cynicism is an escapist process. It is a luxury which people engaged in construction cannot afford. You find it in the political field—people who spin political phrases. What does this lead to ? That is what I want to know.

We must have an organisation for the assessment of public opinion. That does not mean that we should Americanise ourselves and find out how many people see television. At the present moment, all your assessment of public response is merely guess work. There must be some study of public responses and how to condition those responses, how to educate those responses ? You cannot do it all of a sudden. It is a gradual process of cultivating and educating public taste itself.