

Toxic Masculinity Portrayed in the Film Kumbalangi Nights

Project

Submitted by

Catherine Jose (SB21CEO12)

Under the guidance of

Dr. Priscilla

In partial fulfilment of requirements for award of the degree

Of Bachelor of Arts

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam



College With Potential for

Excellence Accredited by NAAC with 'A++' Grade

Affiliated to

Mahatma Gandhi University

Kottayam-686560 April

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Declaration

I do affirm that the project “Toxic Masculinity Portrayed in the Film Kumbalangi Nights” submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature and Communication Studies has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.

Ernakulam

Catherine Jose

21 March 2024

SB21CE012

B.A. English Literature and Communication Studies

St. Teresa’s College (Autonomous)

Certificate

I hereby certify that this project entitled “Toxic Masculinity Portrayed in the Film Kumbalangi Nights” by Catherine Jose is a record of bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

Ernakulam

21 March 2024

Dr. Priscilla

Department of Communicative English

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Catherine Jose

Abstract

This academic exploration delves into the cinematic canvas of "Kumbalangi Nights," a Malayalam film that intricately dissects the manifestations of toxic masculinity through the lens of hegemonic theory. Drawing from the work of Connell, the analysis unravels the dynamics of power, control, and patriarchal hegemony portrayed within the narrative landscape of the film.

Through the portrayal of male characters exhibiting destructive behaviours and rigid gender roles, the film highlights the pervasive nature of toxic masculinity in Malayalam cinema. However, "Kumbalangi Nights" stands out as a refreshing departure from the industry norm by depicting masculinity with warmth, vulnerability, and kindness. The paper examines how the film challenges patriarchal constructs and celebrates feminism by subverting traditional gender roles and empowering female characters. Furthermore, it explores the synthesis of hegemonic masculinity and the kinship structure within the context of neoliberal capitalism, shedding light on the crisis of care and its implications for gender equality. The study also investigates the role of mass media in shaping gender identities and stereotypes, using reception analysis to explore audience perceptions of male representations in television and film. Overall, this analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of masculinity, gender dynamics, and social reproduction in contemporary society.

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Chapter-1

Introduction

In the realm of cinema, narratives frequently function as mirrors that reflect the complexities of social conventions and conceptions. The heartbreaking gem of Malayalam film, “Kumbalangi Nights,” explores the depths of human connections against the calm setting of Kumbalangi hamlet in Kerala. The story of the movie tells a story of personal development and familial ties, but it also delicately reveals the layers of toxic masculinity that the protagonists have ingrained in them. In this thesis, embark on an academic exploration of toxic masculinity within the cinematic canvas of “Kumbalangi Nights,” utilizing the lens of hegemonic theory to dissect and comprehend the manifestations of dominant masculinity portrayed. Drawing from the work of Connell, aim to unravel the intricate dynamics of power, control, and patriarchal hegemony that permeate the film’s narrative landscape. The representation of male characters in Malayalam films that display destructive behaviours towards others and rigid gender rules is a common manifestation of toxic masculinity. Characters that emphasize physical prowess, emotional repression, and a drive for control and dominance are common. When they want to show how powerful they are, they could use violence, usually against women or other weaker people. Toxic masculinity is frequently romanticized or exalted, making these actions seem admirable or brave. This has the potential to strengthen negative stereotypes and the notion that power, and aggression are fundamental components of masculinity. The concept that men should repress their emotions is further reinforced by the portrayal of expressions of sensitivity or vulnerability as flaws.

The Malayalam film Kumbalangi Nights, which was directed by debutant Madhu C Narayanan, stays with you for a long time. It seeps into your body and mind, disturbing your

consciousness, particularly in relation to how you construct your male identity and how it shows up in relationships with other men and women and, most importantly, in the evolution of the male “being” itself. By subverting the role models set by patriarchy and women decision makers at all pivotal moments, it honours feminism. Instead of pitting men against women and having women win, it celebrates womanhood by showing how women can lead male-female relationships and advance gender equality both at home and abroad.

In Malayalam cinema, “Kumbalangi Nights” is a welcome breath of fresh air. Examples of toxic masculinity in and out of the movies are abundant in Malayalam cinema. In Indian cinema, where themes of sexism, misogyny, hyper-masculinity, and patriarchy are prevalent, this has been a welcome change of pace. Kumbalangi Nights portrays male characters and masculinity with warmth, vulnerability, and kindness, in contrast to the Malayalam film industry’s prototype. Unquestionably, Kumbalangi Nights is one of the great films that attracted the interest of moviegoers. The film, which told the story of brothers and an extraordinary visitor, was a very relatable family drama even though it was very far from reality. The film succeeded in portraying the people and the scenic beauty of Kumbalangi, but it also gave us Shammi, a modern-day antagonist. The movie deconstructs the idea of “virtue” and frees it from the constraints of moralization. In the story, what appears to be anarchic is sympathetic, what appears to be moral is brutal, the hero is the anti-hero, and the criminals are the ones who save the day. This is an extremely political and logically nonreligious viewpoint. It is political because it rewrites the rules of power between the dominated and the dominated, as well as between men and women. Moralizing virtue is deeply religious, so it is logically irreligious.

Hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Raewyn Connell, is an analytical tool used to pinpoint the attitudes and behaviours of men that support gender inequality. These behaviours

include men's dominance over women as well as the authority that certain men have over other, frequently marginalized groups of men. Hegemonic positions are not the only masculinities that exist in each society; masculinities are diverse, fluid, and dynamic. They could also be viewed as situationally occupied positions, since the practices, beliefs, and positions held in one context might not be the same in another. Hegemonic masculinity is a component of R. W. Connell's gender order theory in gender studies, which acknowledges a variety of masculinities that differ depending on the individual, society, culture, and time. A practice known as hegemonic masculinity is one that supports men's dominant status in society, the subjugation of women and other marginalized male identities, as well as the subjugation of the general male population. Hegemonic masculinity is a concept that aims to explain how and why men continue to hold dominant social roles over women and other gender identities that are viewed as "feminine" in a particular society.

The account of working-class people navigating capitalist patriarchal structures during times of crisis—moments that also point to potential for social change. A new synthesis of hegemonic masculinity and the kinship structure of the heteronormative family is provided by the plot, characters, and tropes explored in the movie. Here, the modern patriarchy crisis—which has been exacerbated by the crisis of social reproduction under neoliberal capitalism—puts the lives of the working-class front and centre. The "crisis of care," which has been explained in recent scholarship on social reproduction, is central to this crisis of masculinity and the bourgeois family form that is portrayed in the movie. Nancy Fraser employs this expression to examine the paradoxical propensity of capitalism to erode the social reproduction conditions essential for its own perpetuation and stability. This paper outlines the features of this new synthesis by analysing the movie and the social realities of modernday Kerala. In addition to questioning some of the tenets of capitalist patriarchy, the

movie imagines a new way for subordinate masculinities to live while still elevating romantic love and its connection to the workplace.

Male and female roles in society are constructed and reinforced by mass media, particularly film and television. People learn about gender roles from the media, so how gender is portrayed in the socialization process. In addition to the female identity, masculinity can also be constructed, and fictional male characters that are created for television and film convey messages about masculinity to viewers. Considering this presumption, the study compared the representation of men in television shows and motion pictures, exploring the issue of how men are portrayed in Turkey's two main mass media.

Additionally, the study's focus area is the question of "whether masculine representation produces an alternative male model or reinforces the existing patriarchal male image." This study used reception analysis as its methodology, and in-depth interviews with audiences representing a range of demographic groups were conducted. Consequently, it has been discovered that similar gender languages are employed in various media, similar myths, symbols, metaphors, and messages are produced for male representations in film and television, and fictional male characters in these media share similar traits. Television and movies are the two most powerful mass media that convey social values. Movie plots have the ability to both reflect and impact the social values system. The identification is given by the narration. In addition to movies, television demonstrates the ability of mass media to influence, inform, and educate the general public. It is evident that both adults and children learn a great deal from watching television on a weekly basis, despite the claims of industry insiders who frequently downplay this power and argue that television is merely for entertainment. Certain critics argue that television propagates harmful ideals like consumerism, stereotyping, and a shallow and trivial outlook on life.

Connell asserts that those who uphold hegemonic masculinity may not only behave in accordance with the social norms all the time, but also modernize gender roles and establish the masculinities repeatedly. They contend that because gender relations are a form of stress field, the hegemonic concept of masculinity may persist to ease these tensions. The authors do not use social reproduction theory as the foundation for hegemonic masculinity. Stated differently, they note that gender theory is unable to predict which pattern prevails in the struggle for hegemony.

In society, being a man comes with significant responsibilities and burdens, much like being a woman. From birth, men have been accustomed to interacting with various social codes in society. This socialization, which initially began within the family, continues with additional state-run ideological machinery. Television and other mass media, like movies, are useful in this process. Manhood is not an isolated concept. Men can exhibit these traits in society, even though their ideas of what it means to be a man change over time.

It is plausible to argue that while the majority of people do not fit these standards, they are nonetheless impacted by them. Two stereotypes surfaced in this study, which employs the method of reception analysis, when it came to the opinions of moviegoers and TV viewers regarding the male characters in these productions. In every way, the first one is romantic, attractive, wealthy, and strong. The latter is irritating, crude, humorous, and uncomplicated. The two characters seem to be mirroring each other's Inner looks.

Women are the second plunge, as is widely believed based on the reactions to Turkish TV shows and movies. In the story, the woman's role is to be with the male character and to receive his love and protection. Males battle against life, triumph over adversity, and defend their women. Every gender role is completely different from every other gender role. The external appearance of men is used to describe them in all of these constructions. One crucial component is wealth. These productions put expectations on women about what their ideal

man should be like and exert pressure on how men should behave in the real world. As a result, the in-person interviews for this project demonstrate how unconvincing the male characters are on TV and in movies.

Chapter 2

Masculinity at a crossroads: challenging toxicity in modern culture

“Masculinity at a crossroads: challenging toxicity in modern culture” is a title that perfectly captures the idea that conventional ideas of masculinity are at a crossroads in modern society. It implies that there is a conundrum or a turning point where the meaning of masculinity is being reconsidered and called into question because of the pervasiveness of toxic behaviours linked to it.

The topic would probably examine how society expectations and cultural standards have influenced conventional masculinity, frequently encouraging aggressiveness, emotional repression, domination, and the objectification of women. When these actions are excessive, they can be detrimental to men and society at large, exacerbating problems like aggression, mental health disorders, and interpersonal conflicts. The term “Challenging Toxicity in Modern Culture” implies that efforts to address these negative characteristics of masculinity are becoming more and more conscious. This could entail questioning preconceptions and social pressures that support harmful behaviours, as well as looking at alternative models of masculinity that encourage empathy, vulnerability, and emotional intelligence.

An attitude or set of societal norms that are stereotypically linked to manliness and that frequently have a detrimental effect on men, women, and society at large is known as toxic masculinity. It is not intended to suggest that masculinity is a negative concept in and of itself when the term “toxic masculinity” is used. Rather, it is intended to draw attention to the detrimental and frequently dangerous effects that some actions and mindsets that are commonly associated with masculinity—from sexism and homophobia to mental and physical toughness have on society.

Although the phrase “toxic masculinity” may seem like a trendy term these days, it has been used for many years. The phrase first used in men’s movements in the late 20th century to refer to limited conceptions of masculinity that did more harm than good for men. They saw toxic masculinity as a sign of immaturity, a sign of men who had not yet discovered their true, spiritual masculinity. The term “toxic masculinity” was subsequently embraced by the roughly ten-year-old fourth wave of feminism. Compared to previous waves, this one placed more emphasis on intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality holds that racism, ageism, classism, homophobia, and ableism are all components of systematic oppression, and that sexism is only one of them.

Men are frequently characterized by these antiquated and baseless stereotypes, which lead to an unhealthy and unrealistic idea of what it means to be a male in today’s culture. These traditions range from being narcissistic and violent to being power-hungry and emotionless. It can be harmful to assume that men should be the providers, leaders, or defenders, or to equate men with violence, rage, and greed. Boys and men are encouraged to believe things that aren’t true or to strive to live up to stereotypes that are founded on unsubstantiated biases that we, as individuals and as a culture, support. This leads to them hurting themselves and other people.

Similar to “womanhood,” “manhood” in America is often accompanied by a host of expectations. In our society, we place a higher emphasis on kindness, compassion, and caring in women than in males. According to the Pew Research Center, we also identify men with being protective in a positive way and with being emotional in a negative way. The conduct, duties, and tasks that society considers proper for people depending on their gender are referred to as traditional gender roles. Due to their tight definitions throughout history, these roles frequently perpetuate negative preconceptions about masculinity and femininity.

Traditional gender roles assign particular behaviours, tasks, and traits to men and women, albeit these can differ among countries and time periods. Males are frequently expected to support and provide for their families as the main breadwinners. They are urged to exhibit qualities like fortitude, self-reliance, and aggressiveness. It is customary to discourage men from expressing their emotions, therefore they may be expected to hide their sensitivity or fragility. Usually, women are assigned roles that revolve around nurturing, caring for others, and household chores. It is expected of them to put their family and home life before their professional goals. Characteristics linked to femininity frequently encompass empathy, compassion, and submissiveness. Women could experience pressure to live up to expectations about their looks and beauty standards. For millennia, numerous societies have been profoundly embedded with traditional gender roles that have shaped expectations for behaviour, professional choices, and relationships. However, as societies change and are more conscious of the constraints and injustices they uphold, they are coming under more and more scrutiny and scrutiny. Traditional gender roles are criticized for limiting chances for both personal and professional growth as well as for restricting individual choice and perpetuating gender inequality. A lot of advocacy groups and social movements support gender equality and the deconstruction of traditional gender roles in order to build a more just and inclusive society in which people of all genders are free to express themselves. There are further possible hazards associated with “toxic masculinity.” Too many people misinterpret it to mean that “all men are toxic.” If we want to encourage men and boys to critically consider gender and masculinity, the last thing we need is for it to make them feel attacked and blamed. Men may respond more favourably to persuasive public messaging that completely shies away from “masculinity” terminology. For men, toxic masculinity qualities are shaped by their families for a variety of reasons. Adherence to traditional gender norms, which dictate that men should be the main breadwinners and possess traits like diligence and

problem-solving skills, is one contributing cause. Men may feel under pressure to uphold society's standards of masculinity as a result of this expectation, which may result in the emergence of negative characteristics. Furthermore, toxic masculinity can be reinforced and men's attitudes toward women shaped by cultural values and the home environment.

Moreover, the notion of male compromise emphasizes how men might endeavour to uphold their authority within the family, despite evolving conditions brought forth by migration. Gender inequality is still present in many nations, and traditional ideas of masculinity frequently serve to perpetuate it. Understanding what it means to be a man helps us recognize and combat negative gender norms and stereotypes that support oppression and discrimination based on gender identity. Recognizing that gender is a spectrum and that there are several approaches to becoming a manly person is essential to understanding masculinity. This knowledge may result in more accepting views and laws that support gender parity, enabling people of all genders to prosper and fully express who they are. Men are less likely to seek treatment for mental health problems because of traditional masculinity, which contributes to greater rates of untreated depression, anxiety, and suicide. We may endeavour to lessen stigma and encourage men to seek help when they need it, which will eventually improve their general well-being, by recognizing the relationship between masculinity and mental health.

Aggression, dominance, and emotional repression are characteristics of toxic masculinity, which can be detrimental to both individuals and society as a whole. In order to overcome toxic masculinity and its accompanying harmful behaviours—such as misogyny, homophobia, and violence—it is imperative to comprehend its origins and expressions. Because hardness and stoicism are frequently emphasized in traditional masculinity, men find it challenging to connect deeply emotionally and express honestly in relationships.

Comprehending the concept of masculinity can assist individuals in managing these obstacles and fostering more robust and satisfying relationships founded on reciprocal dignity, compassion, and openness. There are good qualities of masculinity, such strength, bravery, and resilience, even when traditional masculinity may encourage negative actions. Recognizing and appreciating these positive attributes while opposing negative stereotypes and actions are essential components of understanding masculinity. By comprehending the intricacies of masculinity, we can build more accepting communities that value the variety of gender identity expressions. Everyone gains from this inclusivity because it fosters respect, tolerance, and acceptance for people of all genders. By comprehending what it means to be a man, we may recognize and support strong male role models who exhibit qualities like compassion, sensitivity, and emotional intelligence. Those who want to redefine masculinity in a more inclusive and positive way might find inspiration from these role models.

Aggression, violence, and antagonism are among the traits that are frequently linked to toxic masculinity. In order to lessen violent incidents and foster conflict resolution abilities, we can create focused interventions and preventative tactics by comprehending the underlying causes of these behaviours within the framework of masculinity.

Chapter 3

Kumbalangi nights and four pillars of the male psyche

In *Kumbalangi Nights*, every character is written in an incredibly creative way. They have distinct personalities. This movie does not have a star, for that matter, not even a hero. Fahadh Faasil, the leading actor in Malayalam film industry, plays the role of an anti-hero (Shammi). The characters all have set frames, whether it's Shammi (Fahad Fasil), the creepy madman, or Bobby (Shane Nigam), the aimless guy who changes. In *Kumbalangi's* backcountry, things are a little different. Three half-brothers who don't get along well—Saji (Soubin Shahir), Bobby (Shane Nigam), and Frankie (Thomas Mathew)—live in a tiny, rundown house. Bobby and Saji, in contrast to Shammi, do not wish to assume ownership of the house. The youngest and most mature of them, Frankie, refers to their home as the worst in the neighborhood. When Saji and Bobby fight over insignificant matters on their father's memorial day, their fourth brother Bonny (Sreenath Bhasi), who is visiting, rows his boat away. There is a structural definition for even women. Simy (Grace Antony), is incredibly dedicated to her husband, but she does not accept that he is abusing her sister. While Baby (Anna Ben) is obviously not acting delusional, she will do anything for her love.

Saji, Boni, Bobi, and Franki are the four brothers around whom the film is centered. The plot thickens when Bobi falls in love with Baby, an old schoolmate. Simmi, Baby's sister, is wed to a man called Shammi. The three brothers reside on a small island in a run-down home. The town is home to Baby and her family, and Shammi becomes the head of the household after getting married. "He is the only man in the house who can 'protect' the helpless women," in his opinion. These men are obviously flawed. A fascinating look at the performance of masculinities and the effects it has on the men who engage in it, as well as their relationships, is offered in *Kumbalangi Nights*. From the opening scene, a complex

interplay of masculinities takes place: Frankie's tenderness clashes with his brothers' apathy and Shammi's (nearly) archetypal hegemonic masculinity. Shammi is feared by both his housemates and the neighborhood kids, one of whom acknowledges that Shammi "is no gentleman." The masculinities interact and contrast with one another. In a specific occasion, Bobi asks Baby, his partner, to kiss him, but she declines since they are not married. He responds by telling her, "I am a man," and he storms off. Women who reject males often respond in this way. Through the course of the film, these characters grow and evolve.

Despite having different parents, the brothers are connected by their love and support for one another. The warmth and love they have is depicted in the film through their arguments and battles. What distinguishes the story is the protagonists' willingness and capacity to be vulnerable with one another and with themselves. In a different moment, Shaji's closest buddy commits suicide, and Shaji bears the guilt for it. Following this, Shaji informs the youngest, Franki, that he requires assistance. Please transport me to the hospital. I can't even weep. As Shaji visits a therapist and dispels the stigma associated with mental health, we observe. He sobs and loses it. Because it demonstrates that reaching out is not a sign of weakness, this scene is crucial. That a younger person can approach an older man and seek for assistance. Getting professional help is the foundation of this assistance. It destroys the stigma around mature men being weak and requesting professional assistance. However, the film falters when it attributes Shammi's aggressive and domineering behavior to a potential mental health condition. It performs a mixed job of holding Shammi, if she had mental health issues, responsible for her acts and doing good in some areas. One especially notable scene is Fahadh Faasil's character Shammi standing in front of the mirror, appreciating his moustache—a sign of masculinity. Upon gazing into the mirror, he notices a pottu (bindi) lodged there. After scrubbing it off, he continues, "Raymond—the whole man." This scene accomplishes several goals to establish the mood of the political criticism the film seeks to

make. It serves as a symbol for the way the Malayalam film industry has erased women and their place in society, as well as for how it has attacked anything feminine that gets in the way of the idea of a “complete man” and what that man looks like. A man who can eliminate femininity, maintains control, and wearing a moustache is considered complete. However, Shammy’s character is quite complex. His poisoning lies not so much in his overt acts of violence as it does in his adoption of the patriarchal position. In a home headed by women, he feels entitled to make decisions on their behalf. He smiles (uncomfortably) all the time, especially when he is manipulating people’s emotions. Shammi is the embodiment of the “modern man,” thinking that he has the power to give and withdraw freedom from the ladies in his household. Throughout the movie, Shammi is frequently used as a contrast to the four brothers. In addition to contrasting the brothers’ messy appearance with Shami’s impeccable attire, the film highlights the difference between the stereotypical image of the male head of the household and the real Shaji, who is depicted at his most vulnerable. The deeper discrepancy is evident when Shammi criticizes Bobi due to their living circumstances and social position. The film gradually reveals how toxic masculinity can be and how, as the brothers’ narrative demonstrates, it can also be transformed into a positive kind of masculinity. The film does not center on the story arc or character development of women, nor is it a critique of them. Only from the perspective of the men do we know about the roles played by women and their story arcs. Women continue to be portrayed as the love interest or the obedient wife for the most part, despite the story’s best efforts to depict indications of female solidarity, their freedom of choice, and their assertiveness. When the brother’s mother, who had chosen a spiritual path, decides not to return home to her kids, it’s one of the few moments where this agency is revealed. She informs them that without her, they have to blaze their own trail. And they do, discovering their path via love and grief. The film aims to

challenge the harmful notion of the “complete man” and move away from traditional masculine clichés, even though it falls short in this regard.

The males are not entirely changed by the end of the film, nor is there a contented “family.” Instead, it depicts men evolving, unlearning, and transitioning. It envisions a family that goes beyond the conventional Malayali household. Simi’s aggressive conversation fractures the evil Shammi’s shell when he begins referring to her sister with the abhorrent terms “edi” and “podi” rather than “mole.” It takes bravery for Babymol to confront Shammi about her rejection of her desire to marry Bobby and her ridiculing of his many paternity. Reminding Babymol that he is similar to his older brother, Shammi uses language that is beyond the “complete man”’s tolerance. Simi breaks free from her timidity and says, “Ethu type chettanayalum maryadaku samsarikanam,” which translates to, “Which ever type of elder brother you are, make sure you speak with respect.” Then, Shammi turns into his aggressive personality and attacks Babymol, his mother-in-law, and his wife. From the very first frame, Shammi’s character exudes toxic masculinity, unwilling to accept any hint of feminine marring his ideal of the ideal male. He feels the want to be in charge of everything around him. Even though he lives in his wife’s house as a “ghar jamai,” he considers himself to be the head of the family because he is the only man living there together with his wife, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law. The scene where he sits down to supper with the entire family makes this clear. He sits at the table next to his mother-in-law, but before he starts eating, he explains that there isn’t enough light where he is seated. Subsequently, he deftly positions his chair at the head of the table, asserting his dominance over the family. We finally witness this toxic masculinity and drive for control go beyond basic acts and manifest as completely crazy conduct in the frightening climax. He is fiercely opposed to his sister-in-law Baby because he believes that their relationship with Bobby indicates that they are not meant to be together. Simi, his wife, defends her sister when he treats her rudely and

controlling when she refuses to end the relationship. Shammi now knows he can't manage his wife, and that pushes him over the line and turns him violent. He constantly says things like "I am the man" and lets the two brothers know that they are fighting what he views as a "real man" while he fights Bonny and Saji after imprisoning his wife and her family.

Ultimately, his capture signifies the end of "toxic masculinity." Baby is a strong, self-reliant lady who aspires to have an independent life. She directs her and Bobby's relationship. She is the one to start and maintain the relationship because she had a crush on him in school. She even chastises him for attempting to approach her after she has repeatedly refused. Because of her strong morals and attitude, she never hesitates to express her feelings, whether they are to Bobby or her brother-in-law Shammi. She stands up for herself against her family, unlike other girls, and doesn't wait for her lover to save her. With a bravery that very few characters in this movie possess, she boldly opposes her brother-in-law, saying she will elope. She makes money by giving visitors tours of the area and by renting out her family's guest house to them. She doesn't fear her brother-in-law Shammi, in contrast to her mother and sister, and she frequently confronts him. For instance, Baby questions Shammi when she kicks Nylah out for letting Bonny spend the night with her in the guest home, even though her mother told her not to say anything. She resists Shammi's attempts to get her to give up on Bobby even to the very end, even threatening to elope in an attempt to get her to do so. Simi is meant to be the ideal devoted wife who meekly listens to her domineering husband. Since she feels it is her responsibility to be the submissive force in the relationship, she never challenges this stance. Her spouse is her idol since he saved their family and assumed the position of family patriarch. She is afraid to speak negatively about him, and her mother also ensures that her two daughters do not disagree with her son-in-law. On the other hand, Simi does speak up when necessary. Simi doesn't argue with Shammi when he criticizes Baby's affair; in fact, she even allows him to address Baby as an older brother. Simi eventually reaches her

breaking point when Baby doesn't listen to Shammi, who then becomes enraged and starts speaking badly to Baby. She discreetly but forcefully confronts her spouse for the first time. And Shammi's final outburst of violent and psychotic conduct is a result of this feminine power moment.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

The exploration of toxic masculinity within the cinematic canvas of “Kumbalangi Nights” through the lens of hegemonic theory has provided invaluable insights into the intricate dynamics of power, control, and patriarchal hegemony portrayed within the film’s narrative landscape. Through an academic lens, we’ve delved into the manifestations of dominant masculinity as depicted in the characters and storyline, drawing from the seminal work of Raewyn Connell and other scholars in gender studies.

“Kumbalangi Nights” stands as a poignant example of how cinema can serve as a mirror reflecting the complexities of social conventions and conceptions, particularly regarding gender roles and expectations. Set against the tranquil backdrop of Kumbalangi hamlet in Kerala, the film delicately unveils the layers of toxic masculinity ingrained within its protagonists while also celebrating the evolution of personal development and familial ties.

The portrayal of male characters in Malayalam cinema often embodies destructive behaviors fueled by rigid gender norms and societal expectations. “Kumbalangi Nights,” however, defies these conventions by presenting male characters with warmth, vulnerability, and kindness, challenging the prototype prevalent in the industry. Through its narrative, the film celebrates womanhood and challenges traditional power dynamics by showcasing women as leaders in relationships and agents of change.

Moreover, the film provides a nuanced critique of hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Connell, shedding light on the attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequality and reinforce patriarchal structures. By depicting the struggles of working-class individuals within capitalist patriarchal systems, “Kumbalangi Nights” highlights the intersectionality of

gender, class, and power dynamics, offering a new synthesis of hegemonic masculinity within the context of modern-day Kerala.

In addition to its cinematic exploration, our study has delved into the broader societal implications of toxic masculinity and traditional gender roles perpetuated by mass media, including television and film. Through reception analysis and in-depth interviews, we've observed how media representations of masculinity can both reflect and reinforce societal norms, influencing perceptions and behaviours.

However, amidst the discourse surrounding toxic masculinity, it is crucial to recognize that masculinity itself is not inherently negative. Rather, it is the rigid adherence to narrow stereotypes and harmful behaviours that give rise to toxic manifestations. As society grapples with redefining masculinity in the face of changing cultural landscapes, it is imperative to challenge toxic norms and promote alternative models of masculinity that prioritize empathy, vulnerability, and emotional intelligence.

Moving forward, efforts to challenge toxic masculinity must be met with a multifaceted approach that encompasses education, media literacy, and cultural transformation. By fostering inclusive communities that value diversity in gender expression and promoting positive male role models, we can create a more equitable society where individuals of all genders can thrive.

In conclusion, "Kumbalangi Nights" serves as a poignant reminder of the power of cinema to spark meaningful conversations about gender, identity, and societal norms. Through its nuanced portrayal of toxic masculinity and its repercussions, the film invites viewers to reflect on their own perceptions and behaviors, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable future. As we navigate the complexities of modern masculinity, let us heed the

lessons learned from “Kumbalangi Nights” and strive towards a more compassionate and understanding world for all.

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