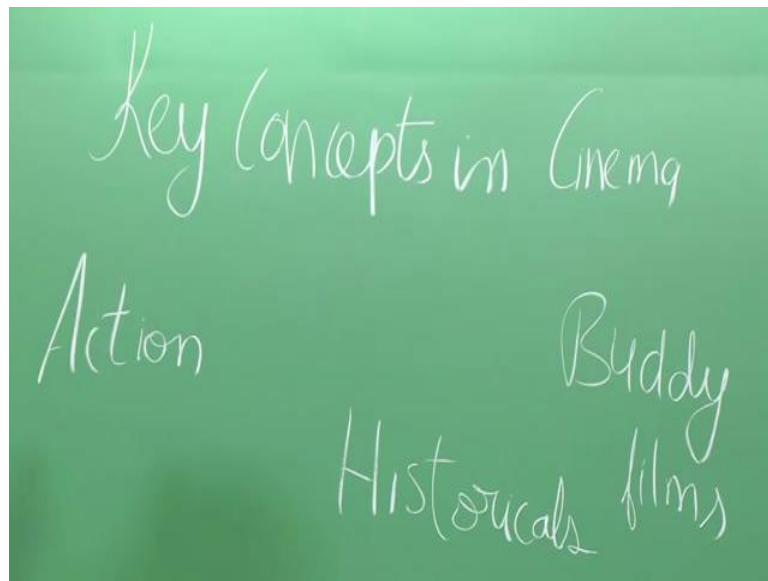


Film Appreciation
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Lecture - 02
Key Concepts Part-1

Good morning. In this class on key concepts in cinema, how many of us are aware of what is the concept of key concepts in cinema? So, if I ask you to give me some words, which you think, without knowing these words you would not be able to appreciate cinema the way you should be appreciating, what are words those you or the concept, that you can come up with?

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There are a couple of words that I have just randomly mentioned, action, cinema, historicals, buddy films. These are genres, these are the categories. We have been talking about genres also. So, these are the categories of cinema, that, that some of us are familiar with. So, of course, these are concepts, but it goes beyond. So, in today's stock and in some of the lectures that will follow, we will be talking about the major concept, the key concepts in cinema.

Let me start with talking about action film, films or action cinema. So, these are mostly ideologically driven and more often than they no and more often, more often than not, they actually articulate popular beliefs and ideas. For example, take a look at a film like

Top Gun, where the hero single handedly photographs the enemy camps, you know, secret documents and pictures. So, the idea is, that Americans in the 80s, America was still the super power. So, we are talking about how, you know, an American pilot can single handedly break into this, so called, or supposedly impregnable bastion of the enemy camp and actually record a document, certain secret papers. So, that is the idea. So, this is definitely ideologically driven, that one country, one nation is superior to another. That is the concept.

Now, but this idea has always been there in prevalence. For example, the period between 20s and 1930s was the swashbuckling adventure cinema with actors such as Douglas Fairbanks Junior and Errol Flynn rule the roost. They were the archetypal or archetypal cine action heroes. From 1940s to 50s, Hollywood witnessed the peak of war and cowboy films such as the Guns of Navarone starring Gregory Peck. The 1960s introduced us to the James Bond kind of cinema, which is often entertaining though it may be, it is often ideologically driven. There are camps between Britain, the British camp and its alias and the enemy, and the enemy keeps on changing, you know, sometimes it is the erstwhile Soviet Union, sometime it is Afghanistan or you know, the far east country. So, ideologically driven action cinema.

Now, 70s were marked by the by gritty detective stories and urban crime dramas leading to a string of, you know, cop drama cop films such as Bullitt, starring Steve McQueen and French Connection with Gene Hackman and also, Clint wood, Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry and its sequels. Even in the 70s we can look at how ideologically driven our cinema was with the action movies gaining, supervising the angry young man, all those action films with Amitabh Bachchan. So, 1980s was, were dominated by the likes of 48 hours and also Rambo film series and Lethal Weapon, Die Hard series, etcetera.

So, by the time we were in the nineteen, 1990, it was the period of sequels and hybrid action such as Total Recall and Terminator, whereas 2000 onwards, cinema, action cinema included science fiction and super hero film such as the Star Wars or the Dark Knight Trilogy, The Expendables. So, action cinema never goes out of favor. There is always, you know, dedicated audience, that look forward to action cinema and that is true in most languages, most nations.

So, action films have various sub genres also. For example, we have action horror, which combines the intrusion of an evil force or event or super national or super natural, sorry,

personage of horror movies with the gun fights and chases of the action genres. We also have a category called disaster film that has element of thriller and sometimes science fiction films. The main conflict of this genre is some sort of natural or artificial disasters such as floods or earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanoes, etcetera. Disaster films are not too common in India. Occasionally, we have had a film like Ravi Chopra's *The Burning Train*, which was released in the, in 1980, but that is an exception.

Martial art, another sub genre of action cinema and again extremely popular. It is mainly a Far East import and contains numerous breathtakingly choreographed fight sequence between characters. They are usually the film's primary appeal and entertainment value and these are often the method of story-telling, character expression and development. Wushu, the Chinese martial art cinema is also a very popular genre. It is a stylized action fantasy period, genre, typically set in ancient Asia, particularly China where skill in martial arts can enable fantastic abilities like flying and magic like abilities.

We also have the genre of the science fiction action, which is yet another popular sub-genre, where the emphasis is on gun place, space battle, inverted weaponry, another science fiction elements weaved into action film premises. In spy films, the hero is generally a government agent who must take violent action against agents of a rival government or terrorist. In super hero films we have the elements of science fiction and fantasy. We focus on the actions of one or more super heroes who usually possess super human abilities and are dedicated to protecting the public. John Wayne, Steve McQueen, Lee Marvin, Bruce Lee, Tom ((Refer Time: 07:40)), *Lawline*, Charles Bronson, Chuck Norris, Clint Eastwood, they are some of the best known action heroes of all times. And in recent times we have Mel Gibson, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone and Bruce Willis. And also, more recently with ((Refer Time: 08:02)) *Bone Trilogy*, we also have Matt Damon who is not typically an action hero, but then he is, of course, thanks to the trilogy, he is a recognized action hero.

Another concept is that of androgyny, which is basically a literary concept in cinema. It is not so well accepted, but then anyway there are some film, particularly art house cinema where concept of androgyny is also, can also be seen occasionally. So, androgyny, in terms of gender identity, is a person who does not fit neatly into the typical masculine and feminine general characteristics of the society. This may be, as in fashion, gender identity, sexual identity or orientation and it may refer to biological inter-sex physicality. One reason for interest in androgyny was the, was the surge of second wave

feminism is in which encompassed nuclear families, working women and their financial independence and also collapse of traditional and father mother role models.

There is a major book by Betty Friedan, the *Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, which added credence to idea, that pop culture or popular culture has been or had been rather sexist in representation. Some of the features that encourage the arrival of androgyny into the main stream were, for example, rejection of past social conventions during the 60s, suspicion of cultural norms of prior generations and open mindedness towards unconventional ideas. So, popular culture and music scene embraced androgyny during 1960s to 80s. The characters were dressed in ornate, elaborately colored flashy robes and androgyny was seen as an expression of sexual liberation or radicalism.

The Nomi song, that was Andrew Horn, which was 2004 documentary about the life of singer Klaus Nomi and the documentary looks at the early life of Klaus Sperber before he became Nomi Klaus and again, another important work is *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, which is directed by D. A. Pennebaker in 1973, which is about David Bowie, the great rock star, his androgynous altered ego. And then, Todd Haynes has directed an art house film of sorts called *Velvet Goldmine*, which is set in 1970s during the era of glam rock and tells the story of bisexual glam rock icon pattern after David Bowie.

From here, we move on to another concept, which is becoming quite popular nowadays, which is called anthology film. Now, anthology film is also called omnibus film or portmanteau film. It is a film consisting of several different short films often tied together by only a single theme premise or brief and interlocking event, which is often a turning point. Sometimes there is a theme such as a place, like for example, in *New York stories*, which is a compendium of three films directed, three independent film directed by Scorsese, Coppola and Woody Allen. You also have ((Refer Time: 11:56)), which is collection of 16 shorts, but there is a single theme, that runs through sometime the theme is a person. For example, in *Four Rooms* and it can also be a thing, for example, *Jim Jam* ((Refer Time: 12:10)), coffee and cigarettes. So, a common feature that is present in each story and serves to bind the characters together.

So, the concept of anthology film, however, is not new and it dates back to the early history of cinema. One of the most well-known films of this genre is *Love At Twenty* where director such as Truffaut and Andrzej Wajda and Marcel Ophuls came together to

present vineyards of youthful love, young love. This movie came out in 1962. Sometimes anthology films feature a top level story as a binding agent and a framing device to help establish the framework or narrative for the rest of the films in the feature acting as the major narrative that leads to the various sub stories in the presentation.

The format is also an extremely popular one for horror films and it was popularized by 1945 film called *Dead Of Night*, compared to the problems to be solved in the production of a single narrative feature, those in any anthology films are multiplied in direct relation to the number of stories contained within. There are anthology of horror films also and taking you from this very popular international product we have also seen a couple of Hindi films in recent times, such as Ram Gopal Varma's *Darna Mana Hai*, which was an anthology film and its sequel, *Darna Zaroori Hai*, which was released in 2006. We also have *Dus Kahaniyan*, which was released in 2007, a compilation of ten features by different directors such as Sanjay Gupta, Rohit Roy, Meghna Gulzar and others.

Another concept is buddy movie. The buddy movie is genre in which two people of the same sex, generally we talk about, historically we talk about men and there are two men paired, very rarely we have female buddy films also, but extremely rare, you know. We can only think of *Thelma and Louise* in recent times. So, a friendship between the two films, two people or two men is the key relationship in a buddy film that two men often come from different background. This is defining feature or have different personalities and they tend to misunderstand one another, at least in the beginning. Through the events of the buddy film they gain stronger friendship and mutual respect. Often, contrast in personality creates a different dynamic on screen. Then, a paring of two people of the opposites sex, the contrast is sometimes extenuated. The contrast is sometimes extenuated by an ethnic difference between the two.

The buddy film is common place in American cinema and it has endured through the 20th century with different pairings and different themes the buddy films is more common to cinema in the USA, then compared to cinema from other western countries, which tend to focus more on male or female romantic relationships or an individual male hero. Portrayal of male bonding in the United States you need to, just to give an idea of the background of this genre, it goes back to 19th century, author Mark Twain whose characters Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer, well, as well as Huck Finn and the slave Jim in adventures of Huckleberry Finn are well-known, ok. So, that is the template on

which most buddy films have been based on traditionally. The buddy film is common place in American cinema, but it has also become a popular features of Hindi films of late, think Dil Chahta Hai or films like Rock On or Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara and these are perfect examples of buddy cinema.

So, from genres we move on to certain cinematic techniques such as cinemascope. All of us enjoy watching films in cinemascope technique where there is a big screen and you know, there is nothing, that can substitute the pleasure of watching a film on big screen. So, cinemascope cinema enjoyed a large foot fall during the Second World War, but experienced the decline in attendance post war. I am trying to give you the reason for the growth and development of this new technique. So, the advent of television also added to the drop in ticket sale collections in the USA and this resulted in the big studios competing with television and providing richer cinematic experience. That is what I was telling you about that there is nothing, that can substitute cinematic experience and the idea was to provide for more fulfilling, more satisfying, more you know, novel kind of cinematic experience, that can compete with TV and can beat TV at its own game.

So, soon we had the introduction of 3D cinema and Cinerama in 1952. 3D films and Cinerama required expensive equipment and projection systems and different screens, cinemascope required relatively cheaper equipment and projection system. French inventor ((Refer Time: 18:01)) developed anamorphoscope in 1926, which became the basis for development of cinemascope later in 1953. So, some of the earlier films in cinemascope were films such as The Robe starring Richard Burton, How To Marry A millionaire starring Marilyn Monroe. We also had experiments in cinemascope technique with Guru Dutt's Kaagaz Ke Phool, which was in 1959.

However, though people enjoyed the experience cinemascope was not without problems. Close up shots would be slightly over stretched on actor's face and it often caused low brightness and grainy image on screen and magnetic stripe prints were twice as expensive to producers' normal prints, and not all theaters had the expensive four-track magnetic stereo sound systems. So, despite its problems cinemascope thrived and flourished and it is still here and we all enjoy cinemascope films. For example, look at our own Sholay, which was heavily public sized when it was first released in the 70s as a cinemascopic adventure.

We move on to another concept which again straddles the boundary between cinema and

literature, counter culture. The counter culture is a sub culture, that opposes challenges and rejects significant elements of the prevalent and dominant culture of the land usually, that which is in line with excepted norms and conditions. It gives, rise, voice to the ethos, aspirations of a specific population during the specific time period, often dubbed dropping out of the mainstream counter culture movements are in opposition to one or more aspects of prevalent social norms in cultural modes.

Apart from the various socio-political factors, the literary environment of the time to foster the winds of change and rebellion, America saw the rise of the ((Refer Time: 20:16)) generation in literature with writers like Allen Ginsberg William Burroughs coming together to specialize in certain new and radical style of writing that rejected conventional standards and practices and placed an emphasis on narrating not just the plot, but also the emotional and personal landscape and experiments of the narrator or the protagonist. The counter culture movement led to a rise in experimentation with drugs, alternative sexualities and a rejection of materialism. We all know hippie culture and its influence on cinema, fashion and also the rock scene. The counter culture, counter culture spirit was captured in books, music and films.

A seminal film of this period was *The Wild One* starring Marlon Brando and Lee Marvin. This was a trendsetter for the biker films, you know, bikes give wings to protagonist and that was the whole idea about, that was the, that was what the film was all about. So, it introduced for the first time a kind of drifter, ruthless, aimless hero in cinema and it also sought to glamorize the young anti-social misfit, an anti-authoritarian kind of hero. The film was made in 1953 and then, soon a ((Refer Time: 21:53)) of films followed. One of the most influential films of the 60s was *Blow Up*, Italian director Antonioni, film in 1966, which is about the swinging sixties in London where the weeds and hippies an existential cool and colorful fashion all these things ruled. The core philosophy is, that one cannot always trust what we see and the director explores the possibilities and limitation of images here. The film's narrative structure ellipses morally ambiguous characters, leave us with no clue and set the stage for the kinds of films that were about to come.

So, one of the major films, *Blow up*, was the major influence on the so called American new wave cinema and one of the major defining films of this period counter culture cinema and new wave cinema is *easy rider*. So, the characters were named ((Refer Time: 22:57)) and *Billy the kid* after the two western outlaws and these two character played by

Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda ride their bikes from west to east. So, the philosophy is that to be on the move is freedom and ((Refer Time: 23:16)) which was the philosophy as shown to us by the counter cultural exponent such as William Burroughs and also Jack Kerouac and his famous on the road. So, philosophy was that anyone who is on the move and has the sense of adventure was free.

Another major film of this period was *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, made in 1975. This is Milos Forman's political allegory and it is an adaptation of Ken Kesey's 1962 novel. It emphasize the notion that by mechanisms and by other figures, society gains control of, suppresses individuality and natural impulses. The story is set in a mental asylum where we meet the protagonist Randle McMurphy who pretends to be slightly mad in order to escape along imprisonment, ok.

So, films such as *Five Easy Pieces*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Easy Rider*, they all come, belong to so called American new wave cinema, also capturing the spirit of counter culture movement. In Britain you had a film such as *Performance*, directed by Nicolas Roeg, again a key film of counter cultural movement.

We move on to another technical aspect, technical concept, which is the emblematic shot in cinema. If you have watched the *Great Train Robbery*, in direct, directed by Edwin Porter and which was released in 1903, one of the earliest examples of cinema. The film has shot of gang leader holding a gun poised to shoot. That became an emblematic shot of a western. So, an emblematic shot communicates abstract, complex and associative ideas and reveals special connection between visual elements within the frame. When placed at the start, it is used to establish the narrative. When placed at the end, it is the narrative closure.

One of the most frequently used shot is emblematic shot. I can right away give example of my left foot where Daniel Day-Lewis's huge foot fills the screen and we know why it is so important. Why the foot is so important in this film? Because that is what the film is all about, how this hero who suffers from cerebral palsy can use only one part of his body, that is, his left foot and how he overcomes all odds with the help of his foot. So, extreme close up shot of his foot. So, that is a perfect example of an emblematic shot.

Now moving back again to genres and one of the most recognizable genre in Hollywood is gangster cinema, which is also a precursor to the film *Noah*. So, the western film for most of us is no more than the folklore of the past where, while the gangster films comes

much closer in times. So, these are the two important American, you know, most identifiable American film genre, the gangster and western. The gangster cinema historically is influenced by two socio-economic events, prohibition and the great depression prohibition from 1919 to 1933 and the great depression, 1929 to 34.

The prohibition in 1919 played an important role in bringing the underworld into national prominence regional or big city gangs most of which belong to the ethnic immigrant groups, you know, Jews, Italians, Irish. They took charge of the illicit liquor trade and the gangs quickly group powerful, controlling first neighborhood, then whole cities, fighting rival gang for domination.

Gangster cinema is often associated with the great American dream. They play on the American myth of a democratic class society. Gangster, gangster cinema expose the deep social divide in American society. The gangsters become fundamental in a socio-cultural upheaval causing the subversion of traditional values and the period of underworld counter culture, which became mainstream. We will also note, but the gangster hero is the sight of two fundamental and opposing American ideologies, a contradiction in thought between America is a land of opportunity and the vision of a classless democratic society. The classic gangster hero invariably comes from the proletarian class and gains access to wealth by stealing. He does not follow the rules and embodies the contradiction in the American society. Therefore, his death is ideologically necessary, rarely you will find a surviving gangster hero in most films.

The gangster hero, traditionally in Hollywood, was mostly played by actors such as James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, Edward G. Robinson. One of the earliest films and successful films of this genre was Scar Face, directed by Howard Hawks starring ((Refer Time: 29:04)). This film was also scripted by the great Ben Hecht, journalist and screenplay writer and it was adapted from pulp novel. The film was rooted in the then contemporary reality with people and incidence drawn directly from Chicago gangster history.

We also need to understand the heist code in relation to American gangster cinema, which is set where the moral and censorship. It set the moral and moral censorship code and guidelines that govern the production of most films, which were released in USA between 1930, to nineteen, mid 1960s. The production code spelled out what was acceptable and what was unacceptable content for motion pictures produced for a public

audience in America. So, it was known as heist code. The first part of the code was certain general principles, which mostly concerned morally or moralities and second part consisted of a list of terms or items, which should not be depicted on screen. So, heist code also led to censorship of cinema and we all know, that most people have mixed feelings about censorship in most countries.

Let us talk about historical as a genre. This genre is composed of dramatic features films in which the primary plot is based on actual historical events or in movies where an imagined plot unfolds in such a way, that actual historical events are central to the narrative or to the story. All historical films closely follow cause-effect relationship in scene construction and follow a linear narrative. Think Troy for example, think Gladiator for example. So, these are romantic historical films of course, they are also fictionalized partly, but they claim to be to have some kind of authenticity where as far as historical depiction is concerned.

So, it should be noted, that with the exception of movies such as intolerance, which was made in 1916, 1916, all movies have a definite setting in space and in time historical films overlaps with other genres. So, subgenres of historical films are for example, war films, epic films, biopics film, meta-historic costume dramas and also docu dramas.

From here we move on to icons and iconography. Iconography is the way through which visual motives and styles can be categorized. It can encompass ((Refer Time: 32:22)) objects and sometimes even clothes and hairstyles of characters. For example, in Noah, one gets a standard look of the ((Refer Time: 32:29)) and in ((Refer Time: 32:32)), we identify the hero by some of his props. So, again consider a typical Bombay film, which often contains shots of the Gateway of India, Haji Ali, the Marine Drive, the beach. So, all these are iconography of a place of a person, etcetera. Iconography has a strong connotative power and helps us associate meanings with the image.