



A CRITICAL REVIEW OF A MARATHI FEATURE FILM- KUNKU (1937)

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Abstract:

Movies irrespective of language and setting, always try to convey a message directly or indirectly to the spectators in the pertinent time zone and eve rafter through its characters, dialogues, songs, music,etc. Marathi movies have significantly contributed to the constructive growth of a humanitarian society by preaching age old principles of humanity like liberty, equality and fraternity. It has provided multidimensional lenses of gender equality, girl education, women empowerment, love for culture, honesty towards modernity in humanitarian sense. Kunku(1937) is such a Marathi movie which can be studied with different perspectives to understand its multifarious power of conveying a strong social message to the society by then. It can still be studied for its commendable characters, settings, dramatic climaxes and heart-touching rendering of human world caught between difficult kinds of socio-political nuances.The Paper under consideration will throw light on significance of this movie, its novel base, plot, songs and strong social message to the Marathi speakers in particular in to the the world in general.

Youtube Link of the movie 'Kunku' : https://youtu.be/g5_0pEkKzz4

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Introduction:

'Kunku' had its initial release in 1937. It was director by V. Shantaram. Music director: for this movie was Keshav Vaman Bhole. Story was based on a significant novel written by: Narayan Hari Apte with the title- *Na Patnari Goshta*. Cast primarily included Shanta Apte, Keshavrao Date, Raja Nene and more. Screenplay was provided by Narayan Hari Apte, Munshi Aziz.A close observation and study of this movie would surely provide an everlasting impact on the reader's mind.

Significance of the Title of the Movie-**Kumkuma: Kunku in Marathi-**

It is a powder used for social and religious markings in the state of Maharashtra and many states in India. It is made from turmeric or any other local materials. The turmeric is dried and powdered with a bit of slaked lime, which turns the rich yellow powder into a

red color. Kumkuma is most often applied by Indians to the forehead. The reason involves the ancient Indian belief that "the human body is divided into seven vortices of energy, called chakras, beginning at the base of the spine and ending at the top of the head. The sixth chakra, also known as the third eye, is centered in the forehead directly between the eyebrows and is believed to be the channel through which humankind opens spiritually to the Divine".Thus, the kumkuma is placed where Indians believe to be the most important spot for receptivity to be enhanced.

Haldi-Kunku mark a religious and soulful tradition-

In the Vaishnava tradition, the "white lines represent the footprint of their God, while the red refers to his consort, Lakshmi".The Swaminarayana tradition holds that the tilaka (yellow U-shaped mark) "is a

symbol of the lotus feet of Paramatma," and the kumkuma "represents the bhakta" (devotee). In both of these traditions, the forehead mark serves as a reminder that a devotee of God should always remain protected at the feet of God. The 'color' of the womb is yellow and is symbolically represented by turmeric. The blood stains on the womb is represented by kumkuma. It is believed that the combination of turmeric and kumkuma represents prosperity.

Kumkuma and women- When a girl or a married woman visits a house, it is a sign of respect (in case of an elderly lady) or blessings (in case of a girl) to offer kumkuma to them when they leave. However, it is not offered to widows. Men, women, girls, and boys also apply a dot on their forehead of red turmeric powder, when visiting a temple or during a pooja. Kumkuma at temples is found in heaps. People dip their thumb into the heap and apply it on the forehead or between the eyebrows. In most of India, married women apply red kumkuma to the parting of their hair above their forehead every day as a symbol of marriage. This is called vermilion, or in Hindi, *sindoor*. In southern India, many unmarried girls wear a bindi every day unlike northern India where it is only worn as a symbol of marriage.

Kumkuma is also widely used to worship the Hindu goddesses, especially Shakti and Lakshmi. In some castes in Maharashtra, it is applied as a horizontal line running parallel to the forehead. During navratr, full forehead of goddess is smeared with a broad horizontal band of kunku called "Malvat". kumkuma powder is thrown (along with other mixtures) into the air during Holi (the Festival of Colours), a popular Hindu spring. It is believed that Kumkuma also prevents one from "negative energies entering the body".

In this movie, the central character is always shown puzzled and sad while applying kunku to her forehead as she is not happy with that ritual which reminds her the unwanted old husband who had deceived her and married her treacherously against her wish.

About the Movie- Kunku is a 1937 a Marathi classic social drama film directed by V. Shantaram, and based on the novel, *Na Patnari Goshta* by **Narayan Hari Apte**, who also wrote film's screenplay. The film was simultaneously shot and released in Hindi as *Duniya Na Maane*.

The movie went on to become both a critical and commercial success, and was shown at the Venice International Film Festival. The film is now hailed for

Central Themes-

- 1) A daring attack on the treatment of women in Indian society
- 2) A succinct depiction of child marriage
- 3) A marriage system as a business
- 4) Spirit of revolt and determination
- 5) Being Hopeful, Futuristic, imagining a better world for post-modern women

PLOT –

A young woman, Nirmala (Shanta Apte), known affectionately as Neera, is orphaned and comes to live in the house of her maternal uncle. His wife, a very good lady, urges her husband to do his duty and arrange for Nirmala to marry a suitable young man. The uncle finally brings a family to meet his niece, consisting of a handsome young man, his much younger brother, his middle aged father and his widowed aunt (father's sister). The meeting is cordial, and a few days later, Nirmala's uncle comes home with the news that the boy's family has agreed to the match. On the day of the wedding, While Nirmala sits inside a room like a demure bride, her aunt is at the gate to receive the groom with aarti. She is horrified and faints

when she discovers that the elderly father is the groom! When she recovers, her husband tells her sternly not to make a scene but to ensure that Nirmala goes quietly with her husband, the much older widower, Kaka Saheb (Keshavrao Date).

The story is based on a novel by Shri. Narayan Hari Apte. It reminds us instinctively of the story of Sharada, a play by Deval which had long been a classic of Marathi theatre. Neera, a young girl, is married off to an old widower by her foster-parents, an uncle and his orthodox wife. The deal is obviously motivated by considerations of money. The shock of the marriage is too much for the girl, but she bravely tries to accommodate herself in the house. The widower deceives himself into believing that he is still not old enough to have lost his manhood. His college-going son tries to flirt with his young stepmother, while a widowed daughter of his sympathises with her in her woe. The marriage does not work. Some cheer is added to Neera's life through the company of a teenage girl belonging to the household. However, when the old man fully realises the implications of his action, he commits suicide, leaving the girl he has married against her will to go her own way. He accepts her as his daughter, appreciates her courage to fight back and asks for pardon for forcing her to be his wife. In order to solve this serious problem that he had created, he finds only one solution in terms of his death.

A young girl who is forced to marry an aging lawyer. She is implored to find a young husband before her would be husband snuffs the idea out.

Famous and Eternal songs' from Movie:

1. The actress, Shanta Apte, also sung "Psalm of life" a poem written by American writer Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in this same movie. Keep in mind this was 1937. Imagine the talent. Marathi cinema was always beyond just glamour and showbiz.

2. One more famous song – Man Shuddh Tuz Gosht Hay Prithvi Molachi- This song is regarded as the true glory days of Prabhat and by extension, Indian cinema. 83 years later still this song give us biggest motivation in our day to day life. Music never dies but this lyrics are just beyond words and language they hit us right in the guts. A minimum instruments khanjiri and harmonium however so strong tune and god gifted voice makes a song gem of alltime.83 years and only a handful of songs can compare with the motivation and philosophy simplicity of structure and rendition presentation of this song in Marathi cinema, that in itself is a star indicator of universal value and greatness of this song.

Playback singer: Master Parshuram

Music: Keshavrao Bhole

Lyrics: Shantaram Athavale

A Movie with a Strong Social Message:

This is a reformist's movie with a strong message of curbing the social practice of forced child marriage and subsequent plight of women victims. Neeru's defiance and insistence on justice underlines Marxism with demanding social equality and equal opportunities to all concerned. There is a clash between ageold tradition and real scene. A modern woman in Neeru wins her freedom of choice and life with courage, patience, perseverance and faith in her high principles of one's right to a dignified life.

Conclusion:

This movie has provided multidimensional lenses of gender equality, girl education, women empowerment, love for culture, honesty towards modernity in humanitarian sense. Kunku(1937) can be studied with different perspectives to understand its multifarious power of conveying a strong social message to the society by then. It can still be studied for its commendable characters, settings, dramatic climaxes



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