

A PATRIARCHAL IDENTIFICATION OF THE MOVIE KETTIYOLAANU ENTE MALAKHA THROUGH MULVEY'S MALE GAZE THEORY

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ABSTRACT--Marital rape, a social sensitive issue which been given little attention over the decades had been remained in the four walls as a silent crime, and this silence extends to the media too. The issue of marital rape is not directly portrayed in Malayalam films, instead such movies turn out to show domestic violence, which is a modified form. In that way *Kettiyolaanu Ente Malakha* can be considered as one of the primary movies which discuss marital rape as a social issue. Despite dealing with such an issue, filmmakers tried to manipulate the audience to believe all is fine when it is not. The paper thus broadly traces all the aspects involved in respect with the theory of male gaze. The paper also tries to examine and question the central character's innocence as well as the representation of marital rape as common issue in the light of Male Gaze theory.

KEYWORDS- Male gaze, Sex, Violence, Patriarchy

I. INTRODUCTION

As an avid film-watcher, I have noticed an unequal characterisation in the movie *Kettiyolaanu Ente Malakha*, which led me to analysis the movie. It's one of the popular movies of 2019 discusses a pleasant-arrange marriage love story with starring Asif Ali and Veena Nandhakumar as the central character. Their spectacular performance made the characters versatile. The movie is directed by Nissam Basheer and written by Aji peter. Nissam brilliantly captures the texture of Idukki and narrates the daily life of rural folks. Other than the artistic representation, the movie succeeds in bringing up the sensitive issue which been rarely attempted in Malayalam industry. The story narrates from the perspective of Sleevachan, who is the protagonist as well as the villain. Sleevachan, a pious and hardworking farmer who gets married to Rincy out of pressure from the family, aftermath of his marriage his ignorance about sex led him to struggle with the fear of physical intimacy. Though we are economically independent but still live in a society were sex and marital rape consider as taboo topics and even hesitates to talk in public. Here the director tries to break the barrier by boldly narrating the issue. Movie excellently entertains the audience with its core subject at the same time it disappoints the female spectator for demonstrating the dominance and violence as legitimise and for normalising the issue with the slice of love tale. Further paper analysis the movie from female perspective in respect with Male Gaze theory.

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II. OBJECTIVES

Kettiyolaanu Ente Malakha is a movie that visually and narratively put forth discrimination and gender stereotype which is merged in the patriarchal blood. The paper thoroughly analysis the presentation and justification of the mentioned ideas in the movie through the character of Sleevachan. While portraying of such a socially relevant issue, there is an unconscious acceptance of male gaze in the movie. This also stands as a central area that the paper examines using the theory of male gaze.

III. HYPOTHESIS

Film industry is a popular media which been entertaining mass audience from many decades. It plays an essential role in depicting the reality and visualizing the socio-political problems- to some extent it succeeds in tackling the contemporary issues. Other than the aesthetic pleasure, film creates a hyper-reality upon spectator's perceptions of reality.

'we all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth'(picasso)

Representation of women is a sensitive issue which being debated all over today. Not only in society but in onscreen too women are underrepresented. In movies they are supposed to be the secondary actors whose primary role is objectification. Either they are represented as the object for gaze or portray as a submissive object through which man masculinity been idealised. From the last few years there is a drastic change in situation -with the growth of female lead films. Women started challenging the established norms and undertaken the roles which breaks the stereotypic jinx. But still one can't ignore the reality that cinema is a male dominated media. Primary concern of film makers is male spectator and thus constructs the movie accordingly. Male audience demands their hero's to be macho and women be valued based on their identification as wife or lovers otherwise the movie disappoints the spectator. It is sad to encounter that the perception of women is still same. Men oriented films follows the traditional concept of women with the tagline as men property

IV. RESEARCH METHEDODOLOGY

The term associated with the notion of dominance (male dominance). Male gaze the term been coined by film theorist Laura Mulvey in her essay *visual pleasure and narrative cinema* which was published in 1975. In it Mulvey states that "the gender power asymmetry is a controlling force in cinema and constructed for the pleasure of the male viewer which is deeply rooted in patriarchal ideologies and discourses". This means that women have no real importance in onscreen. They are merely the supporting character who is portraying as an object of gaze for heterosexual man, however their presence in screens is vital. Mulvey follows Freuds theory of psychoanalysis to evaluate the distinction between identity and desire.

Concept of male gaze was an important part of feminism in the 1970s as it explained the patriarchal ideologies. Mulvey add up the idea that we live in a dominated society in which the rules and norms are constructed by men and media works as a mirror in channelizing this construction.

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kettiyolanu Ente Malakha is one of the recently celebrated movies of Malayalam industry. Though the movie is much popular, but till now no one contributed any research regarding the movie. The primary sources to evaluate the movie are the articles, reviews and interviews.

VI. ANALYSING THE MOVIE

Apart from the outpouring love, the film unconsciously underscores the dominating concept of society. From story to cast, every aspect of the movie been directed according to masculine perspective in favour for male hero. The film been noticed for addressing marital rape among rural life however the movie is not about the offence or the offender, it prods the viewer to accept the idea that love can even happen after violence. The movie follows an asymmetry in the representation of sex. The 'Deep Masculine' is reiterated in a pattern through different loops of dominance in the movie.

Movie perpetuate gender discrimination. Despite being a women centric movie, it doesn't empower women. There are many scenes and situations which can't be accepted as a female spectator. One is Male superiority, Patriarchal ideology determined that men are supposed to work in outside while women play the role of housemaker. The concept of this so called biological-determined division is reintroduced in the movie. Sleevachan is portrayed as the head of the family who runs a shop in town. His day begins in early morning, where he goes to rubber tapping with other men whereas women stick to their gender roles- cleaning, cooking, gossiping. Women in the movie are showed as passive, their identity been defined only in terms of her relationship with the male character. The two characters which given impact to Sleevachan's character are the mother and the sisters. Through them his innocence been proved repeatedly. After the crime perpetrated, Sleevachan's mother asks Rincy for forgiveness and gives a character certificate by stating that "he never had an impure thought for any girl, for him every girl is either his mother or is his sisters". These lines clearly try to show Sleevachan as a quintessential "good boy". Another characteristic of the film is the character's virtue. He is angry when he catches a friend spending time with his girl and even makes a fuss by threatening them, because his religious belief doesn't allow any kind of relation before marriage and considers such relation as misdeed. His religious hegemonic concept regarding marriage and relationship goes beyond the norms when he assaults his wife in the name of sex. It is incredulity that a man in his 30s is unaware about sex and doesn't realise that what he did was rape.

Male female relationship is always been a perennial issue in real and reel world and Such kind of diegesis always entertains the audience of Kerala. In *Kettiyolaanu Ente Malakha*, the filmmakers try to save the institution of marriage by lulling the audience to accept the love over violence. In the movie Sleevachan disinterest towards marriage is clearly mentioned. He gives his consent for alliance only because he wanted someone to take care of his aged mother and what better than bringing a woman as wife. It is fair to say that marriage is a patriarchal institution where its primary function is to breed a society. In conversation regarding marital rape a woman jokingly talks about her sex life "*I have no idea how my two children were born*". This is a scenario which probably reminiscent in the Indian homes.

Violence to gain power or control over women is considered as a sign of masculine achievement. There are different types of violence among them the only violence which is considered as legal is spousal violence. A silent crime which is still untouched by society as well as the law makers of our country. It is estimated that in Kerala

65.7% of women and 54.2% of man believes that spousal violence is not a crime. Our society favours such crimes by stating marriage as a sacred institution and women are the one who supposed to maintain the institution. Men dominate women both physically and emotionally. They consider women as a property available for them to consume. It is his friend who tells him that the only way to prove manhood is by dominating women in bed and a drunk Sleevachan attacks her so brutally that she ends up in hospital. Throughout the movie he had no regret for what he did, his only fear is the humiliation and embarrassment to face the world. Her wounds and injured lips never bothered him, the only thing which mattered was his pride. In fact no one files complaint to police nor anyone sends him to any counselling, every one brushes it off and praises him for his achievement. It is a woman who advises Sleevachan to forget the crime and restart the relation, the scene elaborates the hegemonic concept that woman is inferior and can forgive anyone, even if the man is her assaulter. There is no scene where he has been criticised. His friends, family and even the church priest encourages him to come out of the situation. At one point the priest takes the burden from Sleevachan shoulder by apologising him for not educating the latter about sex and even says sorry for not hearing his pleads. The movie been structured according to our patriarchal ideologies. Rather than empathizing the victim part, filmmakers found it important to focus on eliminating the gravity of issue. In fact the movie is all about victimizing the assaulter where the assaulter and the victim is Sleevachan.

Gaze is considered as the nutshell of movies. Film theory often equates gaze with look, which is entirely phallogocentric or patriarchal. Masculine and ideal man are often the essential part of the diegesis in the film. They been showed with the figure of powerful and machoistic with the image of caring and loving. Sleevachan is portrayed in concern with this gaze. Despite being the assaulter, audience embrace his character because of his ignorance about sex and his innocence in dealing with these matters. Neither his desire nor his intentions never questioned in the movie. Sleevachan's sexual urge towards Rincy makes her an object for gaze. while Rincy brushes her hair in bathroom Sleevachan looks at her with a desire to dominate her body, through him the audience enjoys the pleasure of gazing. The smile which he adds after perpetrating the crime denotes the satisfaction of proving his sexuality, young men saw sexual domination and aggressiveness as a symbol of masculinity.

“Mainstream cinema hit upon a successful formula with the first half of the film focusing on an encounter between a self-willed heroine and a macho hero, while the second half witness a systematic and extremely popular process of breaking her down.” (sreedharan83).

The transmogrification of character is another trait of the movie. The man who was ignorant in the first half suddenly turns to be the ideal man. He starts to go church, become socially active and even go against everyone to help a couple to get married. Above all, the media and villagers praise him for his commendation. After perpetrating the crime, he roams around the village with the image of an ideal hero. The second half completely breaks down the central heroine identity with the image of ideal wife who is only desirous of husband's love.

VII. LEAD CHARACTER: RINCY

Mulvey believes that women are in fact “the bearer of meaning and not the maker of meaning”, which can evidently be seen in *kettiyolaanu ente malakha*. Movie been shot in favour for male hero with females as inferior. The Female lead character Rincy been portrayed as simple, quiet, and subdued who bought up in Bangalore city.

Despite living in modern and educated family, her silence and helplessness towards violence points out to her individuality.

Nissam brilliantly portray Rincy's character in respect with patriarchal concept. She is a perfect example for feminine beauty which the patriarchal society looks for. When Sleevachan comes after *penukanal*, his sisters were desperate to know about her beauty and after seeing the photo they measure the girl's height, colour, and even the length of her hair which is considered as a custom and right of boy's family. Apart from the beauty she is a perfect daughter, a perfect wife, and a perfect daughter-in-law who accepts and loves her marital life even after brutally attacked by her husband. Here the silence and helplessness represented as a tool which led to their pleasant marriage life. She been represented as weak and confused who accepts her assaulter because that what the story demanded. Throughout the movie Rincy's identity been subjugated. She is tagged as a rape victim and an understanding wife. She was just an object through which the spectator may sympathise on the male character who is a victim of mislead thoughts about sex. Despite being the lead character, she fades in background. Her sexuality, dreams, achievements, remains a mystery to audience.

The cliched presentation of Rincy as a forgiving wife naturalise the gender stereotype in the movie. Despite being a rape survivor, she agrees to live with her assaulter and even appreciates and falls in love with the new side of Sleevachan. One can accept if the movie been shot in 90s, but as a modern and independent girl her decision is utter inconvenient.

VIII. CONCLUSION

From the beginning of Indian cinematic progression, women have been subjugated with the dilemma of objectification. The camera eyes compliment the male gaze, and often neglect the female perspective. The Malayalam movie that my paper deal with, discusses a significant issue of marital rape that haunt most of the Indian housewives. But because of the recurrent male oriented cinematic tradition, the movie fails to project the agony faced by the female lead and focus directly on the so called "unfamiliarity" of the man in the particular situation. Thus the filmmakers lost a glorious opportunity to awaken the society regarding sex and marital rape. Though there are movies which broadly narrates the unconcerned contemporary issues, but we can't neglect the reality that the mainstream cinema hits the trend of male gaze and objectification and this situation will change only if the male oriented cinema looks upon the issue after deconstructing the gender stereotype.

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