

19/01/01

manner that has univer- tively and rebuild their lives out of The director has worked for nearly remarkable for their artistic beauty and social relevance. Didi Thakrun is yet another feather in its cap.

Time for self-censorship

JAYANT BHANDARI

HINDI FILMS have always glorified criminal means for the sake of the so-called larger good. Our censors reserve their scissors for erotic scenes: for them this is the only true crime! Now we have a film like *Dil Pe Mat Le Yaar* which directly goes ahead with glorifying crime: no more beating about the bush for any larger good, or even doing it as a result of having been exploited.

The storyline is simple: an 'honest' guy (in non-Hindi film ethics: a person who is self-righteous, uncontrolled emotionally, a stalker and who despite limited experience challenges superiors in his two-minute assessment in his job as a car mechanic) loses his job for his behaviour and becomes obsessed with a girl who declines his moves. He becomes a criminal, moves to Dubai and then lives a hi-tech life of crime, happily ever after!

The film claims to be showing the reality of life. Its message is clear: a life of crime is easy and once you become a smalltime criminal and make a bit of money, everything falls in line. You automatically become sophisticated enough to manage a worldwide crime syndicate. It shows crime as a good career for the youth. But it is far from reality: even the most successful criminal would disagree that it was easy, despite all the corruption!

So-called ethically minded people like Mahesh Bhatt have attested to this by being a part of it. (He made a special appearance in the film). I wonder if such a film has any chance of being allowed by censors in any liberal country. The people in most such

countries would have rejected it as grossly unethical, offensive and even unrealistic. While we have restrictive rules including for censorship, they work in a skewed manner that fail to impose censorship in cases where even the most liberal countries would do.

In advertising the story is the same. In a recent advertisement, Vimal, to sell its dress material, has decided to use the apparent glamour of cigarette smoking. Use of cigarettes as a glamour commodity or their advertisement is simply not allowed in Europe and the USA. India prefers to have no problems with this. While a US company

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would be worried about being sued for billions for much lesser issues, we have nothing against showing a young mized sex cosy crowd in advertisements of Wills and Classic cigarettes (ITC products). Red and White, and Four Square are worse, with their nauseating chivalry.

When the bungee jumping advertisement of Thums Up (a Coke product) resulted in a few deaths, they simply went in for a fine print added on the advertisement. Pepsi's recent advertisement is about a kid who comes home early to find his elder sibling having a party in the absence of parents. He

is offered a bribe of a large Pepsi and Kitkat to keep this secret. While Thums Up does irresponsible advertising, Pepsi encourages children to be street-smart, selfish and corrupt.

Another major company recently advertised their salt. It was based on the fact that their salt had iodine which was good for the brain. The message was to eat more salt, an extremely unhealthy suggestion! Santro (a Hyundai product) and Suzuki (Government of India is a major shareholder) have decided to go on a rampage in showing whose vehicle is capable of being driven more rashly. I wonder if they have any conscience to worry about their corporate responsibility.

In the early 90s there was an uproar in Europe on Nestle's advertising their milk powder for children in Africa. This resulted in several deaths as they had failed to encourage people to boil water before using the powder. It is a company's responsibility to sell its products to people for whom it will be beneficial and not to 'sell a comb to a bald man'. If there is a possibility of injury or risk to human lives, companies have to be very careful with their advertising and products. For similar reasons, it is mandatory in developed countries to have holes in plastic bags to avoid suffocating children who might play with them. Self-regulation and self-censorship are a part of liberalised systems.

While reading a book on advertising and journalism, I came across a statement that it is unwise to show evil winning over good, even if it was true. The reason was that such a truth would offend the middle class. Given this, I wonder why such advertisements and films are accepted by us and our governments.

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Groovy dance numbers | Typical and

19 January 2001
The Statesman