

Insights to help you . . .

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'Slumdog Millionaire' – a reflection ~

*"He has shown you,
O man, what is good:
And what does the Lord
require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly
with your God?"*

- Micah 6:8 [NKJV]

As an Indian I am proud to know that 'Slumdog Millionaire' has brought laurels to the country. Danny Boyle, the director with Loveleen Tandon has produced a master piece. A. R. Rahman deserves full praise and commendation for his world class contribution. The script writer Simon Beaufoy has woven the story in a very attractive style, audiences are not bored but taken along with the narration.

The film has brought the stark realities of India before a global audience. The elite of the country have spoken against the movie as it brings the other side of India, which is not as an IT superpower pulsating with urban life, but real India.

- **Slums:** 25 to 40 per cent of the urban population in India, live in slums. The movie brings out the pathetic life in these slums. The narrow streets, lack of health and hygiene, tin roofs, open sewerage, garbage heaps ...etc.
- **Lack of human dignity:** Jamal (Dev Patel) who appears in the Kaun Banega Crorepati (the TV show: 'Who wants to be a millionaire?') is ridiculed by the anchor Prem Kumar (Anil Kapoor). Selling tea is shown as a 'mean' job and he publicly ridicules him.
- **Children:** Children do not have opportunity for education. In fact, they are kidnapped, maimed and sent to beg on the streets. The money that is collected by begging is taken by the gang leader Maman. 'Missing children' in India mostly end up as child beggars in big cities.
- **Children and starvation:** Starving children are shown stealing food on a train. They are roughed up and thrown from the moving train. Miraculously they escape. The way the children are treated for this crime is horrific.
- **Human trafficking:** The stark reality of human trafficking, especially of woman, is also brought out well in this movie. It is an open fact that women in India are exploited to be dancers and sex slaves.
- **Violation of human rights:** The hero, Jamal is picked up when he comes out from being on the TV show. He is tortured in an effort to discover the truth. How did he know all the answers when more educated people could not even survive the first few rounds? Police are brutal and violate all laws of the land.
- **Attitude of upper class:** Prem Kumar (Anil Kapoor) informs the police that Jamal could have cheated because he wanted nobody in the show to win. He could not tolerate a socially lower class (caste) boy winning the prize of millions of rupees.
- **Riots:** Riots are a common feature in India. Minorities are attacked with impunity, with the help of law enforcing agencies from time to time.
- **Underworld:** The mafia gang operates in cities like Mumbai with impunity. They violate human rights, bribe police and escape. Many teens are being attracted towards these elements.
- **Karma:** At the opening scene of the movie, a title card is presented: "Jamal Malik is one question away from winning 20 Million rupees. How did he do it? A) He cheated, B) He's lucky, C) He's a genius, D) It is written." At the end of the film, the answer is given as 'D' – it is written. This promotes the idea of 'karma' where everything is predetermined and nothing could be changed.

Thus the film has opened a window for all to see the stark realities in India. Instead of contesting the portrayal, leaders should work to address the injustices shown in such detail.

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