

'THE CROW'S EGG'

Director: M Manikandan

Date: 2015

Language: Tamil (with English subtitles)

Running time: 109 minutes



On the outside looking in.

A slum next to middle class apartments in Lucknow.

Photo: Tom Pietrasik/Oxfam

FAST FOOD IN INDIA

European and North American fast food, like the pizza served at Pizza Spot, is becoming increasingly popular in India. Here are some of the fast food brands investing in India.

Burger King
Pizza Hut
McDonald's
Domino's Pizza
Dunkin' Donuts
Starbucks
KFC

According to the New York Times, the Indian fast food market will be worth \$8 billion by 2020. Its popularity is based on it being a 'fancy and fast' choice for young professionals.

But where does this leave Grandma's *dosa* (a traditional South Indian pancake) and India's delicious street food?

INTRODUCTION

Kaakka Muttai (The Crow's Egg) is a Tamil language feature film set in the Indian city of Chennai, in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. It follows the story of two young brothers whose dream is to taste a delicious pizza from Pizza Spot, an exciting new restaurant that has opened next to the slum where they live.

Although Chennai leads India's rapid economic development and has the second highest literacy rate in the country, *Kaakka Muttai* illustrates many of the inequalities that continue to divide modern India. Neither boy goes to school, they live in a slum and their father is in jail.

Money in kaakka muttai

We see a lot of money change hands in *Kaakka Muttai*. Everything has a price. Here are the costs of doing some things in the slum, converted into pounds and pence. Why does the film focus on money so much?

The pay for children collecting coal at the railway sidings — 3p

An average bus fare across the city — 14p

An illegal TV connection — 35p

All the money that the brothers' mother has in the house — £1.20

A pizza from Pizza Spot — £3.47

The bribe to free the brothers' father from jail — £347

The cost of building Pizza Spot, including bribes—£924,924



Children in Delhi scavenging for rags to sell.

Why open an expensive restaurant next to a slum?

Photo: David Levene/GCE UK

Globalisation & INEQUALITY

According to the Hindu Review, *Kaakka Muttai* depicts 'globalisation at the doorstep of the underprivileged'. Examples include pizza, the shopping mall, nice clothes, TV and cell phones. Can you identify any others?

Think about these images of globalisation. Do they benefit all people or do they contribute to the widening inequality between rich and poor?

RealISM

Is *Kaakka Muttai* realistic? Does it truthfully depict daily life in the slum? Does this matter?

Compare *Kaakka Muttai* with other films like Satyajit Ray's '*Pather Panchali*', Mira Nair's '*Salaam Bombay*' or Danny Boyle's '*Slumdog Millionaire*'.

What similarities and differences do you notice?



Big Crow's Egg and Little Crow's Egg
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A real-life slum in Delhi.

Is it important that the film is realistic? How would you know?

Photo: David Levene/GCE UK

Everyday Life

What do you learn about everyday life in the slum? Is life similar for all of the characters or are there inequalities between young and old, men and women, or rich and poor? Think about:

- Home and family life
- Access to water, sanitation, education and health
- Jobs and incomes
- Politics and corruption

Genre

Kaakka Muttai is in the Tamil language, not Hindi. This influences who will watch it.

Like many Indian films, *Kaakka Muttai* has songs but it has no dance routines. It features a star actress in a leading role but no conventional leading man or romance. However, many of the characters are similar to those in other Indian films, such as the corrupt businessman, the buffoon and the loveable rascals.

So what type of film is *Kaakka Muttai*?

- Is *Kaakka Muttai* a **Bollywood** film? If not, what type of film is it?
- *Kaakka Muttai* has won an award for being the best children's film in India. However, is it a film for **children** or an **adult film** featuring child actors?
- Finally, does *Kaakka Muttai* provide evidence that **globalisation** is influencing India's film industry? Can you think of other films or TV shows from different countries featuring two young boys in similar lead roles?



Photo: Wikimedia Commons. Author: Lppa

Desire

The characters in *Kaakka Muttai* all want something.

- To taste pizza
- To own a television
- To own a cell phone
- To get Dad out of jail
- To earn easy money from bribes
- To taste *Pani Puri* (street food)

Is 'wanting things' a result of globalisation? Can people's wants ever be satisfied in an unequal world?

What is the significance of the film's title **The Crow's Egg**?

What do the crows' eggs that the boys gather and eat symbolize?