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## Who Debarred ‘you’? : The Idea of “Unqualified” Public in International Film Festival of Kerala

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### Abstract:

The paper examines the idea of ‘unqualified public’ in International Film Festival of Kerala, IFFK. The general notions about the public in IFFK will be described by narrating incidents and tales of hindrances people faced while entering into the above-mentioned space. The criticisms leveled against cinema in the discussions, outside the space, always contributed to number of censures of the Film Festival too, spurring debates centering around who should watch a movie or who should participate in IFFK. A paper that aims to understand the notion of public, in an international festival on films in Kerala, cannot possibly neglect the typical perspectives and public notions about movies, especially among a select group of people in Kerala. While unpacking the notions of who these public individuals are and what their opinions on films are, the paper will also raise questions such as: Do films really imagine a homogeneous public, an idea of public without differences? What is the film’s conception of public sphere? Do films create a new kind of public sphere? Then, what about cinema *kottakas* and film festivals? The paper takes note of one of the burning controversies in 2014 in the history of IFFK, that each delegate should submit a note on his/her ideas about cinema. Aloor Gopalakrishnan, Malayalam film director had suggested

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that only those who know English can enjoy all the movies as the Festival includes movies in other languages with subtitles (Ramnath 2014). So I here look at how specifically, language becomes a key factor to determine a 'qualified public' in IFFK, among other factors that aid in the manufacturing of the 'qualified public'. For this study on IFFK the aim would be to focus on the description and analysis of (unqualified) public in IFFK in relation to the recent controversies, to reveal the multi-layered construction of the 'qualified public'.

I was twenty-four when I entered the world of films and thereby, film festivals, a place totally forbidden for me till that time. Moreover, International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) was known to be a chaotic space of anarchists from cinema, art, literature, etc., a space not permissible to a girl, especially a girl from Payyannur, a village in Kannur district of Kerala. Questions would be raised regarding the range of activities that film festival goers might engage in within these spaces; what motivates the persistent cine lovers to flock at the festivals every year? What kind of moral fabric do these cine lovers adopt? The noose tightens even more if we are speaking about women in Payyannur, as spectators of Films in such spaces.

To reiterate, the idea of the spectators/participants of such film festivals are typically judged in terms of their moral integrity; women participants are often considered to be lacking the desired morality. From a sociological perspective, theatres and parlours could provide an alternative 'liberating space' for the youth in the countryside. But in reality, it is the contrary; all these places turn out to be 'morally corrupted' as judged by the vanguards of the moral culture of the society.

However, one needs to understand the concerns and contestations of such issues within the specific geographical context. For the elucidation of these issues, I take into consideration, the particular case of Payyannur, a rural place in Kannur, North Malabar in Kerala.

A video became viral in social networks recently, especially in Whatsapp as "A Kerala woman slaps daughter during flash mob for bunking college." It occurred in the Payyannur new

busstand. The news claimed that the mother was under the impression that her daughter was studying hard in college and was shocked to find the teenager in a flash mob (the mother used the word *thullalin* Malayalam to denote the act) at the bus stand. The mother lost her control and slapped the daughter, who was dancing in the front row and abused her for playing truant. It seems like people have the same reaction to girls whether a girl goes for a movie or a flash mob, or to dance, or to take part in a street play, etc. especially from colleges or schools.

Sithara A. S, Malayalam writer, shared her experience in Facebook when she went to watch *Rathinirvedam* (Kumar, 2001), a movie about sexual adolescence which was a remake of a 1978 movie with the same title, known for being one of the mainstream Malayalam movies which degenerated to porn.

Sithara writes in her Facebook post on 14th November:

Three girls reached in theatre to watch a movie titled Rathinirvedam. They entered the theatre in Thalassery, Kannur district in Kerala, other people (obviously all males) came for the movie started staring at them. Those three women who dared to go for an "A" certified movie were humiliated in the theatre. The man in the ticket counter did not even want to give tickets to these ladies. When an old lady entered the theatre, men there started mocking at her. The moralists couldn't tolerate the sixty-year-old woman, and they poured obscene comments on her (Sithara, 2011).

Movie screenings, a common practice in schools during 1990s, provided a chance for women, children, and elderly people to watch movies once in a year as theatres were not accessible to them. However, just as cinema has been popular, so has cinema never been devoid of censure. Mahatma Gandhi's antagonisms towards films were based on his belief that films are a source of frivolous entertainment, and the cinema hall is a modern den of vice (Lal 2009, p. 79). Researchers of Indian cinema, till date, have been unable to respond to the alleged indifference of Gandhi's approach to cinema. The strict censorship laws in India still

continue to prevent public screening of most of the films, either for fear of political disruptions or for the 'apparent' breach of the moral fabric that runs through the imagination of the custodians of morality. Impact of films on the public has been a contested domain. However, researchers have shown how films, as a medium, have been successful in reaching out to the public and in many instances, have left a deep impact and power on people. Films reflecting critiques of discrimination, hegemony, and large scale socio-economic mismanagement are targeted, their screenings restricted, as these are seen as challenging the cultural coherence or integrity of a place, thereby allowing disruptions in governance.

Religions too have had a hostile approach towards films. For instance, Islam considers movies as 'haram' / forbidden. Quran prohibits men from seeing women other than their relatives especially when they expose their 'non-permissible' body parts. Nevertheless, cinephiles like Vaikom Muhammed Basheer have been passionately engaged in the movie industry from the days of *Bargavi Nilayam* (1964). Simultaneously, it should be noted that cinophobia has prevailed in most major religions, wherein it is considered as responsible for corrupting the minds.

There always has prevailed a public notion that films, in general, have a motif of seducing the audience, even though no political or commercial message is intended in it. Cinema has been accused for drawing people out of their loyalty to community into a space of unsanctioned consumption as it creates a social space devoid of gender, caste, community and identity demarcations. As a carrier of Film's motto, IFFK carries all these features of cinema within the space of the film festival. But here arises a question: Do films really imagine a public without differences? What is a film's conception of the public sphere? Are they part of creating a new kind of public sphere? Then what about cinema *kottakas* and film festivals? Do movies produce different public inside and outside it? Do the balconies and first classes create some hierarchy in the theatres of rural Kerala? Are those equally arranged seats in multiplexes meant for equals? These are some of the questions that will be explored in detail through the paper.

## **A brief history of the film festivals in India:**

It was in 1952 that film festivals began in Delhi, and later spread to other cities in India. It was the Film Division which organized those film festivals and which evidently showed that its part of state's educating agenda.

When International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in India was conceptualised in the context of the developmental scheme of Government in India, first world countries used this as an opportunity for the promotion of their movies with clear nationalist agendas till 1960s. However, National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), previously known as Film Finance Corporation was formed only at the end of 1960s.

The Film Fest, as it stands now, whether it's a carnival, film festival or intellectual encounter occurs in the month of December each year in Trivandrum, the capital city of Kerala, and provides a liberal space meant for movie lovers in all its way. IFFK welcomes ageless cine lovers to Trivandrum, a free, liberated space every year. IFFK is a friendly crowd organized not simply for watching movies. IFFK was started in 1996 in Calicut hosted by Kerala State Chalachithra Academy on behalf of Department of Cultural Affairs of Government of Kerala. The festival is recognized by the FIAPF thus making it part of a prestigious circle of specialized festivals. The festival has attracted an ever increasing number of entries to watch and has facilitated debate about the content, form, and implications of the films shown in different mainstream theatres of Trivandrum.

The home page of IFFK describes the festival as given here: "Kerala boasts of one of the most cine-literate and discerning audiences in the world. Cinema and politics are two abiding passions of the people of Kerala. Bizarre experiments in the medium, with few takers elsewhere, find vociferous votaries here." (IFFK, n.d) IFFK boasts of an exclusive and extremely popular Competition section restricted to films produced or co-produced in Asia, Africa & Latin America in the last year of the festival cycle. The usual sections include world cinema, documentaries (in film formats), short fiction (in film formats), retrospectives, homage's and tributes.

**In Saraswathy Nagarajan's opinion:**

International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), renowned for elevating the conventional film festival platform from a niche (read elite) cultural space to a collective, democratic, popular and populous one, brings together the best of world cinema to Kerala with a focus on the 'Global South.' IFFK keeps its standards intact with an assortment of films that is perhaps unmatched by any other film festival on the sub-continent (Nagarajan, 2014).

Some movies are screened by giving an introduction to the significant works and milestones from director's filmographies thereby providing a glimpse into the life and art of the director or actor. IFFK includes indigenous films that dwell upon the experiences of the oppressed and the sidelined while finding their voice inside and outside the screen as IFFK accommodates everyone irrespective of their class, gender, caste, identity, ideologies, nationality, etc. In IFFK, art movies, and commercial movies exist as strong dichotomies, and art movies predominantly occupies a privileged position. Apart from the demarcations between "Art" and "commercial," IFFK in many ways preserves its democratic nature. Art as movies untouched by censor's constraining 'scissors' appear as it is.

This Film Festival accommodates artists, painters, poets and everyone who wish to represent themselves. IFFK opens possibilities for an alternative youth dialogue irrespective of gender, caste, and identity. It represents space for open debate. It is not a place exclusively for cinema but works as a parallel gathering space for the movie lovers all over the world.

IFFK keeps its multi-dimensionality in screening films on adolescence, peer relationships, LGBT movies, environmental issues, political and social problems while retaining the space likewise for revisiting the joy of celebrated movies in Malayalam. The festival holds and sustains its spirit in the post- films screening space when delegates will have discussions, forums and workshops not simply around the theatres but those will have a leeway to tea shops, auto rickshaws and continue till the mornings

in the hotels of Thampanoor, a city in Kerala. Delegates stay in hotels, engage in night long debates without even going to the theatres. IFFK offers a space for performance in any form. People can sing, dance, protest, debate do whatever they want to express, thereby offering an uninhibited space for a myriad range of expressions. IFFK welcomes everyone who has/ has not had a direct connection to films, regardless of those who watch movies seriously or not.

Nevertheless, in the last few years, several events have brought to the forefront another dimension of this space. In 2014, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, one of the most acclaimed film directors from Kerala, who is acclaimed for his work *India*, made a much-noted statement regarding IFFK that only those who know English language should come to the fest (Ramnath, 2014). It initiated the controversy on who is eligible to participate in the festival and on what grounds. Adoor, as an advocate of art cinema of 1950s opposed mainstream commercial movies which he argued lacked serious content and realism, and was saturated with dialogues, dance, and songs. For Adoor and filmmakers of his genre, films needed to be *original, formalistic, innovative, real* and *meaningful*, thereby distinguishing what 'others' in the cinema world, the commercial films, lacked in comparison to art-house or parallel cinema. Adoor, with his statement, reinforces a specific kind of elitism, following the footsteps of some of his pioneers in selecting "*worthy*" delegates till 1952. Another criteria forwarded by the committee spearheaded by Adoor was that one should be a member of the Film society to be a part of the festival. In a sense, this implies that film festivals should become exclusively for those people who have continuous engagement with the movie industry. It might be stated that Adoor's statement perhaps sought to understand the relationship between the delegate's proficiency of English in helping them understand English subtitles. But, it is perhaps not an exaggerated extension to assume that behind his questioning of the delegates' linguistic proficiency was a complete lack of an understanding that language proficiency is detached or unrelated to cinematic literacy.

### **Trouble in *CinemaParadiso*:**

This observation becomes significant to understand the power of language in determining whether a delegate is a 'qualified' or 'unqualified' public to be a participant of IFFK. English is not merely a language of contemporary Indian, but it is an *athibaasha* which determines the structure of political thinking and citizen discourse.

### **In *The Republic of Babel*, Madhava Prasad says:**

The exercise of citizenship requires the capacity to participate in public discussion of polity, and so there needs to be a language that is one of the instruments of citizenship. He calls this political language those not educated in knowledge of political language (obviously Hindi and English) never considered to be a citizen ...when such a segment of population exists, their ability to participate in the political nation requires them to learn the political language. When Hindi and English are the political languages of the republic, all other languages are considered as minority languages. The question of language reduced to a question of ethnicity/religion/ race as it make more claim on particularism that militates against the universalism of modern life (Prasad, 2014, p.71).

As Madhav explains, language becomes a site where the struggle between policy and politics continue to be waged. In another observation made by Ratheesh Radhakrishnan (2015), he advocates that it is doubtless that such a statement from Adoor came from an undemocratic approach about the fest. It as an undemocratic opinion by him, implicit in it is the anti-democratic symptoms rooted in the formation and development of film festivals itself. Ratheesh observes that since beginning, Adoor seems to be committed to an idea of the wisdom about movie which is not very different from what a state expects from its spectators (Ratheesh 2015, p. 87). Adoor, as a person has firm belief in the system of modern state. He was incidentally, one of the persons from Kerala



who agreed to the state's idea of nationalization of distribution of movies.

Selection of delegates in film festival may be an indicator of the conflicts between modernity and democracy. At a time when IFFK asks for your membership in film society for getting the delegate pass, some other fests ask more from you. All other film festivals except IFFK have a history of rejecting delegates. Even to this day, Calcutta film festival asks you the recommendation of some film organization including film society for the entry. MAMI has its high entry fees from 1000 to 1500 which is also given out on a first come first serve basis.

Another burning controversy that came to the fore in the 2014 edition of IFFK was also that each delegate should submit a note on his/her ideas about cinema. This was later withdrawn as the idea was criticised by people from across the political, cultural, and economic spectrum and was later changed to the first come first serve basis. The report of the committee headed by Adoor, and appointed by Kerala Government in 2014 suggested to give priority to the 'real viewers' of IFFK, here 'realship' being sanctioned by qualifying eligibility tests. But the genuine spectators, who lacked the merit of speaking or understanding English, and could not usually respond to questions in a test, owing to their lack of fluency in English or otherwise, could not find a place in IFFK. The 'democratic' thought behind IFFK is essentially against the idea of any kind of eligibility criteria, in contrast to Adoor's comments that strum a discordant note. Anyone who can pay Rs. 500 can be a delegate. But the illusion that there prevails a real spectator and an unqualified spectator still makes the frontiers of the fest contestable.

The immense hold that cinema has over people is perhaps unquestionable. Unlike most other art, cinema is considered as a popular art enjoyed by all kinds of people without distinctions. Films tell stories and inform us about worlds afar. Movies are an important resource for popular entertainment. Movies, and their genres, represent a wide range of issues, about life and lifelessness. Even when it deals with the complexities of the world, cinema, if its creators want, can reach all sections of people. The easy accessibility and simplicity of many of the movies makes it

relatable to people. Cinema has been a standard source of a poor man's entertainment (Persson, 2003). If we take into consideration the cost and effort that is expected of the audience, cinema becomes everyone's form of recreation. When the conception of cinema does not allow for such *niche* audiences, the idea of an 'unqualified public' originating in a space like IFFK, seems not only contradictory, but defeats the purpose of cinema. In other words, the spectators for whom cinemais made are not allowed to watch it. Is this selection criterion based on the concept about sublimity of art and who can be the connoisseurs? Do art and artistic ventures have an esoteric meaning that cannot be deciphered by the 'common' people? Who marks a line between high art and low art in this same medium? Both cinema and IFFK has been, and is, conceptualized as an institution of democracy as it provides equal space for everyone irrespective of their institutional sanctions capabilities or qualifications; such as whether they are literate, or they belong to a certain class, caste or gender. Film as a visual culture, accommodates all of the public and IFFK as a propagator of such a popular art in all its means is open to all. IFFK forms a democratized space for such a democratic art.

Is this a more anxious space for the state as it brings into the forefront the manifold oppressions and concerns of the heterogeneous people of a nation? Meanings and emotions drawn from films, often explicitly reveal violations of basic rights and inefficiency of governmental policies and actions. The possibility of people becoming aware of these observations through visual culture can be threatening for the state.

The Cinematography Report Committee (1927- 1928) had submitted their report in which it was suggested that movies should be designed for education and enlightenment (Report of the Indian Cinematograph Committee 1927-1928, 1928). As a tool of pedagogy or propaganda, cinema can be used to showcase information about the nation/state, thereby instilling the sense of patriotism, show educationally relevant cultural artefacts and life praxis of communities across the nation.

IFFK accommodates all shunned movies that are eschewed in the mainstream. All the ignored, marginalized or side-lined movies, movies that went unnoticed in the theatres, movies that were

banned, or deemed controversial and those restricted by the censor board are screened alike and fall under the single category of 'film'. People who are regular visitors of IFFK, know the politics of IFFK and the pulse of this space. Orthodoxies of all kinds keep themselves away from this space. Even though it is a public of *strangers*, the population here has a feeling of friendship in them. A commonness binds them irrespective of their diversities, as Warner says "this dependence on the co- presence of strangers in our innermost activity, when we continue to think of stranger hood and intimacy as opposites, has at least some latent contradiction" (Warner, 2002, p. 57). This is why he defines a public as a relation among strangers, which in IFFK, is evidenced as a relation with strangers, where the commonality is bound through participation alone.

### **Commonness and Public**

Politics of films is based on the anonymity of address. It eliminates rank or class of people. In contrast, popular concern about films is that it spoils society by violating the codes of society. The play of art disturbs the society as it contains implicit sensory experiences. The modernist vision claims that films are meant for 'qualified' people. But people start interpreting and institutionalizing this.

### **Ranciere advocates:**

"...they are ignorant because they were dominated"...A free mind always get chance for free thinking. There are two kind of thinking. One is thinking of the poor, one who expresses his condition. Then the thinking of a thinker as he makes the bibliography and who organizes the category. He knows he encompasses the totality and understand that in this totality are some manifestation of thought. The thought is just an expression of thought discloses that thinking is alike for all (Qtd in Das 2008, p. 8).

People are voluntarily becoming a part of 'a public' in IFFK. Everyone here has a choice of participation. The unstable and

countable set of people gathered in this public theatre, involved in it, reflects an active agential process. Warner's interest upon the agency of the spectator and his constant criticism of the bourgeois public sphere is important here. He brings the idea that "only a certain kind of [modern] person- inhabiting "a certain kind of social world," "motivated by a certain normative horizon," and able "to speak within a certain language ideology" is able to "address a public or to think of [her]self as belonging to a public"(Warner 2002, p. 10). IFFK, in many ways, resists this idea of dominant public culture.

The participation of people in the fest itself became a declaration. It's not an arena of a power base stratum of bourgeois men who think of themselves as belonging to a universal class. One can be reminded of Habermas's words wherein he says "representation can only occur in public sphere" (Habermas 1991, 4).

Adoor wanted to perhaps make a spatial segregation by allowing such a qualification to watch a movie with 'international competence'. Adoor's argument stipulates his hegemonic tendency of his bourgeois ideology, aiming to dominate over all that does not follow a "standard" to avoid all alternative and counter publics.

Multi-dimensional society requires a multi-dimensional public sphere. IFFK is considered to be a mass attained public sphere where the unchallenged position of the bourgeois was threatened. The delegates themselves became a gateway to the opening up of this public sphere. When the public relates to their acquaintance with a distinct kind of 'commonness', this indicates that the fragmented commonness does not disappear with new idea of public. Here, instead, the aim is to challenge the segmented idea of public through the heterogeneous experiences and *umwelts* of the public. However, the deliberation, one should not imagine is given up, rather the participants retain and exercise what concerns them, not from positions of power, but from what are relevant for the uncommon commoners.

It is in this context one should be reminded that cinema was a leisure time entertainment for the working classes in industrialized countries in the early decades of twentieth century, an industry with mass audience. And, it was precisely the poor man's interest in cinema that seemed to be a source of worry for the members of the committee.

## **Differentiating collective empirical community from public.**

IFFK works as a public space made up of expressions of public feelings. When religious, ethnic, community leaders are worried about the threat posed by cinema to social order, they reiterate how normalizing violations can still be thwarted by the coexistence of discrete communities even under the paternal eye of the empire. The spectator- illiterate, uneducated, ignorant, member of the working classes, at times uniformed, youth, and adolescents however, resists the debarring. They want the problematic to be discussed. In a space like the IFFK, the divide between the educated and illiterate never succeeds. It is as if these people were watching movies without having the necessary qualifications for doing so.

The films were considered likely to have a bad influence on the civilians, not only because of what they showed, but also because of who the audiences were, culturally, educationally and occupationally. The proponents of this deracination were concerned to maintain community boundaries. Why these proponents target mere spectators' (those who stand outside film industry, except film critics and intellectuals) gaze as problematic? When some people watch the sexual scenes/female bodies (required by the movie) in the movies, people argue that it arouses eroticism and for the enlightened others it is a matter of aesthetics of the movie. That is what Adoor meant by saying: "while eligible persons are waiting outside the theatres, ineligible ones storm into the halls expecting some hot scenes." So he advocates that delegates should be adequately educated to understand world films with sub-titles in English (Philip, 2014).

The reservation of limited number of seats for movies that are to be screened in the 2015 edition of IFFK bothered the IFFK population. The committee introduced a competition and tightening of rules that allowed viewers to enter the hall, much like the government-owned theatres just 15 minutes before screenings. This practice upsets the fluidity that was prevalent earlier in this space. The long queue and disorder disturbs the serenity of the space. What works in a space like IFFK is the culture of sharing and bonding and these

features create a vibrant public. If violation of democracy happens inside theatres, all the celebrations of resistant identities, struggles, and democracy on the screen goes in vain.

The peculiarity of IFFK is in understanding the diversity of the world, instead of merely appreciating the differences between Malayalam and world films. The increase in the number of delegates reveals its widening popularity of this fest. IFFK stands as the biggest among all other film festivals conducted in India. Karun says that while film workers occupy the Calcutta film festival, it is the common people, non-trained cine appreciators who have a greater participation in IFFK (Karoan, 2015, p.23). Participants of the festival do not merely engage in watching movies together, but instead use the opportunity to explore a wide range of possibilities of connecting and interacting. People believe that spaces such as IFFK have created a certain kind of engaged public. Venkiteswaran claims that film festivals permit public viewing of films which builds the sociality of the creative festival (Venkiteswaran, 2015, 14). People from various countries, culture and language engage in various debates on questions posed and not posed, which eventually facilitates a camaraderie, building of friendships across borders.

C. S Venkiteswaran defines cinema not purely as an entertainment or a world travel (Venkiteswaran 2015, p. 17). IFFK deconstructs the criticality towards all the traditional norms and notions about movies. Movie watching, thereby, ceases to be a personal and domestic recreational activity. The most unique and crucial feature of a movie lies in watching it with others as it becomes alive only when it is watched together. So festivals are the spaces that accept the gathering of spectators and sociality of movie viewing. People from all over the world flock towards Trivandrum, for the festivals, indicate the delegates' desire to understand the conglomeration as a meaningful social act. Devika adding to this says:

“IFFK involves not just movie-watching, but also and perhaps more vitally, human bonding. Thus there is more to watch in IFFK than watching movies. At IFFK over the years, I have made friends with an amazing range of students, autorikshaw drivers who came in for the last show, retired lady

clerks who got really curious to know why people flocked there, day-laborers from Kerala's northern districts who saved up for the IFFK week. IFFK has evolved into a far more exclusive space (Devika 2002, 2).

Often festivals such as these allow the hosting city shed its inhibitions, even if it is temporary. One of my friends from Trivandrum shares that the city itself became a democratic and open space devoid of 'moral' policing of Kerala only in the festival week. Delegates are informed of the rights provided in the space. This kind of an informal atmosphere grew and maintained, perhaps because it was devoid of constraints that a typical festival organized by government would have. As organizers, Film society of Kerala obtains all power of the fest and not government, thereby state control is at best nominal. In contrast, unlike IFFI, Kerala, International Film Festival of India (IFFI), Goa always faced criticism because of male domination in the space. The neglect of women's voices and silenced fear of spectators demonstrate the state controlled voices of protest. Deedi Damodaran calls IFFI Goa as "barthredhesham", a "native place of husband" to specify its male hierarchy. She also mentions the incident in which a girl was restricted by the security to watch Gasparno's French 3D movie, love as its erotic (Deedi 2015, 30).

### **In conclusion**

Cinema as a medium has proved to be an effective means of integration of people scattered all over the world. The aesthetic judgment of cinema never asks for any requirements or qualities from anyone. The moving images on the screen have a universal power of communication beyond its language. When a director turns to be a craftsman, all questions regarding depth, treatment, theme and language of the movie fades, what remains is only the spectator and the cinema, leaving each person with their freedom to interpret the cinema. How can then English become a criteria for the spectator then? Perhaps the answer lies in the fear of state and 'elites' who oppose the unrestricted sharing of IFFK to resist critiques, to celebrate democracy unbridled with power.

As scholars, we have a responsibility to analyse whether IFFK has indeed strengthened the element of intimacy that is necessary for the free articulation of people inevitable in the public sphere, to what extent IFFK has made active participation of all people in this public sphere to elevate their social worth and in what way it has involved in the participation of all from the side-lines/marginalized. The evolution of this public sphere formed in the space is filled with new ideas of freedom and liberation. They contest the efforts of state and some other 'elitist' agendas to call them as 'unprivileged' delegates, second class delegates, and inferior beings in the public in IFFK. Cinema is an institution of political imagination, of moral imagination too. However, as a practice, in a public space, when heterogeneous public views cinema together, it becomes a process of creating bonds that extend beyond boundaries of discrimination. Therefore, the recent events highlight an important issue. Given that, films and festivals such as IFFK cannot exist without the control of state and political parties, the recent agenda of segregation therefore, indicates an attempt to distort the bonding, curb the voices and the power of the collective imagination. This deserves acknowledgement and calls for academic explorations, debates and discussions, both as responsible citizens and as pedagogic concerns within culture studies classroom spaces.