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EDITORIAL 01

Good, not ugly: On the 70th National Film Awards

Film awards regained some prestige by sticking with good cinema

The National Film Awards appeared to be facing a **credibility** crisis in recent years following some questionable choices and **glaring omissions**. For instance, last year, the award for 'Best Feature Film on National Integration', for The Kashmir Files, **encapsulated** the general political **thrust** of the awards, where, during the screenings, cinema theatres became platforms for communal sloganeering. Thus, the 70th National Film Awards, declared earlier this week, came as a sort of surprise, somewhat redeeming the **prestige** associated with the highest cinematic honours. Malayalam film Aattam, directed by debutant Anand Ekarshi, became an interesting choice for the Best Feature Film, Best Screenplay and Best Editing winner, especially in the era of the #MeToo movement. Without ever slipping into **preachiness**, the film-maker uses the subtle chamber drama to analyse male behaviour after a woman raises an allegation of sexual abuse within a theatre group. The award also comes at a time when protests and debates are **roiling** the country after the rape and



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murder of a doctor in Kolkata. Kannada film Kantara, which won Best Popular Film, and also fetched its director Rishab Shetty the Best Actor Award, taps into folk traditions to raise contemporary environmental concerns. Bhoota Kola, a tribal ritualistic performance from coastal Karnataka, is the centrepiece, with Shetty's **frenzied** interpretation in the climax going a long way towards the film's success as well as getting him the national award.

One commonality between these films is the lack of a formula, especially the kind dictated by corporate studios. Aattam, in fact, originated from a theatre group, giving its working-class members a chance at cinema; they play themselves in the film. Nithya Menen's Best Actress award is also an unconventional choice — as the **effervescent** Shobhana in Thiruchitrambalam, hers is not a typical award-bait role. Yet, within the film's scheme, it was a **stunning** performance which raised its overall effect by several **notches**. The awards reinforce the recent trend of South Indian cinema surpassing Bollywood, which, despite its humongous budgets, has been finding it hard to match the consistent quality of content from regional industries. It is also heartening that the juries and the larger public have started discovering more meaningful content from the southern industries. The National Awards in the 70th edition seem to

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have fulfilled, to an extent, the purpose for which they were instituted: to celebrate good cinema.

SUMMARY

The 70th National Film Awards regained some prestige by celebrating good cinema, despite facing a credibility crisis in recent years. Malayalam film Aattam, directed by debutant Anand Ekarshi, won Best Feature Film, Best Screenplay, and Best Editing, especially in the era of the #MeToo movement. Kannada film Kantara won Best Popular Film and Best Actor Award, tapping into folk traditions to raise contemporary environmental concerns. The films share a lack of a formula, with Aattam originating from a theatre group, and Kantara winning Best Popular Film and Best Actor Award. The awards reinforce the trend of South Indian cinema surpassing Bollywood, which struggles to match the consistent quality of content from regional industries.

Vocabulary

1. Credibility

Synonyms: Trustworthiness, reliability, authenticity

Antonyms: Deception, dishonesty, inaccuracy

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2. Glaring

Synonyms: Obvious, prominent, visible

Antonyms: Subtle, discreet, hidden

3. Omission

Synonyms: Exemption, deletion, removal

Antonyms: Inclusion, addition, insertion

4. Encapsulated

Synonyms: Enclosed, contained, wrapped

Antonyms: Exposed, open, expanded

5. Thrust

Synonyms: Push, shove, drive

Antonyms: Pull, drag, hold back

6. Prestige

Synonyms: Status, esteem, respect

Antonyms: Shame, disgrace, infamy



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7. Preachiness

Synonyms: Moralizing, lecturing, smugness

Antonyms: Humility, empathy, tolerance

8. Roiling

Synonyms: Turbulent, agitated, churning

Antonyms: Calm, peaceful, serene

9. Frenzied

Synonyms: Frantic, hysterical, manic

Antonyms: Sober, gentle, composed

10. Effervescent

Synonyms: Bubbly, fizzy, vivacious

Antonyms: Flat, dull, lifeless

11. Stunning

Synonyms: Gorgeous, spectacular, dazzling

Antonyms: Ordinary, mediocre, dull

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12. Notches

Synonyms: Mark, score, cuts

EDITORIAL 02

Two States: On elections to Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana

Elections to Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana are of great Import

Assembly elections for Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), to be held from September 18 to October 1, will test India's democratic institutions and, especially, the Election Commission of India (ECI), to the fullest extent. This will be the first election for J&K since it lost its statehood and Ladakh was carved out as a separate UT without an Assembly in 2019. After a three-phase poll in J&K and a single-phase one in Haryana, the counting of votes will be on October 4. Curiously, the ECI has said that elections that are due in Maharashtra and Jharkhand will be announced later. In 2019, Haryana and Maharashtra went to the polls together. Security concerns and festivals have been cited as the reason for holding these elections in batches of two each. Falling within the first year of the 2024 general election, these four Assembly

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elections, and then the one in Delhi, will be notable for the political signals that will **emanate**. Of import will be the J&K exercise, as a new elected government can be the first step to a **durable** political process after J&K's reorganisation five years ago. The **enthusiasm** that the electorate showed in the general election and the recurring incidents of violent **insurgency** are two aspects of the situation in Kashmir. Elections could open the possibility of the emergence of new political actors. An election process that is demonstrably fair and transparent is essential for a healthy democracy, and in Kashmir's case, no less so.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) went in for a changing of the guard in Haryana ahead of the general election to dilute the discontent against the party and its governments at the Centre and the State. The Agnipath short service scheme that was introduced by the Centre is a topic of intense interest in a State where many young people look to the military for a career option. The Congress is hoping to benefit from the double anti-incumbency and a **disarray** in the non-Jat social coalition that **propelled** the BJP to the top in 2014. The impact of the Assembly elections will not be limited to the two States/UTs. The general election had loosened the BJP's grip over the country's politics and given the Opposition a

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fresh lease of life. Whether that trend holds or there is a **reversal** is to be seen. Politics within the BJP, among the National Democratic Alliance partners, between the BJP and the larger Sangh Parivar, and between the BJP and the Opposition, could all be influenced by these elections. The BJP and the Congress both know that the stakes are high, giving this round of elections an added edge.

SUMMARY

The Assembly elections for Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) will take place from September 18 to October 1, testing India's democratic institutions and the Election Commission of India (ECI). This marks the first election for J&K since losing its statehood in 2019. The elections will be held in batches of two each, with security concerns and festivals cited as reasons. The J&K exercise is of great importance, as a new elected government could be the first step to a durable political process after J&K's reorganisation five years ago. The elections could also open the possibility of new political actors in Kashmir. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is targeting a change of guard in Haryana to dilute discontent against the party and its governments. The elections could influence politics within the BJP, National Democratic Alliance partners, Sangh Parivar, and Opposition.



Vocabulary

1. Carved

Synonyms: Cut, sculpted, engraved

Antonyms: Smooth, rough, coarse

2. Emanate

Synonyms: Arise, radiate, emit

Antonyms: Absorb, contain, suppress

3. Durable

Synonyms: Sturdy, tough, hardy

Antonyms: Fragile, delicate, weak

4. Enthusiasm

Synonyms: Passion, excitement, eagerness

Antonyms: Apathy, lethargy, dispassion

5. Insurgency

Synonyms: Rebellion, uprising, revolt

Antonyms: Stability, order, peace



6. Disarray

Synonyms: Chaos, confusion, disorder

Antonyms: Clarity, coherence, harmony

7. Propelled

Synonyms: Impelled, motivated, spurred

Antonyms: Halted, hindered, static

8. Reversal

Synonyms: Inversion, switch, flip

Antonyms: Continuation, preservation, upkeep

