

Retrieving the Masculine Performance: Redemption Through Romantic Possession: A Study on Selected Malayalam Movies

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to study Marginalized Masculinities in popular Malayalam Cinema focusing on three Popular Cinema of the Millenium portraying alternate masculinities

The relationship between masculinity, identity and gender as social structure has changed somewhat during the various phases of development with the sociology of masculinity. Early influences tended to draw heavily on notions of gender role and its 'strains or 'discrepancies' for men. (Pleck, 1981) Nathaniel Goldberg identifies the 'neuro-endocrine system' (the interaction of the nervous system with the hormone system) as the biological basis of masculinities. Such essentialism is also characteristic of populist 'celebratory' writing about masculinity, in which men are urged to reinvigorate their 'natural' masculinity. Robert Bly sees masculinity as being damaged by the conditions of modern society, and remedy in men-only retreats and bonding rituals. In contrast, from the more critical, academic perspective of the social sciences, masculinities are understood as a form of power relation, both among men themselves and between men and women. Masculinities occupy a higher ranking than femininity in the 'gender hierarchy' characteristic of modern Western societies. At the top of the gender hierarchy is 'hegemonic masculinity', the culturally dominant ideal of masculinity centered on authority, physical toughness and strength, heterosexuality and paid work. This is an ideal of masculinity that few actual men live up to, but from which most gain advantage and the next level is 'complicit masculinity'. Below this in the hierarchy are 'subordinated masculinities', the most important of which is homosexual masculinity. More generally, this form of masculinity includes a range of masculine behavior which does not fully match up to the macho ideals of hegemonic masculinity. At the bottom of the gender hierarchy are femininities. (Although these may take a variety of forms, for example emphasized or compliant femininity and 'resistant' femininity, femininity is always subordinated to masculinity.) In his 1977 publication, *Verbal Art as Performance*, anthropologist Richard Bauman defines performance as a term that conveys 'a dual sense of artistic action ... and artistic event' with the event comprising 'performer, art form, audience, and setting'.

In Cinema the male protagonist is expected to perform a masculine role in front of his audience. Any lesser performance would make him stand out as a clown, transgender or invalid. The New Wave cinema of the 21st Century focused more on lives of the marginalized-the Others and their stories. These stories were new and fresh bringing audience back to Cinema Halls which were at the verge of shut downs. Jude (Nivin Pauly) in *Hey Jude* (2018) directed by Shyamaprasad is the son of Dominique (played by Siddique) and

Maria (Neena Kurup). Dominique inherits the property of his paternal aunt in Goa and comes to know about it when he reaches Goa for her funeral. The family decides to stay back at Goa to decide about disposal of the property inherited before travelling back to Cochin where they own an antique shop. Jude befriends Crystal (Trisha) who is the daughter of Dr. Sebastian (Vijay Menon, tenants of the outhouse of Olivia (Dominique's aunt) Bungalow. While Dominique instinctively develops a dislike for the tenants Jude patiently develops a bond with Crystal who has split personality. Jude unlike his predecessors (feudal lord protagonists) lacks the charm and lives an ordinary life taunted by his limitations. Though brilliant, Jude failed to socialize with others. He has poor social skills and after been thrown out of his last job he helps his father at the antique shop. Crystal who is suffering from bipolar disorder with the help of her father who is a psychologist befriends Jude and helps him to realize his long, cherished dream of being an Oceanographer.

Kumbalangi Nights (2019) directed by Madhu C Narayanan depicts the isolated lives of Kumbalangi islands through the character of Saji (Soubin) and his brothers Bobby (Shane), Bonny (Sreenath Bhasi) and Franky (Mathew). The geographical isolation coincides with the social life of the islanders who struggle to make day today living. Saji is in depression unable to control his emotions whereas his brother Bobby is frustrated as he cannot be successful in life.

Sudhi in ***Su Su Sudhi Vatmeekam*** (2015) lives in a secured condition avoiding any chances to socialize. Sudhi has stuttering which increases in the presence of a stranger.

All the three protagonists of the selected texts are introverts reluctant to face the society. They live in their own cocoons, comfort zones with their close-knit family and friends. Any people other than their close confidants are seen unwanted disturbances in their routine lives. The entry of the female companions like the therapist in Sudhi's life, Crystal as a friend and lover for Jude, the maternal care found in Sathi which reunites the brothers of Kumbalangi are all romantic repossessions made by the introvert males on their way in finding a place in a society where their masculine performance was found unsatisfactory.

Masculinities convey that there are many socially constructed definitions for being a man and that these can change over time and from place to place. The term relates to perceived notions and ideals about how men should or are expected to behave in a given setting. Masculinity and femininity are relational concepts, which only have meaning in relation to each other. Masculinities are configurations of practice structured by gender relations. They are inherently historical; and their making and remaking is a political process affecting the balance of interests in society and the direction of social change. Men who may wish to stay in control of conversation may quite accurately perceive that the disclosure of their emotions leads to a reduction in control, with the result that they may not find the prospect of self-revelation an enticing one. (Spender, 1980). With an ideology based on an objectifying trajectory, manifested psychologically in the splitting of intellect from feeling and the repression of the latter, it ceases to be possible to adequately construe the self—to make sense of one's own experience and emotional confusion...men's own experience is left uninterpretable because masculinity is based upon its repression—a particularly significant issue in relation to therapy. Self-control, mastery of nature and of our 'nature', is a defining marker of the masculine state.

Hey Jude (2018) directed by veteran director Shyamaprasad came with the tagline 'Be yourself love will find you.' Inspired from *The Beatles* 1968 song *Hey Jude* which is an address to Jude to find his lover the movie is about the self realization of Jude (Nivin Pauly) who is slightly autistic. His friendship with Crystal (Trisha) gives him the opportunity to explore his fears and conquer his dreams. While the song written by Paul McCartney is all about motivating Jude to discover his strengths and confidence, the

movie, according to Shyamaprasad, is only broadly referenced on the song and it is more about a youngster's inner voyage.

Hey Jude, don't make it bad.

Take a sad song and make it better.

Remember to let her into your heart, Then you can start to make it better.

Hey Jude, don't be afraid.

You were made to go out and get her.

The minute you let her under your skin,

Then you begin to make it better.

(Hey Jude, 1968)

Hey Jude, produced by Anil Ambalakara, is a first for the film director as it, “a kind of rom-com about a family who lives life on their own terms”. “No, they are not dysfunctional but they are different,” Shyamaprasad said, during an interaction at Alchemy, a cafe at YMR junction in Thiruvananthapuram. Immanuel Kant isolated two fundamental necessary conditions for a judgment, to be a judgment of taste—*subjectivity* and *universality* (Kant 1790/2000). Jude would not have been the likely subject of discussion some years ago as he is not the admired hero of the popular cult of the previous decade. Jude is a representative of the hero who has risen to power due to the larger visibility of the underprivileged. Jude bypasses the definitions of a hero as a hero always is someone with a masculine performance. Masculinity demands aggression, power, dominance and success. Jude is a mathematical genius but fails to impress others even his family members. His somewhat compassionate mother is the only person who has sympathy towards her son. She tries everything to help him out-religious methods as well as scientific. She prays for him and wants him to be ‘normal and smart’. His father Dominique is obsessed with making money and sister Andrea is a street-smart teenager shrewd enough to get away with her pranks. Jude is seen as cranky and childish by his family members and as a misanthrope by his colleagues.

At the dining table the family meets up for lunch and there is a discussion about Jude and his behavior. His mother Mariya believes in religious rituals and seeks advices of priests on Jude's behavior. Dominique on the other hand refuses to acknowledge the ‘strangeness’ in Jude. According to Dominique Jude is not abnormal. “Jude does whatever he likes and will not do things he doesn't like however he is forced to”. (00.06.57). Jude is pranked by his colleagues and finally loses his job.

Jude in *Hey Jude* lacks the Universality of a romantic hero. Dr. Sebastian (Vijay Menon) who is a psychologist and his daughter Crystal (Trisha) are responsible for the changes in Jude's life. A change in geographical location itself is a big change in the life of Jude who insists on permanency. He functions like a machine without rewritable memory. His Asperger's syndrome as stated by Dr. Sebastian in the movie makes his life a struggle to understand human emotions. The inability to distinguish between joy, sorrow, grief etc. makes Jude's life difficult. Jude is exceptionally talented in maths and can solve mathematical puzzles easily. He says “there is truth in maths”. (1.07.43)

He is unable to understand emotions. They are complicated for him. Jude cannot understand why a person who is smiling is not always happy. He couldn't find ‘truth’ in emotions. Jude is forced to live under a control freak father who proposes the rules of his life. Once Jude fell in water and struggled to escape out of it. After the incident his parents never permitted him to go near water. Jude loved Oceans and water life yet couldnot tell his parents about it as his father would have disapproved the idea. So Jude restricted himself to a small world where he did not belong to. He was always an outsider. He hated the crowds, had few friends and went on with his mundane routine been thrown out from several jobs. Dominique who is

reluctant to depute Jude as the proprietor of his antique shop while he is at Goa bribes him into befriending the lessee to ooze him out of their place before the end of the lease period. Thus the control freak father initiates his son into action. Crystal unlike the submissive, dutiful lover is presented as a person with extreme emotions. She is the ambitious, aggressive go getter among the couple. She is not the prize for the hero which will be a mandatory gift for him but a true partner and guide who can boost confidence of her partner. Crystal is not the stereotyped female who sacrifices everything for her family. She goes on to choose her partner, make him desirable and social.

Crystal instills the fire to conquer his fears yet Jude is doubtful. Dominique and Mariya are suspicious about the changes in Jude. The climax is Jude retrieving the body of his father after he gets drowned in a swimming pool during a massive cardiac attack. Thereafter Jude takes on the responsibility of his family. Crystal goes on to do voluntary medical service and discover herself. Crystal who always believed in Jude finally discovers that she has to be more open to adapt Jude's emotions. The movie ends with the lyrics asking Jude to find the truth and to go on fearlessly behind his dreams.

Both Jude and Crystal break the stereotyped imagery. They question the norms. In *Hey Jude* both these characters (subjects) break all the rules to bring new order, values and aesthetics. The decentralization of power gives more freedom to the characters. Throughout the movie the mannerisms, language and dressing style of Crystal remains the same indicating that Crystal has not undergone any changes whereas Jude explores the world, overcomes his fears and make most use of his opportunities. The movie is about how Jude overcomes his performance crisis. Masculinity crisis here is resolved by introducing a fluid subjectivity making both Jude and Crystal atypical subjects. They become beautiful and acceptable in a society where both complement each other.

An outsider in the mainstream both Jude suffering from Autism and Crystal from Bipolar Syndrome recognize the worth of each other. Along with their family members the audience also accepts the bonding between them. "Happiness can exist only in acceptance", commented Orwell. The people around Jude decided to accept him as he was and that brought happiness in their lives. Jude grew up to be a responsible head of his family taking care of it. Crystal could find the lover and partner in Jude.

Stereotyping discourses about disabilities can be found in the main-stream media. They are either 'the other' or the dependent ones playing roles that are insignificant. There is a discursive exclusion of the disabled in the main stream media. Post colonialism has brought in ethnic inclusion which has now resulted in multiculturalism and liberal humanism. This fresh wave of representation can be seen in The New Wave Cinema, The Millennial Cinema which brought to its forefront lives of various sections of society. *Su.. Su... Sudhi Vathmeekam*, is a 2015 Malayalam comedy-drama film directed, co-written and co-produced by Ranjith Sankar. The film stars Jayasurya in a lead role, who also co-produced the film under Dreams N Beyond. Jayasurya won national and Kerala state special jury mention for his performance as lead. The central character is inspired from a real-life person Sudheendran Avittathur. It is a tale about how Sudhi Vatmeekam born with stammering earns respect and power in a society from which he was trying to get away with.

The movie is an inspiration for everyone as it propels the positivity and hope in us. The protagonist Sudhi played by Jayasurya has stammering which makes him a loner. He has his limited circle of friends and lives in his own comfort zone. At the presence of an outsider he fidgets and the increased strain results in stammering. After a series of events in life Sudhi realizes that one has to fight against ones fears, illusions and stigmas to realize one's own strengths. For Sudhi his love failure and his acquaintance with a speech therapist whom he unconsciously admired gave him confidence to fight against his own prejudices.

The movie begins with the introduction of Sudhi in which the director portrays Sudhi as a weak, timid person in want of sympathy. His stammering which is a minute issue affects his daily life making it miserable. He is seen shopping vegetables. After waiting for sometime Sudhi manages to open his mouth yet he cannot utter the words he wants. So instead of eggs (Kozhimutta) he gets Cauliflower as 'Ko' is the only sound he managed to produce in this misadventure. Sudhi behaves normally within his limited social place but is reluctant to accept changes. He takes a bus regularly to his school where he is the accountant and is frightened to board on any other bus as he is afraid to talk to the conductor. Sudhi is afraid to tell to the conductor where to get down from the bus.

Hegemonic masculinity identifies the hegemonic position of males within many Western cultures and argues that men's multiple performed masculinities grapple for power along a continuum ... With hegemonic masculinity, masculinity becomes much more complex than sex role arguments — combining ethnicity, sexuality, economic power, and personal characteristics to determine status. The physically disabled male body provides a means to grapple with the components of embodiment and cultural interpretations of masculinity because "disability is defined not as a set of observable, predictable traits — like racialized or gendered features — but rather as *any* departure from an unstated physical and functional norm," as a result "disability highlights difference" (Thomson, 1997, p. 24)

The relationship between masculinity and physically disabled identity materializes as a central component to personal identity across performances. "What is it to perform masculinity and sexuality?" is a conflicting question *a desire to be desired*, through a body culturally positioned as "other." One has to perform his/her/hir identity in a unique time and space, situated within cultural meanings, beliefs, and realities. The variability across experiences drew attention to the ability and masculinity spectrums on which these bodies surface, enabled and constrained by cultural expectations of gendered performance. Bodies cited as different and deviant potentially unsettle dominant understandings of the culturally-constituted gendered continuum upon which all human bodies move within their daily performances. Through body marked atypical, the character Sudhi expose the nuances of culturally-constituted hegemonic masculinity that all human beings negotiate, interpret, create and re-create within our interactions. He mourned, resisted, and/or embraced his performances of masculine identity through his disabled body.

The bus ride Sudhi makes in a bus with a hot tempered conductor, the teasing of fellow travelers and the inferiority of Sudhi himself is a typical evidence of the embarrassment Sudhi develops around his masculine performance. Sudhi is trying to overcome his minor defect but his inability to accept himself as he is becomes his greatest problem. The lack of confidence and his futile attempts to hide his stammering brings the negativity and inferiority in him to the forefront marring the innocence and love in him. Greygon (Aju Varghese) is the foil for the diffident and forever succumbing Sudhi. There are instances where Greygon voices explicitly for Sudhi. He consults a doctor regularly but nothing works for Sudhi as he is reluctant to accept his disability. The marriage proposal from a Mumbai based girl brings a lot of hope in his life. Sudhi wanted the girl to accept him with his disability .He announces his intention to his family members and the marriage is a much hyped event that ended as an illusion. The disapproval / rejection by the girl after the engagement increases the chaos and confusion in an otherwise diffident Sudhi and his want for empathy from others change to frustration. He even goes to the end of breaking his friendship with his close knit group of friends who stood with him at his toughest times. (01.00.00)

Disability theorists and researchers have analyzed the relationship between gender identity and ability, providing multiple discussions on how disabled bodies are interpreted by the dominant culture. Some

disability researchers explain that the presence of disability potentially negates sexuality, compelling those around the disabled person to view her/him as asexual and incapable of entering into a sexual or romantic relationship with another person. As Porter (1997) notes, "a disabled body seems to be lacking something essential, something to make it identifiable and something to identify with; a body that is deficiently itself, not quite a body in the full sense of the word, not real enough," and in turn potentially absent of sexual identity.

Pablo Picasso has once said "There is only one way to look at things until someone shows us how to look at them with different eyes."

It was Kalyani the speech therapist who brought different shades in Sudhi's dull life. A realization that stammering is a condition he has to live with came to Sudhi. The person who sought sympathy from others at the end was able to help a mute student Tara Menon (Roshni Singh) daughter of the principal of their school to obtain high marks in her post metric exams. Kurup Sir (Irshad) who exploited the talents of Sudhi and frightened him to join in financial fraudulency was exposed and Sudhi retrieved his confidence and stance in society. Sudhi went on to explore the world with the newly gained confidence, joined as a probationary bank officer and later accepted the hand in marriage of the speech therapist who was sincere, a music enthusiast and down to earth (the qualities which attracted him to Sheela, his first lover.

The performances of masculinity also call attention to our gender identities. It depends upon multifaceted cultural markers, from size and ability, to professional success and personal relationships, all of which are vulnerable to change with age, contexts, relationships, and/or events. Perhaps, through their reflections on gender, disability, and embodiment, we can first understand, and then begin the process of dismantling notions of 'ideal masculine identity' that all humans imagine and pursue, but that can never be realized by *any single body*.

When 'men', who are not meant to cry or show vulnerability, and may well, have had difficulty with intimacy of any kind, really do find themselves 'in crisis, communities we construct are the support networks and crisis services we create. Relations between public and private worlds have long been a central concern within feminism, and are also, arguably, pivotal to the intrinsically personal politics of 'mental health'. At times of crisis, innermost private worlds come into collision with the all too often uncomprehending faces of the public domain, and when the person in crisis is a man, a distinct set of issues and difficulties arise which have seldom been addressed without recourse to a modernist paradigm of medicalising knowledge. The term 'in crisis' is used rather than 'madness' or 'distress', as it created a non-medicalising space within which experiences could be located on a continuum, while still sufficiently evoking an arena where key issues such as risk and fears of 'dangerousness' arise. It also enables to avoid the discomfort many people feel with other people's use of language, and to flag up the tension between discussions about 'mental health' crises and discourses claiming that masculinity, or men in general, are in a state of crisis. Over recent decades a considerable feminist literature has debated the impact of patriarchal culture and psychiatry on women. Issues particular to women in the 'mental health' system, such as concerns about violence and harassment, have recently been approaching the politics of complexity, written into policy, but remain far from resolved on the ground. Despite cautioning against an essentialist identification of insanity as feminine, some feminist commentators may have inadvertently encouraged a belief that women are intrinsically psychologically vulnerable and that madness is a 'female malady' (Showalter, 1987).

Kumbalangi Nights (2019) is the story of brothers Saji (Soubin Shahir), Bobby (Shane Nigam), Bony (Sreenath Bhasi) and Frankie (Mathew Thomas). It is the story of outcasts who find their worth and place

in life through love. Football-crazy Frankie (Mathew Thomas) is ashamed to invite his school friends to his home, set on a fishing hamlet, where his brothers Soubin and Shane are constantly at odds with each other. Mathew considers his home to be in squalor, calling it the worst house in the locality. The hamlet is used as a dumping ground for stray dogs and cats, serving as a metaphor for their place in society. Saji (Soubin) and Bobby (Shane Nigam) are both loafers, who live in their own worlds and are unwilling to earn an honest penny. Bobby (Shane Nigam) is a happy-go-lucky man who loves his music (his portable speaker travels with him). His opening frames show him playing ‘Happy’ on his portable speaker as he serves himself rice and fish, their staple food. Shane is averse to working and his friend advises Babymol, who needs Shane to engage tourists at her homestay, that the proposition must be put forward as a favour as opposed to ‘work’. Anna Ben, the find of the movie, is delightful as Babymol, a strong-willed woman who looks to chart her own course in both love and life. The blossoming love affair between Babymol and Bobby change everything for the family. The obstacle to Babymol and Bobby’s love life comes in the form of Shammi (Fahadh Faasil), her brother-in-law who stays with her family. Fahadh’s unique take on Shammi guilts us into laughing at his toxic masculinity while also making us conscious of the uneasiness in every scene he pervades. One fine example is a kitchen scene where Fahadh hangs by the door and questions his wife, played by Grace Anthony, and Babymol on what they were talking about. Despite repeatedly being told it was something personal, Fahadh continues to question them, all with a smile on his face. When Soubin approaches Shammi, who has established himself as the patriarch, to discuss Babymol’s marriage to Bobby, Fahadh reminds Soubin of his family’s place in the lower strata of society and that Bobby does not have a job or a house. One poignant moment is when Soubin cries his heart out to a psychologist following a personal tragedy. It is the women in *Kumbalangi Nights* that offer hope and purpose to the lives of these men. Bobby (Shane) in particular is constantly found questioning his worth, but it is Babymol’s persistent love that serves as his anchor in what could have otherwise been a turbulent life.

Guillermo Maldonado, the American Evangelical pastor, says “Loneliness is not lack of company but loneliness is lack of purpose”. This is absolutely true for Saji and Bobby, two idle fellows messing up their lives. Fourteen minutes into the movie the song ‘Cherathukal torum nin tee ormayayi’(every lamp brings in your memories/the warm kisses we never received) played at the background of an image of a mother rocking her kid to sleep clearly depicts the personal tragedy in the lives of the four brothers-the absence of a mother. Saji, the eldest brother is an utterly broken loner who yearns for maternal care. His father Napoleon married a second time and Leelamma was then the mother of Boney whose father died. The couple later begot two sons Bobby and Frankie. The brothers were forever been insulted by society who branded them as ‘fatherless or born of many’. (01.21.30) Saji reveals to the psychiatrist the reason for the conflicts in their notorious brotherhood-it is their inability to perform their masculinities in the society. Their frustration and shame for being mocked at culminates into hatred and violence. Another important character is Shammi (Fahad Fasil) who enters the hamlet after his marriage with Simi. (Grace Antony)Forever conscious of the fact that he is an outsider the schizophrenic Shammi appears to be a decent gentleman living under the rules of patriarchy.

Shammi calls himself “The Complete Man” referring to the tagline of Raymonds Clothing. Shammi hides his violence under a smile which is cynical and silly. Simy’s uncle refers to his migrated settlement comparing Shammi to him as he has also settled in his wife’s native place while she is working abroad. Shammi offended by the remark points to the difference between them. Shammi says “We are not birds of same feather. I earn for my family and take care of them while you depend on your wife.”(30.04)

Saji, Boney and Bobby seek solace in love. Saji takes care of Murugan's wife Sathi and child after Murugan's accidental death while trying to rescue Saji on his suicide attempt. The mother and child entering the Napoleons house brings love, peace and order into the lives of the brothers who lived like stray dogs in the alienated island of Kumbalangi. The brothers had always missed their mother who gave up family life and went to serve with a Christian missionary group. Saji embarks on a chivalrous mission of protecting Murugan's family; Boney seeks solace in music and later in Nyla his girl friend, Bobby and Babymol love each other and Frankie is the happy to have his brothers back. No one can be masculine through and through without constantly, and in the end rather obviously, doing violence to many of the most basic human attributes; the capacity for sensitivity to oneself and others, the expression of fear, the admission of weakness, the wisdom of co-operation, the satisfaction of servicing, the pleasures of passivity, the need to be needed—all quint-essentially 'feminine'. (Segal, 1993)

By taking part in self-conscious and critically reflective practice that challenges dominant discourses and constructs alternatives and by adopting non-patriarchal speaking positions, men can begin to reconstitute the sense of who they are and who they might, both individually and collectively, become. (Pease, 1999)

At the 1990 meeting of OUT WRITE, a first-of-its-kind national conference of gay and lesbian writers, the African American poet and essayist Essex Hemphill spoke with several other writers on a plenary panel entitled "AIDS and the Responsibility of the Writer." There was discussion of the photographs of the late Robert Mapplethorpe. Hemphill in fact was critical of Mapplethorpe, whose work he argued "artistically perpetuates racial stereotypes constructed around sexuality" by representing the Black male as little more than "a big, black cock." Hemphill's talk thus sought to situate Mapplethorpe's photographs as another moment in a long history of the white gay community's tendency to treat Black men as "sexual objects." Hemphill argued, "Mapplethorpe's eye pays special attention to the penis at the expense of showing us the subject's face, and thus, a whole person." For Hemphill, this refusal "to not look at the black male as a whole being but as selected parts" is a racist practice as old as the slave trade.

While acknowledging the strategic importance of second-wave feminist analyses of gender and 'mental disorder', Busfield criticises their almost exclusive focus on what happens to women. In a book entitled *Men, Women and Madness*, she argues that although this focus may have been strategically necessary given an over-representation of women in the system, and a long-standing silence in relation to their needs, men's experiences and treatment also need to be 'kept in the frame'. Acknowledging that men are prominent among some psychiatric populations, and that some groups of men have been subject to as much if not more coercion than women, she advocates moving towards 'more subtle and complex forms of analysis that fully allow for the presence of male...patients' (Busfield, 1996 pp. 6, 231–2).

Prior concludes that the assumption that women are universally over-represented in psychiatric statistics has been based on over-generalisation, and finds evidence for an increasing visibility of men (Prior, 1999). Boys are over-represented by between two and ten to one in apparently bio-medical disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Rising male suicide rates also indicate serious systemic problems that need to be carefully contextualised. There can, however, be little doubt that many of the most vulnerable users and survivors of psychiatry have been and continue to be women. Moreover, given that some diagnostic categories in which men predominate (notably substance abuse and antisocial personality disorder, neither of which are classified as 'mental illnesses' per se) have been linked, for various reasons, with violence, any shift in the overall gender balance of the psychiatric patient population is unlikely to favour claims about a new parity of victimhood for men. Clearly such statistics depend upon how distress is theorised, on the contingencies of social and diagnostic processes, and on how evidence is evaluated

and presented within various discourses. Empirical evidence about changing patterns in the relationship between gender and distress or madness are summarised and evaluated elsewhere. (Pilgrim and Rogers, 1993/1999; Rogers and Pilgrim, 2003; Prior, 1999; Archer and Lloyd, 2002).

The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us, on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, ‘demands’ only to surface...one has to have an inverted image of power in order to believe that all these voices which have spoken so long in our civilisation—repeating the formidable injunction to tell what one is and what one does...are speaking to us of freedom. (Foucault, 1976/1978)

According to Foucault, the development of modern disciplines made possible the gradual emergence of a new configuration of power, “so that ‘after the Enlightenment...power is not responding to men in crisis. In place of the king a ‘machinery of furtive power’ began to function ‘like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere’. Under such a regime, symbolised in the iconography of the Panopticon, with its invisible ‘eye of power’, individuals would effectively police themselves, and ‘become the principle of [their] own subjection’. In a ‘reversal of the political axis of individualisation’, the examination and description of individuals, now conceived as ‘cases’, becomes a method of domination, augmenting or supplanting previous, originally violent means of inducing and perpetuating a radical internalisation of instinct in the interest of social conformity. Nowhere is this more evident than in relation to the supposed animality of madness (Foucault, 1975/1977 pp. 192, Foucault’s relentlessly claustrophobic historical account of the evolution of ‘carceral society’ in *Discipline and Punish*, which fittingly opens with a description of the gruesome public execution of an unsuccessful regicide, thus revisits terrain covered in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*; and his new political anatomy (a term bearing resonances from *Birth of the Clinic*) can be seen as a political anatomy of nihilism, a critique directed against the negation of life.

Nietzsche’s account of an earlier historical transformation appears to have been motivated by his desire to recuperate Dionysian wildness from Christian (or Buddhist) inhibition, and by certain nostalgia for feral social violence. His distinctly ungenealogical ‘hypothesis’ for the origin of bad conscience posits a polity founded by act of violence, in which ruthless oppression by a ‘warlike pack’ forces members of a populace to sublimate their instinctual power (Nietzsche, 1887/1956 pp. 219–21).

Hostility, cruelty, the delight in persecution, raids, excitement, destruction, all turned against their begetter. Lacking external enemies and resistances, and confined within an oppressive narrowness and regularity, man began rending, persecuting, terrifying himself, like a wild beast hurling himself against the bars of his cage. This languisher, devoured by nostalgia for the wild, who had to turn himself into an adventure, a torture chamber... became the inventor of ‘bad conscience’. (Nietzsche, 1887/1956 p. 218)

Butler sees Foucault’s account of disciplinary power as an attempt to rewrite Nietzsche’s doctrine of internalisation in terms of a model of inscription, in which an expanded interior world of ‘the soul’ is produced as a ‘surface signification’ on the body, albeit one that ‘perpetually renounces itself as such’, so that, for instance, prisoners’ bodies are compelled to signify prohibitive law as if it were their very ‘essence, style, and necessity’ (Butler, 1990 p. 134).

Foucault is explicit, however, that it is ‘the beautiful totality of the individual’ which is neither repressed nor altered by the social order, but carefully fabricated in it (Foucault, 1975/1977 p. 217). Foucault sometimes seems to share Nietzsche’s enthusiasm for the historical cruelties that he catalogues, and in a strongly Nietzschean conclusion to **Discipline and Punish** privileges the ‘the necessity of combat and the

rules of strategy’ as a ubiquitous deconstructing sovereignty organising force behind the diversity of carceral mechanisms (Foucault, 1975/1977 p. 308). While there is undoubtedly a need to recognise the realities of conflict, and the interested nature of truth claims, this unquestioning reaffirmation of Nietzsche’s public agony comes close to normalising violence. The transition from sovereign to disciplinary power is personified for Foucault by Napoleon, a figure whose single gaze loomed over an entire empire and whose attributes epitomised an ideal of masculinity for the polemical Nietzsche. **Discipline and Punish** is replete with unacknowledged imagery of gender, not least in the figure of the soldier that functions as a galvanising image, modelling the definition and production of ‘docile bodies’ in a newly enlightened world of ‘Man-the-Machine’. His upright and regimented male form appears to replace ‘the body of the king’ in an imaginary anatomy of masculinity, announcing ‘the birth of meticulous military and political tactics for the control of bodies and individual forces within states’, as disciplinary modes of power infiltrate all others (Foucault, 1975/1977 pp. 216, 136, 168). If masculinity is a—presumably hierarchical—process of ‘homosocial enactment’, demanding constant vigilance and mutual evaluation, ‘an intense scrutiny of its own boundaries’ in order to repudiate difference and ambiguity, then the ‘panopticon’ seems an obvious symbol for this aspect of its historical project. (Kimmel, 1994 p. 128) But the construction of paradoxically docile masculine individuals probably relies as much upon the management as upon the repudiation of ‘instinct’. Public discourse, perhaps increasingly, fabricates an idealised image of masculine agency, whether through physical strength, wildness, reason or consumer choice, as if these were men’s interior essence, an image that (as in the case of the obsequious fascist) often masks collusive weakness, and reverses Nietzsche’s picture of pallid ‘bad conscience’ in which an ethic of altruistic sympathy has to be superimposed over seething instinct (Butler, 1990 p. 136). As carceral networks proliferate, a diffuse and furtive paternalism begins to constitute normality and madness through the theoretical reach and disciplinary practices of masculinist psychology and psychiatry. Foucault’s notion of political anatomy also resonates with Lacan’s versatile concept of ‘imaginary anatomy’, and his assertion that the unified body image of ‘normal’ individuals is a precarious achievement that needs protection against the threat of disintegration. In ‘psychosis,’ Lacan claimed to have found ‘the fundamental alienation constitutive of our experience’, which he analysed in the context of his theory of a mirror stage. Conversely, the concept of imaginary anatomy has been described as ‘crucial in explaining the symptomatology of psychosis’ (Grosz, 1994 p. 44). If, in a world of disciplinary surveillance, madness, inflamed by a vivid sense of actual and possible persecution, or driven to transgress symbolic paternal limits, seems to Responding to men in crisis reveal the ‘paranoid’ nature of the ego, this will surely be because both have been forged within the same configuration of power.

“We are never trapped by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy,” remarks Foucault.

Jude is stubborn and refuses to change his lifestyle in *Hey Jude*. Even when Crystal demands attention and care Jude makes it clear that he is not the chivalrous hero who will satisfy the demands of his love through sacrificing his comforts. The farewell scene at Goa (02.20.04) depicts the violence in Jude. Sudhi in *Sudhi Vathmeekam* refuses to marry Kalyani when she proposes to him as he feels inferior and the offer to marry as an act of mercy. Sudhi moves out of his home, leaves his comfort zone, get a job on his own and seek Kalyani’s hand in marriage. His disability thus becomes his strongest weapon for survival in the competitive world. Saji and Bobby fight against the rules to make a home in the alienated land of Kumbalangi. Saji accepts the wife and kid of an immigrant laborer and Bobby weds from out of his religion and class. All these heroes are law breakers resorting to violence of varying degrees to express

themselves. The laws made by society are methods to impart discipline in their lives and the punishment for them was a life of crisis particularly gender crisis which made them victims of the legal system, patriarchy and classicism.

The fin de siècle Malayalam Cinema had the leftovers of the feudal system which appeared as the 'tampurans' and 'madambes' who emerged regularly and the most acclaimed actors of Mollywood-Mamooty and Mohanlal with their presence graced these roles. The monotonous repetition of stories and clichéd dialogues kept people away from Malayalam movies. While the other southern cinema industries brought in new subjects Malayalam Cinema was slow to change. A set of young technicians and actors finally came up with the new wave in Malayalam Cinema which now has retrieved its front seat in Indian Cinema Industry.

The relationship between movies and culture involves a complicated dynamic; while movies certainly influence the mass culture that consumes them, they are also an integral part of that culture, a product of it, and therefore a reflection of prevailing concerns, attitudes, and beliefs. In considering the relationship between film and culture, it is important to keep in mind that, while certain ideologies may be prevalent in a given era but it is also constantly changing from one period to the next. Mainstream films produced in the late 1940s and into the 1950s, for example, reflected the conservatism that dominated the sociopolitical arenas of the time. However, by the 1960s, a reactionary youth culture began to emerge in opposition to the dominant institutions, and these antiestablishment views soon found their way onto the screen—a far cry from the attitudes most commonly represented only a few years earlier. The millennial cinema reflects the attitudes of many members of a young generation growing increasingly dissatisfied with what they perceived to be the repressive social codes established by their more conservative elders.

Mosayile Kuthira Meenukal (2014) Diamond Necklace (2012) Maheshinte Prathikaaram (2016) Thondi Muthalum Driksakshiyum (2017) Saphthamashree Thaskaraha (2014) Uyare (2019) Njan Marykutty (2018) North 24 Kaatham (2013) Oru Muthassi Gadha (2016) Aby (2017) Ishq (2019) Kismath (2016) Da Thadiya (2012) Udaharanam Sujatha (2017) Nirnnayakam (2015) Njandukalude Naattil Oridavela (2017) Guppy (2016) Memories (2013) Kattappanayile Rithwik Roshan (2016) Ayyappanum Koshiyum (2020) Traffic (2011) How Old Are You? (2014) Mili (2015) and many more movies of the last two decades made in Malayalam are tales of ordinary people making extraordinary efforts to win in life. They are not the 'Greek Heroes' of noble birth but humans with flaws and weaknesses trying with nails and claws to get the best in lives. The villainy in them is natural like the characters of Alex and Ali in *Mosayile Kuthira Meenukal (2014)*, Dr. Arun Kumar of *Diamond Necklace (2012)*, all the seven robbers of *Saphthamashree Taskaraya*, both Ayyappan n Koshi of *Ayyappanum Koshiyum*. All these characters exhibit violence in varying degrees. The social and moral code of conduct seldom affects them.

The new wave hero is not always a traditional hero who is very likable, chivalrous, optimistic and extrovert. They are the less privileged, unsuccessful ones living in squalor and dirt. The movies are not always about the rise of the hero. It is often about the struggle. There is no definite or well structured course of action and the story is not about the success the hero attains but about the unending troubles one has to face in life. The masculine and feminine performances often coincide breaking the stereotypes. Sujatha and Nirupama played by Manju Warriar, Crystal in *Hey Jude*, Vasuda (Ann Sheetal) in *Ishq* are a few to mention. The protagonist turns into the antagonist often as like Mahesh in *Maheshinte Pretikaram*, Ayyappan in *Ayyappanum Koshiyum*, Sachi in *Ishq*, Vishnu in *Kappela*. As the heroes lack the upper class dignity, the language used by them has become more realistic, vulgar and unrefined. Their clothing, dressing and body language communicate their low life. The Jewish political philosopher Hannah Arendt

states that “Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance”. Any system thus maintains its power through rules and values. Discipline is imposed using authoritative rules which often compel one to surrender the innate man/woman/trans qualities in oneself. Albert Einstein has commented that “Power attracts people with no moral values”. Ma Jian the Chinese writer opines that “when history is erased the moral values are also erased”. History is made by the dominant, the privileged. When their history gave way to narratives of the lives of the underdogs it has to present on screen tales that has blood and sweat of the common man in it.

Popular Cinema always synchronies with the aptitude of , a ‘living set of humans’, of a locality. The last two decades of Mollywood Cinema is rich with its experimentation. During its genesis when the makers focused on storyline now it’s all about characterization. The narrative tone has given way to description of life and people living in contemporary society. The vestiges of the classical era are replaced with the stark reality of stress, trauma and resistance in day to day lives of ordinary men. Cinema now doesnot revolve around the lives of heroes particularly those which are modeled on the Greek ones but it is about the rights and mistakes that one make to make life easier in a world which is largely hostile.

Masculinity and femininity were at crises as they failed to meet the demands of the traditional society. Power was vested at the hands of the privileged- the upper class white men who never permitted digressions in the unwritten rules passed on to generations as heredity. These failed subjects appear in ‘millenial cinema’ as protagonists resorting to violence. The violence is not justified with the presentation of these atypical characters as sympathy deserving underdogs but the violence becomes power at the hands of the majority which they get as a price for their relentless struggles in day to day life.

These Heroes are common men, less sophisticated, embittered due to lack of privileges and psychotic as they cannot perform their demanding gender roles. Particularly masculinity is at crisis and men often suffer from traumas. The rejuvenation of these men takes place when they come into terms with reality. The character of Jude in *Hey Jude* drives in the message that it is the society that has to change its attitude towards him and not vice versa. Sudhi Vathmeekam in *Su Su Sudhi Vathmeekam* represents the deficient body. People with disabilities are not the clichéd ‘disabled ones’ but body is merely a physical representation which executes orders for Sudhi. The four brothers of Kumbalangi gets assimilated into a society which kept them distanced and marooned with its rules and customs. Power can be obtained through violence. The morality and aesthetics of resistance must not be measured with traditional rules. Visual representations of these untold heroes make Malayalam Cinema relatable; there can be different subjectivities which are yet to be understood.

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Filmography

Primary Texts

1. *Su Su Sudhi Vatmeekam*. Directed by Ranjith Sankar, performances by Jayasurya, Shivada Nair, Swathy Narayanan and Aju Varghese, Dreams and Beyond, 2015.
2. *Hey Jude*. Directed by Shyamaprasad, performances by Nivin Pauly and Trisha,
3. *Ambalakkara Global*, 2018.

4. *Kumbalangi Nights*. Directed by Madhu C Narayanan , performances by Shane Nigam, Soubin Shahir, Fahadh Faasil, Sreenath Bhasi, Mathew Thomas, Grace Antony and Anna Ben, Fahad Fazil and Friends, 2019.

Secondary Texts

1. *Aby*. Directed by Srikant Murali, performances by Vineeth Sreenivasan , Mareena Michael Kurisingal, Aju Varghese , Suraj Venjaramoodu , Sudheer Karamana and Vinitha Koshy , Little Big Films, 2017.
2. *Ayyappanum Koshiyum*. Directed by Sachy, performances by Prithviraj Sukumaran and Biju Menon , Gold Coin Motion Picture , 2020 .
3. *Da Thadiya* . Directed by Aashiq Abu, performances by Sekhar Menon ,
4. Nivin Pauly, Ann Augustine and Sreenath Bhasi , AJ Films, 2012.
5. *Diamond Necklace*. Directed by Lal Jose , performances by Fahadh Faasil, Anusree, Samvrutha Sunil and Gauthami Nair, LJ Films, 2012 .
6. *How Old Are You?*. Directed by Rosshan Andrrews , performances by Manju Warriar, Kunchacko Boban and Kaniha , Magic Frames , 2014.
7. *Ishq*. Directed by Anuranj Manohar , performances by Shane Nigam and Ann Sheetal , AVA, 2019.
8. *Kattappanayile Hrithik Roshan* . Directed by Nadirshah, performances by Siju Wilson and Vishnu Unnikrishnan , Nad Global , 2016.
9. *Kismath* . Directed by Shanavas K Bavakutty , performances by Shane Nigam Shruthy Menon and Vinay Fort, *Pattam Cinema Company* , 2016.
10. *Maheshinte Prathikaaram* . Directed by Dileesh Pothan , performances by Fahadh Faasil, Anusree, Alencier Lopez, Aparna Balamurali, and Soubin Shahir,
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12. *Mili* . Directed by Rajesh Pillai , performances by Amala Paul and Nivin Pauly,
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14. *Mosayile Kuthira Meenukal*. Directed by Ajith Pillai, performances by Asif Ali, Sunny Wayne , Swathy Reddy and Janani Iyer , Frames Inevitable, 2014.
15. *Njan Marykutty* . Directed by Ranjith Sankar , performances by Jayasurya , Innocent, Jewel Mary, Jins Baskar, Suraj Venjaramoodu, Aju Varghese and Joju George , Dreams N Beyond, 2018.
16. *North 24 Kaatham*. Directed by Anil Radhakrishnan Menon , performances by Fahadh Faasil, Nedumudi Venu and Swathi Reddy, E 4 Entertainment, 2013.
17. *Oru Muthassi Gadha* . Directed by Jude Anthony Joseph , performances by Rajini Chandy, Bhagyalakshmi , Suraj Venjaramoodu , Lena ,Aparna Balamurali and Rajeev Pillai, AVA , 2016.
18. *Sapthamashree Thaskaraha* . Directed by Anil Radhakrishnan Menon, performances by Prithviraj Sukumaran, Asif Ali, Nedumudi Venu, Sudheer Karamana, Chemban Vinod Jose, Neeraj Madhav,Salam Bukhari, Reenu Mathews,
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21. *Traffic*. Directed by Rajesh Pillai , performances by Kunchacko Boban,
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