

The Kerala Story: When Cinema Becomes the Tool to Spread Hate

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It is alarming to see the rise of propaganda films in India that use art as a tool to propagate hate and create division among communities. Even Kerala, the God's Own Country is not spared while filmmakers influenced by the fringe elements are trying to pose the state in a bad light. Thanks to the upcoming release of the film 'The Kerala Story' which is as propaganda as the earlier releases like the controversial film 'Kashmir Files'. KF was criticized for spreading half-truths and fiction while claiming to be based on facts and yet it was declared as the top grosser at the box office.

The Distortion Continues

Let's not forget, how Kashmir Files was labeled as "propaganda" and "vulgar" by the head of the jury at the 53rd International Film Festival held in Goa, has stirred outrage in India and Israel. While the film's makers claimed it to be an honest portrayal of the subject matter, it soon proved out to be an attempt to come up with a propaganda film thus trivializing the truth by marketing the object of hate. The head of the jury, Nadav Lapid, has stood by his initial diagnosis of the film despite the backlash it has received. However, as the head of the jury, it is his responsibility to evaluate the films objectively and provide an honest assessment of their quality.

While it is important to acknowledge and address issues faced by various communities, films that use distorted narratives and sensationalize situations for propaganda purposes can only cause more harm than good. We see the distortion continues with the advent of 'The Kerala Story'. The filmmakers have made a baseless claim that 32,000 Hindu girls have been converted and are part of the Islamic State, without any credible source to back up their assertion. The filmmakers' fantasy about Kerala, claiming the film to be based on a true story, is clearly meant for propaganda purposes. The film's narrative appears to be aimed at

creating a false image of the state, promoting communal tensions and creating division among communities.

When Cinema Is Used to Spread Hate?

The use of art to spread misinformation and propaganda is a disturbing trend that needs to be addressed by the authorities. Such films have the potential to create long-term damage by fueling hate and creating divisions that take years to heal. We still see the effect of Kashmir Files and it will continue to contaminate in the coming times and similar will be the story of The Kerala Story. The film claims that 32,000 Hindu girls were converted by the Islamic State. However, the paper by Adil Rasheed titled 'Why fewer Indians have joined ISIS' sheds light on the issue of Indian recruits to the Islamic State gives a different story. According to the paper, there are about 40,000 recruits to the Islamic State across the world, with the majority of them coming from Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, Tunisia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, France, and other Middle Eastern and European countries.

In contrast, the paper reveals that less than 100 Indian migrants ever left for Islamic State territories in Syria and Afghanistan, and about 155 were detained for having links with it. This indicates that the number of Indian recruits to the Islamic State is significantly lower than that of other countries. The paper also touched on the reasons behind the low number of Indian recruits to the Islamic State. These reasons are both varied and complex. One possible explanation is that India is a predominantly Hindu country, with a large Muslim minority. The paper suggests that Indian Muslims have largely rejected the extremist ideology of the Islamic State and have instead chosen to embrace mainstream Islam. At such a helm of affair movies like The Kerala Story are nothing but an attempt to spread hate using the platform of art and films.

Wrapping up

As responsible citizens, it is our duty to ensure that we do not fall prey to such propaganda and instead work towards building a harmonious and inclusive society. We must be vigilant in identifying and opposing propaganda films that are created to spread hate and misinformation. At the same time, it is important for filmmakers to be responsible and sensitive towards the subject matter they choose to portray in their films. The use of art to spread hate and division can have serious consequences for our society and must be strongly condemned. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that propaganda films that seek to spread misinformation and create communal tensions do not gain any traction.

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