

Article

Subrat Jyoti Neog

Pradip Kurbah's Films: An Analytical Study

Film maker Pradip Kurbah, who hails from Meghalaya, is the face of Khasi cinema. He made his directorial debut in 2013 with critically acclaimed film "*Ri: The Homeland of Uncertainty*". National award winning film "*Ri: The Homeland of Uncertainty*" documented the militancy present in the state of Meghalaya.



Pioneer of Khasi cinema, Pradip Kurbah's second full length feature film titled "*Onaatah*" was released in the year 2016 and this film also won coveted national film award in the category of best film in Khasi language. "*Onaatah*" is based on sexual assault. His third film "*Iewduh*" talks about life of common people who reside in a market place. This film premiered at the 24th Busan

International Film Festival in Korea where he also won the prestigious Kim-ji-seok award. Showcasing a Khasi film at Busan International Film Festival is a real honor for entire Northeast cinema as we all know that in Northeast India cinema is still at a nascent stage. It is noteworthy that Pradip Kurbah's films are able to break the regional ceiling and his films now represent Indian cinema on the international platform.

Pradip Kurbah's first film "*Ri: The Homeland of Uncertainty*" is based on terrorism of Northeast India. Terrorism is the most nagging issue in our country these days. Nowadays, several dozens of the terrorist groups are active in the Northeast India. Today, this region is labeled the title "hot bed of extremism". Pradip Kurbah, through this film, presents how our region is badly affected by terrorism. The narratives of the film focus that the filmmaker aims at spreading the awareness among the civil society about the harmful affect caused by rampaging terrorism. This film also tries to make penetrating inroads into social, economic and political philosophy of the people. The film is made with the hope that bloodshed and tears that have been the story of our society will finally find a solution. Pradip Kurbah beautifully visualized the conflict between the state and anti-nationalist militant organizations. Along with this aspect, the film maker deliberately presents the human emotions and relationships too. It is noteworthy that Pradip Daimary's cinematography sets and supports the overall look and mood of the film's visual narrative. Another significant aspect of this film is the

use of simple and colloquial language, uncompromisingly based on reality. But sometimes lecture type dialogue of characters decrease the cinematic value of the film. As for example- terrorist Manbha forcefully took shelter in the house of an elite woman, who tried to motivate the terrorist through her philosophical and rationale thoughts. Her conversations with Manbha promote ideas of Indian patriotism. These lecture type conversations decreased the cinematic beauty of the film.



Pradip Kurbah's second film '*Onaatah*' is a saga of a young girl, victim of sexual assault. Onaatah is a simple, innocent girl who loves to watch football with her father, who loves to talk with her sister and mother. Suddenly, one incident has changed her life. One evening, four of her friends raped her. This incident created sensational breaking news in the entire state. Though the culprits were punished by the fast track court, the innocent Onaatah could not be able to get rid of her depression. Socially she was ostracized. In this crucial moment, she tried to suicide. But for her loving family she could not be able to take this worse step. She was almost broken. As suggested by her father, Onaatah pondered on taking a break and after that she went to her uncle's beautiful village. Onaatah's perspectives about life changed when she got introduced to the people of the village. The people of the village are simple and easy going. This is another world, a world

very different from that of Onaatah's. This new world helped her to get rid of her depression. Finally, Onaatah found her inner peace.

The narrative of film first raises a question- What is the value of well-educated people of our society? Onaatah brought up in an elite society. After the incident, the elite society ostracized her. On the contrary, the rustic people embraced her with joy and treated her as a family member. Onaatah finally came to know that the village society was also aware of her story, yet they did not utter a single question on her past life. So, Onaatah once said to her father- "Life has brought me to such a crossroad. That I felt there was no hope, no love, no light... All I could see was darkness... I felt like God too had stopped listening to me... But the people there in the village were so kind to me papa... I realized there are a ray of hope. That I was so desperately looking for." Moreover, after the incident, Onaatah's well-educated boyfriend did not support her. In the words of Onaatah- "His being a doctor has not taught him much. He is just like any other illiterate man, who blames me for whatever has happened. He left me when I needed him the most." On the other hand, a village boy Duh, who does almost everything that comes his way for a living, said- "Enough... just stop using that word victim... you are a survivor and you are an inspiration... not only me but everyone thinks you have a lot to teach other victim." It is noteworthy that universal appeal of the narrative makes the film worthy. Though it is made in Khashi language and this film portrayed the various color of Khashi society, yet the narrative of the film will definitely touch every human being of the world.

The beauty of cinematic language and grammar transforms it to a rare piece of art. In this film visuals speak every narrative brilliantly. As for example, whenever Onaatah

returns back to home from her uncle's place, then through a few Close Up(C.U) and Mid Long Shot(M.L.S),the director visualizes her inner conflicts without providing any dialogue. Again we notice that Pradip Kurbah uses one Long Shot (L.S) and one Mid-Long Shot (M.L.S.) of the town and one Close Up (CU) of Onaatah, who was standing beside a window of her home, to show that she shifted to Shillong from her uncle's village without creating any long sequence and dialogue.

Use of metaphor makes the narrative of the film more meaningful and artistic. Bah Dondor has been one of the important characters of the film. He is a blind old man and a very good friend of Onaatah. The director Pradip Kurbah uses this character as metaphor. We can say that this blind man is the inner self of Onaatah, who guided her to take inspirational and courageous path. This metaphor indicates that sight is not the only sense we have; the other senses are equally prominent. On the other hand, this character can be considered as the symbol of optimism. The optimistic attitudes of the character inspired Onaatah. Once he told her: "Everyone is pining for something that they don't have...and life runs away very fast...I rather celebrate the wrath of the sun, the smell of the earth after the first rain, the music, smell of organs and good food...the satisfaction in a puff of beedi, this lovely village...who knows if I had eyes but I would be born in a miserable place...I am happy with how I am now...I have led a full life and a good life...Even if God calls me today, I would look at him with smile, I would hold his hand and go...because I know there is a promising journey waiting for me."This dialogue reflects how optimistic he was.

One of the major successful aspects of this film is projection of quality images. As for example-Bah Dondor, the old blind man of the village, roams the village without anybody's

help.Once holding Bah Dondor's hand and closing her eyes Onaatah roams the village. That day she learned that sight is not the only sense we have, the other senses are equally significant. It was a wonderful and inspirational journey for her and she also realized that there is a ray of hope. After this sequence, Pradip Kurbah projects an image of a beautiful tree and an image of sun rise. These images rightly signified the subtext of the sequence.



We can also say that it is also a mild satire on judicial process of our country. In this regards we want to quote a dialogue of Onaatah which reflects it prominently: "People say this is a fast track court meant for quick judgment but it has been endless months of knocking on the judiciary's door....Do I get back all that I have lost? My peace of mind?My dignity?They say these criminals will appeal to a higher court. Their punishment might even decrease but I get a higher court to appeal? Will anyone decrease my pain?"

Pradip Kurbah's national award winning film "Onaatah" was remade in Marathi language. It proves that the content of the film has universal appeal. Well-known actor director Satish Kaushik decided to remake it in Marathi. He rightly says-"its theme,treatment,simplicity and lack of pretentiousness reached out....The small film and the journey of its protagonist touched my heart." It is noteworthy that "Onaatah" is

second film ever from Northeast India which was remade in another language. Assamese national award winning film “*Chameli Memsaab*” (1975) was remade for the first time from Northeast India in another language. Abdul Mazid’s “*Chameli Memsaab*” was remade in Bengali and Hindi language.

Film maker Pradip Kurbah’s third film “*Iewduh*” has gained tremendous responses from the audience across the world. Actually Iewduh is one of the oldest and largest public markets in Shillong. Pradip Kurbah beautifully presents the market using drone camera and narrates the story of common people who inhabit it. The entire camera works brought alive the panoramic expanse of the Iewduh market.



The film maker Kurbah says, “Rather than talks about the market itself, I seek to depict human relationships and the existence of different kinds of people who exist there. Iewduh is such a massive and old market that there are stories in every lane. The movie is basically the story of everyday people.” The director visualizes the Iewduh market through the cinematic language and he also personifies the market. As we know that personification is a common form of metaphor. Pradip Kurbah uses Iewduh market as a metaphor. Human characteristics are attributed to the market. In this film, the Iewduh market has been presented as a character who talks about warm-heartedness, compassion, kindness and sense of equality of the people.

The central character Mike is a toilet cleaner and a good human being who always like to help others. He motivated Hep, a young adult, who was a former drug addict. Mike has a soft corner for Lamare, an old, abandoned man. He treats this man, who is suffering in dementia, as his father. Mike also consoles Priya, a cloth vendor. She was tortured by her alcoholic husband. Mike tries to save her from her problems. In this way, various characters with different problems of their life were associated with Mike’s world. Mike is a humanist. His attitudes echo the soft feelings of his humanistic heart. Through this character, the director Kurbah appeals the world to show human feelings for down-trodden, oppressed and poorer section of the society. In this film, Mike is the spontaneous expression or symbol of human love. Commenting on Pradip Kurbah’s magnum opus “*Iewduh*”, Dominic Sangma, another well-known film maker from Northeast rightly holds the view: “Iewduh is among the best films to come out of the Northeast. The main character is bustling open market of Iewduh, but the film’s beauty lies in its depiction of familial bonding between desperate characters beyond blood ties. One of the key characters, a toilet cleaner, finds family through all that chaos. The film shows how people from different and desperate circumstances, like a drug addict or someone suffering from dementia find each other in startlingly unanticipated ways and establish a deep bond. There is so much humanity in the film.”

One of the significant aspects of Pradip Kurbah’s film “*Iewduh*” is meaningful background score. The film background score reflects the tone, texts and subtexts of the film. It is noteworthy to tell that background music, used thoughtfully and correctly brings life to the film. Pradip Kurbah, pride of Northeast cinema, through his unique and different filmmaking style, has enriched entire Indian

cinema and his creative journey will be definitely continued exploring new ideas, thoughts and unique cinematic style.

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Dr. Subrat Jyoti Neog is an Associate Professor & Head of the Department of Assamese, Tezpur University, Assam.