



Nostalgia and Narrative: Anik Dutta's *Bhooter Bhabishyat* and Bengali Historicity

Dr. Bappa Maji

Assistant Professor

School of Creative and Performing Arts

Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University, Kanpur, India

Abstract: In the dynamic landscape of Bengali cinema, the work of director Anik Dutta, particularly exemplified in his 2012 film *Bhooter Bhabishyat* stands as a pivotal marker of change. In this cinematic narrative, the lead protagonist, a young filmmaker, serves as the conduit for audiences to traverse a meticulously crafted tapestry of Bengali history, spanning from the medieval Islamic era to the advent of post-modernism. Through the medium of moving images, the film masterfully encapsulates the nostalgia of Bengali history while concurrently reflecting on the evolution of filmmaking itself.

This paper delves into the intricate interplay between technology and the innate eloquence of Bengali cinema as showcased in *Bhooter Bhabishyat*. It aims to scrutinize how technological advancements manipulate and reshape the cinematic language, thereby influencing the cultural and societal fabric of post-millennium Bengal. By examining this transformation, the study seeks to unveil cinema's adaptive nature as an artistic medium, constantly reinventing itself to mirror the ethos of its time. Through this exploration, it seeks to shed light on the broader shifts occurring within Bengali society and culture, as mirrored through the lens of its cinematic expression.

Index Terms - Post-modern (West) Bengali film making, Bengali Cinema, Post-Millennium Bengali Culture, Cinema as an Art, Anik Dutta, *Bhooter Bhabishyat*, Ghost Movies & Bengali History.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bengali cinema has played a significant role in shaping the Indian film industry, contributing to its reputation as one of the largest in the world. With an impressive annual output averaging around 800 films, it stands shoulder to shoulder with other global film hubs like Hong Kong and Hollywood. However, amidst this prolific output, Tollywood, the Bengali film industry, stands out for its focus on creating meaningful cinema, often surpassing the glitz and glamour associated with Bollywood.

In this article, we delve into the evolution of filmmaking language over the years and its impact on Bengali society and culture in the post-millennium era. We explore how cinema serves as a mirror reflecting societal changes and how it contributes to the reshaping of cultural norms and values.

Furthermore, this study investigates the dynamic nature of cinema as an artistic medium, constantly adapting to the evolving tastes and preferences of audiences. Through examining the themes, narratives, and techniques employed in Bengali cinema, we gain insight into the broader trends within the film industry and their influence on society at large.

In essence, we embark on a journey to understand not only the artistic and cultural significance of Bengali cinema but also its role in driving social change and shaping the collective consciousness of a generation.

The inception of Indian cinema dates back to 1896 with the arrival of silent films introduced by the Lumiere Brothers. However, following this initial spark, there was a lull in production for about 15 years until N. G. Chitre and R. G. Troney rekindled the cinematic tradition with the release of *Pundalik* in 1912. This film, centered around a Maharashtrian holy sadhu, marked a resurgence in Indian filmmaking. Building upon this momentum, Dhandiraj Govindraj Phalke made a significant contribution to Indian cinema by producing *Raja Harishchandra* in May 1913, often hailed as the cornerstone of the Indian film industry. Phalke is widely regarded as the pioneer or the father of Indian cinema due to his pioneering efforts that laid the groundwork for the future of the industry.

The evolution of Indian cinema took a significant leap forward with the advent of talkie films, exemplified by Ardeshir Irani's groundbreaking production *Alam Ara* in 1931. This marked a revolutionary shift in the industry, as films could now incorporate dialogue and sound, enhancing the cinematic experience.

During the early 1920s, Indian cinema predominantly gravitated towards specific genres like mythological or devotional films. However, a notable transition occurred in the 1950s, particularly in Malayalam, Tamil, and Bengali cinema, where a departure from traditional themes took place. Instead, these films began focusing on social narratives, portraying the lives of ordinary families and addressing pertinent societal issues. This shift reflected a broader cultural transformation within Indian cinema, as filmmakers started to explore more diverse and socially relevant subject matters, resonating deeply with audiences across the country.

The Bengali film industry boasts a rich history dating back to the introduction of the first feature film, *Billwamangal* by Madan Theatre in 1919. Over the decades, Bengali cinema has been profoundly influenced by luminaries such as Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Tapan Sinha, and Ritwik Ghatak. However, this list of directors is by no means exhaustive; there exists a cadre of talented filmmakers including Purnendu Pattrea, Buddhadeb Dasgupta, Nitish Mukherjee, Goutam Chakraborty, Aparna Sen, Goutam Ghosh, Sandip Roy, and Rituparno Ghosh, each contributing significantly to the industry's diversity and depth.

In recent times, contemporary directors like Koushik Ganguly, Srijit Mukherjee, Mainak Bhowmik, Anindya Chatterjee, and Anik Dutta have continued to push the boundaries of Bengali cinema with their innovative storytelling and bold narratives. This paper delves into Anik Dutta's *Bhooter Bhabishyat* (2012) film, focusing on three major aspects of the movie: the first is change of Bengali people's lifestyle, the second is the evolution of Bengali cinema, and the last point is about the director's criticism to the Bengali things through his film. Modify or change the article.

II. Data and Sources of Data

Primary data will be collected through references from relevant books and by analyzing various Bengali movies.

Secondary data will be obtained through qualitative research methods, including literature reviews, analysis of articles, research papers, and other published information to gain insights into the current scenario. This approach will involve understanding the perspectives of experienced Creative Design Artists to identify existing coverage and any gaps in the field. The research will entail in-depth analysis of web sources, research papers, management reports, seminar papers, and other relevant documents. Additionally, information will be gathered from reference books, magazines, journals, web sources, interviews, and documents to ensure comprehensive coverage in the report.

III. Theoretical Framework

Anik Dutta, a multifaceted filmmaker known for his unique storytelling and creative vision, has left an indelible mark on the Indian film industry with his distinctive works. Among his notable achievements stands *Bhooter Bhabishyat*, a cinematic gem that captivated audiences with its blend of humor, social commentary, and supernatural elements. Directed by Dutta, the film garnered both critical acclaim and commercial success, solidifying his position as a prominent figure in Bengali cinema.

Born into a prestigious lineage, Dutta draws inspiration from his illustrious family background. As the grandnephew of the legendary filmmaker Bimal Roy and the grandson of Narendra Chandra Dutta, the founder of Bank of India, he inherited a rich legacy of creativity and entrepreneurship. However, Dutta forged his own path in the film industry, carving out a niche as an independent filmmaker with a penchant for thought-provoking narratives.

Dutta's journey in the world of cinema began with his education in Kolkata, where he attended South Point and Pathbhavan schools before pursuing a degree in Economics at St. Xavier's College. Fuelled by his passion for storytelling, he further honed his skills by obtaining a post-graduate diploma in integrated marketing communication from the same institution. Armed with a strong educational foundation, Dutta embarked on his filmmaking career with a focus on advertising and documentary filmmaking.

Establishing two production units, Bioscope and Film Shop, Dutta immersed himself in the world of advertising, creating compelling content for various brands and corporations. His companies produced a myriad of television commercials, ranging from Tata Steel to ITC, showcasing his versatility and creativity as a filmmaker. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the advertising industry, Dutta was honored with the prestigious Srijon Samman Award in the best original commercial category in 2004.

Bhooter Bhabishyat stands as a testament to Dutta's storytelling prowess and his ability to weave together disparate elements into a cohesive narrative. Set against the backdrop of a dilapidated mansion haunted by a motley crew of ghosts, the film explores themes of urbanization, gentrification, and the clash between tradition and progress. Through the character of Ayan Sengupta, a director embroiled in the supernatural world of the mansion, Dutta deftly navigates the complexities of Kolkata's changing landscape, juxtaposing the past with the present.

At its core, *Bhooter Bhabishyat* is a poignant reflection on the ephemeral nature of time and the enduring power of storytelling. As the ghosts of Chowdhuri Mansion band together to preserve their home from the clutches of a relentless developer, they not only defy the forces of modernisation but also reclaim their place in history. In a touching gesture of solidarity, Biplab, a ghost with a penchant for storytelling, entrusts Ayan with the task of immortalizing their tale on film, thus ensuring that their legacy lives on for generations to come.

In summary, Anik Dutta's *Bhooter Bhabishyat* stands as a testament to his creative vision and storytelling prowess, weaving together elements of humor, social commentary, and supernatural intrigue into a compelling cinematic experience. Through his innovative approach to filmmaking, Dutta has cemented his status as a trailblazer in Indian cinema, leaving an indelible mark on audiences worldwide.

IV. Results and Discussion

In this film, most of the characters represent different periods of Bengal. The director has shown us the evolution of Bengali cinema. Cinema is a form of entertainment for people. There, we have been seeing a combination of singing, dancing, acting and other activities. In Bengal, we have seen that Jamindars are entertained through Durga puja and Female Dancers. Bengal Nawabs are entertained by chef-made delicious dishes. After that period, theatre came to Bengal. During British rule, we have noticed Palli Giti (folk Song) and Swadeshi songs. The film was started in the Colonial Period. It started during the Silent Era. In this film Director, Anik Dutta uses greyscale to revive the old period that covers the 1940s, also replicates shooting logistics, use of direct light, dual shadow, hand-drawn background, stylistic use of cinematography, costumes, and makeup everything. Before the playback tradition, heroines were capable of singing. The director also replicated this part by using a female character named, Kodoli Bala. He used sepia tones (Darpo Narayan Choudhury and Ramse sequence) for the development of cinema and showing for the different periods. After that, in 1970 Mrinal Sen used a handheld camera in his film. The director also captured the process of cinema himself.

When colour was introduced in film it covered the domain of television. As a consequence of that, we can see the influence of that in advertisements and there we needed some advertisement film directors (Anik Dutta himself is an ad film director), these entire things are shown in Anik Dutta's film. The digital camera was introduced in contemporary cinema. He used a digital camera and represented the technical development of Bengali cinema. Along with the development of cinema, he has described the importance of technicians, assistant directors, DOP or camera-men and production managers. How to think a story of a film, plot, location, this entire work process we have seen in this cinema. The director has described the cheap publicity of the modern film heroine and the importance of producers in Bengali films from a commercial angle.

The evolution of Bengali films happened through time, and here the director represents the time through some characters and their different socio-economic background. Like, the Battle of Plassey (1857) was represented through Nawab's *Bawarchi* or the chef (Khaja Khan); after that British Rule (Ramsey "sahib") and Native Zamindar (Darpo Narayan Choudhury) got introduced. We have seen British adulation and adverse behaviour to tenants by Zamindar. Communal riots of East Bengal (1940) were represented through Refugee (Bhutnath Bhaduri) and their sentiments of Bangal and Ghoti, Elisha and prawn, then 1970's Naxalite movement represented by Biplob Dasgupta. The director has established modern-day Kolkata through different characters. Middle-class Bengali sentiment, salesman and their demand house, car, credit card, instalment also business man's child (KoelDhar), singer of Bangla Band (Pablo Purokaystho), rapid urbanization and flat culture, Promoter (Ganesh Vutoria), anti-social elements, gangsters, Rikshaw puller (Atmaram), the superstition of Bengali people (T. K. Guchait) everything conveys the modern Kolkata scenario.

V. Conclusion

Bhooter Bhabishyat is a Bengali horror comedy film. But the director also gives some messages in this film. He exhibited the evolution of Bengali cinema through time, similarly different periods represented through different characters, and the characters' conversations tell social cultural and political criticism. We have seen social decadence but the director has not said this explicitly to the viewers. He criticised everything in a very decent manner through the comedy. Somewhere, Bengali evolution's history is flashed through the citizens of Bengal. But, Anik Dutta's craft showcases the notion and makes it clear that this is also a stereotypical assessment of the serious culture and popular culture generally created by urban intellectuals and scholars. This study finds that his films are unique and not individual; rather, they introduce a new perspective instead of being mere repetition. Interestingly, his movies do not belong to so-called Bengali serious Art House cinema but to popular culture which is usually criticized and neglected by intellectual film researchers. This is due to Dutta's attempt to amalgamate both old and modern views of Bengaliness and the generic history. In the movie, Ayan said that "Film is the highest form of commercial art". Bengal and Bengali sentiments are hiding everywhere in this film. Instead of remaining stagnant in any typical cultural space, his film echoes the feelings of a large cross-section of people. With the popular outline of colours of reality, the film represented 21st-century Bengaliness. Real life and cinema are complementary to each other. If literature is the mirror of society, then to understand the demands and dilemmas of the urban and semi-urban Bengalis, we have to include the visual cultural products that add up to these popular spaces in discussions of South Asian Visual Cultures. *Bhuter Bhabishyat* shows us a new way that we can take this, using the tools provided by comparative cinema-study methodology.

VI. References

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