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A Cultural Interpretation of Value Changes

in

Popular Indian - Tamil Films

(1950-1990)

by

Vasanth P. Louis

**A Thesis
submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the
Department of Communication Studies
in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at
the University of Windsor**

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1992



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ABSTRACT

People living in India and Canada share different sets of meanings and values and these meanings guide their thoughts and actions. These shared meanings, gained through living and interacting with each other, are revealed in the everyday lives of people and are also reflected in popular cultural artifacts like feature films.

This thesis examined and interpreted the shared values in Tamil-Indian society using James Carey's theory, a cultural approach to communication. Carey views communication as a 'ritual' rather than 'transmissional', which is different from the dominant view in the West. According to him, communication is a ritual that brings people together as a community, to share the commonality of meanings and partake in common activities.

The method that was used for interpreting the common meanings shared in a culture as reflected in the popular films is what Victor Turner calls as "comparative symbology", which is concerned with interpreting the meanings shared in a culture by examining symbols, particularly nonverbal symbols. This study is therefore a kind of ethnographic research that explores the "public code" or the "socially established code" that conveys and imparts meaning and through communication brings people together.

The changes in values in Indian society through the years 1950-1990 were observed from an examination of eight popular Tamil films. Two out of the five most popular films from each decade were used as representative texts for interpretation. For each

film, five value related categories - caste issues, family: respect for elders, marriage, religion and education were interpreted and examined. These categories were analyzed from the narrative patterns, and from the behavior of the characters in the films. Based on the findings, this thesis commented on Tamil-speaking people's culture in particular and Indian society as a whole in terms of value changes.

From this study it was found that some of the value-expressive categories like family structure and caste issues have changed drastically in the last forty years while others like religion, marriage, respect for elders, and education have changed slowly. The changes observed in the Tamil society were therefore seen in the direction of modernity.

Dedicated with love to Dr. Marlene Cuthbert:
for her love and concern for the developing countries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the very first time I walked into the communication studies department, I have been greeted and treated with love and affection. The faculty and students in the graduate program made me feel at home and I consider this as signs of the humanitarian values that continues to exist and makes life worth living.

This thesis is as much mine as Dr. Stuart Selby's. It was a honour and pleasure working with such a distinguished scholar, who with kindness, constantly encouraged and guided me in this rough but nevertheless enjoyable terrain. But for Dr. Selby, I will still be in the library searching for books not knowing when to stop reading and start writing.

His doors were always open and I was given the special privilege to walk in whenever I wanted to see him. The feed back I received from him were immediate and excellent and helped me finish my thesis within the set deadline. There was one instance when I had inadvertently changed the translation of one of the films from "train going east" to "train going west" in the second copy. When I got my copy I saw his humorous note that read, "now I see the train going in the opposite direction." This is a proof of his microscopic scrutiny of my work.

I would like to thank Dr. Stanley Cunningham for providing suggestions and comments and spending time on my thesis during his sabbatical. He taught me to use 'such as' instead of 'like' and also strengthened my methodology by suggesting to me to use Noam Chomsky's views on grammaticality of language as an analogy.

I am also indebted to Dr. Ripu Singh for widening my perspective on cultures and for

all the interesting discussions we had together. I was always amazed by his knowledge on Indian culture. His valuable suggestions of books helped me to a great extent in narrowing down my search for materials on Indian values and culture.

I would also like to offer special thanks to Dr. Kai Hildebrandt, Dr. Stuart Surlin, Dr. Thomas Carney, and Dr. Richard Lewis for their intellectual and moral support and for making me feel at ease. My understanding and scholarship on various theoretical perspectives, particularly critical theory, owes itself to Dr. Irvin Goldman and Dr. Amir Hassanpour, and I thank them for their intellectual stimulation.

Ann Gallant's love for students cannot be expressed in words. She is more than a secretary who took special care of me in the three years I spent in Windsor. I would also like to thank Sheila LaBelle and Lena Beaudry for their support and help.

For fear of neglecting someone, I would like to thank all the graduate students in the department of communication studies who supported, listened, and spent their valuable time with me.

I would also like to thank Film News Anandan, Randor Guy, Dr. M. S. S. Pandian; Department of Communications, F. S. G. College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore, and the Department of Communications, Bangalore University, for providing the information and data on which this thesis is based.

Since this thesis is a conglomeration and culmination of my experiences in India and Canada and results from my interaction with people, I would like to thank everyone in the two countries who took the time to treat me as their fellow human being, with love and kindness.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Super media create, express, and reflect culture. Culture refers to those elements that set one human grouping apart from others. Culture is the systematic way of construing reality that a people acquires as a consequence of living in a group. . . Culture is expressed and reflected in art, dress, family relations, dance and any other human activity. (Real, 1989, p. 36)

Two weeks before my first Christmas in Canada, I met a Canadian friend. This friend asked me if I was going home for Christmas, and I said, "I wish I could, but I am not, because of the cost involved." When I asked him the same question, he replied that he was going to his parent's "house". When I could not understand the intended meaning, he explained by saying that he called it "house" instead of "home" because his parents were separated and had their own families. His answer shocked me then because I could not relate to the Canadian culture to which I was new and where divorce and remarriage is not uncommon. I also could not understand the distinction made by my friend between his own home and his parents' because he was staying on his own, although his parents lived in the same city. Because I was from India, where families usually live together, and parents often support their children's education, if they have the resources, and where

divorce and remarriage are relatively uncommon and are not respected in the society, it was hard for me to understand the Canadian value system where people valued independence and individualism over family.

Another incident that was shocking in the beginning but I got used to is when a Canadian friend asked me if I wanted to go out for lunch. I said "yes", and we both went to a restaurant. I was surprised when my friend bought and paid for his food without paying for mine. Since in India it is common for the person inviting to pay for both, I was confused and hurt, and could not understand why my friend behaved in that manner.

In the same way, whenever I told my Canadian friends that in India, parents and elders often choose the bride or bridegroom for their children and that the bride and groom usually do not date before they get married, my friends said they found the system strange. They said they would not be able to accept a spouse whom they hardly knew.

Thus, in my experience, having lived in two cultures, both Indian and Canadian, I find the common meanings shared by the cultural members different between cultures, and that these meanings guide people in their thoughts and actions. The common meanings and their inherent values are not only revealed in the everyday lives of people but also in the cultural artifacts made in the same culture for and by them.

Feature film is one such cultural artifact that has gained prominence in the present century. It not only influences but also reflects and shares the mundane ambience of everyday life through its symbolic representation. In spite of its ability to reflect culture, it has only recently gained recognition among social scientists as a rich source of information. Because of its potent nature to historically document "lived experience" of

cultural members, it merits in-depth examination. I will therefore explore popular Tamil films to study their values and changes over four decades.

India is the largest film producing country in the world. Feature films are made in more than sixteen languages and these are seen by Indian people living both in India and abroad. Film has become a part of the ritualistic social life that complements other significant activities.

Although Tamil language films lead in the total output of films made in India (Guy, 1990), it has relatively very little literature available, especially on social and cultural values projected in popular films. Because of this and my special interest in culture and values, I decided to make a small contribution by interpreting the shared values exhibited in eight popular Tamil films made between 1950 and 1990, and to examine if there has been any changes in the last four decades.

I will interpret the selected films using James Carey's theoretical and methodological framework. According to him,

a cultural science of communication. . . views human behavior, or more accurately human action, as a text. Our task is to construct a "reading" of the text. The text itself is a sequence of symbols - speech, writing, gesture - that contain interpretations. Our task, like that of a literary critic, is to interpret the interpretations. (Carey, 1979, p. 421)

Chapter 2 is a discussion and elaboration of James Carey's theory, a cultural approach to communication which views communication as a ritual that brings people together to partake in common activities. I will define the concepts used in Carey's theoretical

definition, and will discuss the research questions, sample films selected, sampling procedure, and value expressive categories that will be analyzed, as well as the method that will be used for interpretation and analysis.

Chapter 3 is basically a review of relevant literature that defines "values" as used in this study and also briefly introduces the readers to Indian films, Tamil-language films, literature's reflection of values, film's reflection of values, and finally discusses briefly the value categories that will be studied in this research endeavour which includes: 1. caste issues, 2. family, 3. marriage, 4. religion, and 5. education.

Chapter 4 is a subjective cultural interpretation and analysis of each sample film by decade, examining and interpreting the value expressive terms represented symbolically.

Chapter 5, the concluding chapter, will compare and summarize the value categories by decade, to see if values have changed over the last four decades, and to comment on what this means to the Tamil culture. I will also offer suggestions as to how additional research could be developed in the future.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

Communication is at once a structure of human action - activity, process, practice - an ensemble of expressive forms, and a structured and structuring set of social relations. To describe communication is not merely to describe a constellation of enshrined ideas; it is also to describe a constellation of practices that enshrine and determine those ideas in a set of technical and social forms. (Carey, 1988, p. 86)

We share a meaning-laden symbolic world. In order to participate and live harmoniously in this world, we have to be familiar with the meanings shared by the community. The reality of these meanings are established and reestablished in the process of interaction and interpretation. These common symbolic meanings are not only shared among people living together but are also embedded in cultural artifacts. Meanings are created, maintained, and transformed through the process and practice of communication which is also an essential part of social interaction and integration. People are not independent from their surroundings but are part and parcel of this network we call culture.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This study will describe and analyze the values that are shared by people living in Tamil Nadu, India, over a period of four decades. Although one can use interviews and direct observation to examine contemporary societal values and culture, it is difficult to study the values supported and celebrated in the past. Because I am not only interested in examining the present but also the past, and in observing changes in values that may have taken place in the last four decades, I intend to study one of the most popular cultural artifacts of this century, namely films which easily record past and present, in order to interpret culturally shared social values.

In examining popular films, I am not concentrating upon their effects, functions, or ideological content, even though I acknowledge their presence. Although I understand and agree to some extent with the critical theorists in terms of how power structures are involved in manipulating and dominating media and audiences, my emphasis in this study is on shared values and how they are symbolically represented and practised in order to maintain a unified cultural community. Since I am interested in interpreting the shared common meanings in a culture, and believe that these meanings are created, maintained and changed through the process and practice of communication, I will use the cultural approach theory developed by James Carey.

Carey's cultural approach to communication, then, guides this research in determining the overall parameters, establishing the epistemology, and providing the methodological basis for this interpretive process. It is an attempt to extend the analysis of media and

culture by articulating the shared cultural meanings veiled behind symbolic rituals. It also seeks to make explicit the esoteric and taken-for-granted meanings in a culture which often appear cryptical to a foreigner. Since there is no "social reality" "out there" to be discovered, but rather a "reality" that is socially constructed, I will aim at interpreting the "reality" of a particular culture, as depicted in popular films.

Carey's theoretical framework draws extensively from previously established theoretical approaches such as hermeneutics, pragmatism, symbolic interactionism, and cultural anthropology. His cultural approach to communication stresses the importance of studying and interpreting the "lived experiences" of cultures over other behavioristic, functionalistic, cause-effect studies. Having been influenced in turn by scholars such as John Dewey, William James, Clifford Geertz, Raymond Williams, Harold Innis, and Kenneth Burke, Carey views communication as "ritual" rather than "transmissional".

2.2.1 Communication

According to Carey (1988), we live in a world of communication that is both symbolic and language-oriented. It has become a part of us, an "ambience" we no longer recognize or appreciate. (p. 24) It is this "ambience", which is often considered mundane and insignificant in everyday life, that Carey wants to highlight. According to him, communication studies should engage in acknowledging and expressing this "ambience" as it is usually done in art. Art according to him,

. . . can take the sound of the sea, the intonation of a voice, the texture of a fabric, the design of a face, the play of light upon a landscape, and wrench these ordinary phenomena out of the backdrop of existence and force them into the foreground of consideration. (1988, p. 24)

As it can be seen, Carey does not only advocate explicating the extraordinary but also in making the ordinary extraordinary. His is an attempt to show how much is lost because of poor observation and lack of realization. He therefore stresses the importance of interpreting and understanding the shared meanings that are acquired and disseminated through action and life experiences. These shared meanings, according to Carey, exist in communication, meanings which also help in bringing people together to celebrate their oneness. This is what Carey calls a cultural approach to communication.

In Carey's theoretical framework, communication occupies the central position. According to him, communication is not merely an instrument for expression but part of existence itself. Societies are created, maintained, and transformed through communication which consists of symbols that are integrated with the social structure. (Carey, 1988, p. 110)

Carey's definition of communication is greatly influenced by John Dewey's work. According to Dewey (1934),

communication is not announcing things, even if they are said with the emphasis of great sonority. Communication is the process of creating participation, of making common what had been isolated and singular; and part of the miracle it achieves is that, in being communicated, the

conveyance of meaning gives body and definiteness to the experience of the one who utters as well as to that of those who listen.

Men associate in many ways. But the only form of association that is truly human, and not a gregarious gathering for warmth and protection, or a mere device for efficiency in outer action, is the participation in meanings and goods that is effected by communication. (p. 244)

Reiterating the importance of communication in bringing people together, Carey (1988) says that communication

is the basis of human fellowship: it produces the social bonds, bogus or not, that tie men together and make associated life possible. Society is possible because of the binding forces of shared information circulating in an organic system. (p. 22)

Dewey (1916), in trying to explain the relationship between communication and community and how communication brings about a community, says that the relationship between the words 'common', 'community' and 'communication' is more than merely verbal. According to him, people belonging to a particular culture share similar "aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge" and common understanding because of communication. This commonness also results in establishing a communal life. Since these common meanings cannot be passed, separated or shared in a physical sense, they are disseminated through a consensual process of communication. (pp. 5-6)

Carey, agreeing with Dewey, considers communication as pivotal to human life. According to him, communication, more than transferring and imparting information,

helps in maintaining society by bringing people together through shared meanings. Cultural studies is concerned with studying these shared meanings. According to Carey (1983), cultural studies

attempts to think about the mass media not in relation to this or that isolated problem (violence, pornography, children) or institution (politics, economy, family) or practice (film production, conversation, advertising), but as elements, in Raymond Williams's phrase, "in a whole way of life." Societies, in this view, are complex, differentiated, contradictory, interacting wholes. They are threaded throughout, held in this complexity, by culture: by the production and reproduction of systems of symbols and messages. (p. 313)

Cultural studies, in Hall's (1986) words, "conceptualizes culture as interwoven with all social practices; and those practices, in turn, as a common form of human activity: sensuous human praxis, the activity through which men and women make history" (p. 39).

Hall, defining culture, says it consists of common meanings and values that are shared and shaped by a group of people who live together. These shared meanings and values are a result of historical conditions that includes traditions and lived experiences of people. It is in and through these lived experiences that culture is embedded and expressed. It is also through these common values and meanings that cultural members identify and integrate with each other. (1986, p. 39)

A similar view is also expressed by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their book Social Construction of Reality. According to them, culture is a set of practices and

activities that cultural members engage in, resulting in creating, maintaining and transforming reality. (1966)

Clifford Geertz comes close to this view in his trend-setting work The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays. He defines culture as a context within which behavior occurs rather than as a power which causes behavior. According to him,

. . . culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly - that is, thickly - described. (Geertz, 1973, p. 14)

Praising Clifford Geertz's scholarship on culture, Carey notes that Geertz' theory is greatly influenced by phenomenology, semiotics, British philosophy, and continental literary criticism. (1988, pp. 39-40) Geertz' theory is therefore an elaboration of the "theory of symbols and symbolic processes in their relation to social order" (1988, p. 40).

Clyde Kluckhohn's earlier conception of culture is similar. He defines culture in his book Mirror for Man as "the total way of life of a people", "the social legacy the individual acquires from his group", "a way of thinking, feeling, and believing" (1949). Thus, culture is seen by him as something that is shared within a group of people, which is transferred or passed on from one generation to the other. Although he sees culture as something that is shared, he does not emphasize it as a practice or action that is performed. This by contrast is what the British cultural theorists such as Raymond Williams accentuated.

Raymond Williams not only helped in eliminating the difference between "high" and "low" culture but also set a trend in defining and conceptualizing culture differently. In his book The Long Revolution, Williams conceives of 'culture' as the "sum of the available descriptions through which societies make sense of and reflect their common experiences" (Hall, 1986, p. 35). In other words, he democratizes and socializes the conception of culture. (p. 35) According to Raymond Williams (1961),

since our way of seeing things is literally our way of living, the process of communication is in fact the process of community: the sharing of common meanings, and thence common activities and purposes; the offering, reception and comparison of new meanings, leading to tensions and achievements of growth and change. (p. 55)

Thus, Raymond Williams looks at culture as a literary scholar but from what one could call an anthropological point of view, in terms of "social practices" or as a "whole way of life" which is different from the historically earlier definitions, where culture was associated with the elitist, intellectual, refined, disciplined artistic pursuits and endeavour. This is what makes Williams' definition of culture different from earlier literary critics. Hall (1986), elaborating further on Williams' work, says that Williams sees culture as

the active and indissoluble relationships between elements or social practices normally separated out . . . 'the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life'. 'Culture' is not a practice; nor is it simply the descriptive sum of the 'mores and folkways' of societies - as it intended to become in certain kinds of anthropology. It is threaded

through all social practices, and is the sum of their inter-relationship. (pp. 35-36)

The emphasis is therefore in grasping "how the interactions between all these practices and patterns are lived and experienced as a whole, in any particular period" (Hall, 1986, p. 36). Thus, the main focus in Williams' theory of culture is studying life experiences, their context, their relationships and interpreting cultural practices. Carey, influenced by Williams, also stresses the importance of communication as experience that shapes our minds and lives. Society, according to him, is a form of communication where "reality is created, shared, modified, and preserved" (Carey, 1988, p. 33).

2.2.2 Reality

To amplify the concept of "reality" discussed earlier, it becomes necessary to define this often debated concept. While scholars belonging to the "dominant paradigm", referred to by Stephen Littlejohn as "world view I", conceive it to be existing extramentally "out there" and waiting to be discovered, the scholars belonging to the "alternate paradigm", referred to as "world view II" see it as a product of human intervention (Littlejohn, 1989). This dichotomy between world views cannot be overlooked because it has caused a ferment within the field of communication. According to Carey (1988), "reality"

is not given, not humanly existent, independent of language and toward which language stands as a pale refraction. Rather, reality is brought into

existence, is produced, by communication - by, in short, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms. Reality, while not a mere function of symbolic forms, is produced by terministic systems - or by humans who produce such systems - that focus its existence in specific terms. (p. 25)

Thus, Carey stresses the importance of human consciousness in defining "reality" and the world around us. He is very critical of scholars who see the world as existing on its own and language as a representation of this world. According to Carey, language is not secondary, a symbolic representation to explain the world, but rather a world in itself, that brings the world into existence.

Elaborating further on "reality", Carey (1988) says,

reality expresses at any historical moment the purposes and objectives, intentions and desires of humans. . . Reality is expressive not because it reveals any nature, human or divine, or any eternal essence of any kind but rather because it is a product of human action in and upon the world. . . Reality has been made - has been progressively made - by human activity. This is through a process, celebrated by structuralists, whereby nature is turned into culture and by similar but inverse process whereby culture penetrates the body of nature. (p. 73)

Therefore for Carey (1988), "reality" is not "objective, contingent, and neutral" (p. 73), but is a result of "collective and associated work and action. It is formed and sustained, repaired and transformed, worshipped and celebrated in the ordinary business of living"

(p. 87). "Reality" is therefore socially constructed, influencing and determining people's external ritualistic actions. Emphasizing the ritual aspect of communication, Carey observes that communication, like religious rituals, brings people together and helps in making people participate in a common world of meanings.

2.2.3 Communication as ritual

Because Carey sees communication as ritual, he agrees with Dewey, who sees society as existing "not only by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication" (Dewey, 1916, p. 5). Expanding on this, Carey (1988) says that in the American culture, communication has either been seen as a form of transmission or as a ritual. Although the "transmissional view" has been the dominant one, Carey supports the "ritual view" by criticizing the former.

According to Carey (1988), the "transmissional view" is synonymous with "'imparting,' 'sending,' 'transmitting,' or 'giving information to others'" (p. 15). Thus, communication has been seen mostly "as a process and a technology that would, sometimes for religious purposes, spread, transmit, and disseminate knowledge, ideas, and information farther and faster with the goal of controlling space and people" (p. 17).

Disagreeing with this "transmissional view" of communication, Carey (1988) emphasizes the processual and temporal dimensions. He says, "the ritual view conceives communication as a process through which a shared culture is created, modified, and transformed" (p. 43). It is

directed not toward the extension of messages in space but the maintenance of society in time (even if some find this maintenance characterized by domination and therefore illegitimate); not the act of imparting information or influence but the creation, representation, and celebration of shared even if illusory beliefs. . . [It] centres on the sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality. (1988, p.43)

Carey criticizes the dominant conception of communication, which sees it as a form of transmission or movement of information for the purpose of control. According to Carey (1988), this view sees communication as a form of "persuasion; attitude change; behavior modification; socialization through the transmission of information, influence, or conditioning or, alternatively, as a case of individual choice over what to read or view" (pp. 42-43).

Carey (1988), in contrast, celebrates the "ritual view", which according to him, is "linked to terms such as 'sharing,' 'participation,' 'association,' 'fellowship,' and 'the possession of a common faith'" (p. 18). It symbolizes bringing people together to celebrate their oneness (p. 18). The main interest is not in the dissemination of information but in the "construction and maintenance of an ordered, meaningful cultural world that can serve as a control and container for human action" (pp. 18-19).

The ritual view of communication "is not that of information acquisition, though such acquisition occurs, but of dramatic action in which the reader joins a world of contending forces as an observer at a play" (Carey, 1988, p. 21). Reading a newspaper, in the ritual

view, is like "attending a mass, a situation in which nothing new is learned but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed" (p. 20). According to Carey (1988), then,

under a ritual view, (then), news is not information but drama. It does not describe the world but portrays an arena of dramatic forces and action; it exists solely in historical time; and it invites our participation on the basis of our assuming, often vicariously, social roles within it. (p. 21)

Because Carey celebrates the "ritual view" of communication he disagrees with scholars who see communication and culture as a "transmission". In distinguishing the approaches he says,

culture is best understood not by tracing it to psychological and sociological conditions or, indeed, to exclusively political or economic conditions, but as a manifestation of a basic cultural disposition to cast up experience in symbolic form. (1988, p. 64)

Carey therefore views communication as a ritual. According to him, communication, like a tribal or religious ritual, brings people together to share, participate, and celebrate life. Although he recognizes the importance of rituals in human life and communication is viewed by him as a ritual, he does not delve into the intricacies of "rituals". Because of this it seems necessary to explore this concept.

2.2.4 Ritual

The term ritual has several meanings. According to Ronald Grimes (1982), the term "ritual" refers to actions that are usually "performed, embodied, enacted, gestural (not merely thought or said)", "repetitive, redundant, rhythmic (not singular or once-for-all)", "collective, institutionalized, consensual (not personal or private)", or "symbolic, reverential" (1982, p. 14).

Although the term ritual sometimes carries negative meanings such as, "vain repetition, meaningless activity, formalism, and 'going through the motions'" (Mitchell, 1977, p. ix), it is used here with a neutral meaning of "agreed upon pattern of movement" (p. x) or "corporate symbolic activity" (p. xi). It is this neutral meaning that Carey gives to his definition of communication as a ritual.

Carey's conception of rituals can be better understood by studying tribal societies and their performance of rituals. Mitchell (1977), discussing primitive rituals, says that all of them have symbolic meanings. Giving the example of primitive hunting where members of a community cooperated in finding food and later shared the meal, Mitchell says that this ritual of sharing the meal brought people together and established a community and aided in close relationship. (p. 15)

These rituals then are usually repetitive actions that are performed by an association of people, who share its meaning, distinguishing themselves from others. For example, in one culture people might kiss each other as a form of greeting while in the other public kissing might be seen as shameful. Several years ago, for instance, a young man returned

to India after studying in the United States for three years. Having lived in the U.S., he had acquired its meaning system and performed its rituals to communicate his feelings. So, when he met his parents and his sisters at the airport, he went to hug and kiss them, but, in the Indian manner, they offered him their hand and refused his hug and kiss. He felt as if he was lost in a whirlpool of differing rituals. These differences are what makes cultures unique. When people belonging to a particular culture share their meanings and rituals, they come together and develop a feeling of oneness that is celebrated in their daily lives. Every culture, then, has its own form of rites and rituals and these are represented symbolically. Neither the rites nor the symbols may always mean the same in two different cultures. They are traditionally, culturally, and mythically bound and are products of context and history.

According to Mitchell (1977), ritual acts are part of a tradition of symbolic acts that can be understood by people who share the tradition. (p. 136) Since rituals contain shared communal meanings they represent the uniqueness of that particular culture.

According to Monica Wilson (1954),

rituals reveal values at their deepest level . . . men express in ritual what moves them most, and since the form of expression is conventionalized and obligatory, it is the values of the group which are revealed. I see in the study of rituals the key to an understanding of the essential constitution of human societies. (p. 240)

In order to understand the reason for such ritualistic celebrations within a culture, one can be guided by Arnold Van Gennep's theoretical explanation and exploration of this

concept in The Rites of Passage (1960). The concepts used by him are also elaborated and popularized, in turn, by Victor Turner.

According to Van Gennep, human life is accompanied by a continuous process of physical and social changes. It can be seen as a ceremony or containing several sub-ceremonies which are celebrated through rituals. These rituals are performed for and by individuals or groups. Individual rituals help in the "initiation" process that aids the general movement from one spatial and social position to the other. Every movement from "profane" to "sacred" moves through three phases. These phases of "separation", "transition", and "integration", are more recognizably done through ceremonies containing most elaborate rituals in tribal societies as compared to the industrial societies.

Turner, elaborating on the stages involved in the "rites of passage" says that every "transition" contains three phases. The individual is first separated from his original group of social structure or cultural conditions. This is followed by a "liminal" period, when the characteristics of the individual becomes stateless, and the person hangs in a limbo, neither here nor there. Finally, the individual enters and gets incorporated into a new state where he or she gains new rights and new duties to perform. (Turner, 1969, pp. 94-95)

Defining and elaborating the transitional phase between separation and incorporation, Turner says, it "is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to the eclipse of the sun or moon" (1969, p. 95). People in this transition phase cannot be classified under any particular group and are therefore considered to be ambiguous. These people are spatially floating and do not

belong to any of the positions determined by "law, custom, convention, and ceremonial".

They are

represented as possessing nothing . . . no status, property, insignia, secular clothing indicating rank or role, position in a kinship system - in short, nothing that may distinguish them from their fellow neophytes or initiads. Their behavior is normally passive or humble; they must obey their instructors implicitly, and accept arbitrary punishment without complaint.

(1969, p. 95)

This liminal period blends "lowliness and sacredness, (of) homogeneity and comradeship . . . a 'moment in and out of time'" (1969, p. 96). It is "an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated comitatus, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders" (p. 96).

The movement from one state to the other is usually accompanied by the performance of a ritual which celebrates such a movement, and is also assumed to cushion the instability and vibrations that are usually caused in such transitions. Each culture has developed its own form of rites and rituals to celebrate the changes in life. Beyond this function of initiation, they also help in bringing people together and this is Carey's main focus in using the concept of ritual to explain the function of communication. Douglas Kellner, who usually does not agree with James Carey and criticizes him as a liberal pluralist, does agree with Carey in saying that rituals help in social integration. According to him,

myth and ritual traditionally integrate individuals into the social order and celebrate dominant social values. Myths provide stories which dramatize society's values, ideals and ways of life; they are enacted in story-telling media and are often embodied in rituals. Rituals provide collective, participatory activity in which individuals participate in festive cultural forms that are familiar, repetitive and entertaining. (Kellner, 1982, p. 133)

Classifying television as a modern day "ritualized institution", Kellner notes that it helps people to take part in a common activity. By participating in this repetitive ritual act of watching television and watching conventionalized genres, people participate in the common life of the culture. (1982, p. 143) George Gerbner and Larry Gross also make a similar commentary on rituals in an unpublished manuscript quoted by Kellner. According to them,

common rituals and mythologies are agencies of symbolic socialization and control. They demonstrate how society works by dramatizing its norms and values. They are also part of a general system of messages which cultivates prevailing outlooks (which is why we call it culture) and regulates social relationships. This system of messages, and their story telling functions, make people perceive as real and normal and right that which fits the established social order. (Kellner, 1982, p. 143)

Thus, rituals are symbolic and are performed by the members of a culture in their everyday life. The meanings embedded in these rituals are culturally comprehensible and therefore help in the interaction and integration of its members. The concept of symbols

and how they aid in interaction is well developed by symbolic interactionists, who also inspire Carey in his theoretical development.

2.2.5 Symbolic Interactionism

Since communication is a symbolic system, and because Carey's theoretical framework is built on the earlier foundational works of symbolic interactionists, it becomes necessary to explicate this theory. According to Herbert Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism looks at human life as both an interpretive and interactive process in which people independently and unitedly engage in making sense of the world around them.

Symbolic interactionism, according to Norman K. Denzin (1970), is grounded on three major assumptions. These are,

first, social reality as it is sensed, known and understood is a social production. Interacting individuals produce and define their own definitions of situations. Second, humans are assumed to be capable of engaging in "minded," self - reflexive behavior. They are capable of shaping and guiding their own behavior and that of others. Third, in the course of taking their own standpoint and fitting that standpoint to the behavior of others, humans interact with one another. Interaction is seen as an emergent, negotiated, often unpredictable concern. Interaction is symbolic because it involves the manipulation of symbols, words, meanings, and languages. (p. 5)

We therefore live in a world of symbolic meaning. "In our dress, in our manners, even in our most trivial gestures we are constantly "making statements" that others can understand. For the most part these statements refer to human relationships and to status" (Leach, 1968, p. 523). Since these meanings are dependent on the context within which they circulate, cultural context is very important to understand what the shared meanings are and how it becomes intelligible to its cultural members. According to Leach (1968),

we observe individuals behaving toward one another in customary, ritually standardized ways, and whatever we have to say about social relationships is, in the last analysis, an interpretation of these "ritual" acts. . . Our day-to-day relationships depend upon a mutual knowledge and mutual acceptance of the fact that at any particular time any two individuals occupy different positions in a highly complex network of status relationships; ritual serves to reaffirm what these status differences are. (p. 524)

According to Carey (1988), the social scientist "has to figure out what it [cultural form] means, what interpretations it presents of life, and how it is related to the senses of life historically found among people" (p. 44). Since common meanings are shared not only in ritual but also in works of art, art objects and productions can also be interpreted to study culture. In other words, according to Tom Burns, in the words of Carey, "the task of art is to make sense out of life. The task of social science is to make sense out of the senses we make out of life" (Carey, 1988, p. 44).

In Carey's (1988) words, culture is

the meaning and significance particular people discover in their experience through art, religion, and so forth. To study culture is to seek order within these forms, to bring out in starker relief their claims and meanings, and to state systematically the relations between the multiple forms directed to the same end: to render experience comprehensible and charged with affect. (p. 44)

Thus, experience constitutes culture, and these experiences are also shared in cultural forms like art. Because art is the expression of humans, who in turn are part of culture and draw from their experience, art becomes a representative of the culture.

2.2.6 Art

Since art is a cultural artifact that carries the common meanings in a culture, it too can be interpreted for examining the common meanings shared within a culture. David Thorburn (1988), in his introduction to Carey's Communication as culture says, culture is a web of complexities that cannot be reduced to a "one-way process," but should be addressed in terms of a collaboration of "dialogue, of ritualized sharing or interaction" (Carey, 1988, p. ix). These shared meanings are also reflected in the cultural artifacts because they are part of the cultural process. In the words of Carey (1988),

This projection of community ideals and their embodiment in material form - dance, plays, architecture, news stories, strings of speech - creates an artificial though nonetheless real symbolic order that operates to provide

not information but confirmation, not to alter attitudes or change minds but to represent an underlying order of things, not to perform functions but to manifest an ongoing and fragile social process. (p. 19)

In Carey's (1988) opinion, "Society existed not only by art, religion, ritual, language; society existed in these forms of life" (p. 11). What Carey means is that society is not only a result of these symbolic forms, but also is an entwined part of it.

According to Dewey (1934), our experiences in the past are assimilated in our meaning system. When the time comes for expression we neither express the events of the past as they were or the present as it is but a combination of the past and present. "Immediacy and individuality, the traits that mark concrete existence, come from the present occasion; meaning, substance, content, from what is embedded in the self from the past" (1934, p. 71).

The production of art, therefore, is not exclusively a result of past experiences or the present situation but a combination or synthesis of both. Works of art, which are influenced by life experiences, are part of the common life enjoyed by a community and signify a "unified collective life". They not only signify collective life but also help in such interactions. Art therefore helps in "remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity" (Dewey, 1934, p. 81).

Celebrating the importance of art in bringing people together, Dewey (1934) says, the union of men with one another is the source of the rites that from the time of archaic man to the present have commemorated the crises of birth, death, and marriage. Art is the extension of the power of rites and

ceremonies to unite men, through a shared celebration, to all incidents and scenes of life. This office is the reward and seal of art. That art weds man and nature is a familiar fact. Art also renders men aware of their union with one another in origin and destiny. (pp. 270-71)

Art as a result of life experience is a idea that is also shared by Kenneth Burke. According to him, the popularity and success of a drama depends on how much the audience can identify and participate in the life experience of the characters. The commonness of life experiences is the determining element in holding the audience's attention.

The dramas could retain their hold only in so far as the spectators were "glued" to them - and one is glued to a work of art only when that work is reliving for him some basic pattern for his own experience, with appropriate "medicine." The curriculum vitae symbolized in the dramas must have paralleled the people's despite the kingly symbols. . . . despite absence of realistic, everyday detail in the rituals, they symbolized the experience of even the most lowly, though expressed "transcendentally," in "stylistic dignification". . . . It was not the king's life but their own lives that the onlookers were reliving - and these lives were being made acceptable, or "negotiable," by transmogrification into royal attributes. (1957, p. 318)

Films, like dramas, also present the common meanings in a culture which their audiences can share. They reflect a set of images that are familiar and are considered

"real" by the members of a particular culture. These common meanings are celebrated in films, which participate in perpetuating, maintaining and changing society.

Films are symbolic and are part and product of the social interaction and interpretation. According to Norman K. Denzin (1970), films "illuminate the processual, interactional features of a society or a culture" (p. 222). He further says that "films are cultural and symbolic forms that may be used to reveal and illuminate important features of social life" (p. 232). Because the film maker is a part of society, who shares the contemporary social meaning, his or her creation will also reflect this meaning.

The film maker's "self", then, is a social self that results from interaction. So, when film makers make a film, they draw from their experiences and from the common meanings they share with their community. According to Denzin (1991), "the statements that a film makes bear the stamp of the cultural, social, and economic contexts that surround the film makers work" (p. 10). Because of this, films, especially the most popular ones, will generally reflect the meanings existing in the society during that particular time. Since films are an extension of the society, constructed from interaction and interpretation of many individuals who are all part of the society, it becomes possible to study social values through interpreting them.

Since I am interested in studying values shared in a community as supported in popular films, Carey's theoretical perspective provides a highly appropriate framework. Carey is not only critical of the theorists who belonged to the "dominant paradigm" or "world view I" as defined by Littlejohn, but also of the critical theorists belonging to the "alternate paradigm". According to him, critical theorists often reduce the phenomenological

diversity of society "to the single quest for power and domination" (1988, p. 106). Carey (1988) further says,

just because one admits power to the household of consciousness and conduct, one need not let it occupy every room, though I admit that, as with many an unwanted guest, one will have to struggle to prevent it from taking over the entire domicile. (p. 106)

Communication, as Carey has noted, is not merely the dissemination of information as a form of social, economic, and political control, but "also includes the sharing of aesthetic experience, religious ideas, personal values and sentiments, and intellectual notions - a ritual order" (1988, p. 34).

Carey is therefore not only critical about scholars who reduce communication studies to empirical and behavioristic studies that overlook the importance and aesthetics of the cultural artifacts that circulate the existing meaning system in any culture or society, but also of the critical theorists belonging to the "alternate paradigm". The theorists belonging to critical studies, according to Carey, are so much involved with the structure of power, ideology and the issues of domination in media and society that they fail to see the "ritual" and "cultural" elements in it. Carey, although he acknowledges the existence and influence of power structure in the mediated texts, refuses to "yield entirely to a vocabulary of power, for its resistance to the privileging of 'ideological' as against 'mythic' or 'ritual' or 'anthropological' elements in the description and interpretation of cultural formations" (Thorburn, Intro to Carey, 1988, p. ix).

Following Carey, I will, for this study, eschew both the dominant positivistic, behaviouristic and functionalistic approaches and the alternate power-oriented and ideological approaches in favour of a ritualistic cultural approach. What is appealing about Carey's theoretical framework for this cultural research is his celebration of the "ritual" over the "transmissional" aspect of communication. Communication is defined by Carey as a "complex, ritualized experience in which 'meaning' or significance is constituted by an intricate, contested collaboration among institutional, ideological, and cultural forces" (Thorburn, Intro to Carey, 1988, p. Intro).

2.3 Sampling

The purpose of this study is: (1) to examine, interpret, compare, and describe the values represented and supported in popular Tamil films and (2) through this film analysis to identify whether there has been any change in these values in the last four decades, (3) and to discuss what this means in Tamil and Indian society.

On the grounds that the most popular films will best share the meanings and values in a culture, two out of the five most popular Tamil films in each decade have been chosen. (Popular films are those with high box office returns and the ones that ran for the most number of days.) Since the Indian government does not maintain a record of this, the data was obtained from Film News Anandan (sic), one of the most acknowledged film archivists and historians in Tamil Nadu. In the process of choosing the most popular films, films based directly on the re-telling of religious myths and highly conventional

films about hero-kings and their lives. (mostly made before 1960) are eliminated because they are narratives of a different kind, where the film maker consciously tries to create an overly determined and traditional image of the world. Another reason for eliminating these films is because they try to represent a temporal period that is different from this study's interest, that is, 1950 - 1990.

The following films have been chosen from the post-independence era, starting from 1950 onwards. The reason for choosing 1950 as the starting point is because India attained independence from the British Empire in 1947 and it took approximately three years of transition for film makers to make films of their choice with less concern about being influenced or censored by the British government. The period between 1950 and 1990 is then divided into four decades with two films chosen from each decade for interpretation. This division into four decades is a choice made for convenience rather than for any historical or political reason. Since I am interested only in interpreting the shared values of a culture as represented in popular films and not interested in doing a cause-effect, functional, or ideological study, such a division based on convenience is assumed not to effect the results of the study. The films that are chosen for study are:

1950-1959, 1.Parasakthi, 1952 (Powerful Goddess Sakthi),

2.Devadas, 1953 [the name of the hero];

1960-1969, 1.Bhagapirivinai, 1960 (Separation of the ancestral property),

2.Pasamalar,1961 (Flower of love);

1970-1979, 1.Pattikada Pattanama,1972 (Village or City),

2. Kizhake Pogum Rayil,1978 (Train going east);
- 1980-1989, 1. Nenjathai Killadhe,1980 (Don't pinch the heart),
2. Moonram Pirai,1982 (Third stage of the crescent).

The samples are limited to two in each decade because: (1) it is believed that two popular films will suffice to represent the values that are supported and shared in a culture during a particular time frame, and because (2) the close interpretation of eight feature films is already a lengthy undertaking.

2.4 Methodology

Comparative symbology is not directly concerned with the technical aspects of linguistics, and has much to do with many kinds of non-verbal symbols in ritual and art . . . it is involved in the relationships between symbols and the concepts, feelings, values, notions, etc. associated with them by users, interpreters or exegetes . . . it pertains to meaning in language and context. (Turner, 1982, p. 21)

The method that will be used for interpreting the common meanings shared in a culture as reflected in films will be similar to what Turner calls as "comparative symbology". The main aim is to "apply the anthropological or primitive society conception of culture to the life, [artifacts] and peoples of industrial society" (Carey, 1988, p.95).

This analysis is a kind of ethnographic research that will explore the "public code" or the "socially established code" that conveys and imparts meaning and through communication brings people together. As Geertz (1973) says, one single act of closing one eye could be interpreted as a twitch, wink, parody, or a rehearsal based on the context and situation. Because of this common difficulty, I will interpret the meanings that are understood by its members by explaining the wink as a wink and not as a parody. I will therefore study the

stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures in terms of which twitches, winks, fake - winks, parodies, rehearsals of parodies are produced, perceived, and interpreted, and without which they would not . . . in fact exist, no matter what anyone did or didn't do with his eyelids. (Geertz, 1973, p. 7)

I will therefore view the films as an ethnographer, to interpret the meanings that are shared by the members of a culture. I will be involved in explicating, as Geertz puts it, "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and unexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render" (1973, p. 10). I will also analyze films like "trying to read a manuscript - foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound by intransigent examples of shaped behavior" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10).

In this regard, it is important to note that I am not a foreigner who tries to enter a different culture attempting to interpret it from the natives' point of view, but rather belong to the same culture. Having lived and experienced the Canadian culture for three years, and in the process having achieved both temporal and spacial distance from my own, I can provide a more sensitive perspective of the values embedded in the cultural texts. My claim to cultural competence has an analogue to Noam Chomsky's claim that the measure of grammaticality in any series of linguistic sequence is acceptability to native speaker. Chomsky says, "One way to test the adequacy of a grammar proposed for L [language] is to determine whether or not the sequences that it generates are actually grammatical, ie., acceptable to a native speaker . . . (1972, p. 13).

Since films are polysemic and are assumed to share the cultural meanings in a society, I will interpret the values and preferred meaning reflected in the sample texts at least two levels: First, I will summarize the content as a simple descriptive narrative text. Second, I will interpret the text in terms of the values embedded in it.

I will examine each of the eight films several times and then explicate the commonalities and differences in values within each decade, and interpret their meanings and their changes over time.

For each film, I will examine and interpret five value related categories that are considered central to the Indian context. These categories will be analyzed from the narrative patterns, and from the behavior of the main characters in the films. The characters will also be interpreted for their goodness or badness, based on Tamil-speaking people's cultural norms.

The following value-expressive areas will be studied from the sample films:

1. Caste issues,
2. Family: Respect for elders in the family,
3. Marriage,
4. Religion, and
5. Education.

These categories are comprehensive, relevant and not arbitrarily selected, and are derived from several previous studies, particularly Gangrade's study on intergenerational differences in values among East-Indians (Gangrade, 1975, preface), as well as Milton C. Albrecht's study of values in American short stories (1956, p. 723), and Sundberg, Rohila and Tyler's study of value differences between East-Indian and American students (1970, pp. 374-397). These theme areas have also been chosen over others because I find these values most commonly represented in the general population of Tamil films.

2.5 Summary

I will use James Carey's theoretical framework which sees communication as a ritual that is celebrated by a culture. It is only through the commonly held meanings that any culture comes into existence, maintains itself, and changes, over a period of time. It is also through communication that people in modern, industrial societies, such as the tribal and pre-industrial societies, aggregate into communities to celebrate their commonly held meanings. Since cultural studies "does not seek to explain human behavior; rather, it

attempts to diagnose human meanings" (Carey, 1988, p. 56), I will interpret and present the social values of a culture as presented in films. In interpreting films, I will follow the purposes put forward by Geertz.

Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical. (Geertz, 1973, p. 5)

With Geertz and Carey, I believe that the world of social reality is not "out there" to be discovered using objective "scientific" methods but is "in here", interpreted in our daily experiences. We construct the world based on our social knowledge accumulated in the life experiences and rituals that we share with others. We are each part of the history, making and being consumed in it. We share this reality, constantly engaged in interpreting actions in social interactions. Since films are part of the contemporary social world we share, made and seen by people who are part of this cultural reality, it is possible to increase our understanding of this world through interpreting life experiences as reflected in films.

This study is therefore not only a discovery to be shared with people who know little or nothing about East-Indian culture, but also to be shared with members of the culture itself. It is an attempt to examine, interpret, and celebrate oral and gestural symbolic movements, and to stretch these digital moments into an analogous circle. In this

interpretive process, the shared but fleeting moment of a culture will be captured, enlarged and emphasized. This study, therefore, belongs to a continuous string that passes through, links, and holds the fragile beads of culture together in a continuum that somehow constitutes an incomplete whole.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, culture was discussed as a "practice". It was also viewed in terms of "lived experience" built on shared meanings. Since these meanings are socially constructed and include a society's values, they inform social practices by members of a culture in their every day lives. Shared values help people understand each other's behavior and thus integrate them into a communal whole. They maintain each society and in their differences, also differentiate each society from the other. (Labovitz, 1977, p. 48). Furthermore, according to Sanford Labovitz (1977), "If members of a group share a selected number of dominant values, the group is likely to be closely knit, have positive feelings about itself, and endure for an extended time" (p. 48). It is therefore impossible for any society to survive for an extended period when members have conflicting social values.

When people move into a new culture with a different set of values, they will have difficulty in integrating until they acquire the values of that culture, since it is this commonality in values that helps societies to function smoothly and peacefully. However, people brought up in the same culture will acquire the customs, rituals and values of that culture without any conscious effort or learning because they practice them in their every day lives as they grow up.

According to Clyde Kluckhohn et al. (1951), common social values help in stabilizing and organizing a society. In this regard,

social life and living in a social world both require standards "within" the individual and standards roughly agreed upon by individuals who live and work together. There can be no personal security and no stability of social organization unless random carelessness, irresponsibility, and purely impulsive behavior are restrained in terms of private and group codes. (p. 400)

These "codes," "standards," and shared values express themselves and are reflected in the popular artifacts of that culture. These artifacts, in order to be appealing, meaningful, and thereby popular among its audience, must share the people's common values. According to Kluckhohn et al. (1951), "Values are manifested in ideas, expressional symbols, and in the moral and aesthetic norms evident in behavioral regularities" (p. 394). These are made "explicit by word or deed. . . are constantly made in daily behavior. . . . [and] are also embodied in the formal oral or written literature of the group, including laws, mythology, and standardized religious dogmas" (p. 404). Because narrative, mythological and other artifacts carry the common meanings and values, social scientists can study the inherent values of a culture from its popular artifacts.

In this century, film is the narrative form which has established itself as perhaps the most popular cultural artifact. Many film scholars, ethnographers, and sociologists, cited in section 3.5, have noted how closely film reflects society, and have demonstrated how to study culture through this medium. According to Francois Steudler (1987), film is an

especially useful medium because it not only reflects "what is immediately apparent in a given society, [but] film is also a privileged medium for the expression of the societal imagination: the magical world of the cinema enables the needs, desires and dreams of a period to be projected" (p. 46).

Although film is an excellent potential source of information about the common meanings of its own productive cultures, it was neglected as a research material for a long time (Steudler, 1987, p. 46). Only in recent years has it gained prominence as one of the primary sources that can be studied for understanding a culture in terms of social beliefs and values. Within this context, therefore, I will examine a specific culture in terms of its social values by studying its selected popular films.

3.2 Values

In our everyday lives we come across situations where we decide to do a certain thing in a certain way without giving much thought to our choice. There are other situations when we spend time thinking about what action or decision would be appropriate and right. In both situations, our response is usually governed by our culturally defined values. These values are so pervasive in our community that they help in deciding what is good, right, and desirable. Our resultant action or decision is therefore similar to what other people of the same culture in such a situation would have probably done or decided. If the person does not act in a culturally defined way and opts for a different value system, his or her act would be considered strange by the other cultural members. It is

therefore common to see people belonging to a particular culture share the same culturally defined social values.

3.2.1 Values in practice

Values can be studied by examining, for instance, the marriage process in India. When men and women are ready for marriage, their parents and elders in their families start searching for the right partner. The elders in the families discuss and make a decision after consulting with the men and women who are to be married. The approval of the elders, particularly parents, is considered very important. They take several factors into consideration before deciding on the final choice. The man, compared to the woman, should be older, taller, more educated, belong to the same caste, religion, and linguistic background, among others. The elders also consult astrologists regarding the compatibility of 'stars' of the man and woman. If men and women choose on their own, without going through these rituals, or without consulting their elders, they will not be respected in the family or community. So, usually men and women make their decision based on what is considered right and good in their community. From the above example, one can see that in the Indian culture, respect for elders, marriage, arranged marriage, and male superiority are some of the factors that are valued. In order for foreigners to participate and be accepted in this culture, they must first learn and understand these values, although they will appear strange and new.

3.2.2 Defining values

Although "Values" is regarded as one of the most important concepts used by social scientists, there is no single, comprehensive definition that is used or agreed upon. Kluckhohn et al. (1951) observe that values have been "considered as attitudes, motivations, objects, measurable quantities, substantive areas of behavior, affect-laden customs or traditions, and relationships such as those between individuals, groups, objects, events" (p. 390).

According to Charles Morris (1956), values have been defined in at least three different ways. The first kind, he refers to as "operative values", which are, "simply a way of referring to the actual direction of preferential behavior toward one kind of object rather than another" (p. 10). The second kind, he refers to as "conceived values", which are, "preferential behavior directed by 'an anticipation or foresight of the outcome' of such behavior" (p. 10). The third kind, "object value", he refers to as "what is preferable (or 'desirable') regardless of whether it is in fact preferred or conceived as preferable" (p. 11). After explicating the three kinds of values, Morris defines the study of value as "the science of preferential behavior" (p. 12).

Milton Rokeach (1973), on the other hand, defines "value" as a belief that determines behavior rather than a behavior by itself. According to him, "value" is "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (p. 5).

It is therefore seen by him as

a type of belief, centrally located within one's total belief system, about how one ought or ought not to behave, or about some end-state of existence worth or not worth attaining. Values are thus abstract ideals, positive or negative, not tied to any specific attitude object or situation, representing a person's beliefs about ideal modes of conduct and ideal terminal goals. (1972, p. 124)

In spite of the variety in definitions and explanations, most scholars agree that "values somehow have to do with normative as opposed to existential propositions" (Kluckhohn et al., 1951, p. 390). I will, in this study, define and use the concept of "values" as defined by Kluckhohn et al. because of its comprehensiveness. According to them, "Value implies a code or a standard which has some persistence through time, or, more broadly put, which organizes a system of action." . . . It "is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action" (1951, p. 395). Social "Values" will therefore be seen as a shared set of concepts that govern customary behavior, which are considered normal or standard and desirable in a culture.

According to Kluckhohn et al. (1951), "Value" could be either "explicit or implicit", and is "distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group", depending upon whether it is personal or social. Values are justified preferences rather than mere individual, independent, preferences, and are justified - "'morally', or by reasoning, or by aesthetic judgments, usually by two or all three of these" (p. 396).

Kluckhohn et al. (1951) also note that since values cannot be observed directly, the observer will have to "impute" the ideas implicitly held by the actor or actress. Since values are "ideas formulating action commitments", they are "instigators of behavior 'within' the individual but are not to be conceived as internal social 'forces' in the classical sense of the word 'force'" (p. 396).

They further observe that the discussion of values "centres on approval or disapproval of concrete acts, with the value left as the tacit premise that is the least common denominator of the reaction to these acts" (1951, p. 397). They also mention that values are "desirable" rather than "desired", because, they are "emancipation from immediate physiological stresses and from the press of a specific, ephemeral situation" (p. 397). In other words, "the desirable is what is felt or thought proper to want. It is what an actor or group of actors desire - and believe they 'ought' or 'should' desire - for the individual or a plurality of individuals" (p. 396).

Rokeach, developing on Kluckhohn et al.'s definition of values, says that values are related to "modes of conduct and end-states of existence". When someone mentions that a person has a particular value, he means, the person "has an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence" (1972, p. 160). Rokeach also adds that when a person internalises a value, he or she uses it as

a standard or criterion for guiding action, for developing and maintaining attitudes toward relevant objects and situations, for justifying one's own

and others actions and attitudes, for morally judging self and others, and for comparing self with others. (1972, p. 160)

Although there are differences among definitions, most scholars agree that values are the core and central belief system of a community that guides the members of that community to judge actions and behavior of their members and others as desirable or undesirable, and also direct their actions in their everyday life. It is this commonality that members share which also constitutes a culture.

It is each culture's common values that also guides each and every individual's conscious and unconscious acts and behaviour, including the symbolic forms they create. From traditional forms of dress to literature and film, the cultural artifacts produced by people belonging to a particular culture and shared with the broadest spread of members of the culture, are likely to reflect what the makers and the audience know or what they have experienced in their every day life. Their cultural products will not be carriers of a meaning system unique only to their creators, but of meanings they share with the members of their community, gained through social interaction and interpretation. These shared values, then, can be studied ethnographically not only by observing a culture directly, but also by studying its cultural artifacts.

3.3 Art, literature and values

Values, as discussed in the previous section, are central to human behaviour and action. The values that guide people's life are not only reflected in their actions but also in their

creations, as in art, music, literature and film. It has been observed by many scholars that by studying cultural artifacts, particularly the ones that are popular, one is able to understand a culture and its values.

According to Radhakamal Mukerjee (1945), art is a product of society and is socially conditioned (p. 496). The author says, "every primitive tribe has the art it deserves, moulded by its mental attitudes, dispositions and emotions" (1945, p. 499). Art, therefore, does not exist in a vacuum but is socially constructed. Because forms of art like literature and film share culturally shared meanings, researchers use it to study existing values in a society.

Franz Boas (1938), after analyzing the traditional tales of the Indian tribes, concluded that they agree fully with the beliefs, customs and conditions of life (p. 600). He further notes that literature's content and narrative form are greatly influenced by its cultural life (p. 601). "The motives of action are determined by the mode of life and the chief interests of people, and the plots give us a picture of these" (p. 601). He also observes, "an analysis of folk tales shows that they deal almost throughout with events that may occur in human society, with human passions, virtues and vices" (p. 610). According to him, these tales contain myths that are shared by its cultural members. He says,

if it is true that myths are built on the experiences of everyday life, we may expect that the dominant cultural interests are reflected in them. The incidents mirror the life of the people and their occupations, and social life may in part be reconstructed from these tales (1938, p. 622).

Like the anonymous folk tales of pre-industrial society, popular literature in modern societies also reflect dominant cultural interests. Milton C. Albrecht (1954), in his article The Relationship of Literature and Society, observes that literature reflects, influences, and shapes society. He further says, "the commonest conception has been that literature reflects predominantly the significant values and norms of a culture" (p. 426). Similar views are also shared by Bernard DeVoto (1937) who says, "literature is a record of social experience, an embodiment of social myths and ideals and aims, and an organization of social beliefs and sanctions" (cited in Albrecht, 1956, p. 426).

James Harwood Barnett (1939), in his book Divorce and the American Divorce Novel 1858-1937: A Study in Literary Reflections of Social Influences notes, "the relations of literature to the society and culture which nurture it are so intimate, pervasive and intertwined that neither can be adequately understood without reference to the other" (p. 7). Based on his study on divorce and its depiction in popular novels he arrives at the conclusion that literature does share or reflect the dominant thoughts and beliefs of the society. Agreeing with Martha Wolfenstein on how films reflect culture, Albrecht says, although the relationship of movie or literary patterns to the larger culture is complex and not well understood, it is assumed that these patterns reflect in significant and characteristic ways the attitudes and shared experiences in society. (1954, p. 427)

Albrecht (1954) further observes, "story content, indeed, seems to be slanted in the direction of widespread interests and ideals" (p. 430). They are products of the same culture and represent "lived experience". Ruth A. Inglis also proposes that literature will

reflect and share the "ideas, customs and beliefs" of the society of which it is a product.

She says,

anthropologists and others frequently use the literature of a people as a source of clues to the nature of their culture. Even the words and form in which ideas are couched throw light upon the ideas, customs, and beliefs extant in a group. Since an author usually writes for readers having membership in his own society, the presumption is that literature will reflect what they have in common. (1938, p. 526)

Based on her studies of heroines in 420 popular stories that appeared in the The Saturday Evening Post from 1901 to 1935, Inglis (1938) observes,

although the stories do not consistently reflect actual conditions in American life, they do mirror certain typical American attitudes and ideals, such as the tendency to take prosperity for granted, the lack of class consciousness and belief in the freedom of opportunity for everyone, the glorification of wealth and of youth and of those who entertain us . . . the American pattern of values is reflected more clearly than the actual facts of American life. (p. 531)

She further says, "in order to serve the purpose of amusement, literature must remain in the same universe of discourse as its public and thus reflect the prevailing customs and mores in a general way . . ." (1938, p. 532).

According to James H. Barnett and Rhoda Gruen (1948), who did a study on 25 divorce novels, the relationship between the portrayal of "facts" and "values" has shown that:

divorce novels reflect the factual situation as concerns divorce with a limited degree of accuracy so far as the categories of occupation, urban-rural distribution, and regional areas are concerned. However, as indicators of wide spread social attitudes towards marriage, love, and divorce, the divorce novels are believed to be socially sensitive . . . (1948, p. 326)

Albrecht's study on popular short stories also confirms the theory that literature shares common cultural values. Based on his study he found that the cultural norms and values of the American family are strongly upheld in the short stories of wide-circulation magazines. (1956, p. 729). According to Max Lerner and Edward Mims Jr. (1933),

social influences on literature is [sic] as broad as the entire range of operative social forces; the prevailing system of social organization - including the class structure, the economic system, the political organization and the deeply rooted institutions; the dominant ideas; the characteristic emotional tone; the sense of the past and the pattern of the future; the driving aspirations and the "myths," and their relation to the contemporary realities. There is nothing in the compass of social life that does not play its part - small or large, directly or by deflection,

immediately or by varying removes - in giving literature the impress of its surrounding world. (p. 524)

According to Patricke Johns-Heine and Hans H. Gerth, "students of the sociology of literature have found the analysis of mass fiction to be a useful index to changing values in a society" (1949, p. 105). They studied themes and hero models in stories that were published in five popular magazines between 1921 and 1940, and found that values in American society were indeed reflected in literature.

These studies indicate that art and literature reflect the dominant beliefs and values of people. Since literature is a narrative form, which is a product of its culture, it naturally tends to reflect cultural values. Other art forms of a culture will similarly share the common meanings. Not surprisingly, feature film, which adopts the narrative style of literature, has also been shown to share the common social values of a culture.

3.4 Film and values

Irving Thalberg, the astute and pragmatic executive producer of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer from 1924 to 1937, in a speech delivered at the University of Southern California in 1929 and later published in 1964 observes that successful films entertain a wide range of audiences. This can be done, according to him, only when "the subject matter of photoplays [films] corresponds closely to current thinking - they must be topical" (1964, p. 45). He further notes,

the spirit of modern life, the attitude of children toward parents, the family life or the lack of it, is so quickly and so normally and clearly brought out in pictures. Of course, in each picture of the kind in which one thought is given the predominating position, there is an exaggeration, but nevertheless, there is a resemblance to the current thought of the day.

(1964, p. 46)

Although not a scholar, he was an intelligent observer of the mass audience, and he noted quite pragmatically that film represents the customs and life of people and is "current in its thinking" (1964, p. 46). He also argues that because of its representative nature, it could be used in the future as an historical text to study the life and culture of people who lived in a particular time frame. (p. 47)

Films are also realistic in the sense that they represent contemporary culture. According to Richard Dyer MacCann (1964), "the motion picture has always seemed especially comfortable with realism" (p. 51) and "Hollywood movie-makers, and movie-makers around the world, have always turned part of their attention to the contemporary social scene" (p. 51).

As noted in chapter 2, Norman Denzin (1970) observes that "films, in contrast to still photography, can better illuminate the processual, interactional features of a society or a culture" (p. 222). He also notes that films reflect the cultural experiences, "problematic social experiences", "key historical moments", can "expose problems in key social institutions" and "express and convey political ideology and core cultural values" (p. 222-223).

Films, Denzin (1970) says, "are cultural and symbolic forms that may be used to reveal and illuminate important features of social life" (p. 232). Focusing on the importance of film as a cultural artifact that shares the common interests, values and meaning of people belonging to the culture he says, "Hollywood films thus reveal, illuminate, and explore society. The reading and analysis of these films . . . allows the sociologist to see things about a society that might not otherwise be visible" (p. 224).

Based on his study of Indian films, Theodore Baskaran (1981) found that they "serve as a reflector of the values and the issues that preoccupied the minds of the people at that time" (p. 98). According to Baskaran,

in order to be commercially successful, popular media were bound to adjust themselves to the demands of the audience. For this reason, very often these media depicted only such attitudes as were already universally accepted by the vast audience and they must thus be taken as peculiarly sensitive indicators of the ideas and concerns of the common people. The themes, opinions and crusades of popular entertainment were bound to reflect the ideas and aspirations of a society in an era of historic change" (1981, Preface).

Baskaran (1981) further says,

More than any other entertainment form, films reflect the concerns of the people. Depending upon popular patronage for its very survival, the film industry has to mirror mass desires. Moreover, the cinema envelops and combines within itself all other performing art forms of the time. Thus

when certain cinematic motifs are persistently repeated, it can be safely presumed that these are the outward expressions of the inner urges of the people. (pp. 97-98)

Thus, popular films reflect the "inner urges of people" because the film maker is part of the culture and draws from his experience, directing his work for the visual and aural pleasures of his audience who belong to the same culture. Richard Griffith, analyzing films belonging to the gangster genre in the years 1929-48 says, stories of American life were "drawn from experience" of the writers and "accustomed audiences to seeing contemporary life dealt with from a critical point of view" (1964, P. 50).

Films can also be studied as a day-dream, shared by the film maker with his audience. Using the metaphor of film as dream, Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites (1970) state that:

The story or drama which thus becomes the shared day-dream of thousands or millions has the further advantage over the private day-dream that we know that other share it, and we feel that it is about others rather than about themselves. . . . Where a group of people share a common culture, they are likely to have certain day-dreams in common. . . . The common day-dreams of a culture are in part the sources, in part the products of its popular myths, stories, plays and films. Where these productions gain the sympathetic response of a wide audience, it is likely that their producers have tapped within themselves the reservoir of common day-dreams. (p. 13)

John Houseman (1947), producer and playwright also uses the dream metaphor, and observes that

every generation has its myth - its own particular dream in which are mirrored the preoccupations of its waking hours. . . . I have argued elsewhere against the notion that Hollywood enjoys any real free-will in the choice of its subjects. The best it can do, in the general run of its product, is to reflect as honestly and competently as it can the interests and anxieties of its hundred million customers. (cited in Fearing, 1947, p. 75)

Franklin Fearing, elaborating on the "collective consciousness" approach of film, says that films have two meanings: at the surface level, films reveal the explicit, denotative meaning, and at the deeper level, they "reflect or express the unconscious desires and compulsion of a whole people" (1947, p. 76). He further says,

motion pictures afford an opportunity for the expression of the basic meanings inherent in the relationships of human beings to each other, to their environment, and to the society of which they are a part. This is not limited to a passive reflection of those meanings, but may be dynamic and creative interpretation. (p. 79)

In Fearing's (1947) opinion, "like the folk tale, classic drama, primitive story-telling, or the medieval morality play, the film may be regarded as a means through which the individual understands himself, his social role, and the values of his group" (p. 70).

Although Fearing agrees with other scholars that films reflect society, he believes that one cannot fully explain the process by which this takes place. He says,

there is something approaching a mystical communion between the minds which write, direct, and produce a film and the minds of the mass audience. We have no indication as to the manner in which the makers of films gain access to the collective unconscious of the population for whom they are intended. Nor do we know whether the film as made actually carries the symbolic meanings to the mass audience. (1947, pp. 77-78)

Summarizing, it can be observed that film as a cultural artifact reflects or shares the common meanings and values of a particular culture during a particular time. Because film is a cultural product made by groups and seen by people belonging to a particular culture, it tends even more than many forms to reflect the common meanings of that culture. Whether described as "day dreams" or values, they are commonalities shared in a culture.

Although India is a large and diverse nation, the values shared by people living in India, whether they are from the South or North, constitute a common culture, especially compared to those of Western countries. In the following sections I will focus on Indian films, and values that make Indian people culturally different from other nationalities.

3.5 Indian films

In the year 1895, the Lumiere Brothers exhibited their films in Paris for the first time. After observing the success and future of this medium, they sent their envoys around the world to exhibit the films they had made. One of their envoys, Maurice Sestier, exhibited

films in India for the first time, on July 7, 1896. This lit the flame that has continued to inflame the minds of the Indian people.

Although foreign films began to be exhibited since 1896, it was not until the 1913 that an Indian, named Dhundiraj Govind Phalke (Dada Saheb Phalke), made the first Indian full length feature film, called Raja Harishchandra. This film was based on the famous epic Mahabharata, which also paved the way for mythological themes in the films that followed. According to the authors of The Impact of Film on Society (1974), "the ready acceptability of this movie among the masses was predominantly due to the puranic and ethical value and content of its story, apart from its novelty as a form of entertainment" (p. 3). In recent years, films based on famous epics and myth have been expanded by films that entertain and address various social issues. Films have therefore become a very popular medium in India.

In India, films are produced in more than twenty regional languages and continue to be the primary source of entertainment for people living in India and Indians living abroad (Binford, 1988). Although Hollywood is the centre of the international film industry, India is actually the world's largest film producing country, making one out of every four films made in the world annually. Film making is also one of the ten largest industries in India and produces approximately two films every day (Binford, 1987, p. 145). The place of film in Indian life is much more prominent than in almost any other contemporary society. Films are so popular in India that it is almost impossible to witness the celebration of any function or festival without the accompaniment of films or the songs that are part of it. Almost all public holidays are spent by families in film

theatres or in front of television sets, watching a film. During local festivals, such as Deepavali or Pongal, people wear new clothes, eat sweets, meet relatives and friends, and usually end the festival by watching a film.

Many new films are released during these festivals and are shown five or six times a day. It is not unusual to see a crowd in front of a theatre, or even see black marketers scalping tickets at an exorbitant rate. Thus, films have gained a distinctive social position and recognition among Indian people. Film-going has, over time, become a ritual in every festivity, without which no festival or function is considered complete.

Film has thus become an integral part of Indian culture and is the most popular mass medium. S. Theodore Baskaran, in his book The Message Bearers: The Nationalist Politics and the Entertainment Media in South India 1880-1945, observes, "within two decades of its appearance in 1896, the cinema had emerged as the single largest entertainment form in India, (1) encompassing within itself all existing entertainment and art forms" (1981, p. 127). Since then, the number of films made, and the their influence have increased substantially.

3.5.1 Brief overview of Tamil-language films

In Tamil Nadu, a state in South India, where Tamil is the common language films are viewed as a source of entertainment and a definite mode of spending leisure. More prominently in the labour areas, 89% of the labour respondents covered by the survey, mentioned films as an essential source

of entertainment as against 81% of those in rural areas. Further in urban areas nearly 90% of the worker respondents go to films, whereas among the agricultural worker respondents in the rural areas only 80% go to films for spending the leisure. (The impact of film on society, 1974, pp. 42-43)

According to the authors of The Impact of Film on Society, film is responsible for "evoking and conditioning of social awareness, setting up of standards of fashion, style, dress, manners, social and personal behaviour and permeation of political ideas" (1974, p. 50-51). This becomes more obvious when one studies the history of Tamil film.

Keechakavadam (1917) was the first film to be made in South India. It was during the period from 1917 to 1931 the film industry in South India went through a creditable performance, and individual entrepreneurs were mostly responsible for rendering film industry as an attractive commercial proposition and of lasting entertainment value. (1974, p. 7)

Randor Guy (1990) reports that "cinema began to talk Tamil in 1931" (p. 28) in the film Kalidas. "During the 1930's, 206 pictures were produced in Tamil. Most of them were mythological, folk myths and a few contemporary themes called 'social' as a 'genre' in Indian cinema" (p. 28).

Tamil films not only entertained but some also were social commentators. Menaka was the first social film made in 1937 that depicted the conflicts and controversies within the orthodox Hindu community. It showed the problems faced by a young married woman within a joint family system who was despised by the elders in the family (1974, p. 11). Another film that reflected social problems was Devadas. This film dealt with issues of

love and arranged marriage. Balayogi was a film that attacked the indifference of the Brahmin community to the welfare of their women. The film Jayakodi, made "a poignant appeal for the abolition of the child marriage and dowry system" (1974, p. 12). Thus, Tamil films were very conscious of the existing social system and were also critical about some of the social evils.

In the late 1940's film began to be used by a group of politically motivated individuals to fulfil their political desires. This group of politicians who were "orators, forceful writers, charismatic actors and other opinion builders with high organizational skills" (Guy, 1990, p. 28) used film as a tool to reflect social inequalities and problems prevalent in the Tamil society from a particular political perspective.

Among this new breed of politicians, who had very little monetary support, C. N. Annadurai, a popular orator, screen play writer and later Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, used film as means to rally his political ideology. Because of his existing popularity and the popularity he gained through his films, he was able to become the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in a few years. He was supported by Muthuvel Karunanidhi, who was also involved in writing scripts for popular films. Karunanidhi, then, became the next Chief Minister. He was succeeded by M. G. Ramachandran who was a very popular film actor in Tamil Nadu. The present Chief Minister is Jayalalitha Jayaram who was also a popular actress who had acted in several Tamil films with M. G. Ramachandran. From this list of successful politicians it can be seen that films in Tamil Nadu not only projected the social problems in the society but was also a powerful and potent medium in terms of rallying political support.

According to Baskaran (1981), film along with its power as a political tool also reflected the collective moods and concerns of the period. After studying films made during the pre-independence period he says,

as the mass basis for the demand for freedom widened and the people began participating in elections, film-makers responded increasingly to the political tensions of the times by mirroring this new mood. By supporting nationalistic ideas on the screen, films reflected the popular attitude of the times and often gave a definite shape to vague political inclinations. (p. 100)

During this period, mass media were considered to be a potent force in reflecting and informing people of what was happening politically. According to Baskaran (1981), "with so many song-writers and actors with avowed sympathy for the Congress working in early Tamil films, the cinema was bound to reflect the spirit of the times" (p. 103).

It should also be noted that it was the same time when the nationalist movement, fighting for independence and headed by the Congress party, was gaining ground. The films made during this period drew from the nationalist ideals and addressed issues such as caste discrimination, early marriage, feudalism, evils of dowry etc.,. These films were trend setters that paved the way, in terms of theme, style and technique, for future films.

Although some films criticized the social evils in the society, they reflected at the same time the common values that were celebrated in the culture. Binford (1988) says,

in the process of showing "good things," however, the commercial cinema also conveys values. Within the limits of censorship, masala [mixture of

popular elements] films tease their audience with all sorts of "modern evils," fast cars and loose women and disco dancing, but their weight is overwhelmingly on the side of traditional values and authority - family, religion, the small idealized community; (p. 86)

One can note that Tamil films have not only been used as a vehicle for political awareness and propaganda in Tamil Nadu but have in the process, reflected the values and "lived experience" of the Tamil culture. In spite of its initial political motivation and use, film has always been conscious of the pulse of the culture and has celebrated the dominant meanings of the society. In the following sections I will briefly outline key elements in Indian culture and the values associated with them.

3.6 Introduction to Indian values

Although different societies develop, enact, create and maintain different forms of cultures, yet these societies do contain cultural elements in common. The existence of such universals reflects the fact that there are certain things a society must do if it is to maintain its existence as a society; . . . While there are no universal cultural beliefs and practices in the strict sense of the word 'universal,' but there are numerous widespread practices and ideas which are commonly shared. These are language, sex, marriage, family system, age and sex differentiation, government, religion,

bodies of knowledge, economic system, recreational activities and art.

(Nagpaul, 1980, p. 7)

It is usual to observe cultural differences between countries. India is not only different from other countries but is also culturally diverse from within. In spite of this diversity there is something that holds Indians together, distinguishing them from the rest. David G. Mandelbaum (1970) says, "like other students of the people of India, I was struck by the great diversity among them and yet I could sense the common qualities of society and civilization which they shared" (p. vii). Similar opinion is also expressed by Hans Nagpaul (1980) who says that even though cultures are not monolithic they do share some commonalities that keeps them bound together. In this regard he says, "cultural universals are necessary for existence within a given national society, and include laws, folkways and mores which are related to the religious life, the family life, to schooling, to business activity, and to certain government activity" (1980, pp. 7-8).

The bond that brings about unity in this diversity can be viewed as the common values that are shared by most people in the society. According to Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya (1961),

every nation in its forward march is guided by sets of values which it has developed and these work as its beaconlights in times of strife and turmoil.

If the values are not deep the culture of a nation fails to cope with antagonistic forces and perishes in the long run. (p. Preface)

According to Nagpaul (1980),

every culture operates under some set of values which are the governing ideas of the basis of what members of that culture are usually able to predict about the behaviour of their fellows. Essentially, values are the general and enduring preferences that influence behaviour and give direction to human behaviour; they also serve as ideals or goals of life and constitute a collective evaluation of behaviour in terms of the relative worth that man attributes to or imposes upon various aspects of his life.

(pp. 49-50)

Because values are considered important in any society's existence and survival, they require special attention. Several researchers in the past have studied Indian culture and have observed that Indian people are traditional, and that they value caste, marriage, religion, education and joint family. Within this general orientation among researchers, I am studying popular Tamil films to determine the values they project, and whether those values have changed over the last four decades. Before interpreting the films, I will briefly introduce the value related categories that will be studied.

3.6.1 Caste system in India

It is impossible to discuss Indian society without referring to its pervasive caste system, a hierarchical class structure that is related to specific occupational position or birth.

This social structure is so old that Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador, made note of this system even in 300 B.C. Since then, most scholars who have studied India have

discussed this system that is based on occupational positions (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 3). Elaborating on this concept, Mandelbaum (1970) says that this system "consists of a set of groups whose members together perform certain functions that they do not accomplish as separate groups. The groups are thus interdependent, and they are interdependent in a particular arrangement" (pp. 4-5).

According to Mandelbaum (1970), "'the caste system of India' is best taken to refer to that set of ideas about society that many people of India share and that they use systematically in governing their social relations" (p. 29). He further says,

a caste system, as Berreman discusses the concept, is one that is composed of ranked groups. Membership in a group is only through birth. The groups are exhaustive, exclusive, and discrete; that is, every person is a member of such a group and of only one; he is clearly recognized by others as a member of his separate group. Membership in his group influences most of his roles and activities; there is a high degree of "role summation." No one should try to change his inherited membership and any attempts by individuals to shift themselves to a higher group are strongly disapproved. (1970, p. 663)

Thus, Indian society is built on these caste-based structures. Although these caste-based distinctions are being slowly erased in cities and towns, they still exist in villages. The discrimination between castes are sometimes so deep that people belonging to the higher caste do not marry, eat with, or even touch the lower caste person. Although the government of India is taking all necessary measures to get rid of these distinctions and

bring about equality among people, caste feelings continue to exist and will take time to disappear totally. According to Nagpaul (1980),

the caste system is undergoing a series of changes and the most obvious expression of this new equality is the gradual breakdown of the restrictions against eating, drinking, and working together. It is increasingly becoming clear that with the growth of urbanization and development of industrialization, the traditional tightly structured caste system will gradually break down into a more or less open class-system, and trends seem to be inevitable towards statuses based upon achievement rather than on ascription. (p. 73)

3.6.2 Family: Respect for elders

The basic component of the Indian social system is the family. In the traditional joint or extended family, parents live with their sons and their families. They share the same kitchen and operate from a common pool of monetary resources. Although this kind of family continues to exist in the villages, in cities for the most part it has been replaced by the nuclear family. Even in urban nuclear families, it is common to see the parents living with the eldest son, while the other brothers live separately. The girls in the family, on the other hand, live with their husbands, becoming a part of their family. The family, therefore, is a closely knit unit where each member supports and is supported

by others. No decision in the family is taken without consulting others, particularly the elders in the family. According to Mandelbaum (1970),

the family members are expected to form one solidarity, living in one household as long as possible, supporting each other in the round of their days and in the cycle of their lives. A family may be physically separated, even legally split, yet the brothers may continue to act as a functioning family. This happens, not infrequently, when a brother from a village family moves to a city with his wife and children. He and his dependents return to the village home as often as they can; he contributes to the income of the village family; he rallies to their help and they to his whenever there is emergency need or ceremonial occasion. Before arranging a marriage or taking any decisive measures affecting their careers or fortunes, the members consult with each other, giving due deference to the views of the elders among them. This traditional spirit of the family is frequently upheld in both village and city. (p.45)

Families are also built hierarchically with male members being dominant in the family. "Human males, if only because they are larger and stronger than females, possess a certain, if limited, authority in their families" (Mandelbaum, 1970, p.37). The eldest male in the family is usually the final decision maker although he consults with his wife and other members in the family. He is respected and consulted in all family matters.

The wife of the eldest member has her own form of influence in the family. Because the father is always respectfully feared in the family, the mother performs the mediating function in the family, between the father and son (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 61).

Between mother and son there is everywhere in India a strong, tender, unchanging, dependable bond. The bond is celebrated in sacred writing, romanticized in popular tale, upheld in the actuality of family life. A mother is respected; motherhood is revered . . . She is not the aloof person a father is supposed to be. She is everlastingly loving and caring, certainly in ideal, often in reality. (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 62)

Where the mother is no longer alive, the eldest son's wife takes on the responsibility and has the power in the family although she is expected to be devoted to her husband, and this is "one of the proud values of family life" (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 38).

Thus, elders in the family are always respected by the other members. The respect is shown by standing in the presence of elders, listening to them without interrupting, and not arguing with them. "The ideal of deference to parents is rarely questioned, and in practice it endows the elders with an authority that is not lightly ignored by their children" (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 39).

3.6.3 Marriage

Marriage is a sacrament, ordained and imperative, which every normal man and woman should undergo (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 98).

Although the East understood and valued love, yet it outlawed love. Why?
Because it valued marriage more. (Mace, David & Vera, 1959, p. 125)

In the West you fall in love, then marry. In the East we marry, then fall
in love (Mace, David & Vera, 1959, p. 132).

David and Vera Mace (1959) further observe that "romantic love was outlawed . . . Romance, it was believed, led to sexual license; it encouraged unwise choices of marriage partners; and it undermined the stability of family" (p.127). Because of love's association with lust and sex, it was usually outlawed in India. Since arranged marriage was related to religion and also stabilized society, it was preferred over independent choice propagated by love marriage. According to the Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore (1926),

The way to marriage which is shown by the torchlight of passion has not for its goal the welfare of society, but the satisfaction of desire. In our Shastras, therefore, the Brahma marriage is considered to be the best. According to this, the bride should be given to a man who has not solicited her. Marriage needs must be rescued from the control of the heart, and brought under the province of the intellect; otherwise insoluble problems will keep on arising, for passion reeks not of consequences, nor brooks interference by outside judges. For the purpose of marriage,

spontaneous love is unreliable. (cited in Mace, David and Vera, 1959, p.

131)

Thus, in India arranged marriages are more respected than love marriages. In a country where divorce, widow remarriage and cohabitation is still not commonly recognized or valued among middle and upper middle class people, marriage is considered to be a life ritual to be performed and fulfilled by every one during a certain age. It has both religious and social significance and helps in the functioning of the society. It is one of the rituals where all relatives and friends partake and help in maintaining and establishing new kinship bonds. It is a ceremonial celebration of unity or bond within a culture.

According to Giri Raj Gupta (1974), marriage fulfils four functions.

First, marriage is a religious performance without which the individual is incomplete. . . Second, marriage implies children who will carry the name of the father and vansha [family, dynasty] and become future caste members. . . Third, children are also necessary to assure a happy after-life for the parents. . . The fourth function of marriage is to satisfy the sexual desires of the partners in a socially acceptable manner. (p. 55)

Through marriage a female member is "transferred" from one family to another bringing about a balance in "every aspect of family's status, resources, and social relations" (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 97). An unwed daughter is considered to be both "uncomfortable" and "ritually dangerous" for the other members in a family because it is assumed that the girl has a defect or the family is neglectful of their daughter. It is considered dangerous because "her untethered sexuality may bring social disgrace, perhaps

supernatural retribution, on the whole family . . . " (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 97). The marriage ceremony is, therefore, performed after the consent and approval of elders, by the elders themselves.

"Endogamy" and "exogamy" are two of the explicit structural rules that are followed in marriages. By "endogamy" Mandelbaum means, within a particular caste and by "exogamy" he means that "husband and wife may not be related to each other before marriage in ways they are prohibited, quite as incest is prohibited" (1970, p. 101). These exogamous restrictions differ from state to state.

As Mandelbaum says, in South India, it is common to see marriages between maternal uncles and nieces. It is customary for the elder sister in the family to offer her daughter to her younger brother. The younger brother is obliged to consider his niece before any other woman in the same caste (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 70). Through marriage the bond between a brother and sister is further established.

Another common form of marriage practised in South India is between cross-cousins, that is, children of a brother and sister. A ritual still practised in some districts of South India is performing a special rite before marriage where "mother's brothers of a bride publicly disavow their claims to her if she is not marrying either a mother's brother or his son" (1970, p. 71). The marriage is then performed after several rituals are realized. It is believed that

all marriage plans must reckon with the supernatural forces that affect the course of every critical venture - auspicious and inauspicious days,

favourable and unfavourable omens, the horoscopes of the couple and their astrological congruence. (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 110)

This wedding, according to Mandelbaum, "not only confirms a particular couple's union and the alliance of families, it also affirms the centrality of marital union in the universe of man and God" (1970, p. 115). A wedding is then,

a culmination and a beginning, a demonstration and a test, a stage and a theatre, an affirmation and a consolidation. It is the climax of the negotiations and the formal beginning of the new relationship. It is the grand occasion demonstrating the family's social worth through the participation of kin, jati [caste] fellows, village neighbours, and prestigious friends. (Mandelbaum, 1970, pp. 116-117)

According to Mandelbaum (1970), wedding rituals "affirm a number of values" (p. 117). It affirms the importance of marriage, arranged marriage, and respect for elders and religion. Marriage is not only seen as a mere confirmation of bond between a male and a female but is a bond that unites families, brings about an accordance with God and universe and reaffirms the importance of elders in the family and society.

3.6.4 Religion

A family is a unit before the gods. In almost every house there is a special place for the holy things that help guard all in the household. That place may be no more than a lithograph tacked to a wall or it may be an

elaborate shrine in a separate room; in either case all in the family come under its protection. (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 42)

Indians by culture are religious. As mentioned by Mandelbaum, it is very common to see photographs or statues of Gods in every house, and several temples in every city or village. According to Nagpaul (1980), "Whether it is a metropolis, a city, town or village, Houses of God continue to be powerful centres which control and mould the over-all socio-cultural life, especially the religious life of the vast majority of population" (p.27). People go to the temple every day or at least once every week to perform their usual rituals for their and their family's welfare. For them, religion is not just a belief but is part of every day life. All actions performed in their life is somehow related to religion. According to Mandelbaum (1970), "in former centuries no aspect of life was set apart from religion . . . All social relations were inevitably and legitimately suffused with religious ideas and acts" (1970, p. 523). According to Nagpaul (1980),

it is true that Indian culture is composite, but Hinduism is clearly the most dominant element within that culture . . . [Hinduism] has been able to absorb and assimilate traits of different cultures with whom it came in contact, with the result that it embraces a wide variety of beliefs, loosely held together by an attitude of mutual tolerance and by the unique Hindu conviction that all approaches to God are equally valid (1980, p. 16).

People in India dedicate everything they do to God. When a person in the family falls sick, the first thing they do is call out God's name and start praying to Him or Her before

they would even call the doctor. Most diseases are considered to be a result of God's curse. So, when a person falls sick, his or her kin pray to a particular God who is in charge of the disease to forgive the sick person and save the person's life. They also pray that if the person survives they will either tonsure their head or visit a temple. Similarly, people also promise to tonsure their head, break coconuts or donate money or gold to a particular God if they succeed in whatever they are engaged in. Thus, religious beliefs are predominant and pervasive in India.

Religion continues to play a vital role in Indian culture. Indeed there are few societies whose cultural history is a history of religious and philosophical tradition like that of Indian society. Religion is viewed as a "total way of life incorporating the customs, beliefs, and practices as well as the institutions of people. Actually, it embraces a bewildering variety of forms, practices, institutions and cults within itself and appears not as a single faith, but a fellowship of faiths, or as a congress of religions.

(Nagpaul, 1980, p. 68)

Based on their caste, people perform different rituals to different Gods. Those belonging to a lower caste pray to a particular deity who is considered to be inferior to the God that is prayed by a higher caste Hindu. But what is common among them is, they have firm faith and belief, dedicate their thoughts, actions and deeds to God.

To sum up, "religion for the Hindu is an experience and attitude of mind, and, therefore, it conditions the total complex which embodies the form and content of culture" (Nagpaul, 1980, p. 35). According to Nagpaul (1980),

religion still plays a considerable role in the lives of people; new teaching and new interpretations of traditional elements of religion have not replaced the old ones entirely, but they have been merely added; beliefs in the doctrines of karma, dharma and reincarnation still permeate and undergird everyday life; the sacred books still retain a direct hold on millions of people and provide them with guidelines for living, and religious myths and rituals continue to dominate. Although some elements of the traditional religion are no longer functional, the most general function of religion has been the provision of a certain degree of peace of mind, and security against mental tensions. True, the traditional social structure is in the process of transformation, but many of the old values and attitudes emanating from it still prevail on a wider scale today . . .

(p.52)

3.6.5 Education

Indians believe in the four stages of life. These are, "Brahmacharya or the life of celibacy, which was mainly meant for cultivating knowledge under strict discipline; Garhasthya or the life of a householder; Vanaprashtha, the life of retirement; and Yati, the life of renunciation" (Chattopadhyaya, 1961, p. 13).

In the very early days, education was seen as a part of the "brahmacharya" stage, when students used to spend their time with their teacher in his house. Boys belonging to the

upper class were imparted an education which included "religious studies, comprised various subjects of material interest like archery, principles of warfare, music, astronomy, mathematics etc" (Chattopadhyaya, 1961, p. 13). Education has now become democratized, but is still considered important in society. People with education are more respected than others.

Since education and knowledge are also associated with religion, with Goddess Saraswati, it is not only respected but also revered. Whenever a person accidentally drops a book on the floor or stamps it with his foot, it is common to see the person kiss the book, a ritual that signifies a request for forgiveness.

One of the sanskrit sayings that I remember learning at a very early age is the importance of mother followed by father and then teacher and finally God in one's life. According to the Indian culture, teacher and education play a very important role in the physical and moral development of a person.

Even though education is valued in the present society, there is still discrimination regarding the level of education between a male and a female. Since in marriages, male members are expected to be more educated than the female, male education is more valued in the society.

As Mandelbaum (1970) says, if a girl

has gone through secondary school, it may be hard to find a groom for her whose family will be willing to take in an educated girl. They may fear that she will not make a proper, dutiful wife because of her schooling. If there are a good many educated men in her jati, education can be an asset

to a marriageable girl, but if there are few she may have been educated beyond her marriage bracket. (p. 108)

Education has also become a symbol of status in society. To be respected and to rise up in the social status, education plays a very important and significant role. According to Mandelbaum (1970),

With government grants and aids becoming increasingly significant, those who aspire to respectable status usually find that they must have at least one educated member in their family or alliance in order to hold their own. (pp.246-47)

One can therefore summarize the importance of education in the present Indian society by saying that "modern education has become a prime source of both prestigious symbols and substantive power, so most aspiring groups put heavy stress on the education of their children" (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 519).

3.7 Summary

Values are shared by people living together, and these guide people in their everyday life and action. Every culture has its own set of values that are shared by people, helping them to interact and understand each other. It is also these values that help in maintaining societies over a period of time.

The values shared by people are also reflected in the cultural artifacts made and seen by people living in the same culture. Thus, cultural artifacts like art, literature and film

share the values shared by people. By studying these artifacts it should be possible to study a culture's shared values.

In this study, I will, therefore, try to interpret some of the most popular films made between 1950 and 1990 to find and describe the values they portray and also find out if there has been any notable change in these values.

CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION OF POPULAR FILMS

4.1 Introduction

In our everyday social lives, we are constantly engaged in the process of interpretation and interaction with each other. This is possible because of our inherent ability to communicate and because of the experience and meanings we share with others. This commonality in meanings also helps in communalizing people, who maintain society over time by performing similar ritualistic actions.

These common meanings are not only revealed in people's actions but are also symbolically represented in cultural artifacts. Since, as has been demonstrated in chapter 3, cultural artifacts such as films reflect the shared values and meanings of a culture, it is possible to study them and to interpret the common meanings embedded in them.

Indian films are seen by Indian people living in India and abroad as a primary source of entertainment. In addition, however, I learned from my personal discussions with friends from China that film posters in these areas are also used to seeing and admiring Indian films. I was surprised to hear Chinese students hum the tunes of songs from popular Indian films, and to hear them tell me that many Chinese people are familiar with these songs and films.

Popular Indian films are usually two and a half to three hours long, with song sequences in which actors and actresses are shown emoting or dancing in very picturesque settings. The songs are sung by singers who are very popular and the music is scored by well-known music directors who have their own star value. These films are most often melodramatic narratives with complex story lines involving coincidence, misunderstanding and accidents. The characters are simple delineations, dichotomized into either good or bad. Another notable aspect of Indian film narrative is the comedy track which runs parallel to the main story. The comic actors' role is usually forcefully intertwined with the main characters and they provide comic relief. This part of the narrative, comic element, will not be analyzed by me as part of my interpretation because they are usually irrelevant to the main story line. Thus, Indian films, although technically similar to the Western films, are quite different in terms of narrative structure and characterization.

In this chapter, I will examine eight popular Tamil films made between 1950 and 1990. This period will be divided into four decades and two of the five most popular films in each decade will be examined to find the values they portray and support. Through the examination of films, I intend to find out if there has been any notable changes in the value expressive categories.

Although it is possible to study many values, I will limit myself to examining the five major theme areas outlined in the previous chapter. These categories include: 1. caste issues, 2. family: respect for elders, 3. marriage, 4. religion and 5. education.

These categories will be individually explored within the parameters of the cultural approach to communication advocated by James Carey.

FILM 1 1952 (1950-59)

PARASAKTHI (Powerful Goddess Sakthi)

4.2.1 Story

This film is about three brothers who are living in Burma during the Second World War. They are rich, and the eldest brother is a barrister. They have a sister named Kalyani who lives with their father in Madurai, in India. One day, they receive a letter from their father about their sister's coming marriage and they plan to go back to India. But when they try to book a ticket, the travel agent tells them that because of the war he will be able to issue only one ticket for their family. The eldest brother, Chandrasekar, therefore decides to send his youngest brother Gunasekar for their sister's wedding.

Gunasekar leaves to India by ship and the other brothers, Chandrasekar's wife and their servant later on, fearing the war, also decide to walk back to India. Kalyani's marriage takes place while Gunasekar is still on the ship and the other brothers are walking towards India. By the time they reach Madurai, Kalyani is already married, and delivers a baby boy. On the day of her delivery, her husband dies in an accident when he goes to buy medicine. Seeing the accident, Kalyani's father dies of shock.

Earlier, Kalyani's father had borrowed and spent a lot of money for Kalyani's marriage in the hope of returning it when his sons come home. Because Kalyani's father and husband die, and her brothers don't return, she has to sell the house and her jewellery to pay off the debts. In order to make a living, she cooks and sells food to poor people.

Meanwhile, Gunasekar, the youngest brother safely reaches Madras. He takes a cab and goes to a bank to cash a cheque. While he counts his money, a woman sees him and follows him to his hotel without his knowledge. After settling down in his room, Gunasekar goes to book a ticket to Madurai for the evening. Because there is no ticket available for the same day, he books it for the next day. When he goes back to his room he sees a woman on his bed. It is the same woman who had seen him cashing his cheque and had followed him. Because Gunasekar does not know her, he thinks he has entered the wrong room and tells her he is sorry. The woman asks for his room number and says that she is sorry because she had mistakenly entered his room. While she tries to start a conversation with him he says that he is sorry to leave but has to go see a film. Although he does not invite her to the film, the woman says that she does not like films and that she knows a place where they could see a traditional dance. At first Gunasekar refuses, but when she says that she is like his sister, he goes out with her. During the dance, her friends mix some medicine in his drink that makes him unconscious. While he is unconscious, she and her friends steal Gunasekar's money and other valuables. Because he loses everything and does not know what to do in the strange city, he wanders around begging. He even acts like a mad man to steal food from people.

Finally, when he does reach Madurai he is shocked to know about his sister's misfortunes from her neighbour. When he reaches her small hut, he hears her singing to her baby that their misfortunes will end as soon as her rich brothers come home. Because Gunasekar does not want to let his sister know about his condition, he does not reveal his identity to her, but disguises himself as a mad man. He calls Kalyani his sister and she laughs and calls him her mad brother. Gunasekar lives on the street in front of her house. One day, a man tries to rape Kalyani and Gunasekar saves her. The next morning Gunasekar overhears men talking about Kalyani's illicit relationship with him. He gets angry and beats the man and shouts that Kalyani is his sister. When he goes to her house to reveal the truth, he finds that she had vacated her hut.

Kalyani leaves to another city and starts begging. A rich merchant employs her as his domestic servant. One night, in his wife's absence, he tries to rape her. Kalyani escapes and leaves the house to beg again. One day, not knowing it is her brother Chandrasekar's house, she begs for food. The brother, who is a rich magistrate in the city, not recognizing her as his sister, throws her out. Disappointed, she goes to a temple to pray to Goddess Parasakthi. While she is praying, the priest tries to rape her. She escapes when the priest's assistant rings the bell in the temple. Kalyani therefore decides to commit suicide and therefore throws her baby into the river and before she jumps she is saved and is taken to a court for killing her baby and for attempting to commit suicide.

Her eldest brother, who is a magistrate presides over her case. He thinks she is a murderess till he comes to know that she is his sister. Knowing this, he is shocked and faints in the court. The trial continues headed by another magistrate. The youngest

brother Gunasekar, meanwhile, coming to know about the priest's attempt to rape his sister, attacks him, and in the process ends up in the same court. He fights for his sister instead of defending himself. In the process, Kalyani also comes to know that Gunasekar is her real brother.

During Kalyani's trial, Gunasekar's woman friend, one he had met when he was disguised as a mad man, comes with Kalyani's child. According to her, she had gone boating and had saved the child. Thus, both Gunasekar and Kalyani are released and both go to meet their eldest brother.

Meanwhile, the second brother Gnanasekar, who was assumed dead, also reaches the same city. Because he is not accepted in the refugee camp, he organizes a gathering of refugees who have no place to live. In the process of collecting donation for the refugee group, he comes to his eldest brother's house for donation. The servant, recognizing him, takes him into the house. All the brothers and the sister are happy to see each other. At this moment, the second brother says that he has to leave because he does not belong to the rich people but with the poor refugees who are fighting for their rights. Hearing him, the other brothers also decide to join him. Gunasekar's girlfriend corrects them by saying that they should not become beggars but beggars should become like them. So, they decide to start a shelter for the poor.

4.2.2 Caste issues

In this film, caste does not seem to be a big issue. From the way the leading characters behave and live it can be assumed that they all belong to the upper caste. By

upper caste I mean, classes that are not categorized as a scheduled caste or a scheduled tribe. The characters' misfortunes and sufferings are more because of their sudden poverty than because of their caste. Except in two scenes where caste is mentioned in passing, there is no serious discussion of caste or discrimination in the whole film.

All the major characters belong to one single family. The other characters' caste is never mentioned. In one song Gunasekar mentions that there are a lot of caste fights in the society. Similarly, in another scene when the refugees are interviewed, the interviewer asks one of the refugees his caste and he replies that "same as my father." He smiles and it is clear that he belongs to a lower caste, although he does not mention his caste.

Thus in this film, caste is not shown as a major issue. Since this film is more concerned with the rich and poor and how the rich exploit and oppress the poor, it deals little with specific caste issues. For example, the merchant and the priest whom Kalyani comes into contact with are from the higher class in the society. Seeing that she is poor, and has no one to go to, they try to take advantage of her poverty. Although her poverty makes her look like a low caste person, her fair complexion and features associate her with the higher castes. The film is more about monetary differences than caste in society.

4.2.3 Family: Respect for elders

This film is about a family that had separated in the early years who finally come together. The father, who is the oldest in the family, lives with his teenaged daughter

Kalyani in Madurai, while the three brothers, including the eldest brother's wife live in Burma. They had gone to Burma for economic reasons. Among the three brothers, the eldest brother who appears to be in his mid thirties, is a magistrate and is the decision maker who is loved and respected by the other brothers. The brothers live together and theirs is a joint family. The eldest brother is married and continues to live with them. The younger brothers show respect for their eldest brother and his wife. They listen to him and never argue with any of his decisions.

When the brothers come to know that only one in the family is allowed to go to India, it is the eldest brother who makes the decision to send his youngest brother. Although the second brother is not pleased with the decision, which he shows in his expression, he does not question or argue about it. It is also the eldest brother who makes the decision to walk back to India instead of staying in Burma. No one in the family ever question his decisions.

The father is the decision maker in Kalyani's life. He arranges for his daughter's marriage and when the daughter requests him to postpone her wedding till her brothers come home, the father says "no" and she does not argue. Similarly, Kalyani while going out with her husband asks her father for permission.

It is also a custom to garland the dead person's picture in the house. In one of the scenes, Chandrasekar's wife is seen garlanding her father's picture. Seeing this, Chandrasekar becomes emotional and says to his wife that her father was alive for their marriage and it would have been nice if he was still alive to celebrate his sister's marriage also.

Kalyani's husband is shown not to have any family of his own. Maybe, that is the reason why he stays in his wife's house after marriage instead of living in his parent's house with his wife, which is the norm in Tamil culture.

This film, therefore, shows joint family as the norm and the eldest male member in the family is shown as the final decision maker. No one in the family questions his authority and he is loved and respected by everyone in the family.

4.2.4 Marriage

In this film there is no conflict in terms of marriage. The eldest brother is already married and it seems it was an arranged marriage. There is no mention of love in his marriage. The wife is shown as a traditional, devoted wife who serves her husband and her brother-in-laws. She respects her husband and does not question his authority.

Kalyani's marriage is celebrated in the midst of elders and it also seems to be arranged by the elders. In the first scene, she is shown to attend a function with her father and her fiancée. Although they are together, the father sits in between them and they do not engage in any personal conversation. She does not even look at him in his eyes. Only after marriage she is shown to sing and dance with him.

After her husband's untimely death, she does not date any other person or even discuss about remarriage. She even tries to maintain her chastity and abstains from sex. It is considered normal for a woman not to remarry and to spend the rest of her life bringing up her children. It is against the custom for a good widow to engage in sex even after

her husband's death. Kalyani, as a widow, wears plain sarees without any decoration and also does not wear any jewels. She is also shown not wearing the red mark on her forehead which is usually removed after a woman becomes a widow. The red mark on the forehead is only worn by unmarried and married woman as a mark of womanhood and beauty. This kind of custom which is prevalent in the culture is also represented in this film.

In Tamil culture, it is normal for a niece to marry her uncle or cross cousins to marry each other. In this film, Gunasekar asks his sister whether she would marry her boy child to the daughter he intends to have. Later on in the film, the sister also asks her brother to become a father of a girl child so that her son can marry her.

Gunasekar meets a woman. Because the woman has no father or brother living with her, which is not usual, she is shown as being openly interested in Gunasekar. If she had parents living with her, she might not have the courage to feel free with him. She even allows him to stay in her house in a separate room when he has no place to stay. She shows her love for him but he does not respond to her. She even dreams of singing a song with him. But Gunasekar, who is more concerned about his sister's welfare, leaves the woman's house in the middle of the night. In the final scene, Gunasekar meets his woman friend again. Now, seeing his family happy and settled, he acknowledges her love. His brother and sister-in-law, seeing that they are interested in each other, also accept her in the family.

Thus, in this film, arranged marriage with parents' approval is shown as the norm compared to love marriage.

4.2.5 Religion

The film maker valiantly criticizes priests and religious people who commit crimes behind the veil of religion. None of the brothers in the film are shown as religious. It is only Kalyani, as a virtuous woman, who is shown as religious.

In the very first scene when the camera pans on a wide shot of the city, the tower of a temple is seen in the background. This tower represents the omnipresence of religious places of worship in India. It is impossible to see a city that does not have a temple.

In one scene when Gunasekar wanders around the city having lost all his money and belongings, he engages himself in a soliloquy. He calls out Goddess Parasakthi's name and asks her to look at his condition and situation. He says, "your son has no food to eat, no clothes to wear, and no place to sleep". This comment of his conveys several meanings. It could be interpreted as a sarcastic comment on religious beliefs, and also as a man lamenting on his misfortunes. Although the latter would be the preferred meaning interpreted by the audience, the former cannot be ignored because the film maker is known to question the blind religious faith of people.

Compared to the brothers, sister Kalyani is shown to be more religious. After facing several misfortunes, she is employed by a merchant as a domestic servant. This merchant, who appears to be religious, who performs and wears religious things like the white religious ash on his body, is actually a corrupt man who hides merchandise and sells them at a high rate when there is a demand. The merchant is also shown as performing religious rituals in temples. But he does not practise religious teachings in

his real life. While returning from the temple he beats the man who asks for alms and even attempts to rape innocent Kalyani in his wife's absence.

Another religious character who is shown as a hypocrite is the temple priest whom Kalyani meets in the temple. As a good woman, possessing the best qualities inscribed by the culture, goes to a temple to pray to Goddess Parasakthi. The priest seeing her, asks her to go into the shrine to pray. While she is engaged in her prayers, he tries to rape her. He says that since she has no one, he will take care of her. As a good woman, she refuses to sell her body for physical comforts. Her prayer to Parasakthi is heard when the man guarding the temple hears her cries and rings the bell to save her. It is to be noted that only after Kalyani goes to the temple and pleads to the Goddess that she finally meets her brothers and her misfortunes come to an end.

Thus, in this film, the film maker attempts to criticize people who commit crimes hiding behind religion and also critically examines people's blind belief in religion. He also demystifies the general belief that everyone who engages in religious rituals are good natured people. Because Kalyani's misfortunes end after her visit to the temple, it can be interpreted that the film maker is not critical of religion by itself but people who misuse it. It should also be noted that it is woman who are more religious than men. While Gunasekar questions many of the religious beliefs, his sister Kalyani is religious and is also saved from her misfortunes because of her belief.

4.2.6 Education

Among the major characters in the film, it is the eldest brother Chandrasekar who is a magistrate and the most educated person in the family. Because of his education and position, he is shown as a rich and respected man in the society.

From the dress the other brothers wear and the way they talk and act it can be assumed that the other brothers should also be educated. Among the brothers, the youngest is a socially conscious poet. His woman friend, who is shown as worldly wise, does not seem to have had much education. In spite of this, she is appreciated by Gunasekar for her worldly knowledge. When he asks her where she gained the knowledge, she says from her brother. This reference to "brother" refers to her own brother and also to the script writer - politician, who used to be affectionately called as "anna", meaning brother. The sister Kalyani is probably uneducated because after losing her material wealth she starts a way side food shop and later starts begging.

Thus, in this film, men seem to be more educated than woman, and the educated men are rich and respected compared to the less educated. In spite of the difference in education, the less educated are shown as more worldly wise compared to the educated represented by Chandrasekar. Education, is therefore shown as a necessary qualification for comfortable life.

4.3 FILM 2 1953 (1950-59)

DEVADAS (Hero's name - meaning servant of God)

4.3.1 Story

Devadas is a love story of Devadas who is born in a rich family in a village. As a young boy aged between seven to ten years, he grows up in the company of Parvati, a poor girl of his own age who is from a lower caste. He is depicted as a spoiled bad boy who smokes, beats Parvati and takes all available opportunity to avoid attending school. Although he likes Parvati and plays with her, he beats her at the slightest provocation because of his short tempered nature.

Because he does not behave at home and at school and refuses to study, his father sends him to the city for education. In the city he develops friendship with Bagvan, who is shown as a bad character. Although Devadas is spatially separated from Parvati, he continues to love her. After completing his education, he returns home as an adult. On his return, Devadas visits Parvati at her home and both are excited to see each other.

Parvati lives with her father, mother, and grandmother in the same village where Devadas lived before going to the city. Parvati's grandmother, knowing that Devadas and Parvati are interested in each other, goes to Devadas' house to meet his mother. She tells Devadas's mother about Devadas and Parvati's love for each other and requests her to arrange for a marriage between the two. Devadas' mother does not give a reply immediately, but tells her husband who asks Parvati's father to come and see him. When

Parvati's father goes to see Devadas' father, he is insulted as a lower caste man accused of intentionally trying to make use of the opportunity to associate with the rich and the higher caste people. He is also accused of planning and propagating the love between Parvati and Devadas.

Parvati's father, after being insulted, returns home to promise his family that he will not come home again till he finds a better husband for Parvati. Hearing this, Parvati goes to meet Devadas in the middle of the night to explain to him about her father's plans. Devadas talks to his father about his love for Parvati. His father says that he cannot accept a bride who belongs to a caste that sells women and that he would rather commit suicide than see his son married to Parvati. Devadas, not knowing what to do, goes away to the city.

Meanwhile, Parvati's father finds a groom for his daughter. The groom who is in his forties, is old enough to be Parvati's father, has many children including a son who is Parvati's age. Although Parvati's mother and grandmother refuse to agree to the marriage, Parvati agrees to marry the old man because she wants to honour her father's promise made to the groom. Another reason for Parvati to accept marrying her father's choice is because she received a letter from Devadas who asks her to forget him because his father is not interested in the marriage and that he cannot disrespect his father.

In the mean time, Devadas changes his mind and comes to Parvati's house to make his proposal. Although Parvati loves Devadas, she insults him by saying that she has nothing but fear for him and that he is not as good as her fiancée who is mature, rich and a kind

man. She offends Devadas because she had given her promise to her father and did not want to dishonour it.

Parvati gets married to the rich old man, takes care of her husband's children and brings about peace and love within their family. Meanwhile, Devadas goes back to the city and with his association with Bagvan, indulges in drinking and smoking. He is also introduced to a courtesan named Chandramukhi. When his father comes to know about Devadas' activities, he is shocked and dies regretting his earlier mistake of not letting Devadas marry Parvati. Devadas, having lost Parvati and his father, spends his time drinking, trying to kill himself for his failure in love.

When Parvati comes to know about Devadas' indulgences, she meets him and requests him to stop drinking. He says that if she can stop thinking about him, he will stop drinking. Parvati, not knowing the answer, leaves, but requests Devadas to come and visit her home. He promises to come see her before his death.

Days go by and Devadas' health deteriorates. He meets Chandramukhi and develops a kind of friendship with her. Chandramukhi falls in love with Devadas but Devadas does not reciprocate her love for a long time but promises to marry her in his next life. Influenced by Devadas, Chandramukhi gives up her profession of dancing and prostitution to lead a simple life. Although she tries to stop him from drinking, he refuses. One day, when he vomits blood and Chandramukhi calls for a doctor, Devadas overhears the doctor saying to Chandramukhi that his condition is critical and that he is going to die. Devadas therefore decides to meet Parvati and keep his promise of meeting her before his death.

As he travels to meet Parvati, his condition becomes worse. Finally when he reaches her house, he can hardly speak. As he lies dying in front of Parvati's home, Parvati's husband and police try to identify him.

Parvati, who had a bad dream the previous night about Devadas' death, prays to God. As soon as she overhears people talking about a man called Devadas dead in front of her home, she runs to meet him, but people close the door while Devadas' body is carried away. Parvati falls down.

4.3.2 Caste issues

Caste difference between the hero and heroine can be seen as the primary cause for the conflict within the film that ultimately results in the death of the hero. The hero, Devadas, is one of the two sons of the feudal landlord. He is rich and belongs to the higher caste, at least higher than the caste Parvati belongs to.

Although Parvati and Devadas belong to two different castes, usually not allowed to interact with each other, they spend their childhood days playing, eating and going to school together. Their close companionship can be explained in terms of attending the same school and living in the same village. They are also not shown playing with any other children but with each other. Parvati brings food for Devadas and they eat together. Their parents also do not object to their friendship, not until the issue of marriage comes up. When Devadas returns home to his village after his education in the city, he goes to meet Parvati. She gives him some sweets made for God. In the Hindu religious ritual,

people prepare special food and sweets for God, offer it to God before eating it themselves. Devadas eats it and does not show any sign of discrimination. However, his father objects to his marrying Parvati because she belongs to a lower caste. According to Devadas' father, Parvati belongs to a caste which sells women or are prostitutes. Devadas' father even goes to the extent of handing his pistol to his son asking him to shoot him dead instead of putting him to shame in the society. Because Devadas respects his father and does not want to shame him, he refuses to marry Parvati.

However, an old, rich widower probably belonging to Devadas' caste agrees to marry Parvati although he must have known that she belongs to a lower caste. Thus, when a widower has to find a wife in his old age, he does not worry about caste differences.

There is no specific mention of the caste of Bagvan and Chandramukhi, who are city friends of Devadas, although it can be assumed from Chandramukhi's profession of being a courtesan that she must belong to a low caste who were professional prostitutes. Even though Devadas knows about her low life, he does not mind associating with her, in spite of his initial resistance. He even promises to marry her in his next birth. Indians following the Hindu religion believe in rebirth. According to them, only the body dies, the spirit is replaced in another new body. Thus, Devadas believes in rebirth.

In the final scene when Devadas returns to his village, he travels by train. He sleeps on the bench while the servant, who is like a father to him, older by age, sleeps on the floor. Thus, the distinction between people based on their caste is made clear and distinct in the film.

The interest of the lower class people to rise up the caste and social ladder can be seen from the interest shown by Parvati's family, particularly her father to first get her daughter married to Devadas. When this does not take place, he looks for another man who is richer and belongs to a higher caste. When he does find one, he does not mind marrying his young daughter to this man although he is a widower, old and has children who are his daughter's age.

Thus, one can observe from this film that although caste does not restrict people from studying, playing, eating together, it does restrict marriage. While people belonging to the lower caste desire to marry a higher caste person, the higher caste people show reluctance to marry a lower caste person and consider it a social shame. Devadas' father, prefers death to allowing his son to marry a lower caste woman and thereby bring shame to the family.

Another notable point is that while Devadas' father is intensely concerned about caste, Devadas, who belongs to a different generation and who is educated, does not mind marrying or associating with a lower caste person, including Parvati, Chandramukhi and Bagvan.

4.3.3 Family: Respect for elders

In this film, there are three families. The hero Devadas' family, consisting of his father, mother, brother, his brother's wife and Devadas himself. The heroine Parvati's family includes Parvati, her father, mother, and her grandmother who is her father's

mother. Parvati is married to an old man and this family consists of her husband, his children from his earlier marriage, and his son's wife. Because his wife died and he had to find someone to look after his children he decides to marry Parvati. The other characters in the film, Bagvan and Chandramukhi, are shown not to have any family.

As can be seen, Devadas' family, Parvati's family and her husband's are all joint families. If Devadas would have married, he would have also lived with his parents, his brother and his wife. It is usual that after the father's death the eldest brother becomes the head of the family. The brother, on his wife's insistence, requests Devadas for a partition in the ancestral property after their father's death. Another reason for such a request is because Devadas is wayward and is shown squandering away his money on alcohol.

In Parvati's childhood home, her grandmother lives with her son, that is, Parvati's father. Because there is no mention of any other person in the family, it can be assumed that they also practised joint family.

The family that Parvati becomes a part is also a joint family. Parvati's stepdaughter is married, so lives with her husband's family, while her stepson's wife lives with her parents because of her misunderstanding with her husband. This kind of separation is usually considered a shame for both families in the society. So, on the request of her husband, Parvati attempts to bring her daughter-in-law home and she succeeds.

Respect for elders is considered more important than even one's own personal happiness. Devadas respects his father. As a boy when he disobeys, his father beats him with a stick. When Devadas tells his father about his desire to marry Parvati, his father

refuses. Devadas, instead of running away with Parvati or disobeying his father, refrains from marrying Parvati or any one else. In order to forget his conflict, he starts drinking alcohol and becomes an addict. There are no scenes where he accuses his father for his condition or fights with him. Devadas accepts his father's decision without much argument.

Like Devadas, Parvati also respects her father. When her father is insulted by Devadas' father, and her father chooses an old man to be her husband, Parvati agrees to marry him in order to honour her father who had given his promise to the groom. Here, it should be noted that Parvati's mother and grandmother oppose the marriage, but the father is the final decision maker. Although the grandmother is shown to have some control over her son, and is shown as being respected by her son and daughter-in-law, she has no authority when it comes to making the final decision within the family. It is the oldest male who has the power in the family.

When Parvati is married and becomes a member of another family, the family members show some initial resistance, but finally accept her as part of their family. On the request of Parvati, her stepson who is her age, even goes to the extent of bringing back his wife he dislikes.

Parvati is never shown sitting in front of her husband or refusing to obey his commands. Once when her husband asks her to wear the gold jewels of his late wife for his pleasure, she does it without any question. Similarly, other wives in the film also show respect to their husband.

Thus, it can be seen that this film upholds the traditional joint family system and does not question the weaknesses in this system. All the families within the film are joint families and the elders in the family, particularly the male members, are respected. The children in the film listen to their elders and obey them without questioning their correctness, even to the extent of sacrificing their personal interest and happiness. As it can be seen from the narrative content, the eldest male member in the family is the ultimate decision maker and the women in the family fulfil the needs of their husband rather than show any individuality.

4.3.4 Marriage

As a love story, this film can be interpreted at least two levels with respect to love and arranged marriage. Devadas and Parvati are childhood playmates who spend most of their time together. Even though Devadas ends up striking Parvati, she always comes back to him. Once, when she is struck by Devadas she goes home crying and her grandmother takes her to Devadas' house to complain. When Devadas' father asks Parvati as to who struck her, she looks at Devadas, but when he shows signs of mercy, she points at the school teacher. The school teacher is admonished instead of Devadas.

When Devadas returns home as a grown up man after completing his education he goes to meet Parvati, who is shown praying to God. On seeing Devadas, she is excited. She offers him some sacred food prepared for God. As Devadas receives it he drops it. This scene foreshadows the fact that they will not get married. Similarly, in a later scene

when Devadas tries to wear a necklace around the neck of Parvati he drops it. In the Hindu tradition, men tie the holy yellow thread around their wife's neck during marriage to signify matrimonial bonding. This thread should not be tied by any one else and should be worn by the woman as long as she is married. As soon as the husband dies, there is a ritual where this sacred yellow thread is removed from the woman. Therefore, this ritual act of tying a thread is symbolically performed by Devadas in the form of giving her the gold necklace. Devadas drops the necklace while tying and this again symbolizes ill omen, which denotes the probable interruptions in their marriage.

As mentioned earlier, this film could be interpreted in at least two different ways. In the first interpretation, it could be said that if Devadas and Parvati had not fallen in love they could have been married happily according to custom, and with the parents' approval. Because they fell in love, they had to face all the difficult situations and the hero had to die.

Secondly, the preferred interpretation of this film is that it upholds love marriage and criticizes arranged marriages. In this film, if Devadas' father had accepted his son's love for Parvati, they would have got married and lived a happy life. Because Devadas' father was stubborn and failed to recognize the importance of love over caste differences, he had to die a sad man, also responsible for his son's later death. In the same way, Parvati's father arranges Parvati's marriage to an old man. Although Parvati is shown as a content woman in her husband's house, she hides her love for Devadas and sacrifices her youth and sexual life by marrying the old man. Similarly, Devadas also abstains from sex and even refuses to touch Parvati or the courtesan Chandramukhi.

As it can be seen from the film, marriage is considered very important in every family, to be arranged by the elders, particularly the parents, when their children attain a certain age. In Parvati's family, her grandmother takes the initiative, followed by her father. Although in the case of Devadas no one takes the initiative, it is the father who makes the decision in his son's marriage.

This film does show the conflict between arranged marriage and love marriage and depicts the ignorance of parents in making the choice for their children. It is not that they do not acknowledge love, since in fact Parvati's parents do, but their personal ego and class consciousness comes in the way. The children are shown to be consulted to some extent, but it is the fathers who make the final choice. The film maker seems to create sympathy for the hero and heroine, and makes the audience wish that the hero and heroine would have eloped instead of listening to their parents and suffering. Although marriages arranged by the parents are shown as the norm, the film maker questions such a custom.

4.3.5 Religion

In the Indian culture, religion is given much importance. People, particularly women, are very religious. In this film, the hero does not pray or go to the temple. It is Parvati who lights the lamp before the shrine in her house.

When Parvati is shown as a grown woman for the first time, she is shown praying. On meeting Devadas she offers the food placed before God to him. In the film, Parvati is

shown as a traditional good woman. She is well mannered, respects and obeys her parents and her husband. As a mark of goodness in nature and character, she is also shown as a religious woman.

Later in the film, after she is married to her husband, she is shown lighting the lamps in front of the God. This religious nature of lighting the lamp also signifies the life and light she brings into her new family. Her husband appreciates and respects her for that. He even requests her to light the family like she had lighted the prayer room.

In the final scene, Parvati is shown to wake up from a bad dream. She has a dream where she sees Devadas vomiting blood. She wakes up agitated. Her husband, who sleeps in a separate bed in another room, hearing the noise asks her what is wrong. She says she had a bad dream and does not explain. As she gets up, the necklace given by Devadas drops from her neck, symbolically representing her possible widowhood. Instead of going back to sleep, she lights the lamp before the God and starts praying. As she prays, the lamp flickers, signifying Devadas' struggle with life. She is shown praying till morning. The lamp goes out at the same time Devadas dies. Seeing this, Parvati is shocked. She, along with the audience, recognize that this symbolically represents death.

Thus, in this film, Parvati as the only perfectly good woman is also shown as a religious person. Although nothing good happens to her, she continues to be religious. Her religious nature gives her the inner strength and courage to face the difficulties she faces through her life. Parvati's character can be contrasted with Devadas' character. Devadas, although his name means servant of God, is not religious. Other characters in the film who are not perfect in their character are also not religious although there is a

picture of a Goddess even in the courtesan Chandramukhi's house. In the later part of the film when Chandramukhi gives up her profession as a dancer and prostitute, she is also shown lighting a lamp before the God in her house. Religiosity is therefore associated with a person's character.

4.3.6 Education

In this film, schooling and education are shown to be essential for men and not for women. In the first scene Devadas and Parvati are shown attending school. It is Parvati who is interested in school and education and not Devadas, who runs away from his classes. Because of his mischievous nature he is sent to the city for higher education whereas Parvati is stopped from attending school. The grandmother, who represents wisdom and experience, says that women don't need education. Woman, according to her, needs education only to read scriptures and write letters. Since Parvati, according to her, was not going to be a magistrate or a minister, education was not necessary for her.

However, education is considered important for a man. This is one of the reasons why Devadas is sent to the city for higher education. Even though he is very rich and does not require education for finding a job, his father thinks it is important for a man. Devadas, who is not interested in studies is forced to complete his studies in the city, while Parvati, who is interested in studies is stopped from continuing her education. Another thing that can be noted from this film is that uneducated people have a better

character and are worldly wise compared to the educated. This can be noticed in the way Devadas and Bagvan, in spite of their education do not know how to manage their life whereas Parvati and Chandramukhi are uneducated but know how to lead a comfortable and peaceful life and face their difficulties with more confidence.

4.4 Film 3 - 1960 (1960-69)

BHAGAPIRIVINAI (Separation of the ancestral property)

4.4.1 Story

This story unfolds in a village, where two rich brothers live together in one house with their wives. The elder brother Vaidyalingam has a nagging wife with no children, while the younger brother Sundaralingam has a loving wife and two adult sons. Sundaralingam's elder son Kannaya is handicapped from an electric shock he received when he was seven years old and cannot move his left hand and limbs while walking. The younger son Mani pursues his education in the city. Except for Vaidyalingam's wife Akilandal, the other members in the family are shown to be close with each other.

Akilandal's nephew Singaram and niece Amudha, who had lived in Singapore and are now living in Madras, plan to come and stay with them. Because Vaidyalingam is aware of Singaram's bad character, he opposes his coming to his house, but he agrees because of his wife's constant nagging. Singaram, who is often referred to as "Singaporan"

because of his upbringing in Singapore, comes to the village in a car with his sister, a butler and a dog. He has adopted the Western way of life and attire, and is critical of Tamil culture, village life, and the village people. He finds pleasure in ridiculing them at every available opportunity.

He is shown as being close to his aunt Akilandal who is disliked by everyone else in the family. He therefore joins with his aunt to mock and fight with other members in the family. His presence constantly generates tension within the family and everyone, except his aunt, hate him but tolerate him because he is a relative.

One day, when he tries to make a sexual advance toward the house maid Ponni, who is regarded as part of the family, he is beaten by her with a sweep stick. Because of this, he decides to leave the house with his sister. His decision to depart is welcomed by everyone in the family except his aunt. As he walks out of the house, he is stopped by Mani who has just come home from the city after completing his education. He and Singaram's sister Amudha had met earlier in the city and recognize each other. On Mani's request, Singaram and Amudha decide to stay. Mani, who is modern and educated, is so much attracted to Amudha that he even disregards his family to associate himself with Singaram.

Singaram flatters and charms his aunt Akilandal, and instigates her to demand a partition in the ancestral property. She nags her husband and fights with her brother-in-law. Although Vaidyalingam and Sundaralingam love each other and really don't care about money, they separate and part because of Singaram and his aunt. A wall is therefore built in the house, and the household things and cultivatable lands are divided

equally between the two families. On the same day of the partition, the younger son Mani also announces his love for Amudha. In spite of his parents' and his elder brother's warning and opposition he later marries Amudha.

Meanwhile, Sundaralingam and his wife marry their son Kannaya to their maid Ponni, who is an orphan and lives with them. Days go by and both Amudha and Ponni become pregnant. Although Vaidyalingam and Sundaralingam love each other and would like to live together, they are forced to live separate because of Singaram and his aunt Akilandal.

A few months later, Mani gets a job as a manager in the city and leaves. Singaram also goes with him. In the city, Mani steals money from his office to invest in Singaram's business. Singaram, with Mani's money and the money he borrows from his aunt, starts a circus and gives all the money he earns to his dancer girl friend.

In the village, Amudha and Ponni give birth to sons. After a few days, Kannaya and Ponni go to the hospital in the city, where a specialist assures Kannaya that he can be cured.

Mani, meanwhile, realizing that Singaram is a cheat and that he had lost all his money, repents for what he had done to his family. One day, when he comes to know from his servant that his brother is in the hospital, goes to meet him. Kannaya is happy to see Mani and they reaffirm their love for each other.

Singaram's dancer runs away with all his money, and with no dancer to do the show, incurs losses in his circus. To attract audience to his circus, he plans to include a show where a child is given to the elephant to hold. He steals Ponni and Kannaya's baby for the show. Finding her baby missing, Ponni goes in search of the baby. She meets the

former employees of Singaram who tell her that Singaram stole her baby for the circus. She goes to Singaram's house and tries to recover her baby. When Singaram hears the baby's scream, he snatches the baby from her, locks her in the house, and goes to the circus with the baby. Ponni escapes and goes to the circus to save her child.

Meanwhile, Kannaya who has not seen his wife for three days, asks the doctor for permission to go see his wife, but he is refused because of his condition. He manages to leave the hospital and go to his home, where he discovers that his baby was stolen. Because he suspects Singaram, he goes to his house. Singaram, who had just locked Ponni inside the house, pushes him aside and departs to the circus. Kannaya follows him.

In the circus, Ponni and Kannaya see each other and when Ponni sees her child being offered to the elephant, cries out to her husband that it is their baby. Kannaya rushes to rescue and accidentally touches an electric wire. He gets a shock that suddenly cures him. Unconscious of his recovery, he runs and saves his baby. Singaram then attacks him and they engage in a physical fight.

Meanwhile, the rest of the family also come to the city looking for them. The servants come to the circus with the police, who arrest Singaram. Everyone in the family is happy to see each other, and to know that Kannaya is cured. They go back to the village to celebrate the harvest festival Pongal together. During the festivities, Vaidyalingam's wife says that she is sorry, and that she has learnt her lesson to respect and love her husband. Everyone forgives her and the family is united once again.

4.4.2 Caste issues

In this film, there is no specific mention about caste, but one can assume from the narrative content that the family belongs to a higher caste. Brahmins come to their house to read scriptures and to set dates for marriage and do not show any hesitation in interacting with them. They are rich landlords in the village, and the Gods they pray to, including Lord Muruga and Ganapathy are Gods who are prayed to by the higher caste people. But since the family members do not question the orphan maid's caste and accept her as part of the family, it can be assumed that caste is not dealt with as an issue. Similarly, Sundaralingam's wife is also an orphan who is accepted into the family without questioning her caste. Thus, in this film caste is not portrayed as a major social issue.

4.4.3 Family: Respect for elders

The conflict and tension arising from changes in the family structure are specifically addressed in this film, with the traditional joint family system being advocated and extolled by the film maker throughout.

The entire film, as the title signifies, is about the partition that takes place within a family that had upheld and carried on the tradition of joint family for generations. The two brothers are in the beginning shown as living together in one house with their wives and children. Although the elder brother's wife does not like her brother-in-law, his wife, and his children, and does not hide her resentment, she is not supported by anyone else

in the family. Her dislike and hatred is always quelled by the love and affection that exists between other members in the family.

All the good people in the family respect the elder brother Vaidyalingam and show their respect by always standing in front of him, not arguing with him, and touching his feet on religious and special occasions. This includes the younger brother, his wife, and their son Kannaya. On the other hand, people who are depicted as bad do not show this respect. For example, Vaidyalingam's wife Akilandal, although she does not sit before her husband, does argue and fight with him all the time. She does not agree with any of his decisions and does not behave in a way that would be considered proper for a traditional good woman in the culture. Because of her rebellion, she loses all her jewels to her nephew Singaram. In the end she repents and says that women should love, respect and be obedient to their husbands. Her nephew Singaram is depicted as a bad man: he is bad because he is dishonest, cheats people of their money, and does not respect his elders. The first time he appears, he ridicules and argues with his uncle Vaidyalingam and places one of his legs next to the place where his uncle sits, which is considered to be disrespectful. He is also responsible for instigating his aunt to fight for a partition in the ancestral property, although none of the good characters are interested in the separation. Singaram can also be identified with the Western culture that has influenced and changed the traditional system.

The younger son Mani, who is educated in the city, also does not listen to his parents or his elder brother after his acquaintance with Amudha and Singaram. He ridicules his elder brother and beats and pushes him down. He marries against his elders' wishes and

does not reciprocate his elder brother's and his parents' love. But he does change in the end when he realizes that Singaram is a bad character and that he had cheated him of his office money.

Thus, in this film joint family is upheld. The film maker repeatedly, both implicitly and explicitly, advocates the importance of joint family system and shows it by uniting the family in the end. There is also a song sung in the background that extols the joint family and criticizes separate families. The film also promotes respect for elders. Sundaralingam respects his elder brother. He and his wife, on festivals and other occasions touch Vaidyalingam's feet. When his brother calls his name, Sundaralingam comes running to obey him. He and his wife are also never shown sitting before Vaidyalingam or his wife. Kannaya is also shown to respect his parents and his uncle and aunt. People who do not respect their elders and conspire to break the joint family system are shown to suffer and repent in the end.

4.4.4 Marriage

Although this film mainly addresses the issue of extended family, it also depicts marriages. Vaidyalingam is married to a shrew and his marriage seems to have been arranged. Although he dislikes his wife and he and his wife fight all the time, there is no mention of divorce. The second brother Sundaralingam is married to an orphan and there is no mention of his marriage being a result of love. From the way Sundaralingam

behaves with his elder brother it can be assumed that he would not have gone against his elders' wishes.

Among the two sons of Sundaralingam, the elder son Kannaya marries the woman chosen by his parents. Because he is handicapped, his parents find it difficult to find a suitable bride. Even women in the neighbourhood make fun of him saying that he sits in front of God Pulliar's temple praying for a wife. According to the Hindu religious myth, Lord Pulliar's statues and temples are built beside the river because he is a bachelor who is believed to be searching for a bride from the women who come to take bath in the river.

Thus, often Kannaya is referred to as Pulliar and he is also shown praying to Pulliar, although he does not explicitly show his interest in getting married. Even when his parents ask him to marry the maid in the house, he refuses by saying that, because she is an orphan she should not be sacrificed to a handicapped man like him. But later, when Ponni says that she would feel grateful and happy to marry him, he agrees to marry her. Thus, he marries the woman chosen by his parents.

However, the younger brother Mani chooses his own bride and marries her in spite of his parents' and his elder brother's opposition. Because of his education and city experience, he disregards his parents and marries Amudha. Although his is a love marriage, it is performed according to the custom, in the presence of his uncle and aunt who bless him on behalf of his parents.

In the film, there is no mention of dowry or caste. Kannaya marries an orphan, whose caste and family background are not mentioned. Although, it is normal in the culture to

choose the spouse from the same caste and dowry is expected from the woman, in this film there is no mention of them. The reason why the parents are not concerned may be because Kannaya is handicapped and they could not find any other bride for him. Another reason could be because his mother herself was an orphan.

Arranged marriages or marriages performed with the blessings and permission of parents and elders are extolled in this film. Among the two brides, Ponni, who is chosen by Kannaya's parents for him is shown as a better person than Amudha, who is chosen by Mani and refused by his parents. In Mani's marriage, his parents do not want him to marry Amudha, not because she is a bad person but because her brother is bad. But the parents and Kannaya accept her in the family once she is married to Mani.

4.4.5 Religion

In this film, Vaidyalingam, Kannaya and his wife Ponni are shown as being very religious. Their house has pictures of God and they visit the temple to pray. When they have a problem, the characters call out God's name and later thank God for his blessings.

When Vaidyalingam is shown for the first time, he is seated on a swing inside the house. He calls out God's name and prays for the family's well being. On that day they are shown to celebrate Pongal, the harvest festival celebrated in South India during January. As part of the ritual, rice is boiled in a mud pot on fire wood, and the ground is polished with cow dung and pictures are drawn on it. Sundaralingam is shown bringing sugarcanes, which is usually relished on that day. Everyone in the family join

together to celebrate this festival. Vaidyalingam, being the eldest male in the family, gives new clothes to everyone in the family. Kannaya wears new clothes and as is customary prays to God.

The family also send religious ashes to Mani who lives in the city. When Mani puts it on his forehead, his college friends make fun of him. Mani replies by saying that just because they are in college they should not forget their culture and religion. Mani is therefore shown as a religious person in the beginning.

In the next scene, Kannaya is shown sitting beside Lord Pulliar's statue. Women passing by to collect water make fun of him saying that he is praying to Lord Pulliar for a wife. In this scene and in the later scenes he shown as a very religious person. In one scene when Kannaya's father is very sick and is in bed, Kannaya enters the partitioned house of his aunt to collect some holy ashes. Singaram who is not religious, ridicules him of stealing God's ashes but finally lets him go with the God's picture and holy ashes. Kannaya applies holy ashes on his father's forehead and his father recuperates, even though no doctor is shown to visit him.

In one scene when the women in the house are shown to be about to deliver babies, Meenakshi who is the mother-in-law is shown praying to God. She stops praying only when her son Kannaya tells her that his brother's wife Amudha had given birth to a baby.

Vaidyalingam is another good character who is also shown to be religious. Although he is rarely shown praying directly to God, he is shown sitting in front of the temple or calling out God's name in his conversations. In one scene when his younger brother's son Kannaya is getting married, he goes to the temple instead of the marriage. When the

priest in the temple asks him why he did not attend the marriage he says that he did not want to cause any problem. In this film, all the good characters are loving, truthful, honest, and are also religious.

4.4.6 Education

Among the major characters in the film, only Mani, the second son of Sundaralingam, is shown to be educated. Probably because there was no school in the village, he had to go to the city for education.

When he is shown for the first time, he is with his friends who are playing carom and cards. They make fun of him for being religious and he says that just because they are in college they should not forget their culture and religion. He also wears modern, westernized clothes and speaks English. Because he is educated, he also gets a job as a manager in a company in the city.

His education makes him independent and also changes him. He is different from his elder brother Kannaya who is very innocent and traditional in respecting his elders. Mani, on the other hand, does not associate himself with his family whom he considers unsophisticated.

Thus, in this film, men are more educated than women and the educated person is shown to be more westernized than the uneducated. Although everyone respects Mani because of his education, he is shown to display faults that are not shown by his

uneducated brother. The elder brother Kannaya, in spite of not having any formal education is referred to by everyone as being very intelligent.

4.5 Film 4 - 1961 (1960-69)

PASAMALAR (Flower of love)

4.5.1 Story

This film is about two poor orphans Raju and his younger sister Radha who grow up together in a small town. They lose their parents at a very early age and Raju who is nine years older than Radha, brings her up with great affection. Because of their constant companionship they become dependent on each other and they live for each other. Raju goes to work and supports his sister Radha.

They grow up and become adults. One day while Raju is at work, Radha has a minor accident and Anand who works with Raju saves her. When Raju comes to know about it, he accepts him as his friend. Anand is attracted to Radha and so visits Raju's home to see her. Because Radha is innocent and does not know the meaning of love, she talks with Anand as her brother's friend. One day Anand tells Radha that he is in love with her and that he would like to marry her. Radha is shocked to hear this and says that she will tell her brother about this. Anand asks her not to tell her brother as he intends to tell

him in person. Anand also informs her that he will be away for a while and asks her not to forget about him.

The factory Raju works is closed because of a strike and Raju is worried about not having enough money to support his sister. Radha offers him one thousand rupees she had saved from working part time and from the money Raju had given her for house expenses. With that money they start their own toy factory and become rich. One day, the owner of the factory in which Raju had worked earlier comes to meet him and says that he would like to sell his factory to him. Although Raju hesitates in the beginning, he later accepts to buy the factory. In order to run the factory he also educates himself through a private tutor.

Anand returns home and finds out from his aunt and cousin Sengalrayan that in his absence Raju had become very rich and had also purchased the factory he used to work. On the advise of his aunt and cousin, Anand goes to meet Raju to ask for a job. Raju initially refuses to employ him because he is afraid that his employment with him might ruin their friendship. But, on Anand's insistence, he employs him.

Anand continues to meet Radha without Raju's knowledge. On Radha's birthday party, Anand visits her and gives her jasmine flowers as a gift. On Radha's request, he puts the flowers in her hair and Raju who is passing by notices this. Raju takes Anand inside a room and beats him for touching his sister. Insulted by Raju's action, Anand leaves by telling him that he will teach him a lesson. This incident forces Raju to propose marriage for his sister. He arranges her marriage with a rich engineer named Baskar and also promises to marry his sister Malathi who is a doctor. But when he comes home to tell

his sister about his decision, his servant tells him that Radha is in the garden with Anand. This angers Raju, who takes a pistol and goes to the garden. Before he could shoot he hears his sister telling Anand how much she loves her brother and also how much respect and love her brother has for her. When Anand asks Radha to elope with him, she refuses saying that she cannot marry him without her brother's permission. When Anand insults and ridicules Raju, she gets angry and says that she does not want to marry a person who dislikes her brother. Hearing his sister's love for him, Raju throws away the pistol and goes home.

The next day, Radha brings coffee for Raju who notices her unhappiness and asks her what is wrong. She says that she had wronged him and asks him to punish her. Raju says that as punishment he is going to get her married to an engineer. Radha says she is ready to marry anyone chosen by him. Raju leaves, asking her to be ready to see the groom. He brings Anand instead of the engineer and Radha is happy to see him.

Radha is married to Anand and Anand moves into her house with his aunt and cousin. One day Radha meets Malathi, the doctor who was proposed for her brother. Although Malathi knows who Radha is, Radha does not know Malathi as the one who was proposed for her brother. Radha goes home to tell her brother that she had met a doctor and that she wanted him to marry her. Raju says it is impossible because Malathi's brother was proposed for her and the marriage did not take place. Radha feeling responsible for breaking up her brother's marriage, goes to meet Baskar and Malathi. She introduces herself and tells them that it was her mistake for not marrying Baskar and that her brother had nothing to do with it. She also requests Baskar to arrange his sister

Malathi's marriage with her brother. Baskar disagrees in the beginning but agrees when Radha pleads with him. Raju later marries Malathi.

After Raju's marriage, everyone live together in one house. Malathi feels jealous to see her husband loving his sister more than her. Anand's aunt, who lives with them, meanwhile, conspires to break the family, particularly Raju and Radha, so that she could get money from Radha without Raju knowing it. She therefore steals Malathi's saree and blames Radha for stealing it. Malathi also believes the aunt and accuses Radha for stealing the saree. Raju, when he comes to know about this, is angered and shouts at the aunt. Anand, seeing his aunt being insulted, and trusting her more than anyone in the family decides to leave the house. Because Raju wants his sister to be comfortable and happy, he leaves the house with his wife and asks his sister's family to live there.

The aunt who lives with Radha obtains Radha's signature on a blank paper and uses this to send a lawyer's notice to Raju asking for a partition in the property. Raju, on the insistence of his wife and brother-in-law sends a counter notice. In the process, the house and all the properties goes into the custody of the court till the case would be settled.

Having lost the house and money, the aunt abuses Radha for all the misfortunes. When Raju comes to know that his sister is being beaten and abused, he withdraws his case and leaves all his property for his sister. Meanwhile, both Radha and Malathi give birth to children.

One day, Baskar comes to meet Raju and tells him that his sister Malathi had got admission for higher studies abroad and that it was his parents' and his wish that she gets educated abroad. Raju therefore gives permission for his wife to go abroad for education.

After Malathi leaves for her higher studies, Raju leaves with his son and servant on a pilgrimage. After a few years he returns home very sick and weak.

One day he decides to go see his sister with his son. When he goes to her house, she is not there and the aunt abuses him by calling him a beggar. He therefore leaves, and on his way saves his niece from a fire cracker without recognizing her as his niece. As he takes the fire cracker from her it explodes and he becomes blind.

When Radha comes to know that her brother has come back and had come to visit her, she goes to meet him in spite of the aunt stopping her. She meets her brother and is shocked and grieved to see his condition. Raju, who had remained alive just to see his sister, dies after seeing her. Radha, shocked to see her brother die, also dies.

Meanwhile, Anand comes home to overhear his aunt talking to her son about her conspiracy to separate Raju and Radha was : . . . fail. Anand knowing the truth, throws his aunt and cousin out of his house and leaves to meet Raju to ask for his forgiveness. On the same day, Malathi also comes home after her education. Anand and Malathi enter Raju's house to see both Raju and Radha dead.

4.5.2 Caste issue

There is no mention of caste in the whole film. Although Raju and Radha are poor, there is no mention of their caste. Similarly, Anand who marries Radha also is not referred to as belonging to any particular caste. Baskar is proposed for Radha and Raju

marries Baskar's sister because of their social position and education rather than because they belong to the same caste.

Thus, in this film, there is no mention of caste or any explicit or implicit remark about caste differences or discrimination based on caste.

4.5.3 Family: Respect for elders

In this film there are three families. Raju's family consists of himself and his sister, and their mother is shown to die in the very beginning when they were still small children. The sister Radha loves and respects her elder brother and considers him as her father and mother. She stays home and takes care of him and does not hide any secret except her love for Anand. Even this, she eventually tells her brother and says that she is sorry for hiding it from him.

One day Anand visits Raju and Radha stays inside till Raju calls her. After Raju introduces her to Anand, he asks her to bring cold buttermilk for both of them. She brings and gives both cups to her brother, who gives one to Anand. Since it is the custom for an unmarried girl not to give it in person, the brother gives it to his friend Anand.

Although Radha meets and talks with Anand without her brother's knowledge, she does not have any physical contact with him. Later, when Raju chooses an educated groom for her, she does not refuse but says that she would marry anyone chosen by her brother even without seeing the person.

After Radha is married, she continues to love her brother, at the same time, she also respects her husband, his aunt and cousin who live with them. Even when the aunt abuses and beats her, she does not strike her back or talk ill of her. Similarly, when her husband strikes her in anger she does not shout at him or strike him back. She says to her brother that her husband has more rights over her than anybody else and therefore accepts the pain without questioning.

The second family is that of Anand's. An orphan, Anand lives with his widow aunt and her son. He loves, trusts and respects her to the extent of not seeing her real nature. It is only on his aunt's instigation that he goes to meet Raju and asks for a job in his factory. He even allows his aunt and his cousin to live with him in Raju's house after his marriage. When his aunt says that they should move out of Raju's house, he agrees to it. He supports and trusts his aunt and does everything she wants him to do. Only in the end he comes to know about his aunt's conspiracy, even then he does not strike her but asks her to leave the house.

Baskar and Malathi constitute the third family in the film. Baskar is elder to his sister and makes the final decision in her marriage. Baskar and Raju discuss with each other about their sister's marriages even without asking them about their liking. When Radha goes to Baskar's house to ask him to marry his sister with her brother, he refuses without asking his sister who is a doctor. Later he agrees for the marriage also without asking his sister who stands beside him. The sister is shown to have no say in her marriage.

The only time Malathi contradicts her brother is after her marriage to Raju. One day Raju insults Baskar and asks him to leave his house. Baskar asks his sister Malathi to

leave with him, but she refuses by saying that after marriage a woman should stay with her husband rather than her brother. In one scene, Raju strikes her but she does not argue with him even though she is educated. She follows him where ever he goes and does not question any of his decisions.

When Malathi's brother comes to her house to tell her that she had got admission in a foreign university she is excited but does not make up her mind till her husband Raju asks her to go. Later, when she returns home from abroad she finds her husband dead. She cries by saying that her husband should not have given her such a big punishment for leaving him and her child and not taking care of them. The film maker, therefore, makes an implicit statement that wives should stay home to take care of their husbands and children.

Although most characters in the film are orphans, they decide to stay together as one family after their marriage. As it is common in such families, there are conflicts, tensions and misunderstandings within the family. In one scene when Anand decides to leave the house, and his aunt initiates and instigates the separation, Raju tells the aunt that family is like a beautiful glass jar that should not be broken like a coconut. The film maker therefore exposes the problems and conflicts in a joint family.

In this film, the elder brothers are respected and have a special place within the family. Similarly, husbands are respected and obeyed by the wives without questioning their personal rights. Although the characters do not come from joint families, they live together for a while but separate in the end.

4.5.4 Marriage

In this film, there are three marriages that take place. First, the marriage between Radha and Anand. They are in love with each other, but when Anand wants Radha to elope with him, she refuses by saying that she cannot marry him without her brother's permission and blessings.

Meanwhile, Raju proposes marriage for his sister with a rich engineer. But when he comes to know that his sister loves Anand, he marries her to him. Earlier, when Raju says to his sister that he had chosen a groom for her, she says that she is ready to marry anyone her brother chooses, without seeing the person, irrespective of the person being lame or blind. Although Radha loves Anand, her marriage is in a way arranged by her brother.

The second marriage in the film is between Raju and Malathi. Although Malathi is more educated than Raju and is a doctor, which is not the norm, Raju agrees to marry her because his sister proposes for him. Malathi also agrees because her brother decides to marry her to Raju. This marriage is also arranged by the family members and friends and takes place fulfilling all the religious customs. The third marriage in the film is between Sengalrayan who is Anand's cousin and a miser's daughter. Since Sengalrayan's character is to provide humour in the film, his marriage cannot be taken seriously. His marriage is performed in a court in his mother's absence but in the presence of the bride's father.

In this film, arranged marriage is upheld and is performed according to the culture, fulfilling the rites in the custom. There is no mention of divorce, widow remarriage or pre-marital sex in the film. The film therefore presents a picture of the culture which is traditional in terms of marriage.

4.5.5 Religion

Although there are pictures of Gods in the characters' houses, most characters are not shown as religious. Raju prays to God in his house in only one scene when Radha brings the holy fire. Other than that, he is not shown to pray in his house, in spite of all the misfortunes and difficulties in his life. But, Raju does go on a pilgrimage after his wife goes abroad for higher education. He visits several temples before coming back home.

Sengalayan is shown in one scene praying to God. He thanks God when Malathi gives birth to a daughter. Other than that no other characters are shown as religious.

4.5.6 Education

Among the three families in the film, only Baskar and his sister Malathi are shown as being educated. Raju and Radha, because of their poverty are uneducated. But when Raju becomes rich and also takes over a factory, he learns English and gets himself educated through private tutorials. Although he and his sister Radha do not have any formal education, they are shown to be worldly wise and with good character.

Baskar is an engineer and his sister Malathi is a doctor. Even though they are educated, they don't mind marrying Radha and Raju who are uneducated, because they are rich and have a high social position. The reason why Raju wants his sister to marry Baskar is because he is an engineer, and he would be proud to have an engineer brother-in-law.

Raju initially hesitates to marry Malathi because she is more educated than he is, but Baskar convinces him by saying that although his sister is educated, she will respect and obey him. But the difference in education does result in conflicts within their family. While Raju wants her to go out for a party with him, she says that she has to attend a medical conference and also says that he should have told her earlier so that she could have changed her schedule. Raju does not say anything but shows his disappointment. Raju's sister Radha notices this and feels sorry for her brother because she had made her brother marry Malathi. Later, Malathi also leaves her husband and her baby to go abroad for her higher studies. In the end, when she returns home to find that her husband is dead, she says that her husband should not have given her such a big punishment for not staying and taking care of him.

On the whole, educated people are respected, particularly English speaking people, in the film. Thus, Malathi is happy to hear from her friend that, although Raju has no formal education, no one will believe it and says that Raju's English pronunciation is better than their professor's. Also, the film maker implicitly advocates higher education for men than woman.

4.6 Film 5 - 1972 (1970-79)

PATTIKADA PATTANAMA (Village or City)

4.6.1 Story

Kalpana, the only child of a rich couple living in Madurai, returns from London, England, after completing her education. Her parents, friends and relatives wait at the airport to receive her. Kalpana is in her mid twenties and is shown wearing trousers and shirt, which is considered to be a western dress. Her mother likes her to be modern, but her father wants her to be traditional. Her mother introduces Kalpana to her friends, particularly to Sankar, who is modern and rich and is said to have been educated abroad.

When they reach home, Kalpana shows her dislike for everything that is traditional. She speaks in English and asks the servant to say "good morning" instead of greeting in the Indian fashion. While they are talking, they receive a letter from Mukaya, Kalpana's cousin living in the village, asking them to come for the local festival. Although Kalpana's mother is not interested in going, she agrees on the insistence of her daughter.

In the village, they meet Mukaya who owns most of the land and is respected by all the villagers for his maintenance of justice. He is called to adjudicate disputes within the village and is almost in charge of the whole village. He is in his late twenties, wears a nose ring, ear rings and has long hair which he ties into a knot.

As part of the festivities, unmarried women are shown pouring water mixed with turmeric on unmarried men or the men they would like to marry. An old lady asks Raku,

who is Mukaya's cousin, to pour water on Mukaya and she pours it. Mukaya runs after her to pour water and accidentally runs into Kalpana and pours it on her. Kalpana's father is happy to see this happen because it means marriage between the two. Later, on the request of Kalpana, Mukaya takes her along to show his village. They go around in a bullock cart and the cart over turns and they fall into a slush. They go home after cleaning themselves in the river. Kalpana's parents ask them what had happened and Kalpana says about the accident and how Mukaya had saved her by carrying her out of the slush. She also tells her mother about the respect Mukaya has in the village. Because Kalpana's mother does not like Mukaya and considers him uncivilized, she decides to leave the village immediately before Mukaya could make an impression on her daughter.

After they go home, Sankar and his parents come to their home to propose marriage to Kalpana. Kalpana's mother agrees to give her daughter in marriage to Sankar in her husband's absence. In acceptance, Sankar gives Kalpana a gold necklace and she accepts it without knowing that it confirms her marriage with Sankar. When Sankar's family is about to leave, Kalpana's father comes home. Sankar's father tells him that they have arranged their children's marriage. Kalpana's father does not say anything to them but later asks his wife how she could have made the decision without asking him. She says that she would like to get her daughter married before Mukaya makes an attempt. Kalpana's father says that Mukaya is rich, knowledgeable, and has all the moral qualities to marry their daughter and is a better choice than Sankar who is an alcoholic and a womanizer. Because Kalpana's mother is stubborn about her decision, Kalpana's father goes to Mukaya for help. He tells him that though Sankar is an alcoholic, his wife has

arranged to marry Kalpana to him. He asks him to prevent his daughter's marriage with Sankar. Mukaya promises to help him, and so interrupts Kalpana's wedding and physically carries her away to his village. The people attending the wedding do not object because Mukaya is her cousin and has the right to marry her.

At Mukaya's home, the elders congregate to discuss Mukaya's action. According to them, since Mukaya had touched her and had physically carried her in the midst of other people, no one else will marry her. They therefore ask him to marry her, but he refuses by saying that because Kalpana is more educated than him their marriage will not work out. But when they ask Kalpana, she says that she would like to marry Mukaya. Their marriage therefore takes place in the village in the absence of Kalpana's parents. Kalpana's parents come after the marriage: Kalpana's mother is angry, while her father blesses her and asks Mukaya to take care of his daughter and to forgive her on his behalf for the mistakes she might commit in the future.

Immediately following the wedding, the villagers perform the customary rites and Kalpana shows her impatience in participating in the ceremonies and is explicit in her disrespect for them. Mukaya feels ashamed and angry about her behaviour but forgives her because of her high education and the promise he had made to his uncle.

Kalpana asks for material things she enjoyed in London and at her parent's home, and Mukaya spends a lot of money to fulfil her needs and to make her happy. In spite of that, Kalpana is unhappy and has difficulty in understanding Mukaya. Kalpana's activities and dresses are considered to be shameful and uncivilized for the villagers and Kalpana does not want to change her habits for them. Kalpana removes Mukaya's

parents' picture and the plough from the living room, which angers Mukaya who insults her in front of the servants. Following this, she writes to her mother about her problems with her husband.

On Kalpana's birthday, Mukaya goes out and her friends come to celebrate with her. Mukaya's relatives are shocked to see men shaking hands with Kalpana, consuming alcohol, and singing and dancing with her. When Mukaya enters his house, his relatives tell him that Kalpana and her friends are drinking and dancing and this angers him because it is not acceptable in villages and is considered a social shame. He takes a whip and whips Kalpana's friends and throws them out of the house. When Kalpana argues with him, he slaps and whips her also. On the same night, she runs away to her house and sends a divorce notice to him. On receiving the notice Mukaya goes to Kalpana's house and pleads with her to come home, but she refuses. After Mukaya leaves, Kalpana's family move to a big city to avoid Mukaya.

In the city, Kalpana is introduced by her mother to her friends. When the friends ask Kalpana if she is married, her mother tells them that Kalpana's husband's name is Mukesh and that he is studying engineering in London and is expected to come back the next year.

Kalpana's father writes a letter to Mukaya informing him about their change of address and also asks him to take his daughter back. Mukaya goes to Madras dressed as a hippie and asks Kalpana to go back home with him. When she refuses, he rapes her in her house. One day Kalpana vomits while playing cards with her friends. The doctor who is with them tells her that she is pregnant. Everyone asks her how she could have got

pregnant when her husband was in London and she feels shamed and does not answer.

Later, Mukaya goes to Kalpana's house and tries to take her by force. But when Kalpana says in front of every one that she does not want to go with him, he leaves her and goes home. Because his wife does not live with him, everyone in the village look down upon him.

Meanwhile, Kalpana gives birth to a boy child. While Kalpana is unconscious, her mother takes the baby and leaves it in front of an orphanage home. The man in charge of the orphanage, recognizing Kalpana's mother notifies Mukaya about the baby who takes the baby with him.

When Kalpana regains consciousness she asks for the baby and her mother tells her that she had left it in an orphanage. This shocks and angers Kalpana who goes to the orphanage to know from the person in charge that Mukaya had adopted the baby the previous day. She goes home disappointed and swears at her mother for leaving her baby in the orphanage home.

One day, Mukaya comes to Kalpana's house to give a marriage invitation. Since the bridegroom's name in the invitation is Mukaya, Kalpana cries but her father says that it is too late to do anything. The mother once again shouts at her husband, who slaps her and pushes her on the floor and whips her.

Kalpana goes to Mukaya's house for the wedding. She asks for her child and Mukaya gives her the child. Kalpana, thinking that Mukaya was going to get married, cries and asks for forgiveness. Only later she comes to know that Mukaya refers to another person and not her husband. Kalpana's father and mother also come for the marriage and the

father forces his wife to ask forgiveness from Mukaya. Kalpana's mother says she is sorry and Mukaya also forgives her.

4.6.2 Caste issues

The whole film revolves around the lives of relatives belonging to one family. Because of this, the film fails to raise any significant question about caste. Mukaya is a landlord in the village and everyone respects him because he is rich and also because he is educated. Although one can assume from his way of life that he is not from a low caste, his caste is not mentioned explicitly. This assumption is based on the fact that he is rich, has many people working for him, his relatives are all rich and educated, he adjudicates domestic disputes, and he is respected by every one and is not subject to discrimination by anyone.

4.6.3 Family: Respect for elders

There are two families in this film, Mukaya's and Kalpana's. Although there are many relatives visiting Mukaya, none of them play a significant role in the film. Mukaya seems to be the head of his family with no parents. Even though he is shown to consult with his older relatives, he is the decision maker. Everyone, both younger and older people within the family, respect him and he respects them. He not only adjudicates within the family but also for people living in his village.

He marries Kalpana when the elders in the family ask him to. After his marriage, he touches the feet of the elders and receives blessings from them. He listens to the advice of his elders and is shown standing in front of them.

Kalpana's family consists of her father, mother and herself. Kalpana's father is shown as a nice man who is afraid of his wife. He respects Indian culture and is conservative and traditional. Kalpana's mother is the head of the family till her father takes over in the end. The mother is the decision maker in the family and the father has no say in any of the family matters. She always shouts "shut up" and stops her husband from speaking. She is depicted as a bad woman who likes to be modern and westernized. She does not respect her husband and wants her daughter to marry Sankar, even though she knows that he is an alcoholic and a womanizer. The reason why she likes Sankar is because he is rich, modern and foreign-educated. When Kalpana has problems with her husband, instead of uniting her with him she advises her to file for a divorce. She lies by telling her friends that Kalpana's husband's name is Mukesh and that he is in London studying engineering. Later, when Kalpana gives birth to a baby, she leaves the baby in an orphanage without her daughter's knowledge. Her activities and behaviour are considered bad in the Indian culture. A mother is expected to see that her daughter is happy and lives with her husband rather than separate her daughter from her husband. Since divorce is considered to be bad, a mother should not advise her daughter to do it even though her husband or his family might ill treat her. It is because of these reasons that her husband slaps and whips her in the end and asks her to ask for forgiveness from Mukaya and she does.

Between Mukaya and Kalpana, Mukaya is the decision maker. He tells her what to do and what not to do. Although he gives her freedom, he restricts her from doing things that she was used to doing in London. For example, on her birthday she invites her friends for a party in her house. They have alcohol and dance with each other. When Mukaya comes to know about this, he whips her friends and her and throws her friends out of the house. When she goes away to her mother's house, he urges her to come back home. He even rapes her in her own house. No one in the film questions any of his actions because he is her husband, and in the culture, the husband is believed to have more rights over his wife than anybody else. Because Kalpana's father is a traditional man, he supports Mukaya's actions. In the end, Kalpana is shown to repent for her follies and asks forgiveness from her husband.

In this film, nuclear family is shown as the norm. Mukaya's relatives do not live with him but visit him. Kalpana moves into his home after marriage. Because there is no mention of Kalpana's grandparents, it can be assumed that they are no longer alive, and if they were, they might be living with them. The male elders are the decision makers who are obeyed and respected in the family. Initially Kalpana's mother is shown as the head in her family, but her husband takes over in the end and makes his wife repent for her past behaviour.

4.6.4 Marriage

The only serious marriage in the film is between Mukaya and Kalpana. Mukaya is educated, but works and takes care of the farm. Kalpana, who is Mukaya's cousin, is

educated in London. They meet for the first time in the film in Mukaya's village. Kalpana is impressed by Mukaya's wealth, strength and the respect people give to him in the village. Mukaya is also attracted to Kalpana. He says to his uncle that if he had been educated abroad he would marry Kalpana.

Later when Kalpana's mother arranges Kalpana's marriage with Sankar who is an alcoholic and womanizer, her father goes to Mukaya and asks him to stop the marriage. Mukaya goes to the marriage and interrupts by taking away the holy thread that is usually shown to the elders for their blessings. This yellow thread is usually tied by the groom around the neck of the bride after the elders bless it. The bride is required to wear the thread as long as her husband is alive. This sudden interruption causes commotion and Mukaya says that he has the right to interrupt because he is her cousin who should be given the first preference to marry her. He even physically carries her from the marriage party. When Kalpana's mother asks other people to stop Mukaya, they say that Mukaya has the right to marry her as a cousin.

When Mukaya goes home, the elders ask him to marry Kalpana because he had touched her. One lady says that when eggplants touched by a person will not be bought by anybody else, how can one expect a young woman to be married when she is touched by another male. Mukaya finally agrees to marry Kalpana when she says she is interested in him and when all the elders in the family ask him to marry her. Their marriage is neither totally out of love nor totally arranged by the parents. Although Kalpana's father totally agrees with Kalpana's marriage, her mother is totally against the marriage.

Thus, in this film, marriage between cousins is extolled. No one in the film questions the right of a cousin marrying another cousin. Rather, people think that cousins have the first right over their cousins. The marriage is also arranged by the elders in the family. In this film, Kalpana agrees to marry Mukaya even though her mother disapproves of her marriage. This could be attributed to Kalpana's education abroad which had changed her meaning system and also reflects on the changes that are taking place within Indian society.

4.6.5 Religion

In this film, the characters are not very religious, especially Kalpana and her mother. The only time Mukaya is shown as a religious person is in the beginning of the film when he sings and dances in front of a temple. Although he calls out God's name in his discussions, he does not visit a temple when he has a problem. There are also pictures of God in the house and the film itself opens with a zoom out from a temple tower. In spite of this, the characters are not very religious, particularly the women in the film.

4.6.6 Education

Among the main characters in the film, Mukaya is educated but lives in the village taking care of his farm. Kalpana had her education in London and Sankar who is proposed for her in the beginning is also said to have completed his education abroad.

According to Mukaya, education is required to increase one's knowledge and not to feel proud about it.

It is usual for the woman to be less educated than her husband, and this is the main reason why Mukaya hesitates to marry Kalpana. But he marries her on the insistence of the elders. Kalpana and Sankar, because of their education abroad are shown not to respect the Indian culture. Kalpana wears revealing clothes, argues with her husband and also calls him an idiot and a "country brute". Similarly, Sankar is referred to as an alcoholic and a womanizer. In the first scene in which he is introduced, he comes with his girlfriend. Because girlfriends and alcohol are considered bad in the society, he is depicted as a bad character.

The film maker therefore advocates that woman should be less educated than their husband. If they are more educated, they should forget that and still be obedient to their husband. Women are expected to follow all the cultural rules and be obedient, patient and a housewife. In the end, in spite of her education, Kalpana repents and asks forgiveness from her less educated husband.

4.7 Film 6 - 1978 (1970-79)

Kizhakev Pogum Ravi! (Train going East)

4.7.1 Story

The train going towards the east stops in a small village called Thamarakuzham. Panjali, a poor teenaged girl, disembarks with a parrot and a small cloth parcel. As she walks to her sister's house, a teenaged girl named Kaniamma calls her. Kaniamma, seeing the parrot in Panjali's hand mistakes her for a fortune teller and asks her to come inside her house and tell her fortune. Panjali looks at her palm and says that she is going to eat fish for lunch and that she has a brother. Kaniamma, not realizing that Panjali's predictions are based on the smell, and after seeing a picture in the house, is impressed. When Kaniamma pays her money, Panjali refuses and says that she is not a fortune teller but is her neighbour's sister. Panjali then goes to her sister's home and tells her sister that their mother died ten days ago and she had come to live with her.

The next morning Panjali goes to the river to take bath. On her way back, her parrot flies to Kaniamma's brother Paranjothi who is shown sitting on a rock writing a poem. Paranjothi is in his twenties, educated, and good looking. Because he is a poet and spends his time writing poetry, he is ridiculed by the villagers as an useless man living on his father's income. Panjali asks him to give her parrot and he says that he will give the parrot only if she will tell her name. But because she feels shy she refuses to tell her name and in the meantime her parrot calls out her name and he gives her back her parrot.

One day Paranjothi's father requests a rich land owner to give his son a job. At first the man refuses but later he asks his son to take care of his farm during the night. That night, instead of staying awake Paranjothi sings a song and goes to sleep in the corn field. When he wakes up he finds all the corn stolen. The whole village makes fun of him and calls him an useless man. His father feels insulted and ashamed and therefore scolds Paranjothi and as a punishment he says he will not give him food. But his sister without her father's knowledge gives food to Panjali and asks her to give it to her brother.

Days go by and Kaniamma gets married and leaves her home to live with her husband. The villagers give her money and gifts, but her brother Paranjothi who is supposed to give her the biggest gift writes a poem for her. The villagers instead of appreciating his poetic talent ridicule and make fun of him.

One day Paranjothi plays with small children carrying them one by one in his arm to exhibit his strength. Finally he tells a small girl that he cannot lift her. Panjali who comes there, makes fun of him and calls him a weak man. Paranjothi tells Panjali that he was joking with the girl and that he can not only carry the girl but also her. To prove his strength to Panjali he lifts her and she falls on him. Their bodies come into contact and Panjali experiences new feelings and sensations. She feels shy and therefore runs away from him. Following this incident, they become interested in each other and fall in love.

One day, Paranjothi meets Panjali while she is taking her bath. After they spend some time together Panjali runs home and he follows her. A few villagers who see this, wrongly assume that Paranjothi was chasing Panjali and therefore call for a village

meeting. The elders in the meeting decide that Paranjothi is bad and that he should be punished. As punishment they decide to tonsure Paranjothi's head and send him on a procession on a donkey.

Meanwhile, Panjali tells her sister and her brother-in-law that she will not marry anyone other than Paranjothi. The brother-in-law who is interested in marrying Panjali scolds her. The same night Panjali meets Paranjothi and suggests that they consume poison and die. Paranjothi refuses and says that he intends to go to the city the next morning in the train going east to find a job. He also tells her that he will keep in touch with her by writing messages on the last compartment of the train and will marry her as soon as he finds a job.

Paranjothi goes to the city and starts looking for a job. One day, in hunger he faints on the street. A kind man takes him home, feeds him and finds him a job as a writer. Paranjothi writes about his job on the train and Panjali reads it.

From then on, Panjali waits for the train going east everyday to hear from Paranjothi. One night, Panjali's brother-in-law gets drunk and mistaking his wife to be Panjali, tells her that he wants to have an affair with her. His wife, realizing that her sister is in danger living with her husband, makes the necessary arrangement for her marriage. The groom's family come home and the groom says that he likes Panjali. But when Panjali gets a chance to talk to the groom alone, she tells him about her love for Paranjothi and requests him not to marry her.

Meanwhile, Panjali's brother-in-law calls for a village meeting and says that he would like to marry Panjali because his wife has not given birth to a child. The elders in the

meeting also agree to this. But before any decision could be taken, there is a sudden downpour of rain. The villagers come to know that all the lakes are full and the dam might break anytime to flood the whole village. In this regard, the elders in the village decide to perform special ceremonies to the virgin Goddess. According to them, fifty years ago there was a similar situation and the villagers performed special rites that stopped the rain and saved the village. This special rite requires a virgin woman to run naked around the village before sunrise. They organize a draw and Panjali's name is picked.

The next day morning before sunrise, all the villagers get together and perform several ceremonies with Panjali. After they go inside their house and close their doors, Panjali takes off her clothes to fulfil the rite. As she starts running, Paranjothi who comes to the village to marry Panjali sees her. On seeing her naked, he gives her his clothes. When the villagers hear Paranjothi's voice, they come out and are angry to see him causing interruption in the ceremony. They chase Panjali and Paranjothi till they safely board the moving train going east.

4.7.2 Caste issues

The villagers are caste conscious people. While Panjali belongs to the higher caste, Paranjothi's father is a barber and so belongs to the lower caste. In the first scene when Panjali meets Kaniamma, Kaniamma mistakes her to be a fortune teller and so calls her in. After they talk with each other, Panjali reveals the truth by saying that she is her

neighbour's daughter. When Kaniamma hears this, she asks her to leave her house immediately before anybody would see her. Because people belonging to different caste do not mix with each other and do not go to each other's house, particularly in villages where caste is a big issue, Kaniamma asks Panjali to leave.

Although they have this initial confrontation, they become friends because they are neighbours. Although they go out together to take water from the same river, they never go inside each other's house. Panjali stands outside and talks to Kaniamma through the window.

Paranjothi, Panjali and the army man in the village are the three people who do not care about caste. Paranjothi, because he is educated and also because he is a poet, does not believe in caste differences. He falls in love with Panjali unmindful of her caste. When she carries food for Paranjothi, he asks her to make rice balls and give it to him in his hand.

Panjali is depicted as an innocent woman. She is like a small child who plays with children and acts like a child most of the time. She is very friendly with Kaniamma and also falls in love with Paranjothi. Her love for Paranjothi crosses the social boundary of caste.

The military man is another character who is against caste differences. He supports Panjali and Paranjothi's love and even goes to the extent of arguing with the elders. In one meeting when the elders discuss about Paranjothi chasing Panjali, the military man suggests that if Paranjothi had been his relative he would have got him married to Panjali. Hearing this the elders say how that could be possible when they belong to different

castes. The military man says that all human beings are born without clothes and are equal so should not be bothered by caste differences.

In the end of the film the military man decides to leave the village because the whole village is against him. As he waits in the railway station, he sees Panjali and Paranjothi being chased by the villagers. He stops the villagers and says that he does not mind dying for the young couple and that before they would kill him, he will kill at least ten people.

In this film, caste is shown as one of the major issues. The village people are shown to be conscious of the caste differences and are even ready to kill people to stop an inter-caste marriage. Among the villagers, Paranjothi, Panjali and the military man represent the views of the film maker who do not support caste differences.

4.7.3 Family: Respect for elders

This film is about Panjali and Paranjothi's families. Panjali is an orphan who comes to live with her sister and brother-in-law while Paranjothi lives with his father and sister. His sister, after getting married, leaves the village to move with her husband. No one in the village is shown living as a joint family.

Although joint family is not shown as the norm in this film, respect for elders is still shown to be valued. In Panjali's house, Panjali respects and loves her elder sister and her brother-in-law. The elder sister is like a mother to her, who even arranges for her marriage. Panjali is never shown fighting with her sister or brother-in-law. But, between

Panjali's sister and her husband, the sister is initially shown to have control over her family. But when the brother-in-law decides to marry Panjali, his wife has no power to stop him. She and Panjali sit together and cry instead of fighting with him. In Paranjothi's family, his father is the decision maker. Even though he scolds Paranjothi, he does not retort or run away from home. He stays home and continues to respect his father. His father also arranges Kaniamma's marriage and she also does not question his authority. Both Paranjothi and Kaniamma are never shown to sit before their father. When Paranjothi is accused of attempting to rape Panjali, the elders in the village decide to tonsure his head. His father who is a barber tonsures his head and he does not disobey or argue against him or the elders in the village.

Although joint family is not shown as the norm in this film, respect for elders is still considered important. Even grown up men and women in the family respect their elders, and do not question their correctness or authority.

4.7.4 Marriage

In this film, Kaniamma's marriage is celebrated according to the custom. She is shown to be married to a man chosen by her father and relatives. During her marriage, the villagers give her money according to their social and financial status, and the amount each person gives is read out to the public on the microphone. Although it is the elder brother who arranges and is in charge of his sister's marriage, Paranjothi shows very little involvement. Because he has no money he writes a poem and does not give her any

money. When he takes part in the marriage as a stranger, the villagers mock at him for his irresponsible nature.

Although Panjali's marriage to Paranjothi is not shown in the film, one can assume that it must have taken place in the city after they run away together. Earlier, when Panjali's elder sister comes to know that her husband is sexually interested in Panjali, she arranges for her marriage. The groom's family come to Panjali's house. They all sit on the floor and the groom's parent's ask their son if he likes Panjali. Because he is shy, he says that he likes the sweets offered, indirectly indicating that he likes Panjali. Later, Panjali's sister asks Panjali to give water to the groom to wash his hands. This is usually done for the bride to see the groom and the groom to see the bride in private. Using this opportunity, Panjali tells the groom that she loves Paranjothi and that her relatives are forcing her to marry him and asks him to save her. The camera shows a close up of the groom washing his hands, indicating that he will refuse to marry Panjali.

Meanwhile, Panjali's brother-in-law decides to marry Panjali. He calls for a Panchayat meeting, where elders in the village sit in a common place to adjudicate matters. In the meeting he says that although he has been married to his wife for more than ten years she had not conceived and therefore wants to marry Panjali who is his sister-in-law. In the culture it is considered proper for a brother-in-law to marry his sister-in-law if he has no children from his first wife. Similarly, the husband can marry his wife's sister if his wife dies. A widowed woman, however, is not allowed to remarry.

But when Panjali's sister objects to her husband marrying her sister and says that her sister is too young to marry him, he says that he will either live with both of them or he

will divorce his wife to marry Panjali. The elders in the village finally come to the conclusion that Panjali's brother-in-law is right and that he has the right to marry Panjali.

In this film, there is both arranged marriage and love marriage. Kaniamma's marriage is arranged by her parents while her brother Paranjothi runs away with his lover Panjali to the city. Thus, this film reflects the conflict in marriages in the village. The villagers even consider the word love to be a bad word. In one scene when Paranjothi tells a story to little children, he says that two people were in love with each other. Hearing this the children say that he is using a bad word and Paranjothi immediately changes it by saying that friendship between the two instead of love between the two. Similarly, when the villagers see Panjali and Paranjothi together, they object to it and even go to the extreme of tonsuring Paranjothi's head which is considered to be a shame in the society. Thus, even though the film maker is sympathetic towards lovers and love marriage, and also makes the audience feel sympathetic towards the lovers, he does show that arranged marriage is the norm and is the one that is accepted in the society.

4.7.5 Religion

In this film, the villagers are shown as being very religious. They are not only religious but also superstitious. Among the major characters, Panjali is the only one who is shown to go to the temple. Even she is shown to pray to the God only once during a song in the whole film. Paranjothi is not shown as a religious character and he is never

shown praying to God although he spends most of his time near the temple writing poems.

On the other hand, the villagers are shown to be religious and superstitious. When they have continuous rain and fear flood, they decide to perform special ceremonies and religious rites for the virgin Goddess. They decide to choose a virgin woman in random and ask her to run naked around the village with a piece of wood in her hand. Almost all the people living in the village agree to perform this ceremony. One woman says that they will build a temple for the virgin girl and pray if the rain stops and they are saved. As decided, they perform ceremonies for Panjali who is chosen to be the virgin girl. Meanwhile, the rain stops and they are saved. In spite of that they try to complete the ceremony.

In the final scene when Paranjothi sees Panjali naked and gives her his waist cloth and they try to escape from the wrath of the villagers, they hide for a while in a temple. In the temple, Panjali takes the saree from the Goddess and wears it. This small incident of Panjali and Paranjothi visiting the temple and Panjali agreeing to take part in the ceremony can be interpreted as saving both their lives and helping them in their reunion.

Thus, although the main characters are not shown to be very religious, the villagers in the film are shown to be religious. Among the characters, Panjali is shown to be more religious than Paranjothi, who is never shown praying to a God.

4.7.6 Education

Paranjothi is the only character in the film who is referred to be educated. Although Paranjothi belongs to a low caste, his father educates him by sending him to a school in the town. Later, the father says that he regrets sending his son to school because Paranjothi refuses to do menial jobs in the village. He is always engaged in writing poems and stories and the villagers do not recognize or respect him for his knowledge. They ridicule and make fun of him for not doing any work and for not helping his father. Paranjothi, on the other hand, is interested in a job that would involve writing. He therefore applies for jobs and waits to hear from the city. Finally, he goes to the city and finds a good job as a writer. Because of his education, he is shown as a modern and knowledgeable man and is shown not being able to interact well with the village people. In this film also men are shown as being more educated than the woman. While Kaniamma has no education, her brother Paranjothi is shown to be educated. Paranjothi is also more educated than his lover Panjali. According to this film, even though a person is educated, if he or she is poor, without a job and belongs to a low caste no one will respect the person.

4.8 Film 7 - 1980 (1980-90)

Nenjathai Killathev (Don't pinch the heart)

4.8.1 Story

Viji is an upper middle class woman in her early twenties who lives with her elder brother Chandrasekar and her sister-in-law Mala in the city. Chandrasekar, in his early thirties, is a businessman who is depicted as being very close to his sister and patient towards his nagging wife. Mala argues with Chandrasekar because of his friendship with Ramya, who is her age, and suspects him having an affair with her. But, according to Chandrasekar, his relationship with Ramya is innocent with no sexual interests. He and Ramya were friends before marriage, but because he did not know that she was interested in marrying him, he married Maya. Because Chandrasekar did not marry her, Ramya remains a celibate.

Viji, who cannot stand the way her sister-in-law treats her brother, spends most of her time outside her house. One day while jogging she meets Ram. He is her age and is an athlete who works in a car repair shop. They meet everyday and become friends.

One day, Chandrasekar takes Viji with him to meet their relative and family friend Pratap who is a popular model photographer. Pratap is attracted to Viji and Viji is impressed by his work.

Maya and Viji do not like each other and so they often quarrel. One day, in her brother's absence, Viji dances to loud music. Her sister-in-law asks her to turn off the

music because she wants to sleep. Viji, instead of turning off the music increases the volume. Maya gets up and turns off the music and Viji ends up calling her names. Meanwhile, Chandrasekar returns home and seeing his sister and wife arguing with each other, asks his wife to stop bickering. Maya gets angry at her husband for supporting his sister instead of her. Chandrasekar meets his sister after some time and tells her that she should not disobey or disrespect her sister-in-law who is older than her. He also tells Viji that quarrelling with Maya might result in ruining her life in the future.

The next day, Viji invites Ram to her home for her birthday. She introduces Ram to her brother and her brother says that he knows him because he leaves his car in Ram's workshop for repairs. Later when they sit down for lunch, Chandrasekar calls the servant to serve them food. His wife answers from the kitchen that the servant is busy. Chandrasekar then asks her to come serve them, but she says she has a head ache and also insults Ram and Chandrasekar. Ram leaves without eating and Chandrasekar takes Viji to Ramya's house for lunch. He introduces Viji to her and says that Ramya is a good friend of his and explains his relationship with her. Viji says she likes Ramya and also says that she will call Ramya her sister-in-law.

That night Chandrasekar and Viji return home. As soon as Chandrasekar enters his bedroom his wife starts arguing. She complains that Viji does not respect her and should therefore not live with them. Chandrasekar leaves the room to sleep on the couch in the living room.

The next day, Viji and Ram go to Pratap's studio to see him work. When Ram notices that Viji is impressed and interested in Pratap's work, he becomes jealous. He tells Viji

that he wants to go home and asks her to come with him. When she refuses, he gets angry and leaves her.

Viji meets Ram three days after he had left her in Pratap's studio. She asks him where he had been and why he looks depressed. He says he does not want to see or talk to her because she likes Pratap. Viji gets angry and tells him that she does not want to do anything with a suspicious man like him and walks away. The next day Ram meets Viji and says he is sorry and promises not suspect her again. He also proposes marriage to her.

Viji tells her brother that she wants to marry Ram. He is surprised, but tells her that she will have problems living with him because of his suspicious nature. While they are discussing this, Pratap comes there. Chandrasekar takes him inside and tells him about Viji's intentions and asks him to advise Viji not to marry Ram. Pratap meets Viji, congratulates her and asks her as to who first made the marriage proposal. She says it was Ram. Pratap then asks her if she loves Ram and she says that she likes Ram. Pratap then asks her if she likes him and she says yes. He finally asks her why she did not marry him and she says that he did not ask her. Pratap walks away congratulating her once again.

The next day, Viji tells Ram that her brother has given his approval for their marriage. She asks him to inform his parents and request them to meet her brother immediately. Ram informs his parents and they go to Viji's house. When they go to Viji's house only Maya is home. She tells them that Viji is a nice girl but had once become pregnant and had an abortion. Hearing this, Ram's parents leave the house and go tell Ram that Viji

is a bad girl and that she had an abortion. Initially Ram does not believe them but they convince him.

The next day Ram meets Viji and tells her that his parents came and had left. When Viji asks him what happened, he says that their parents left after hearing that she had an abortion. Viji asks Ram if he believes it and he says he is not sure. Viji feels insulted and angered and leaves him.

She goes home and tells her brother that she does not want to marry Ram. When Chandrasekar asks her why, she does not give an answer. Initially Chandrasekar is angry but calms down and then asks Viji to marry Pratap. She refuses and says that she wants to continue her studies. Chandrasekar convinces her that it is not possible to study after what had happened. He asks her to think for a while and come to a decision. Viji agrees to marry Pratap, but tells her brother that she is doing it for him and because of his insistence.

Viji marries Pratap. They go on their honeymoon and spend a week together, but Viji does not speak a word to Pratap. Even after they return home Viji does not talk to Pratap. Because of this domestic disharmony Pratap finds it difficult to concentrate on his work and his work suffers. His employer asks him to resign his job.

Meanwhile, Ram marries a rich lame girl as advised by his parents. He intentionally rents an apartment in the same building Viji and Pratap live. The reason for his moving in the same building is to help Viji and Pratap get together. One day he meets Viji in the lobby and tells her that he is living in the same building and says that he will visit her when he finds time. The same day he goes to Viji's home and talks to Pratap while

Viji pretends to be asleep. Ram leaves, but before leaving he tells Pratap that he will visit them the next day when Viji is awake. The next day when he visits Viji's home she refuses to see him by feigning temporary blindness caused by soap that had touched her eyes while washing her face. Ram leaves after talking to Pratap.

The next day when Ram is about to enter Viji's home he hears Pratap telling Viji that he had lost his job and therefore plans to leave the city. Pratap also tells Viji that she need not come with him if she did not want to. Ram immediately goes to his house and phones Viji and asks her to come see him. When she goes to his house, Ram tells her that he is married to a lame woman and is happy. He also tells her that Pratap is a good and a better man than him and he deserves to be happy.

When Viji returns home, her servant gives her Pratap's letter and tells her that Pratap was waiting for her and had left to the airport a while ago. Viji reads the letter and rushes to the airport.

Meanwhile, Pratap calls Chandrasekar from the airport and tells him that he had waited for Viji and since she did not come he was leaving alone in half an hour.

Viji reaches the airport just before the plane leaves. She asks one of the airport officials to inform Pratap about her. He sends the message and Pratap comes out. Viji runs to him and hugs him. Chandrasekar, who comes to the airport is happy to see his sister and Pratap together.

4.8.2 Caste issues

In this film, caste is not mentioned. All the main characters except Ram are depicted as belonging to the upper economic class in the society. This does not mean that they should not belong to the low caste, but the film maker does not address this issue even implicitly. Viji and Ram are shown to like each other and are ready to marry without knowing each other's caste. Similarly, Chandrasekar also agrees for his sister's marriage without asking Ram's caste. Caste therefore does not come in between people. Based on this film, one can assume that the film maker is not concerned about the characters' caste.

4.8.3 Family: Respect for elders

There are three families in this film. Viji's family consists of Chandrasekar, his wife Maya, and herself. Ram is the only son of his parents and Pratap's family is not shown in this film. All the families are nuclear and the elders and relatives do not live with them. This film is somewhat different from other films as far as respect for the elders is concerned. Viji does not respect or obey her older sister-in-law. She often argues and swears at her. But she does love, respect and obey her elder brother. When her brother asks her to marry Pratap, she agrees for his sake.

Although Ram has parents, they live in the village while he lives in the city. Ram respects his parents, but it does not stop him from arguing with them. When his parents

tell him that Viji had an abortion, he shouts at them. Similarly, when Ram comes to know that his parents had talked to Viji's sister-in-law and she had told them about Viji's abortion, he shouts at them. But he does marry the girl chosen by them.

Pratap, who has no relatives living with him is shown to respect Chandrasekar. He calls him sir instead of using his first name. But, he smokes and sits on the table while talking to him. These actions are not acceptable in the society, particularly smoking in front of the elders.

Maya is shown not to respect her husband. She fights and argues with him all the time. She questions his right, suspects him and nags him.

Thus, in this film, the characters of different age groups are shown to behave like equals. Although there are vestiges of respect, it has become more democratized. The film maker also shows the nuclear family as the norm. All the major characters live independently without other family members.

4.8.4 Marriage

Viji marries Pratap, even though Pratap is not her choice, but is chosen by her elder brother Chandrasekar. In the beginning, when Ram proposes marriage to Viji, she tells her brother of her liking for Ram. Although Chandrasekar does not approve of her choice, because Ram is suspicious by nature, he nevertheless agrees because Viji likes him. Viji immediately meets Ram and tells him of her brother's approval and asks him to tell his parents. As it is the norm in the Indian culture, Ram tells his parents and they

visit Viji's home to finalize the marriage. Because Viji has no parents, the elder brother and his wife carry the responsibility of marrying Viji to the most suitable person. Ram's parents meet Viji's sister-in-law Mala. Because Chandrasekar is not home, they discuss their son's marriage with Viji's sister-in-law. Mala, instead of helping Viji, lies to Ram's parents that Viji had once become pregnant and had an abortion. Because virginity for a woman is still valued, the parents leave the house and tell Ram that Viji is an immoral woman. They even refuse to use his towel and say that even the towel might be dirty, implying that Viji is dirty. Although Ram does not believe them in the beginning, he starts suspecting Viji. The next day he tells Viji about what had transpired and asks her indirectly whether she is a virgin. This angers her and she goes home to tell her brother that she does not want to marry Ram.

Chandrasekar, because he likes Pratap, asks Viji to marry him. According to him, Pratap is a nice man, is their relative, rich and sophisticated. Although Viji says she does not want to marry immediately, she concedes on her brother's insistence.

After marrying Pratap she does not talk to him. They go on a honey moon for a week, but Viji does not show any interest or liking for him. Even after they return home, Viji continues her silence. Pratap continues to shower his affection for her. When he sees her sleeping on the couch without a pillow, he places one under her head without disturbing her. On her birthday he buys her flowers and takes pictures of her. While taking pictures, Viji is reminded of Ram and throws the flowers given by Pratap. Chandrasekar who comes there to wish her, sees her action and tells her to throw away his flowers and his happiness also. Later he tells Pratap that he is sorry for his sister's

action and tells him that he is willing to take his sister back and save him from her tortures. But Pratap tells him that it is his family problem and he has no right to interfere. He also tells Chandrasekar that even though Viji might not give him the pleasures that a wife should give her husband, he is happy to have her with him.

After Pratap loses his job, he takes Viji out and starts drinking alcohol. He tells her that alcohol is not new to him because he used to drink before marrying her. In those days when he used to be drunk, he used to fight with his companions, but now he is angry with himself. He, therefore, extinguishes the lighted cigarette in his palm and says, "why the marriage . . . why all the confrontation." Seeing his action, Viji does not stop him but extinguishes the candle flame with her palm. Later that night when Viji is sleeping, Pratap carefully, without disturbing her, takes her palm and puts medicine on the injury.

When Pratap loses his job, he tells Viji that he is going back to Calcutta. He does not force her to come with him but tells her that because he did not want to torture her any further, he was leaving her. He also asks her to marry the person she wishes and be happy. Later, he meets Chandrasekar and tells him that he plans to leave and also tells him that he will not remarry.

Ram, on the other hand, marries a lame rich girl on his parent's insistence. Although he regrets his mistake of not marrying Viji and insulting her, he tries to be happy.

In this film, the film maker brings out the conflict in arranged and love marriage. Although Viji and Ram like each other, they marry fulfilling the wishes of their elders.

Even though they have problems in their arranged marriage, they end up being happy. In this way, the film maker tacitly supports arranged marriage.

The film maker also tries to show that divorce is not an answer to family disruptions. Even though Chandrasekar and his wife Maya have domestic problems and Maya nags and argues with Chandrasekar all the time, he does not divorce her. Even his love for Ramya does not encourage him to divorce his wife. His sister does suggest to him that he should marry Ramya, but Ramya says that she does not want it and Chandrasekar also does not make any attempt to marry her. Similarly, Viji's and Pratap's problems also does not end in a divorce. The film maker therefore extols the traditional values in spite of showing the conflicts arising through modernization and westernization of the traditional society.

4.8.5 Religion

None of the major characters are depicted as being religious. There is no God's picture in any of the houses and the major characters are not shown going to a temple or calling out God's name. They try to solve their own problems without going to a temple.

This does not mean that there is no mention of God in the film. One of the minor characters working with Ram is diagnosed to have cancer and he and his grandmother go to the temple. The grandmother representing the past, says that ever since she knew about her grandson's problem she has been spending her time praying to Gods. Except for this scene, there is no mention of God. It is a clear indication of the transformation

taking place in the society. Although the older generation people are religious, the younger generation are shown to be more modern and rational in their actions.

4.8.6 Education

Among the major characters in the film, Viji, Pratap and Chandrasekar are shown as being educated. They converse in English and represent the higher class in the society. Viji exchanges English novels with Pratap and they share similar ideas. In contrast, Ram does not read and is depicted as a person who had run away from home at a very early age. Because of this difference in education, they are unable to have proper rapport. Viji is modern and interacts with men without being shy, while Ram is shown to be jealous of her extrovert nature. Pratap, on the other hand, does not mind Viji's past friendship with Ram and marries her. He does not ask her about her past, but accepts her as she is. Even when Ram visit their home after their marriage, he invites him home and tries to introduce Viji to him. He is not suspicious of Viji or is shown to be bothered by her past life. His education has made him westernized and modern.

In this film, the film maker shows that it is impossible for an uneducated man to be married to an educated girl. This is one of the reasons why Viji is not married to Ram but marries Pratap. Another notable point is that women are also shown as being educated and modern. Unlike most women, Viji is shown to wear jeans, skirt and other western dresses. But she becomes traditional after her marriage and wears only sarees. Thus, in this film, both men and women are shown as being educated, but the

discrimination in the level of education in terms of gender is still maintained. Viji seems to be less educated than Pratap and Mala seems to be less educated than her husband Chandrasekar.

4.9 Film 8 - 1982 (1980-90)

Moonram Pirai (Third stage of the crescent)

4.9.1 Story

Bagyalakshmi goes on a picnic with her friends. She is in her early twenties and is very modern in her dress and behaviour. While returning from the picnic she meets with an accident and is admitted in a hospital. When she regains consciousness, she cannot identify even her parents. The doctor says that she has amnesia and can only remember things as a seven year old girl. She cannot recognize her father because he is now old, fat and bald and as a seven year old girl she had seen her father as an young, thin man with lots of hair on his head.

Soon after this, Srinivas, who is always referred to as Senu, comes to the city to meet his childhood friend. Senu is in his late twenties and is a teacher in a small town school. Senu's friend offers him liquor and he refuses to drink. The friend asks Senu if he had sex before and Senu says that he did not feel the need and has never had sex. The friend says that one should not refrain from sex and that it is a must in one's life. He therefore

takes Senu to a prostitute house. The madam of the house introduces the girls and Senu refuses to see them. The friend tells the madam that Senu is a virgin and she immediately says that she has a girl who is also new to the profession. She calls Viji and Bagyalakshmi comes out. Bagyalakshmi, now called Viji, was kidnapped from the hospital and was sold to the madam. Senu goes inside the room with Viji. He tells Viji that he will not hurt her and tries to begin a conversation and she hits him with a steel lamp. He asks her why she hit him and she says that she was afraid of him. Senu leaves.

The next day he goes to meet Viji again. He asks Viji her name and she says "Bagyalakshmi." He then asks her why others call her Vijaya and she says that she does not know. He asks her address and she says that she lives near the temple, without telling him which temple. He asks her age and she says she does not know. He then asks her mother's name and she starts crying saying that she wants to go back to her mother. Senu leaves her puzzled.

He goes to meet Viji once again the next day. This time he tells the madam that he wants to take Viji home for the night. The madam says that Viji does not behave herself and therefore she cannot send Viji with him. When Senu offers her a lot of money, she agrees. Senu elopes with Viji to his small town.

After Senu goes home, he introduces Viji to his neighbour, an old woman who is like a grandmother to him. When the old lady does not agree with what he had done, Senu says that he had found Viji in a place of ill repute and did not have the mind to leave her

there. When the old lady says that the neighbours will speak ill of him, he says that he is an orphan and does not care about his neighbours.

One day while Senu is teaching at the school, the wife of the school official asks him to come and see her after school. When he goes to see her, he finds her wearing a revealing dress. She tells him that her husband was out of station and tries to seduce him by saying that he has a good physique. When Senu says that he has to leave, she says that she is bored and will walk with him. They walk together and she tells him that she got married to her old husband as a second wife when she was about eighteen years old. Through her conversation she tries to get Senu's interest and sympathy, but Senu shows no interest in her.

Senu and Viji spend their time together, playing with each other like small children. One day while Senu is cooking, Viji asks him for some ink. He says he will get it for her later, but she tries to get it herself and falls down dropping the shelves and breaking the ink bottle. Senu gets angry and shouts at her and she starts crying. When he returns to the kitchen, he finds the food burnt. He therefore goes out to buy some food.

On his way to the shop he meets the school officials's wife. She asks him where he was going and he says to buy food. She invites him home for lunch and he says that he will come some other day. She asks him when and he says on the weekend. She says she will be waiting for him.

When Senu returns home he finds Viji missing. He goes around the town looking for her. Finally when he returns home, he finds her sitting on a chair inside the house. She tells him that she missed him and that she went to the community hall to play and fell

asleep there. She says she is hungry and he feeds her with his hand. Later, he sings a song and puts her to sleep.

The next day when Viji walks home alone with her little puppy, an iron smith who had been watching her for a long time, tells her that her puppy will be killed by the police because it has no leash. When Viji asks him where she could get a leash, he takes her to a dilapidated building and attempts to rape her. She escapes and goes home. On her way she meets Senu and tells him about what had happened. He gets angry and goes in search of him and finding him, he beats him up.

Senu's neighbour informs him one day that there is a native medicine man in the mountain who is famous for curing mental problems. Senu takes Viji to the medicine man who says that he can cure her if her problem was not from her birth. Senu says he does not know and says that he will bring her the next day for treatment.

The next day Senu goes to his school official's house for lunch. While he is in her house, his wife again tries to seduce him but he refuses by saying that he is grateful to her husband for giving him the job and he will not cheat him. He leaves her and she is disappointed.

Senu takes Viji to the medicine man the next day. Viji is put on a trance and the medicine man asks Senu to come back in the evening to take her. Meanwhile, Bagyalakshmi's parents and the police come to Senu's town after hearing from sources that Bagyalakshmi lives there. From the neighbours they come to know that Viji is with the medicine man. They go there and tell the medicine man that Viji is their daughter and that they had come to take her. The medicine man tells that Viji is under treatment

and that she should not be disturbed. Initially they want to wake her but later decide to wait till evening. Senu, who is waiting in the woods, comes to know from the old neighbour that police and Viji's parents were in town and they were looking for Viji. Senu rushes to the medicine man's house. On his way he sees Viji going out with her parents from the medicine man's house.

Senu asks the medicine man what had happened and he says that Viji was cured and that she and her parents were heading towards the railway station. Senu rushes to the station. On his way, he falls down in the mud and his clothes get dirty. He also hurts himself and starts limping. At the station he sees the train and he sees Viji in one of the compartments with her parents. There is a crowd outside her compartment and so he cannot get close to her, so Senu calls out her name from far. He calls her Viji but she does not acknowledge him because her name is Bagyalakshmi. She does not recognize him and thinks that he is a mad beggar. She throws a food parcel at him while the train starts moving. Senu cries and runs after her limping calling her Viji. The train leaves and he walks back crying and sits on a chair in the station.

4.9.2 Caste issues

In this film, the film maker does not address the issue of caste. All the major characters are well-to-do people whose castes are not mentioned. They interact with each other as though there was no such thing as caste in the society.

The only time the term caste is mentioned is by the school officials's wife. When she sees Senu going out shopping, she invites him for lunch. When he refuses she says that she does not belong to a low caste and he can very well eat in her house. This sarcastic comment of hers suggests that people belonging to the higher caste usually do not eat in the house of a lower caste person. Senu says "no....," which implies that he is not discriminatory as regards to caste. It can be assumed from Senu's complexion and name that he is a Brahmin, while the school owner's wife is dark, representing a low caste person, but the film maker does not mention this explicitly.

Overall it could be said that this film does not address the issue of caste in detail. This particular social conflict, often resulting in violent clashes in the society is not dealt with in this film.

4.9.3 Family: Respect for elders

This film deals with Senu and his relationship with amnesiac Viji. Senu is an orphan and has no relatives. Only his next door neighbour, who is an old lady, is shown as being close to him. He addresses her as his grandmother and she partakes in his personal life.

Viji is an only daughter. Because she is mentally sick throughout the film, and also does not live with her parents, it is hard to understand whether she respects her parents or not.

Although respect for elders is not clearly portrayed in this film, one can say with surety that families are nuclear in nature. Bagyalakshmi is the only daughter of her parents and her relatives do not live with them. Senu is an orphan who does not have any relatives. The neighbour old lady also lives alone. This film, therefore portrays the nuclear family as the norm.

4.9.4 Marriage

There is no marriage in the film, although Senu does dream of marrying Viji. He tells his neighbour that when he saw Viji, he knew immediately that she was for him. Later in the film, Senu buys Viji a saree and dreams of her bringing milk for him. This dream represents the first night of the marriage when the bride usually enters the room with a glass of milk in her hand. There is no other mention of marriage in the film, nor does the film maker show the conflict between love and arranged marriage.

The film maker does address the issue of marriage between an older man and a younger woman. The school official, who is in his early fifties is shown to be married to a woman in her twenties. He marries her after his first wife's death. Since widower marriage is acceptable in the society as compared to a widow marriage, there is no overt conflict displayed. But because of the age difference between them, he cannot satisfy her sexual desires. She says she feels warm all the time because "there is a fire inside" her. Because of this reason she tries to seduce Senu in her husband's absence.

4.9.5 Religion

This film cannot be called a very religious film, although in two scenes the lead characters are shown as being religious. Once, when Senu discovers Viji missing, he goes searching for her in the rain. After several hours of searching he sees the statue of Lord Ganapathy in the way side. He kneels down before the statue but does not speak a word. The camera closes on his face which shows pain, despair and disappointment. Out of the two lamps in front of the God only one is lit. Senu picks up the other and lights it.

The second scene where the characters are shown as being religious is when Viji is on her way home with her parents. She is totally cured and she and her parents are shown praying before a God. Thus, although the major characters in the film are shown to be religious, their religious feelings are not expressed in depth.

4.9.6 Education

Among the major characters in the film, Senu is the headmaster of a school. Viji also seems to be educated. The school official is educated and his wife who always listens to English music and reads English novels is also educated. Among these characters, it seems the male characters are more educated than the female.

Educated people are respected in the film. This can be observed from the way other people in the film address Senu. Everyone calls him "sir", which means he is a teacher.

He has a better standard of living than characters like the ironsmith who attempts to rape Viji. By showing the affluent side of the educated, the film maker advocates higher education and through that a comfortable life.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The reality of everyday life . . . [is] a world I share with others. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 23)

Along with the researchers cited in chapter 2, I firmly believe that "social reality" is constructed through the process of communication and interaction. People are not independent from their surroundings but are part and parcel of this symbolic web of meanings. These meanings are created, maintained and changed through the process of interpretive socialization. In the words of Berger and Luckmann, "there is an ongoing correspondence between my meanings and theirs meanings in this world, that we share a common sense about its reality" (1966, p. 23). This commonality of meanings, the "social reality", is specific to cultures and distinguishes each from the other.

I started my thesis with this broad premise and later confined it within the framework of James Carey. According to Carey, communication is central to socialization and communalization. Communication is not merely a vehicle to transmit messages or information, but also helps to bring people together in a ritualistic celebration of oneness. In his opinion, communication research consists not only in studying the effects, functions or ideology embedded in messages, but also includes interpreting symbolic messages within the context of history and culture.

Having been influenced and guided by Carey's framework, I began to contemplate the cultural differences between Canada and India, and to consider specifically the uniqueness of Indian culture. Because cultures are built on values, and because these guide the attitudes, beliefs and actions of people, I decided to observe values as expressed in the "lived experience" of people, mediated through popular films. The main reason for choosing popular films as the texts for this ethnographic research is that I was not only interested in studying culture and values in the present, but also in the past, and film made it possible for me to determine possible changes in the last four decades. Other significant reasons for this choice are that film is the most popular mass medium in India, and possesses a unique capability to express "lived experience" audio-visually. As discussed in Chapter 3, popular film is a cultural artifact that invariably shares the common meanings circulating in the culture. David Brown, in his master's thesis on National Film Board of Canada productions also concludes that "films had a value orientation similar to the dominant value orientation of the society of which the maker of the film is a member" (1990, p.132).

In the beginning of my research, I had proposed three goals. They were:

1. to examine and interpret values portrayed in popular Tamil films;
2. to examine the possible changes in values in the last four decades, and
3. to comment on Tamil society based on my findings.

The previous chapter examined and interpreted five value-expressive categories in eight popular films made between 1950 and 1990, representing four decades. This satisfied the first goal. In the following sections I will satisfy the second and third goals by addressing

each of the five value-expressive categories independently, and in terms of the changes over the four decades. Finally, I will comment on this study's relevance to Tamil and Indian culture.

5.1 Changes observed in four decades

5.1.1 Caste issues

As discussed in chapter 3, caste was, and to some extent, is still a major issue in India, especially in rural areas. As compared to villagers, however, it is common to find people living in the city to be less traditional and westernized. These people are more exposed to other cultures, particularly western, because of their exposure to various western media and to people who have visited or lived in the West. Because of this exposure, it can be expected that people living in the city will not be concerned or express discrimination in terms of caste compared to people living in the village. This was also observed in the films studied.

In the first decade of analysis, 1950-59, caste issues are consciously discussed in major or minor ways. In the film Parasakthi, the film maker makes a minor general comment about caste fights in the society through a song sung by the protagonist Gunasekar. There is also a subtle mention of caste in a scene when a refugee is interviewed. Other than that, there is no deliberate mention of caste in the film. In Devadas, however, a popular film made in the same decade, caste becomes a major issue. One of the main characters,

Parvati, is from a low caste. Although both Parvati and Devadas love each other, Devadas' father objects to his son marrying Parvati because she belongs to a low caste. Caste becomes the central issue of conflict in the film and is the cause of unhappiness and death.

In the second decade analyzed, 1960-69, caste is not at all consciously mentioned. All the major characters in this film seem to be from the higher caste and they therefore show no discrimination or raise questions regarding caste in this film.

In the third decade analyzed, 1970-89, one film Pattikada Pattana:na, does not address caste problems. But in the film Kizhakey Pogum Rayil, caste is dealt with extensively by the film maker. The hero Paranjothi belongs to a low caste while the heroine Panjali belongs to a higher caste. Even though they are in love with each other, the village elders do not approve their relationship because of their caste differences. The film maker through this film shows that caste is still a major issue, at least in villages, and advocates erasing such distinctions that disintegrates society.

In the fourth decade, 1980-1990, not only is caste not mentioned, but it is not even dealt with as a major issue. The vague reference made in Moonram Pirai is a more sarcastic comment than a significant reference. Even when it comes to marriage, caste is not shown as a hurdle. This general observance does not mean that there are no more caste feelings in the society, but it does suggest that caste has become a comparatively lesser concern in the society.

It could be concluded that caste discrimination remains more prevalent among the villagers, old and illiterate people as compared to people living in the city, young and

literate people, but even among them it has changed over the years. As this study reveals, except in one film made in the 70's, the general trend is that films have become less and less conscious about caste.

Generally, lack of exposure and opportunity to interact or integrate with foreign cultures would result in maintaining caste distinctions, and this has been changing in the last few decades. This can also be observed in North American culture where students going to the university and people living in the city show less discrimination and are less threatened by other ethnic groups and races as compared to people who have been isolated from other cultures and had no opportunity to mingle with them. Exposure minimizes the strangeness and incorporates "others" into the common meaning system.

5.1.2 Family: Respect for elders

Indian society is known for its prevalent joint family system. This extended family consists of at least three generations. Although this has been changing in the last few decades, it is still the norm for parents to live with one of their children, particularly with their eldest son. In this study of popular films, it was observed that family units consisting of at least three generations has been replaced by nuclear families.

In both films representing 1950-59, the joint family system is extolled. In Parasakthi, all the brothers live together. Even though they are separated from their father and sister in the beginning of the film, they get together in the end to become one joint family. The father and the eldest brother in the family are shown as the ultimate decision makers.

In Devadas, both Devadas' and Parvati's families are joint families. The major characters are shown to respect their elders, particularly their male elders. Their respect goes to the extent of accepting the spouse chosen by them, disregarding their personal choice and happiness.

In the second decade films, 1960-69, the joint family system is upheld, but the conflict in this social structure becomes obvious. In Bhagapirivinai, the film maker addresses the conflict in the traditional family structure. As the title of this film denotes, the film is about the partition that takes place within a family that had remained joint for generations. However, the respect for elders is still maintained and is revealed in the characters' behaviour and actions.

In the film Pasamalar, most of the characters are orphans and so do not have any relatives staying with them. But when they get married they all live together for a while. The conflict in the family structure is again revealed in the film when the sister is forced to leave her brother's house. Because the separation within the family is caused by the bad aunt rather than the main characters, it can be asserted that joint family is still valued, although the problems associated with such a system are well displayed in this film. On the whole, the films representing this decade show the growing conflict in the family system, although the traditional joint family system is upheld. Also, these films show that elders in the family, particularly the oldest male members are respected.

In the films representing the decade 1970-79, single nuclear families are shown as the norm. In the film Pattikada Pattanama, Mukaya has no parents and he lives alone. The relatives visit him everyday and take care of him but no one is shown to live with him

except his cousin Raku. The elders in the family are consulted and respected by Mukaya who is the leading character in the film. Kalpana, on the other hand, having lived and having been educated in London, does not respect the elders.

In the film Kizhakey Pogum Rayil, the nuclear family is also shown as the norm. All the major characters live with their parents or elders, but the grandparents are not shown to live with them. They are therefore two generation families. The elders in the family are respected and the hero and heroine are shown to listen to and abide by the elders' decision.

In the final decade under study, 1980-90, there is a total transformation of family structure and respect for elders. In the film Nenjathai Killathay, Viji lives with her brother and sister-in-law, Pratap lives alone, and Ram also lives alone, while his parents live in the village. Thus, not even nuclear families are always shown as the norm. In this film one can note that the sons have moved out of their parents' house and have started living alone. This change can be attributed to industrialization and westernization of the urban culture. In terms of respect for elders, there is also a notable change. Viji is shown to disrespect and swear at her older sister-in-law. Maya is shown to disregard and be impolite to her husband and Ram is shown to shout at his mother. Thus one can observe drastic changes in terms of respect towards elders.

In the film Moonram Pirai it can be noted that nuclear family is shown as the norm. Because Senu is an orphan and Viji lives with Senu as an amnesiac, the film does not address respect for elders. Although Senu is shown to respect the old woman living next door, they are not related to each other.

From films representing four decades, it can be noted that values in terms of family and respect for elders have changed considerably in the Tamil society in the last four decades. Initially it was observed that joint family was shown as the norm and the elders were respected, but after the 70's there was a notable change. Families are shown as nuclear, or persons are shown as living alone, and respect for elders is shown to decline in the 80's.

5.1.3 Marriage

Indians have always valued arranged marriage. In earlier years, marriages used to be arranged by the parents and elders without their children's consent. Even when the children did not like the spouse chosen for them, they had to agree because of social constraints. This has changed in recent years. Now, although parents and elders choose the spouse, they discuss it with their children and only when their children consent does the marriage take place. Even this is changing and the children sometimes choose their own partners and later get their parents' approval. These changes are also noticeable in the films examined.

In the film Parasakthi, representing the decade 1950-59, the eldest brother Chandrasekar is married and his marriage can be assumed to be arranged rather than a result of love. His sister Kalyani's marriage also seems to be arranged by her father and other elders. In Gunasekar's case, there seems to be love on the part of the woman before marriage,

but Gunasekar gets his brother and sister-in-law's approval. Gunasekar does not show any love for his woman friend although she loves and dreams of him. Thus, it can be concluded that arranged marriage is shown as the norm in this film.

Devadas is a film that explores the conflict in arranged marriages. Devadas and Parvati are in love with each other, but Parvati marries an old man chosen by her father and Devadas dies unmarried because of his parents' stubborn adherence to tradition. Their parents, who are class and caste conscious, do not understand or recognize their children's love for each other. Because of this, all the characters suffer. Even though the film maker portrays the conflicts in terms of marriage, he shows arranged marriage as the accepted norm in the society.

In the films representing the decade 1960-69, both arranged and love marriages are shown. In the film Bhagapirivinai, Vaidyalingam and Sundaralingam's marriage can be assumed to be arranged. Similarly, Sundaralingam's son Kannaya marries the woman chosen by his parents. However, Sundaralingam's younger son Mani marries the girl he loves. Although his parents and his elder brother Kannaya do not approve of his choice, he marries his cousin Amudha in the presence of his uncle, aunt and other elders fulfilling all the cultural rituals. Mani's parents do not approve of Mani's spousal choice, although cross cousin marriage is preferred in the culture, because of Amudha's brother who is disliked by everyone in his family. Because Mani marries his cousin and also because he does it with the blessings of his uncle, aunt and other relatives, the conflict that could have arisen because of love marriage is softened.

In the film Pasamalar, Radha loves Anand but agrees to marry the person her brother chooses for her. Similarly, Raju also marries the woman chosen by his sister. Their marriages are therefore arranged by the family members and are performed fulfilling the rites associated with it. Thus, even though Radha loves Anand, she marries him only after her elder brother's approval.

Analyzing the two popular films representing the decade 1970-79, it can be observed that the conflict in terms of marriage still exists. In the film Pattikada Pattanama, the marriage is between cross cousins, with the approval of the elders except Kalpana's mother. Kalpana decides to marry Mukaya without asking her parents. This display of independence could be attributed to Kalpana's education in London. Thus, in this film, arranged marriage and marriage between cross cousins is extolled and the elders arrange for the marriage, although the bride's mother does not approve of it.

The second film in this decade that was analyzed was Kizhakey Pogum Rayil. This film also brings out the conflicts and controversies in terms of marriage. Kaniamma's marriage is arranged by her father. Panjali's marriage is also arranged as is the custom, but she secretly makes the groom refuse her by telling him that she is in love with Paranjothi. In the end, Panjali and Paranjothi run away from the village incurring the anger of the villagers. Although their marriage, if it follows their elopement, is a love marriage, the film maker shows that arranged marriage is still the norm and that love marriage is not accepted in the society.

In the film Nenjathai Killathey, representing the decade 1980-90, there is also love between characters, but arranged marriage is still shown to triumph. Even though Viji

loves Ram, she marries Pratap who is chosen by her elder brother. Ram, who loves Viji, also changes his mind when his parents show their disapproval. He also marries the girl chosen by his parents, even though she is lame. Thus, in this film, the film maker tacitly supports arranged marriage over love marriage.

In Moonram Pirai, the film maker does not directly address the issue of arranged marriage, but does show that marriages with partners of incompatible ages will not work. Even here, the film maker makes sure that there is no sexual involvement between Senu and the school officials' wife. The film maker also implicitly shows that love marriages do not usually work by showing that even though Senu is in love with Bagyalakshmi, she leaves him in the end.

In conclusion, one can note that arranged marriages are still valued in the society. Although the existence of love marriage is shown, it is the arranged marriage that is shown as the norm in the society. In recent years the conflict between the traditional arranged marriage and love marriage is becoming tense in the society, but arranged marriage is always shown to succeed.

5.1.4 Religion

As discussed in chapter 3, most Indians are religious. Although people follow many religions and Hinduism is the most prevalent, there is a commonality in their religiosity. Religion to Indians is not a formality but almost a possession. It is not a set of

meaningless rituals but part of life, rituals with abundant meanings that guide life and action.

Representing the decade 1950-59, Parasakthi was one of the films that was interpreted. Although the film maker criticizes people who act religious but are not, he does show that by praying to God one's problems will be solved. Among the major characters, Kalyani is shown to be the most religious person. When she has no where to go and feels totally lost, she goes to a temple to pray. At the temple the priest attempts to rape her but she is saved by the man guarding the temple. Following this incident she tries to commit suicide but she is saved and also meets her lost brothers. Thus, in this film one can see both good and bad people being religious. Even the bad people like the merchant and the priest believe that by being religious they will be protected by God.

In the film Devadas, representing the same decade, it is the heroine Parvati who is shown as being religious. She lights the lamp in the shrine in her house and also in her husband's house. When she has a bad dream about her lover Devadas, she prays to the God in her house. Thus in this film also the woman protagonist is shown as being more religious than the hero.

Representing the decade 1960-69, most of the good characters in the film Bhagapirivinai, both men and women, are shown to be religious. There are pictures of God in their house and the main characters like Vaidyalingam and Kannaya are shown to visit the temple. When there is a crisis in the family, the characters become very religious. In this film also, religious nature is shown as part of the culture.

In Pasamalar, a film from the same decade, characters are not shown to be very religious, but they are religious. One minor character Sengalayan is once shown praying in front of the family shrine when Malathi gives birth to a baby. In the later part of the film, Raju is shown to go on a pilgrimage when his wife leaves for her higher education and his sister is separated from him. Thus, this film reveals the religious nature of Indian people.

In the decade 1970-79, religious observance becomes more ambiguous. For instance the characters in Pattikada Pattanama are not shown to be very religious, particularly the woman characters. This is unusual, since women are generally shown to be more religious than men. The lack of religious feeling in Kalpana could be attributed to her education abroad and to her liking for modernity. Mukaya, on the other hand, is shown to be religious. He sings a song on a religious festival. The presence of temples in the city is shown in the first scene when the camera zooms out from a temple tower and there are pictures of Gods in Mukaya's house. Although this film does not show the characters to be very religious, it does show that religious feelings continue to exist in the culture.

In Kizhakey Pogum Ravil, another film from the same decade, it is primarily the villagers who are shown to be religious, but in a superstitious manner. Among the major characters, Panjali is shown to be more religious than her lover Paranjothi. When there is a downpour of rain in the village, the villagers decide to perform a ceremony to the virgin Goddess, believing that it will end the rain. The rain does stop even before they complete the ceremony. Thus, in this film, religion is shown as a part of the culture among the villagers and the film maker extols such a religious nature.

In the decade 1980-90, characters are shown to be much less religious than in the past. In the film Nenjathai Killatheey, there are no pictures of Gods and the major characters are also shown not to visit the temple or perform any prayers. Because one of the minor characters is shown to visit the temple when he is sick, it can be interpreted that vestiges of religiosity still exist in the culture.

In the film Moonram Pirai, also from the same decade, one can again observe that characters are not as religious as in the past, but that they are still religious to some extent. When Senu finds Viji missing, he goes in search of her. On his way he comes across the statue of a God and he is shown kneeling before the God and lighting the unlit lamp. In the final scene, Viji is shown to visit the temple with her parents.

From analyzing films from four decades it was observed that people are still religious, but are becoming less and less religious as years go by. This change could be attributed to modernization of the traditional culture.

5.1.5 Education

People in India have always valued education, and educated people are respected for their knowledge. Until recently, it was the general opinion that woman needed no education because they were to stay home and look after the family, while it was thought to be necessary for a man because he was considered to be the bread winner. This has changed in recent years and education has become democratized. Nevertheless, even now

it is considered important that husbands should be more educated than their wives. This was also noticed while interpreting the popular films.

In the film Parasakthi, representing the decade 1950-59, the eldest brother Chandrasekar is shown as a magistrate. Although he and his brothers appear to be educated, their sister is uneducated or less educated. Educated people are shown to lead a comfortable life and are shown to be respected in the society although the simple uneducated people are sometimes shown as having better character.

In the film Devadas, the film maker presents education as being essential for a man and not for a woman. Devadas is sent to the city for his education while Parvati's education is discontinued. Her grandmother says that girls do not need more than primary education and being literate is enough. Thus, in this film, education is considered necessary for a man but not for a woman, and the educated are shown to be less worldly wise compared to the less educated.

In the film Bhagapirivinai, representing the decade 1960-69, men are shown to be more educated than the women characters. The educated Mani is shown to be modern and westernized, while his uneducated brother Kannaya is rustic in his appearance and behaviour. Although Kannaya is not educated, he is shown to be a better person than Mani. But Mani is respected for his education.

In the film Pasamalar, the hero Raju is initially uneducated, but when he becomes rich he educates himself and learns English. He marries a doctor who is more educated than him. Initially he is hesitant to marry her because she is more educated than him, but her brother convinces him that she will act like a traditional wife and will respect and take

care of him. He does marry her, but they are not compatible because of their difference in education. The film maker therefore implicitly advocates that women should be less educated than men. It is still the notable aspect of this film that some women are shown as being educated and holding a professional position such as a doctor. The educated people are respected in the film and the film advocates education as being necessary for a good life.

In the decade 1960-69, the heroine in Pattikada Pattanama is more educated than her husband, and because of this they have domestic disputes. The hero, Mukaya, initially is hesitant to marry Kalpana because she is more educated than him, but because she is his cousin and also because the elders in the family want him to marry her, he agrees. Educated people, particularly the foreign-educated, are shown as being westernized, and not respecting Indian culture. Although educated people are respected generally, the film maker shows that women who are more educated than their husbands do not respect them and because of this there will be disharmony in the family. The film maker therefore upholds the traditional belief that a woman should be less educated than her husband. But one can notice that women are also shown as being educated.

In Kizhakey Pogum Ravil, the hero Paranjothi is the only person in the village who is shown to be educated. Because he is from a low caste and also because he does not work and earn money, the villagers ridicule him instead of respecting him. In this film, therefore, contrary to the others, education is not valued for itself. Education is therefore shown as having no value if the educated person cannot find a job and make money. For a rich person, education is seen as a value but for the poor it becomes a means to make

money. This relationship is not only between class and education but also between caste and education. For a lower caste person, education is seen in instrumental terms, means to make money and thereby raise in the social status rather than as a value in itself.

In Nenjathai Killatheey, a film representing the decade 1980-90, both the hero and heroine are shown as being educated. Among the two heroes, Pratap is educated and Ram is not educated. Because of their difference in the level of education, Pratap is more respected than Ram. Finally it is Pratap who marries Viji and not Ram. As an educated man, Pratap is shown to be more liberal and sophisticated compared to Ram, who suspects Viji for everything. Thus, in this film also, education in terms of gender is addressed. The film maker implicitly shows that it is impossible for an uneducated man to successfully marry an educated woman.

In the film Moynram Pirai, both the male and female characters are shown as being educated. The educated people are shown to be respected by other people and are shown to lead a comfortable life.

Overall it could be said that levels of education in terms of gender has remained unchanged in the four decades that were studied. The husbands were and are still expected to be more educated than their wives. The only notable change that is observable is that women are also shown to be educated. In spite of women having an education, they are still primarily shown to stay home rather than work outside.

5.2 Tamil culture and society

Cultures are never static; they change over time. The notable changes cannot be attributed to one particular cause, but to a plurality of causes. Changes are part of the social process, and changes occur over an indeterminate period of time. In the preceding sections it was observed that some value-expressive categories, as observed in popular Tamil-Indian films, have drastically changed in the last four decades while some have changed only slowly. In this section, I will discuss some of the observed changes.

The notable change in terms of caste, especially in the cities as compared to the villages, could be either attributed to the city people's exposure to foreign cultures or to the necessity to mingle because of societal changes brought about by industrialization and urbanization. Just because contemporary popular films do not address caste issues, one cannot come to the conclusion that caste feelings have been totally erased in the society. The reason for the popularity of films that do not address caste issues in detail could also be attributed to peoples' escapist desire to see film characters as belonging to the higher castes and living more lavish and glamorous lives. They might be seeking relief from their everyday reality. From my lived experience in India, I have noticed that caste is no longer a major issue in the cities as in the past, and that economic differences have become a more important basis for discrimination than traditionally determined caste.

On the other hand, I have noted that traditionally arranged marriages are still considered to be the norm, although love marriages are also being accepted. The general

preference for arranged marriage over love marriage could be attributed to the fact that Indian society is still comparatively traditional. Although there have been some notable changes in terms of values that were weakly held in the society, the stronger values like arranged marriage are still supported. This does not mean that this value will not change, but it only means that it takes more time for this particular value to change as compared to the joint family. Arranged marriages are still supported because of the lack of pressure to change.

The disintegration of joint family could be most attributed to industrialization and urbanization in Indian societies. Because people had to move out of the villages to seek better employment opportunities, they were forced to break away from the traditional joint family. In the earlier years, sons took up their father's job and so had to live with him. Since the advent of industrialization, people are more economically independent in terms of choosing employment and in turn are more mobile.

I had noted that people in India are still religious, although less religious as compared to the 50's. This minor change could be attributed to the growing situation where people have very little time outside work to spend in religious activities, and more people live outside village cultures. This particular value-expressive category is not expected to disappear totally as long as the mysteries of life and death continue to be beyond human control.

Finally, in terms of education, it was observed that women continue to be less educated than their spouses, although their general level of education has gone up in recent years. Education is less respected in the society for itself, but for its instrumental or utilitarian

value. A poor educated person is no longer respected as much as a rich uneducated person. It could be said that materialistic values are superimposing themselves on the traditional humanistic values in the society.

Indian society has been described by the Western scholars as a traditional society. From this study I found that contemporary Indian values, as represented in popular films, are still traditional compared to the Western values, but are modern when compared to the past decades. The changes are observed in the Tamil society are therefore seen in the direction of modernity. This corresponds to my own observations of Tamil society. The East follows the West, at least in the values of "modernism" in the contemporary industrial society. It is not possible to say with certainty whether the East has followed the West or vice-versa over the long term, but one can look at contemporary societies and say with surety that the East does try to catch up with the West in terms of values in the short term. However, many in the West, having become disillusioned by so-called modernity, are trying to go back to traditional values.

Although Eastern and Western countries have different value systems at any moment of time, they are part of a spiral following the same path at a different pace, reaching the same point at different points of time. Thus, while India is in the process of becoming modern, in terms of values, a significant part of the population in the Western countries are attempting to force a return to traditional values, consciously trying to slow down the process of change. Film in India, as elsewhere, contributes both to the support of traditional values and to the subversion of traditional values, as part of modern technology, however, on balance, film reflects change than stability.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

When I started this study, I was uncertain as to how I would address values as depicted in popular films. Although I could have done a critical study of these popular films, I decided to do a cultural and historical study. The reason for this choice was not arbitrary but because there was no study yet done interpreting the existing and past values portrayed in popular Tamil films.

With this study as a beginning, I would suggest four areas for further research. The first is that researchers should now study why some values have changed while others have not, and why certain values are advocated and supported by the film makers over others. It is a fertile ground for feminist and Marxist critics to utilize their critical tools to study these films and to investigate the relationship of the ideology of the dominant class in the society to other social classes and alternate ideologies.

The second suggestion I have for further research is to compare popular Indian films with popular Canadian or American films and to find out the differences in values that each of these cultures support or portray. In addition, one might also do a historical study of American or Canadian films alongside Indian films to compare their changes in values over the same time period.

The third suggestion is to compare the values portrayed and supported in contemporary Indian popular films with the values supported by different classes of people of the same culture to find out the similarities and differences.

Finally, I would suggest that it would be interesting to compare the values in the most popular films with those of the least popular films of the same culture, and to discover whether it is the values supported in these films that correlate to their popularity.

5.4 Summation

One can say that the most notable change in Indian values is in terms of family structure. It has changed from joint family to nuclear families. This is followed by changes in caste, which was shown to be a major concern but is no longer depicted as an issue, at least in the cities. Education is still valued, but in more instrumental terms. In addition, the gender difference in the level of education is still maintained although women are also shown as being more educated. People are still shown as being religious, although they are not as religious as in the 1950's. The value-expressive category that has changed least is marriage. Although film makers have started depicting and supporting love marriages, it is the arranged marriage that is shown as the norm and as having least conflict and tension in the family and society.

Now I think I understand why my father and grandmother always said that things are different now, and that they are ashamed of the developments and changes they see in the society. They always thought that films had ill influence and they corrupted culture, and they spent their time revelling in their nostalgia of a pristine past. I can tell them that films are not the only culprit, since they usually represent the values existing in a society and that values change with time. If they wanted to maintain the culture and values over

time, they would have to freeze time, shut their doors, and totally isolate themselves from life. For, life is change.

Finally, in reiteration, I have demonstrated that popular films share the conventional meanings circulating within a culture, and are valuable documents that can be referred to by social scientists interested in studying culture and society.

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