

The shape of things to come

RICHARD A CASH

Elysium* Director: Neill Blomkamp. Producers: Bill Block, Simon Kinberg, Neill Blomkamp. 109 minutes. 2013.

Released in August 2013 and starring Matt Damon and Jodie Foster, "Elysium" is a science fiction film that explores political and social issues, with a special focus on healthcare, class, and justice.

The film is set in 2154, when the earth is even more overpopulated and heavily polluted. The rich and powerful have created Elysium, a space habitat that orbits earth. With the help of high-technology machines, all diseases can be cured, the ageing process can be reversed and even body parts can be recreated. However, this technology is available only to the elite citizens registered in Elysium and is not accessible to people on Earth.

The main character, Max (Matt Damon), is poisoned by a lethal dose of radiation and given just five days to live following an industrial accident at the Los Angeles factory where he works. His only chance of survival is to reach Elysium, get himself registered in the central computer and be treated. A friend has developed a computer programme that will allow everyone on Earth to become a citizen, but Max must first reach Elysium and

breach multiple layers of security to instal the programme. In his almost impossible attempt to reach Elysium, Max reaches out to his childhood friend Frey, who is now a nurse. Her daughter has leukaemia and she is also seeking treatment for her in Elysium.

There follows a rather convoluted plot, with a number of very violent confrontations. Whether Max reaches the computer core and what happens during the climax cannot be revealed here. But the film has taken up a key issue, that of the ownership of powerful healing technologies and their use for the public good or for private benefit.

The film clearly differentiates between those few who have access to the very best healthcare and the vast numbers who do not. The citizens of Earth are denied healthcare both for political and economic reasons, a situation not dissimilar to the citizens of many countries, including India. The sci-fi format allows these issues – access to healthcare, class, and justice – to be confronted directly and in a creative way. By not addressing the problems of any one country, the themes dealt with transcend specific boundaries and, in a sense, make them more accessible. The film is written and directed by Neill Blomkamp, who has been quoted as saying, "This isn't science fiction. This is today. This is now." The film is recommended to those who are interested in the inequities of access to healthcare and the underlying class issues that support inequitable systems, and those open to exploring these issues in a sci-fi format. That said, the film is complicated and has many moments of excessive and, it seems, unnecessary violence.

(*The review is based on a viewing of the film and excerpts from other movie reviews on the web)

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A story of real heroes

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Dr Prakash Baba Amte: a real hero, Producers: Golden Globe and Samruddhi Porey, Director: Samruddhi Porey. Marathi with English subtitles, 126 minutes, 2014.

The Marathi film, *Dr Prakash Baba Amte: a real hero* is the inspiring story of a doctor couple which has been working for the welfare of the tribal community in Hemalaksana, one of the most difficult tribal terrains in India, for decades and is still going strong. The two have worked tirelessly and without harbouring any expectations.

The film begins with the visit of a few international journalists to Hemalaksana. They have come to interview Dr Prakash Amte (Nana Patekar) and his wife Dr Mandakini Amte (Sonali Kulkarni), and to familiarise themselves with the Lok Biradari Project, one of the initiatives taken by the couple. This project

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