Abstract

The thesis entitled Films and Philosophy of Gulzar: A Critical Study argues for Gulzar’s status as an auteur of his films by analysing his films – visually and thematically. The thesis explores the philosophy of Gulzar by employing auteur theory of film criticism. Auteur is the director who shows the consistency of style, theme and reflects his philosophy and worldview in his films. The study is the critical appreciation of Gulzar’s films.

Gulzar, a renowned film director, is an appropriate choice for an auteur study because he has worked in different genres including comedy, drama, romance, crime, biopic (biographical picture) and has a body of work - seventeen films. Gulzar has written the screenplays, lyrics and dialogues of all of his films.

Gulzar, in his career as a director, writer, and lyricist has created a body of work, cemented by recurring themes and consistent individual style of filmmaking. Gulzar is an auteur due to his individual style of filmmaking and identifiable themes of his films. Gulzar reflects his philosophy of relationships, family, love, death, humanity etc. in his films. Mere Apne, Gulzar’s first film as writer-director suggests that death is not an end; it is the beginning of a new journey. Death is also a birth of something beautiful. Mere Apne provides a good example of this philosophy of Gulzar. In addition, repentance, peace, wait, violence, etc. are some of the themes that Gulzar explores in his films consistently. The thesis focuses on all of Gulzar’s sixteen films, except Libaas, which so far has not been released.

Gulzar, beyond doubt, is an auteur of his films. Quality of stories and simplicity of style are two main characteristics that are consistently found in his films. Some of the thematic motifs in Gulzar’s films include human relationships, love, anger, sacrifice, long wait etc. Some of the recurring motifs in his films are door, white kurta pyjama, similar dialogues, use of Punjabi word, use of same cast, crew, flying bird etc. One of the elements in Gulzar’s films is the vivid touch of humor. Three shot, triangular composition, frame within a frame, ruins and monuments, flashback, match on action editing are some of the elements of his individual style. Another element of Gulzar’s films is his use of beautiful images like bird in flight, flowing rivers, snow covered green hills etc. Gulzar uses symbols in most of his films. For example, in Ijaazat, Gulzar uses the symbol of shadow between Mohinder and Sudha, when they meet at a railway platform after many years. A stylistic grandeur and simplicity of his individual style make him an auteur.

There is a thematic unity in Gulzar’s films. From Mere Apne to Hu Tu Tu, single unifying theme of Gulzar’s films is the theme of relationships among human beings. Gulzar
explores the subtleties and complexities of human relationship in his films in many different ways. For example, Khushboo, Namkeen, Mausam, Koshish, Aandhi, Ijaazat, Kinara are some of his films, which has human relationship as the prominent subject matter.

Under the vivifying touch of Gulzar’s genius, great stories by writers like Kamleshwar (Mausam), Samresh Basu (Namkeen), Indira Moitra (Mere Apne), Khushboo (Sharatchandra Chatterjee) etc. have become unforgettable films.

Lyrics are an integral part of his narrative. Gulzar does not paste lyrics on stories as happens in most of the Hindi films, instead he makes lyrics an organ of the narrative. The greatest advantage of Gulzar being himself a great poet is that he can express the feelings and emotions of the characters in the lyrics very well. For example, the opening sequence song in Mausam: “idla ZUMZta hO ifr vahI fusa-t ko rat idna (This heart lays in search once again for those days and nights of leisure...)” indicates that here is a man in search of something and later in the film his search for Chanda starts.

Therefore, to study Gulzar as an auteur of his films, gives a comprehensive overview of not only his cinematic world but also the influences of other legends and films. However, apart from the present perspective, his films can also be studied by employing film criticism approaches like psychoanalytical and feminist theories. Students of film studies can gain an insight into the celluloid world by looking at auteurs like Gulzar.