



Representation of Masculinity in T.V Chandran's films: An analysis of Dany

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ABSTRACT

This is an attempt to analyse how T.V Chandran represented Masculinity, with respect to his methods of portraying the hero through the protagonist in his movie called "Dany". Man, when portrayed on the silver screen, always has his male sexual superiority or his masculinity, while the woman is usually depicted as submissive. My aim in this thesis is to differentiate the representation of masculinity in TV Chandran movies from mainstream cinema. For this purpose, I have analyzed the film "Dany" that has been written and directed by T.V Chandran.

In popular cinema stereotypically, men are cast in lead roles while women are cast in roles where they are depicted as emotional and dependent on their male counterparts. Men are thought of as being more competitive and less emotional than women. But in his films, T.V Chandran represented men as men and sometimes little inferior to women also.

KEYWORDS

Film, Arts, Malayalam Films, Narrative style

INTRODUCTION

Gender is a social and cultural category influenced by stereotypes about male and female behavior the exist in our attitudes and beliefs. Such beliefs are often culturally produced or constructed. Media plays a major role in creating those types of assumptions. As Lenin said Of all the arts the cinema is the most important. Cinema plays an important role in molding and influencing the society. It may be also regarded as a major socializing agency. Cinema opens up the ideas, relations and problems of a society. On the other hand it is one the most effective entertaining media. Film is an imaginary world where the reality is often suppressed. The media has a strong impact on setting the behavioral patterns of the general population: on what they think and what they look like at issues winning in the society. Cinema has the capacity to carry viewers to faraway places and alternative temporalities as it engages viewers in an act of revelation and transportation (Landsberg 2004). Based on style, different genres of Film are Action, art, biographical, adventure, comedy, parody, documentary, drama, educational, erotic, epic, exploitation, film noir, horror, musical, mystery, reality, romance, science fiction, thriller, trick, etc.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary records that masculinity is the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish men from women, i.e, "the condition of being a man, and not a woman".

The Webster's Dictionary mentions a few important associations of masculinity as;

1. Masculinity- the properties characteristic of the male sex
2. Maleness, sexuality, gender, sex: the properties that distinguish organisms on the basis of their reproductive roles
3. Virility: the masculine property of being capable of copulation and procreation
4. Masculinity- the trait of behaving in ways considered typical for men
5. trait- a distinguishing feature of your personal nature
6. manfulness, manliness, virility - the trait of being manly; having the characteristics of an adult male
7. boyishness - being characteristic of a boy
8. machismo - exaggerated masculinity
9. hoydenism, tomboyishness - masculinity in women (especially in girls and young women)
10. femininity, muliebrity- the trait of behaving in ways considered typical for women

Thus, to speak of masculinities is to speak about gender rela-

tions. Masculinities are not equivalent to men; they concern the position of men in a gender order. They can be defined as the patterns of practice by which people (both men and women, though predominantly men) engage that position. There is abundant evidence that masculinities are multiple, with internal complexities and even contradictions; also that masculinities change in history, and that women have a considerable role in making them, in interaction with boys and men. While masculinity has been an increasingly visible field of study within several disciplines (sociology, literary studies, cultural studies, film and tv) over the last two decades, it is surprising that analysis of contemporary representations of the first part of the century has yet to emerge. Focusing on representations of masculinity in cinema, popular fiction and television from the period 2000-2010, it has been observed that dominant forms of masculinity have become increasingly informed by anxiety, trauma and loss, and this has resulted in both narratives that reflect that trauma and others which attempt to return to a more complete and heroic form of masculinity. While focusing on a range of popular genres, this work places close analysis of individual films and texts in their cultural and historical contexts, arguing for the importance of these popular fictions in diagnosing how the culture in the state identifies its changing role in the world through the representation of men, fully recognising the issues of race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, and age.

ABOUT T.V CHANDRAN

T. V. Chandran is an Indian film director, screenwriter, and actor, predominantly working in Malayalam cinema. Born into a Malayali Hindu family on 23rd November 1950 in Thalassery, Chandran worked as a Reserve Bank of India employee before entering into the film industry. He was associated with Communist party and also had sympathy towards the naxalite ideology during his college days. As a result most of his art works were influenced by these two factors. He had no formal training in film-making.

When he started his career in the film industry he assisted P. A. Backer and John Abraham. In the political Drama of 'Kabani Nadi Chuvannappol' (1975) by P.A Backer Chandran acted in the lead role. His first film called 'Krishnan Kutty' which is an experimental film did not even have a wide public release. His second venture was 'Hemavin Kadalargal' (1985) which was a Tamil feature film. Later he made 'Alicinte anveshanam' (1989) and he got Kerala State Film Award for Second Best Film. This was his first film award in his career. This film is also nominated for the Golden Leopard at Locarno International Film Festival and Indian Panorama selection at the International Film Festival of India. Ponthanmada (1993)

was his fourth film and in this film he got National Film Award for Best Director and Kerala State Film Award for Second Best Film. Later he directed several films and got State and National recognitions.

Masculinity has grown considerably since the emergence of the énew menis movement of the late eighties. This movement evolved partly in response to second wave feminist politics and has expanded to include both pro-feminist and masculinist arms. Early on in the development of masculinity studies a number of feminist film theorists identified the importance of engaging with issues pertaining to masculinity from a feminist perspective. Identifying the potential for academic investigations into discourses of masculinity to become part of a wider cultural dismissal of feminist politics, is a rarely conducted study in a society that is inclined towards uplifting the status of 'the other sex', while ignoring the weaker side of men. Men, all over the world are captive to a rigid and harmful social code of masculinity. From the earliest age, they have been programmed like robots, with the code to "Be a Man!" "Don't Cry!" "Stop with the emotion!" and "Man up!" This "guy code" suppresses their humanity, excites their drive for dominance, and renders many of them dangerous.

Masculinity is a cultural creation, which is more than a 'mask' that most men wear. But that is only marginally true. A lot of typical boy behavior, such as rough-and-tumble play, risk-taking, and fascination with gadgets rather than dolls, appears to have a basis in biology. Researchers have found, for example, that female monkeys play with dolls much more than their brothers, who prefer toy cars and trucks. Are male monkeys captive to a "guy code?" A recent study on sex differences by researchers from the University of Turin and the University of Manchester confirms what most of us see with our eyes: with some exceptions, women tend to be more sensitive, esthetic, sentimental, intuitive, and tender-minded, while men tend to be more utilitarian, objective, unemotional, and tough-minded. We do not yet fully understand the biological underpinnings of these universal tendencies, but that is no reason to deny they exist. However, the media fails in its duty to rightly portray and acknowledge the virtue of the male reserve. The character of Dany in T.V Chandran's film Dany tells us that men in our society don't feel safe talking about emotions and personal struggles. To do so violates the guy code and subjects them to shame and ridicule. The driving message of Dany is that we must free our young men to become emotionally expressive. Of course, parents should do all they can to improve their sons' emotional literacy. But parents (as well as wives and girlfriends) should keep in mind that male reticence has its advantages. The energy, competitiveness, and corporal daring of normal males are responsible for much good in the world. No one denies that boys' aggressive and risk-taking tendencies must be socialized and channeled toward constructive ends.

Masculinity is performed by individuals, of course, but it is not individual property or attribute, it is formed within the intuitions and is historically constituted. Like femininity, it discursively produced and it can be viewed as a conglomeration of concepts, themes and images, and of kinds of social relation and social practice. There are different kinds of Masculinities. Hegemonic Masculinity is the dominant form of masculinity that we can see in the society. Hegemonic masculinity is not achieved by force. Robert Connell, an Australian sociologist, explains 'Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy'. He also stresses that it is not a fixed character type, always everywhere the same' but constantly shifting.

Some of the key concepts of the masculinity in the societies are rationality, heterosexuality, hierarchy, dominance and violence. Bringing in the 'family wage' is deeply entrenched as masculine in a wide range of discourses. Work is a part of being real men. Some studies suggest that men are defined in terms of their employment.

Masculinity embodies cultural ideals. Cultural expressions of male ascendancy are endemic in the media. Cultural hegemony is maintained via the medium of film in a large scale. Film is a technical art form which usually exaggerates things in order to entertain the audience or viewer.

Heroic Masculinity

Language of heroic masculinity is sometimes represented by the martial powers, property and governance. Masculinity is often measured in terms of proper domination and submission along an axis of ascending social order. Men cluster around stronger men for protection in an unsteady world of challenge and aggression. This usually portrayed in films too. In order to represent the masculinity in the leading characters (mostly men) the filmmakers use to narrate the story in such a way that the leading characters are protective to the other's in the film.

Most of the TV Chandran's films were realistic cinemas which portray real life and emotions. He managed to break through the stereotypical barriers and take on roles that are not based on society's determined characteristics of their gender. This is evident in his films such as "Ponthanmada", "Dany" etc. In some of his films he portrayed men in such a way that the hero or is even inferior to all other characters in the movie. Novels in Malayalam like "Aadujeevitham" of Benyamin depicted leading characters in an inferior way, but when it comes to cinema there are only a few in numbers.

In most of the TV Chandran films he tried to represent the characters in a realistic way than imposing behavioural expectations on each gender. Mostly there is an approved way of behaving imposed on both men and females. Masculinity in films is often conveyed in an exaggerated way in most of the popular cinemas. Traditionally women have been regarded as more delicate and compassionate than men; stereotypes for femininity include domesticity, warmth, beauty, emotion, dependence, physical weakness and passivity. Men are thought of as being more competitive and less emotional than women; masculinity stereotypes can be described by words such as unemotional, physically strong, independent, active and aggressive. But in his films he represented men as men and sometimes little inferior to women also. When we study films in detail we can understand that it is not only a technical art form but it is also a serious business. Most of the time the success of a cinema is evaluated on the basis of profit of the investors or producers. Here this study is about TV Chandran's films that made several experimental cinemas both in Malayalam and Tamil. He redefined the conventional film narrative style and the pre assumptions of the viewers about masculinity. Most of his films portrayed the life of common people in a natural and realistic way. His films are a medium that is too close to the real life. His films are not focused on the commercial aspects; rather aesthetics is what matters in his films.

The way of representing masculinity and the quotidian existence in TV Chandran films made his film more realistic. Some of his films were influenced by his personal life. The communism and naxalite ideology in the film 'Ormakal Undayirikkanam' film is an example of that. Most of his films discussed about the life of common man living in the society during a period of time. In popular cinema or in conventional narrative style there will be a lead character or characters who lead the story from the beginning to the end, the story will be mostly focusing on these characters. But in Chandran's films rather than focusing on a single character he depicted the life of people without any exaggeration.

In this movie the masculinity of the character called Dany is suppressed and also inferior to his wife. He was from a poor family and had a lot of hardships throughout his life. After his second marriage he didn't had even any physical relationships with his wife, he was just acting as a husband in front of the society. We can compare this with popular cinema, where men are portrayed as rough and tough, unemotional and potentially violent human beings.

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