



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Media

REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY IN TV CHANDRAN FILMS: AN ANALYSIS OF KATHAVASESHAN

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ABSTRACT

This is an attempt to analyze the masculinity representation in the Malayalam movie "Kathavaseshan" directed by TV Chandran. Masculine ideologies are represented in a different manner in the movie called "Kathavaseshan". The attributes given to masculinity like Dominance, Authority, Power, Supremacy etc. are absent in the male characters of this film. As compared to popular cinema the masculinity in the movie "Kathavaseshan" is represented in a totally different manner. My attempt is to differentiate the representation of masculinity in the TV Chandran movie "Kathavaseshan" from mainstream cinema.

"Kathavaseshan" is a Malayalam movie written and directed by T.V Chandran starring Dileep and Jyothirmayi in lead roles. As in Susanna, Dany, and Paadam onnu oru vilaapam T.V Chandran is conveying a social message through this movie. Kathavaseshan is something which discusses about the relevant issues in our society. Chandran is showcasing the story in a different way that is totally new to the audience in Kerala. The story begins with a flash-back about a person committed suicide. Many people were concerned with that person. The Gopinathan Menon, a character performed by the actor Dileep was more realistic than his other popular cinemas. The narration of the story was something different from the past cinemas in Malayalam.



GOPINATHAN MENON (img: 1)

Gopinatha Menon (img: 1) was a young engineer staying in a flat in Trivandrum; He was alone in that flat. The story begins with the suicide of the young engineer. His family and also his fiancée Renuka were shocked by hearing this sad news. He found dead by hanging inside his flat. But the family members and his fiancée were unaware of the reason that why he committed suicide. Renuka (img: 2) wants to know more about the cause of his suicide. She decides to investigate on that. Initially her family was against it and gradually they were convinced by her. Renuka started digging up the life of Gopi.



RENUKA (img: 2)

She started digging in Gopi's life to find out the reason behind the suicide. It takes her to a very long expedition. She met Gopi's friends and well-wishers. She meets different people who had some role in the protagonist Gopi's existence and collects information from their versions about Gopi. All their testimonials lead to her concluding on what Gopi's reasons were. The idyllic attitude that Gopi acquire against the odds endow with the fuel for Renuka's journey.

As Renuka gets closer to knowing Gopi, the man who led a very

normal life posed an even more difficult question as to the cause of his death. She started realizing the human qualities in Gopi - A simple man who cannot stand by the injustice in the society. Gopi had always countered to the immoral doings in the society. One such act has taken his life away.

Finally Renuka's gets in a conclusion that Gopi committed suicide out of the shame of being alive in a merciless society.

The director successfully depicts several evils in the society and the film, in its course way beyond a regional movie as it implants totally different cultures. The film is also known for the way the story is told, like a Rashomon way.

One should appreciate T.V Chandran's noble effort to send a message across. Dileep tried his best to make the character of Gopinatha Menon realistic and it's one of his best performances.

Jyothirmayi handled her role with much ease. Her character Renuka just does not stop with the shock caused by the suicide. She comes across 14 people, speaking different languages in several places, only to know that everybody had only good things to say about him, for he managed to rise above languages proving that the bond of humanism was above any other relation.

The death note by Gopinathan was "For the Shame of Being Alive". It's not an indication that he was unable to react as an alive human, but to the point where he is disabled to react, where anarchy ironically rules world. A gang raped and killed in the riots in Gujarat was titled in majority of news papers, and many have read it and might have sympathized. But how many have empathized as Gopinathan does? Or How many have asked this question why such deep trauma in his article Rape — The Curse of an Educated Society and whims of Cowardly Men ... ? This is not a note on increased rape rate, but the cause on empathy.

Many are died day by day or become the victim of cruel destiny and are pasteurized in news headlines. Readers often sympathize and seldom empathize. It's just not that easy too. Pain is the most commoner. Irrespective of region and state it speaks through one language and understood to all. As the character Uncle of Gopinathan says "Although his language is not implicit, I can feel his cry with the same effect he has".

The story, is all about empathy and Gopinathan is the best example TV Chandran raises the ethical dilemma of having to live in an unethical, uncaring and nasty society. Do we live our life without reacting to real issues, our minds numbed by our petty concerns, needs and compulsion? What are we to do when hope in humanity is becoming a sick dream? Do you have to die to end this problem?

The film makes viewers to think of the place in the world and the world's place in our life. The episodes move from commercial

comedy of Malayalam movies, sentimentalism and quasi seriousness.

Here T.V.Chandran talks about "human love" in an unusual way. He uses the communal riots in Gujarat to illustrate the evil and terrible happenings in the society. The episodes are petty and trivial except Gujarat one and this makes the film look much unsophisticated and perhaps missing the gravitas that was necessary for such a theme. The structure of the film has been used before; But T.V Chandran handled it with a different narrative style. It is certainly a unique theme and is a sad comment on our insensitive Indian world.

Gopinathan, Gopinatha Menon was an engineer by profession. The story begins with the death of Gopi. He was a fun loving person. In the mean time he was very sensitive too. The story discusses about the social evils and the bad practices in our society through the life of Gopi. He lived in a small village and he was engaged to a girl named Renuka while committing suicide. Gopi was annoyed with problems and bad practices in the society. He had a helping mentality towards the people surrounded by him. He believed that man is a social animal and should help each other. People surrounded by him got attracted to him because of his personality and concerns about others. He reacted to the evils in the society, and he was nervous and tensed at the same time. Externally Gopi showed his strength, but his inner mind had a lot of depressions and frustrations. He was a chain smoker. Almost in ever scenes he is smoking. This showed his level depressions and tensions. Renuka got attracted towards his personality from the first meeting. He committed suicide after their engagement. Renuka was unaware of the cause of death. Not only Renuka nobody was aware about his cause of death. Renuka's enthusiasm to find the cause of death of Gopi and her informal investigations is the plot of the story. She tried to find the reason behind it by enquiring about it to his relatives and colleagues.

People who knows Gopi narrates his character and personality. This helps Renuka and the audience to know more about Gopi and his life. Gopi was happy and active during his early stages of his life. Gopi was in love with his uncle's daughter Sreedevi. But she got married to another person. Gopi found depressed, but he never showed his frustrations and depressions to others. He shifted to Trivandrum after this incident. Before this he was working in Calcutta as an engineer. The intimacy and honesty towards others while colleagues narrate about him during the time of investigation by Renuka are perfectly portrayed in the movie. He paid attention to the problems of people and tried to help them by involving himself in those problems with them. But he never succeeded in all those things.

The investigation goes through Gopi's sister, family, friends, co-workers and his old lover Sreedevi. Sreedevi explains about their divine love, she describes about their relationships to Renuka and she tells that even they lived in the same room for one night, they never touched each other. In the same time of narration of Sreedevi the film maker T V Chandran shows their activities in the room while they were together. They had a physical relationship and during the time of narration she tries to prove that it was a mental relationship not a fatal attraction. This shows the diversity in people's words and reality.

The real life of Gopi was distracted, nervous and emotionally imbalanced to the problems in the society. Even though he had the courage to react to the problems happened in the society his activities never came successful. He just over reacted to things happened in the society. His just showed his emotional imbalance as the reaction to the evils in the society. He always had a complaint that the people were selfish, no one cares about anything. They just lived for themselves.

Gopinathan and other male characters in the film are physically masculine, but they are emotionally weak and depressed. Gopi was a kind and soft hearted person. He was always bothered about the companions in his life. He found this life annoying to live with

selfish people. The character Gopinathan cried in several stages of the story and remained helpless. Gopi's friends were the other main male characters in the story. They had complaints about the evil practices in the society, but they never reacted. Other than this several characters like, a police officer, a thief, a videographer accidentally met Renuka and narrated their experiences with Gopi. Through these narrations the character of Gopi revealed. The male characters in the movie seemed helpless to the social evils happening in their surroundings, they remained as they are. Nothing changed. Gopi was getting more depressed by reading the newspaper that the girl near to Gopi's house when he was in Calcutta brutally raped and murdered. His mental instability before this suicide portrayed in the beginning of the movie. He was nervous before his suicide. All together, the male characters, especially Gopi is emotionally very weak.

Renuka, her friend, Sreedevi are the major female characters in the movie. Renuka plays the lead role in the movie. Even though it is about the life of Gopinathan and his suicide, the story progressed through the investigations of Renuka. She was an independent woman. She wanted to know the cause of death rather than others. She, herself conducted an enquiry by neglecting the dislikes of her family shows her strength and determination. Courage, independence, emotional balance etc. can be seen in the behaviors of Renuka. She collects details about death by enquiring it to his companions. But she failed to get a conclusion, especially about his cause of death. Finally she approaches a private detective who studied the case of Gopinathan Menon and finds more about his death note. The detective explains this as a rare case rather than the normal suicidal cases. "Being ashamed of living in the society" he committed suicide. He felt insecure, abandoned, and frustrated. People may think that he was a coward; they may say that he was not normal. He was normal, normal than the other people in the society. His complaints about the society were true, but nobody can stop the insecurity of minority living in this world. The only thing that people can do is that, just forget about others, and be selfish.

Gopi used to reduce the seriousness of the issues in his life pretending and presenting himself it as a comedy. Viewers can see this in his engagement while explaining about his old love story to Renuka. But in other situations, when he involved in other's problems, he was angry and annoyed. This shows his emotional imbalance and concern about others. Gopi was physically masculine, his body language and other characteristics showed the attributes of masculinity. But he was emotionally weak and imbalanced. His over reactions to the evils in the society showed this. In certain situations he behaved like a small child. He was helpless to find the solutions to the problems of others. He was kind hearted, but his attempts to solve their problems never succeeded. He never succeeded in anything. He failed in solving his own problems. But he never stopped concerning about others. Gopi tried to escape from the future and the problems that he is going to face in the future by committing suicide. The central character Gopi never showed any qualities of a hero in popular cinema. Compared to popular cinema, heroism, courage to face problems, and being a successful man in the end was absent in the character of Gopi. His life was a failure. He never accomplished his goals. He was nervous, depressed and frustrated. His external appearances showed masculinity, like body language, communication etc. But in totality courage, heroism, dominance, etc. were absent in the character of Gopinathan Menon.

Renuka is another leading character in the story. The movie progresses through Renuka. Renuka also plays a major role in the movie. She was an independent woman. Renuka showed courage to investigate about a man she doesn't know much. They met only a few times. In the movie the first meeting was at Renuka's home. She found bold and determined where Gopi was nervous and tensed. Renuka, by avoiding the dislikes of her family investigated about death of Gopi and succeeded in the investigation. She was bold enough to face people and the consequences that may happen. Her body language and communication were bold and masculine. Another female character is Sreedevi, the ex-lover of

Gopi. Sreedevi cheated Gopi and married another wealthy guy. Gopi found very much depressed during this time. But he manages himself to attend the marriage of Sreedevi by hiding his sorrows. Sreedevi narrated the relationship with Gopi in a tricky way that she portrayed herself as a good woman and also stated that they never had a physical relationship.

In general the male characters Gopi, his friends and colleagues seemed unhappy and helpless to the evils in the society. They were emotionally imbalanced and frustrated. The female characters especially the leading character Renuka and the ex-lover of Gopi, Sreedevi was strong minded people and faced consequences in their life with enough strength. Gopi, the depressed and frustrated person committed suicide because of being ashamed of living in this society.

In this movie the male characters doesn't show any attributes like Dominance, Authority, Power, Supremacy Competitiveness Independence, Non-nurturing, Patriarchal, Hierarchical etc. given to the masculinity in popular cinema. And also the male characters in this movie are represented in such a way that they are dependent, emotional, and weak. In general the representation of masculinity in this movie is totally different from the mainstream cinema.

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