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Institut für Südasien-, Tibet- und
Buddhismuskunde
Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2.1 / 2.7
1090 Wien

Einladung zum Vortrag

Prof. Dr.
Nirmal Kumar

Historical Films in Hindi Films and Reconstruction of History from Nowhere

Dr. Nirmal Kumar is Associated Professor at the Department of History of the Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University. Currently he is serving as the third ICCR Visiting Professor of Indian Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Vienna.

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Institut für Südasien-, Tibet- und Buddhismuskunde,
AAKH, Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2.7
1090 Wien

With the emergence of Congress Party as the leading anti-colonial voice and the arrival of Gandhi as the charismatic mass leader in India, the mood of the nation underwent massive change. The people of India were clamouring for self rule and later independence from British colonial rule, but the repressive censorship rules did not allow that. Hence the clever Indian film makers took the route of making historical films which talked of national pride, independence, the pride of being Indian, and all the national sentiments – but set in historical times far from current times.

The consumption of nationhood and nationalism often happens through cleverly crafted visual products like films, photographs, posters, advertisement and other forms and mediums of collective social consumption. We construct, imagine and then consume the imagined notions of nation, nationality and nationhood.

Films, being the most potent mass medium, have tried to create many national and cultural notions of belonging. More often than not and not only in India but world wide, falsification of history takes place often constructing a visual space etched in historical frames.

In my presentation I would like to take up a discussion of films and suggest that: 1. Films were made by people who were not well aware of historical facts, and film makers generally did not spend much time on research and depended on emotions rather than facts; 2. they willfully and knowingly twisted the facts to pander to local/nationalist sentiments; 3. pre-independence and post-independence the treatment of history changes; 4. films like Mughal-e Azam, Razia Sultan, Jhansi Ki Rani, Pukar and Jodha Akbar create a history with imagined historical territory and emotional landscape to negotiate with the struggling nationhood.

I would like to argue that howsoever false and removed from facts, they are essential for the growth of nation/s in India.