

TURBID WRITE-UP

The article *25 Great Musicals* (April '90) by R. M. Vijayakar was a big disappointment. He makes a fetish out of his fixation for Laxmikant-Pyarelal and gets maudlin over the duo's mediocre films like *Kranti*, *Karma*, *Nache Mayuri*, *Ram Lakhan* and *Eeshwar*. A film cannot be a great musical on the merit of just one or two good songs. It beats me how such tuneful scores like *Kudrat*, *Bazaar*, *Sanam Teri Kasam*, *Masoom*, *Souten* and *Alag Alag* escaped his memory.

It is amazing to note that his basis of selection is in sharp contrast to the genuineness of the *Filmfare* awards. Conspicuous omissions are three award-winners—*Sanam Teri Kasam*, *Masoom* and *Sharaabi*. I am no admirer of Bappi Lahiri and agree that *Sharaabi* had only transient appeal—but so had *Karz*. At least *Sharaabi* had a beautiful solo by the late Kishore Kumar, which fetched him a *Filmfare* award, and the tandem *De de pyar de* in which both Kishore and Asha were superb. As for *Sanam Teri Kasam*, R.D. Burman's orchestration was at its best and got him his first ever *Filmfare* award. Again, Kishore and Asha excelled. In fact, mere orchestration is not a genuine yardstick. The total outcome is what matters, and in both cases *Tridev* comes nowhere near *Sanam Teri Kasam*.

Mr Vijayakar surprisingly admits that R.D. Burman scores over L-P when it comes to composing *filmi* classical numbers. So how could he ignore Burman's classical-based haunting scores in *Kudrat*, *Masoom* and *Alag Alag*? In fact, Burman composed several beautiful songs in *Kudrat*. Remember Parveen Sultana's *Hamen tumse pyar kitna* (she won a *Filmfare* award for it) and Chandrashekhar Gadgil's *Sukh dukh ki*. Those who have seen *Souten* will agree that Usha Khanna's melodious tunes mingled beautifully with the idyllic backdrop of Mauritius where the film was shot. Once again, there were personal triumphs for Kishore, Lata and Asha. Sublime poetry and Khayyam's subtle nuances produced a gem in *Bazaar*. Not only the *Filmfare* award-winners but *Kudrat*, *Souten* and *Bazaar* too deserved a place in the list.

Finally, music has now become a hardy perennial in the *Postscripts* column. Notwithstanding *Filmfare's* reputation of being a top-class film magazine in terms of well-balanced articles and presentation, the readers expect a competent job by the coterie of writers. And here Mr Vijayakar has gone totally out of tune presenting a turbid write-up. He fails to draw a clear dividing line between the ordinary and the extraordinary and for sheer favouritism he gives the

impression of being a tyro.

M. Asif Alvi, Charkhari

Best letter: Rs. 100

SO WHAT'S NEW?

Gender Benders (April '90) proved that the Bewitching Brigade of the Bikini Boys has struck Bollywood. So what's new? It's been there down the ages!

Didn't we have Amitabh decked up in (un)lady-like attire jiving to *Mere angne mein* in *Lawaaris*, in a bid to please the frontbenchers?

Didn't we have the 'macho' Dharmendra exhibiting his effeminate tendencies in *Katilon Ke Kaatil*? Or Sanjeev Kumar in *Naya Din Nayee Raat* proving his unquestionable 'talent' by impersonating a woman? Or Govinda as the *femme fatale* in *Taqdeer Ka Tamasha*, decked to the hilt, in red stilettos *et al*?

Boy oh boy! Even the heroines can be accused of 'bending' their 'genders' all too often! Remember Saira Banu as the 'macho' coach driver of *Victoria No. 203*? Or Padmini Kolhapure in *Zamaane Ko Dikhana Hai*?

Dimple, too, has been a 'man' often. In *Allah Rakha* and *Aag Ka Gola*, to be precise.

Film-makers reason that if Dustin Hoffman could do 'it' in *Tootsie*, then why can't our stars? They don't seem to realise that the script of *Tootsie* revolved around the sexual transformation of Dustin Hoffman and was an essential prerequisite for this comedy.

So, film-makers, have a 'sex change' if you must, but only if it is imperative to the film's script.

Nilesh Atre, Thane

HARMFUL

Some time ago a highly objectionable film called *Pati Parmeshwar* escaped the censors' clutches. It seems *Amiri Garibi* has now managed the same amazing feat. A retrograde film which endorses child marriage and the degradation of women, it undoes the efforts of progressive organisations like *Saheli* which strive to better the lives of women.

The director's depiction of women is disgusting. In the guise of the *Bharatiya Nari's dharam*, he subjects his female characters to every form of humiliation.

Heroine No. 1, modern miss Neelam, is unaware of her childhood marriage to Rishi. Though she rebels against the arrangement, better *dharam* prevails and she attains true nirvana only by

washing her stranger husband's *jhootha* utensils and touching her mother-in-law's feet repeatedly.

Heroine No. 2, Poonam, is spurned by her husband for a *tawaif*. She weeps, she grovels before him, his mother and his sister, is abused, beaten and accused of incest (with her father-in-law) and physically thrown out. Her father, *pagdi* in hand, begs her mother-in-law to take her back: "Use *bhooka rakhiye, maariye, jo kuchh bhi chahiye keejiye, magar use waapas le lijiye*," as she is a "bojh" on him. This masochistic woman is 'accepted' by her husband only after she thrashes her elder brother for daring to beat her *suhaag*. Earlier, showing unstinting devotion to her in-laws, she'd even ignored her dying mother's cry. According to the director, a girl's *kartavya* is only towards her husband and in-laws, even at the expense of her own parents' respect.

Heroine No. 3, a *tawaif* (Rekha), smitten by a street goonda, spiritedly asserts her financial independence to him, but meekly suffers his abuses, insults and exploitation only for the *chutki-bhar sindoor* that will make a 'respectable' woman out of her. So what if he has never done an honest day's work in his life—in the director's eyes, even a criminal has more respect than a prostitute, whose profession most probably is not of her own choosing.

Today, when sati and bride-burning still thrive and women continue to be exploited by their husbands and in-laws because of their ignorance, timidity and stoicism, a movie like this can wrought great harm by psyching women into believing that it is in their destiny and *dharam* to suffer every form of humiliation.

R. Lalvani, Calcutta

THUS SPAKE KAMAL?

For an ardent fan like me, it was a bit surprising to learn from a recent issue of *India Today*, that Kamal Haasan has expressed displeasure over this year's National award for best actor going to Kerala's superstar Mammooty (instead of him for his super-hit home production, *Apoorva Sahodarargal* in which the suave actor essayed a triple role, including that of a dwarf).

I have seen *Apoorva...* twice, first on video and then in a cinema hall in Madras—and the sole reason for this, let me confess, was the technical wizardry of the film and nothing else. Not even Kamal's acting which, to say the least, was nothing extraordinary! In fact, it's very difficult to believe that the director of *Apoorva...*, Singeetam

