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The Mobile Identities: Crises of Mobility Portrayed in the Malayalam Film Pathemari

Vishnupriya C V

Research Scholar,

St. Thomas College (Autonomous)

Thrissur, Kerala, India

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Abstract

The present paper entitled The Mobile Identities attempts to examine the aftermath of migration especially from south India to gulf countries as portrayed in the film Pathemari directed by Salim Ahmed. He had already thrived in delineating the intricacies and conflicts in the lives of ordinary human beings through his previous award winning projects such as Abu, Son of Adam and Kujanathantekada. Pathemari also can be regarded as a similar attempt to project the stark realities of life faced by people during a particular time in history in particular and of present times in general. The paper attempts to analyze the life and character of the protagonist Narayan ranging from childhood to death by considering the different aspects of his livelihood such as family ties broken relationships, his unrelenting affection for his native place and the nature of treatment received from his homeland. The major objective of the study is to scrutinize how much the film succeeded to convey the undesirable effects of being driven from one's own culture and community such as identity crisis, the feeling of alienation and the sense of disinheritance. Thus this study can be described as an endeavor to think over the various effects of kinesis; both individually and socially.

Keywords- Migration, Transition, Identity, Structure, Ambience, Socio-Political Values

Introduction

The words such as transition, being and identity crisis are pivotal to the atmosphere of a modern society as everyone tends to believe that it is the direct result of technological development and economic progress. It is something taken for granted that the human desire to have better opportunities for livelihood and employment as a result of changes occurred in the thought process as the immediate aftermath of ever widening horizons of skills. But in reality it has another phase also. The abject poverty and unemployment which struck the south Indian societies as a reflection of opposing socio political and economic conditions had forced many Indians to migrate to gulf countries, especially from the regions of Kerala. As the people of those times had a limited technical knowhow they have to submit to available

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equipment to meet their ends. They used those restricted circumstances to cross the fathomless sea. They used mast driven boats popularly known as pathemari to travel across sea and enter to the royal deserts escaped from the legal formalities and the consequent economic burden. They had to remain those ships for months exposed to any kind natural calamities. The insufficiency of enough food and drinking water makes their lives inside unbearable. They had to conduct a hopeless journey facing the harsh realities of life such as poverty, madness and death.

Discussion

It is a fact that any statistical analysis never attempted to have a glance to the seemingly luxurious life of these migrants. Their returns between years were a celebration not only for the families but also for the whole region. But their traumatized psyche was realized and explored by a few. The national award winning film Pathemari was a similar attempt by the renowned director Salim Ahamed. By projecting the character called Palikkal Narayanan he puts under scrutiny the then existence of Persian keratitis in general. He had to leave his land in a large Pathemari to earn livelihood to protect his family including the mother and sisters. He has literally pawned the joys of his life to give a decent meal to the family. But by the end what the spectator is put to witness is how his natives including his relatives has made use of his emotional sincerity and innocence to fulfill their personal needs both through sugarcoated words and harsh tongue at times.

An analysis of the manner in which everyone at Narayanan's homeland treated him would reveal that they attached so much value to his life. What was described at the initial scenes is the first visit after his marriage. Each and every member in the family was presented and the opening of his luggage was conducted as in a ritualistic manner with such patience and curiosity. But all these happy get-togethers had no more span to go. As time progressed all of them came to believe that he is the only responsible one for conducting all the important events in their lives. It became something taken for granted that he has the responsibility to take care of not only the familial affairs but also the financial matters. It is also to be noted that Narayanan's kindred were living in a world of constructed reality as the direct result of the make-believe atmosphere of him leading a comfortable life abroad. At times when he failed to meet their expectations they never endeavored to realize his real situation of having hard work with a very little earning. Still he tried his best to meet those ends by sacrificing all the assets he had. As a consequence besides much physical loss such as money, house etc., he has also been deprived many other intangible valuables. An examination of each would serve the purpose of this study.

In the first place considering the status of Narayanan's existence as a human being there is some kind of dilemma. Even though he was loved by everybody at his work place, he could not assimilate himself to its conditions in a full-fledged manner. Even while living abroad his mind was absolutely engaged in the affairs of his homeland. In appearance he was contented with the life he was destined to live physically detached from dear and near ones.

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Simultaneously he possessed profound desire to return and live peacefully. It is evident even in his decision to have a separate house of his own. According to him there was nothing private.

He desired to live a collective life providing happiness to everyone. Thus it cannot be said that the identity of Narayanan doesn't belong to the land from where he is earning his maintenance. On the other hand it also cannot be said that he has an established identity in his home as to them Narayanan appears to be a source ought to provide economic assistance and pride to the family. No one realized the inner trauma that he had gone through. He provided everything for the marriage of his nephew with all paternal care. But he was forced to leave immediately before the fixed date of marriage. But the family doesn't seem bother at his absence. Narayanan tried hard to convince the groom's party without any avail. The departure was unbearable for him. It was full of fleeting emotions for him but by the time to the family members it was a routine affair to which no special concern is essential. He faced such a feeling of deprivation even from his own wife Nalini. At the early phase she was ready to wait any long in the local shop setting beside all domestic duties to get connected to Narayanan's call. But now she has no time to properly attend his call on the wedding day. It is also pivotal to note that his absence and its grief were never mentioned in the common discussions among elders and ladies at the eve of marriage. Likewise when he came back once with the decision to not have any further return to gulf, his wife responds that hitherto she owned the pride of being the wife of a man who works abroad which is soon to be vanished. Thus it is to be concluded that Narayan who worked hard devoting the entire time of his life span in actuality belonged nowhere: neither here nor there. As the character played by Siddique says you will only have occasional fits of insanity as a reward for your years long hard work.

Secondly, as far as his role as a father is put to analysis, it is to be said that he failed miserably. He loved his sons from the heart. But he was unable to participate in their moral or intellectual growth. He perhaps had higher hopes for them and mourned when they fell ill. But he never received a chance to interact freely with his children. There is no single scene in the movie which depicts an independent and affectionate talk between him and his two sons.

For them father was a figure who rarely appears once in years with many gifts and bags. He failed in establishing a good relation with them. The children also hardly got chances for the same. When his dead body was brought to their newly built house to place before the last rites as according to the advice of his close friend Moideen, his son Remeshn summarily rejects the idea taking to consideration the comfort of their future life. The semi built house was one of the remaining dreams of Narayanan. In spite of all the contrary circumstances he dreamt of a new life in his new home. The last thing he purchased in his life was a huge luxury lamp for the house which was symbolic of his budding hopes. But in the hands of destiny it became a metaphor of his unfulfilled dreams. Setting apart the ignorance of his son, Nalini was also failed to object her son against his decision. Thus it is clear that what Narayanan had

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to undergo in his life was complete alienation. Everyone who is supposed to understand the emotions of Narayanan has failed in that aspect. He was succeeded in transforming himself as a scapegoat by knowing the desires and expectations of all around him. But he didn't receive that luck of being understood by others.

In all these respects he can be said as possessing a mobile identity which is always under conflict and flux. Even though he has aspirations regarding a jovial contented life and the mind to work hard, nothing turns completely in favour of him. When the dream of his nephew's marriage got materialized he could not stay back and bless it. When his mother, the only solace of his life passed away he cannot go and perform the last rites as a son. He was unable to go and look after his son when he fell ill and he could not come and support the family when Nalini was suffered from serious disease. He had many similar vows in his mind despite his happy appearance and optimistic attitude outside as revealed by the final interview. So it can be rightly said that his being was characterized by mobility at the same time he had also suffered the catastrophe of immobility as a consequence of indefinable forces. At last in the anticlimax when all set for the house warming he was taken away from the external world itself. Thus time has opened before him the door to escape from further fret and fevers of life. The interview that telecasted after his death was served as an absolute eye opener to the whole family. It is through that medium that everyone came to know the sacrifices endured by him and the real worth of the man called Palikkal Narayanan. But it was already late for such a revelation.

Conclusion

To conclude the film Pathemari is a general document regarding life of any human being devastated and estranged from all that was once possessed by him or her. As Narayanan their lives would be left open but no one tries to read it. When all and sundry aspires to cross boundaries they yearn for reoccurrence. The creations of God to love and care others without the profit of loved and cared by others. Though the roots Pathemari is in past in these respects it extends as a mirroring of modern technologically driven psyche.

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