

ANOKHEE REVIEW

Religion, cinema, and cricket play significant roles in the lives of Indians, driven by personal inclinations and emotional connections rather than logical reasoning. The famous line, "I don't have a reason but I like," resonates quite well in this context. The strong emotional attachment and the joy derived from these fields make them deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of India.

The history of films in India dates back 229 years. It began with the production of films like "The Flowers of Persia" in 1897 and "The Wrestler" in 1898, both made in Calcutta (now Kolkata), marking the inception of silent films. However, it was in 1913 that Dadasaheb Phalke made the groundbreaking film "Raja Harishchandra," considered the first full-length Indian feature film. This marked the beginning of the era of Indian cinema. Indeed, in the era of silent films, language was not a limiting factor, and Gujaratis, including Parsis, played a prominent role in the film industry. The first registered Gujarati language film, "Narsinh Mehta," was released on April 9, 1932. It has been 91 years since this significant event marked the beginning of Gujarati cinema. Over the years, the Gujarati film industry has flourished, producing numerous acclaimed films and talented artists, contributing to the cultural landscape of India. Looking ahead to the centenary celebration in 2032, the Gujarati film industry has witnessed a rollercoaster ride of successes and setbacks. In 1932, Ardeshar Irani's groundbreaking film "Alma Ara" became a major hit, as it marked the advent of talking films. However, the progress of Gujarati films at that time was relatively slow and gradual. Between 1932 and 1947, a total of only 12 Gujarati films were produced.

Following India's independence, Gujarati films experienced a surge in production. In 1948 alone, 26 films were made, and from 1946 to 1952, a total of 74 Gujarati films were produced. The subsequent period until 1970 witnessed the creation of additional Gujarati films. These films encompassed a variety of themes, including stories based on Sati (self-immolation), valiant warriors, outlaws, folklore, and mythology. Some films also explored literary works and addressed socially relevant subjects. When compared to regional languages such as Bengali, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam, Gujarati films were considered to hold significantly less value, both in terms of quantity and overall impact. While Hindi films flourished due to their popularity, publicity, and the quality of their leading actors and actresses, it is evident that Gujarati films lagged behind. Despite having talented actors like Abhinaya Samrat Upendra Trivedi, Hitu Kanodia, Arvind Barot, Mallika Sarabhai, Sarita Joshi, Aruna Irani, Asha Parekh, Snehalatha, and Sanjeev Kumar, the audience for Gujarati films remained limited.

In 1970, the Gujarat government provided exemptions from entertainment tax for Gujarati films and offered financial assistance. This led to an increase in film production, but unfortunately, the quality of films began to decline. Initially, there were around 30-35 films produced annually, but over time, the number gradually decreased to less than 20 per year. By 1981, a total of 368 Gujarati films had been produced. However, with a few exceptions like "Kashi no dikro," "Bhavni Bhavai," "Santhu Rangili," and "Malavapati Munj," most films struggled to achieve a rating of more than two stars on the five-star scale. The lack of compelling screenplays, neglect of urban

audiences, poor direction, and technical shortcomings contributed to this decline. By the year 2000, there was a sense that the Gujarati film industry was on the verge of extinction.

Fortunately, over the past two decades, there has been significant progress in the selection of subjects for Gujarati films. Stories that are relevant to the current times and offer originality in their content have emerged. Young artists have honed their talents and delivered brilliant performances that have captivated the audience. The combination of intuition and realism has greatly enhanced the overall quality of Gujarati films. Gujarati films have witnessed remarkable improvements in dialogues, cinematography, editing, and music, enabling them to compete at national and international platforms in selected venues. These productions have earned the respect of critics and garnered appreciation from the audience. The growing atmosphere has gradually attracted a more specific yet larger audience, fostering increased enthusiasm and optimism among all. Gujarati films have successfully captured the essence of culture, the struggles faced by the Gujarati people, masculinity, and the values of life. The day is not far when these films will leave a lasting impact on the global stage, making a significant mark in the world of cinema. Gujarati movies serve as a prominent identity and a source of pride, showcasing the cultural richness and diversity of Gujarat on an international platform for Gujaratis living in over 120 countries.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a sense of boredom, I had rarely watched movies for years. However, Recently on the insistence of my engineer friend in USA, Mr. Pranav Desai, who is the Founder of Voice of Specially Able Persons (VOSAP), I had the privilege of watching a "Anokhee" Gujarati movie. While watching the film alongside Rohitbhai Shah and volunteers of Voice of Specially Abled People, I was deeply moved by the powerful performances and intense emotions portrayed in the film. Working with disabled children in an institution after retirement, I experienced firsthand their special strengths, the unwavering support of their parents, and their strong morale. Witnessing the engaging cultural program at the town hall, where deaf-mute children danced, acted, and sang along with music, brought me joy and satisfaction as I saw their creative abilities in action. The accomplishments of children with disabilities, such as trekking in the Himalayas, winning medals in the Paralympics, excelling in exams, and facing adversity with resilience and smiles, fill me with a sense of pride. Their lofty ambitions serve as an inspiration for all of us.

Our honorable Prime Minister, Shri Narendrabhai Modi, has brought about a significant change by replacing the term 'disabled' with 'Divyang,' and this has been warmly embraced by the community. "Anokhee" tells the story of a young girl who is sociable, educated, and full of life. Unfortunately, she loses her leg and lower body movement in an accident. Despite facing hope and despair, she remains confident and refuses to be a burden or rely on anyone's mercy. During this challenging time, a young man named Aryan falls in love with her. Aryan is understanding yet humorous, and through reading Anokhee's diary and understanding her emotions, he builds a unique bond with her through various experiments. The banter, dialogues, and emotions between Aryan and Anokhee captivate the audience, reminiscent of the beloved characters "Love Story." Is being disabled a crime? Is life wasted if one has a form of weakness? Must the disabled depend on the mercy and support of others? This screenplay dispels these misconceptions. We all have disabilities in some way or another, don't we?

Humans live by helping one another. Can a family or society survive without a bridge of affection between individuals? All these questions are answered by the movie "Anokhee."

Bhoomi Barot delivers such an effective performance in portraying the unique character that the audience feels it is all real. Arjav Trivedi brilliantly portrays the character of Aryan. Whether it's his peculiar feelings, behavior, or approach to his work, Aryan handles everything with boldness, understanding his present responsibilities and calculating the consequences. With an excellent blend of character, wit, and swagger, he shines throughout the film. This young girl, with a doll-like appearance, dreams of becoming an IAS officer. Her speech and behavior resonate with people from all walks of life, not just her own generation. With strong and sensitive direction, seamless editing that maintains the story's flow, melodious music and background score, compelling performances, and beautiful cinematography, the film adds a unique twist to its title. Previously, Gujarati newspapers had a tradition of appreciating films, while English newspapers still rate them. The film "Anokhee" deserves a high rating of 4.5 out of 5.

A distinctive aspect of the film is its specific focus on the condition and prospects of the disabled. It aims to convey a message, utilizing the nine rasas (emotional flavors) outlined by Bharatamuni in Indian aesthetics. The director and their team have ensured that every moment of the movie is engaging and vibrant. The film skillfully balances moments of laughter and seriousness while delivering its message. The movie effectively portrays the rollercoaster of emotions, where fear and hope intertwine seamlessly. It explores a range of emotions, leaving no room for anger or frustration, but rather expressing them directly and sometimes sarcastically. The underlying message encourages viewers to 'Stay awake, feel the sensation and understand the true meaning of love.'

The film skillfully maintains the ebb and flow of the characters' lives, showcasing their ups and downs. The success of art lies in its ability to present its point efficiently and effectively, and this Gujarati film, "Anokhee," achieves just that. While it is difficult to predict the number of awards it may receive, based on my limited knowledge of film and art, I can confidently say that "Anokhee" will be remembered as a landmark in the history of Gujarati cinema. Its uniqueness sets it apart and ensures its significance in the future. Out of the population of approximately 1.43 billion in our country, around 45 million people are born with or experience physical or mental difficulties due to accidents, illnesses, and old age. It is natural for them to feel frustration, anxiety, and a sense of insecurity. To uplift their spirits and foster self-esteem, confidence, and enthusiasm, these individuals require love and encouragement. A unique film like "Anokhee" has the potential to touch the hearts of all the Divyangs (persons with disabilities) in Gujarat and their families. If the entire society embraces this movie and watches it, it can inspire us to think in the right direction, engage in service work, and act with love. By promoting empathy and understanding, the film can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive society for individuals with disabilities.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, uncertainty has pervaded every aspect of life, and this lingering worry often remains hidden in the subconscious mind. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of mental disorders cases. In these challenging times, it is crucial to cultivate faith

in the future, to stand united in the face of adversity, and to foster unwavering determination. Most importantly, we must extend love, warmth, and support to one another to create a happier world. By strengthening our bonds and offering assistance, we can collectively overcome the difficulties brought about by the pandemic and find solace and resilience in the face of uncertainty.

Indeed, the responsibility of living by the words "May life be my homage, good food to the hungry, water to the thirsty," does not rest solely on the shoulders of the film's hero, Aryan. It is a shared responsibility that requires courage and meaning from all of us. Even if one is not accustomed to watching Gujarati films, starting with "Anokhee" can bring happiness. It is possible that after experiencing this unique film, a transformative change may occur in one's nature and personality. Realizing that our own happiness is intertwined with the happiness of others, it becomes essential to engage in acts of service every day. By doing so, we can contribute to the well-being of others and find fulfillment ourselves. Let us take care and strive to make a positive impact in the world.