

DEMYSTIFYING THE DICHOTOMY AND MENTALITIES THROUGH *KAPPELA*

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Abstract

The technological advancement all over the world has made a major breakthrough in the electronic sphere in the past two decades. In spite of all the positive attributes of technology, the major disadvantage of the mobile phones are for the youth who are falling in false traps of love affairs over mobile phones. The generation has bestowed itself with high clarity video calls, social networking sites and lives on with the so-called phony lifestyles. The bogus inveigle in which the young girls unknowingly step into with a simple phone conversation is highly disturbing and tension inducing. The 2020 Malayalam movie, *Kappela*, a simple love plot with deeper implications and moral lessons fabricates the thread of social dramatic structure into seemingly real fake illusions weaving out a perfect thematic value-filled storyline inextricably connected to the contemporary scenario of how young girls dive upon as the victims in the pitfalls and abyss of cyber crime. The director, Muhammad Musthafa, has indications in his mind so as to bare open the modern world's tragic sight and technological deception widespread in Kerala. The paper attempts to analyze the fakeness prevalent in the virtual world and ponders based on the old age proverb that appearances can be deceptive. The subversion of hero/villain dichotomy along with outward good/bad gulf is incorporated in the paper as it forms the major

crux of the movie. Main characters in the movie Jessy, Vishnu and Roy are examined in the paper and the demystification of subversion of good and evil is looked upon carefully.

Keywords: Cyber crime; Technological deception; Dichotomy; Demystification; Subversion

Modern world lives and depend on illusions created by the virtual world. Everywhere the technology has replaced by the old habits. For example, traditional newspaper reading has been changed to seeing news in television which now has evolved to the latest smart phone news. Change is inevitable but how to tackle the changing times is to be noted as the number of crime cases in virtual world is rising. Amidst the growing addiction of cell phones among youth for gaming, social-media usage etc..., the most crucial thing that is detrimental to the girls, who are falling in love with a person in the virtual world that you do not know anything at all. Movies like Chola, have already portrayed such themes but the movie *Kappela* from the director Muhammad Musthafa particularly highlight how a single wrong phone call can change many lives drastically. The paper throws light on how Jessy (Anna Ben), a girl in her twenties has narrowly escaped from Vishnu's rape attempt and trafficking through the unprecedented intervention of a seemingly villainous character Roy.

Even though, everyone is familiar with the saying "Appearances can be deceptive", not everyone pays attention to it. Additionally, "All glitters are not gold", everyone knows it still no one applies it practical use. Jessy is pre-university fail, small town girl, with poor social and financial background from the countryside of Wayanad, Poovaranmala, a place where even opening of a textile shop is a huge innovation. Her family consists of her father, mother and younger sister. She has an inseparable friend, Lakshmi, who she visits every time and shares everything. Jessy, though beautiful is not smart or competent enough in life. She remains

reserved, modest, and shy throughout the movie. She quits studying because it felt “boring” to study and she feels bored when she’s not studying. The dull, monotonous mundane routine life makes Jessy’s life unproductive. Her mother does tailoring and father is a farmer and she have a family who is striving hard to make the ends meet. Jessy have a cell phone but she demands for a smart phone which is out rightly rejected by her father.

Vishnu (Roshan Mathew), an auto driver from Malappuram, makes an entry in Jessy’s life through a single call done mistakenly by Jessy, who dials her neighbor Usha’s number but accidentally rings on Vishnu. The wrong turn ensues in Jessy’s life but the legit, genuine Vishnu finds a way to conquer Jessy’s heart. The calm and quiet over-the-phone romantic love affair sprouts and grows into a strong bond where “they do not sleep at night without having talked to each other”. The sweet, intensifying love story is put forward passionately and the perfect couple can’t wait to each other as they hadn’t seen each other but had fallen in love just through voices. Meanwhile, the *jenmi*¹ of Poovaranmala, Benny, develops attraction towards Jessy and decides to marry her but Jessy gets tensed as she clearly wants to live her life with Vishnu rather than Benny. The constraints of caste, money, looks do not imbibe bleakness in Jessy’s mind as “love is blind” and knows no boundaries. Vishnu, a “good boy” in the books of the society with fresh handsome looks any girl would die for, is a hard-working man in his late twenties living in Malappuram. He works day and night for earning a living and for welfare of his two sisters. He is in clean books of friends, neighbors and remains a helping hand to both known and unknown. The particulate standard character of a good boy is assigned upon him in the early minutes of the movie and the innocent articulation of a poor hardworking boy which captures the attention of both Jessy’s and viewer’s. Vishnu helps a crying, troubled auto-lady driver to earn money by

offering Vishnu's travellers to her. The conversation of Vishnu to other auto-drivers is appealing as it marks Vishnu as a more liberal, ungreedy, peaceful, unselfish man:

Friend: Vishnu, pass a ride to us as well.

Vishnu: She is a poor thing. He (Alcoholic husband) took all the money.

Friend: Even we are like her.

Vishnu: Then I will move aside. I need money only after you all go for rides, whatever is left.

He is the favorite of the group as it is evident in the words of Basheer (Vishnu's friend who is also an auto driver) to fellow auto-drivers: "Learn from him, buddies. He works days and night. No hassies. He knows more people here in six months than we do after thirty years." He is respecting the women and calls them with utmost regard available whenever they need his service. He speaks to school children with sugar coated words. His growing care to his sisters and how they all go to shopping, watch movies at night with even police excusing them is noticeable. Vishnu is even concerned with the choices of his sister's dress, realizing that elder sister Reshma (Vishnu's elder sister) is not satisfied with the dress, willingly agrees for the exchange and asks her "to keep the bill". A kind, sweet and protective brother, civilised friend, generous auto-driver and honest lover puts viewers at the point of feeling how Jessy is lucky to get this caring man. The sisters are the focal point of the story where Jessy contacts Vishnu because they ask Jessy to call Vishnu:

Revathi: This is not Vishu. This is Revathi. All my brother talks

about is you nowadays.

Reshma: Give phone to me. Hello Jessy. I am Reshma. Vishnu's elder sister.

Jessy: It's not what you think. I dialed his number by mistake.

Reshma: Yes. We know you called for blouse measurements.

Please, don't be angry with him. If you call him once in a while, he will be very
happy.

Jessy: I never call him in his number.

Reshma: I know that you don't call him. I am saying this only to see him happy. He rides

the auto-rickshaw every day and night tirelessly, for the two of us. We will call
you later.

(Hangs up)

Jessy: Maybe I should call him.

Viewers develop sympathy towards Vishnu through the scenes which put him in the
'angelic light'. Another incident when Vishnu drops a lady at hospital and don't charge anything
and Jessy asks if it is "free service", the hero captures Jessy's heart and soul. The viewers take
the side of Vishnu and want Jessy to meet him till 120 minutes of the movie.

A stranger derails their meeting, Roy (Sreenath Basi) and the viewers get disturbed at the turn of events when Vishnu tosses and loses his phone in an unknown fight. Roy gets the phone and the viewer's psychological impression is not so pleasing as the villainous trait of Roy is all visible. He is arrogant, lazy, aggressive, shameless, irresponsible jobless wicked villain who beats people with soda bottles, smokes cigarettes, drinks alcohol and do not have a penny to live. He has a family but as he is the prodigal son, he sleeps on an acquaintance's place and immediately develops as a negative character in the movie. Police also does fear him, giving out implications that Roy must be a *rowdy*² or criminal. He takes his cousin's Annie's ring for gaining money.

That one moment when Jessy becomes miserable in the bus-stand toilet because in accordance with their planed meeting, Vishnu was supposed to meet Jessy at the Kozhikode busstand but once she arrived Vishnu's phone number was either busy or out of coverage or switched off. The scene shows that Roy is a pick pursing in the same stand. Accidently, Roy captures Vishnu's mobile phone from a snatcher boy and attends Jessy's call. The movie lets out the terrible vibe that Roy is going to trap Jessy into the trafficking business as the job interviewers were asking for money and girls in exchange for a job offer. Viewers pray that somehow Vishnu finds Jessy which seems impossible somehow and those ten minutes gets hold of them that worst to going to happen to Jessy as Roy may take advantage of her for his benefits. This feeling occurs only because of the growing negative aura with Roy and positive aura of Vishnu blinds the audience into a deep mystery which is going to unleash itself towards the end of the story.

The cruelty, cunningness and eagle look of Roy's face makes it evident that his attempt to lure Jessy is to exploit her for his motives. As, Sigmund Freud remarked in his, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*:

He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his fingertips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore. (163)

The last part of the quote is particularly aimed at Roy's characterization as one can observe betrayal in his eyes and each look towards Jessy. Roy follows Vishnu ominously and tension rises when they get in a duel but viewers want Roy to be beaten as his appearances suggest that he will do something wrong to Jessy. The blood stain on Roy's forehead brings joy to viewers as he deserved it for his troublesome traits.

The traditional sequences, when villain is beaten up by the "good hero", viewers applaud for such a scene of duel from time immemorial in, movies of all languages. But the masks of deceptive fantasy of love slowly drop as the "goodness" of Vishnu dries up in actions, movements and words not only into betrayal but also the inhuman elements of sexual trafficking of women. Vishnu takes her to a lodge supposedly to change Jessy's muddy dress but it have secret implications, which Sabeela *chechi*'s phone leaked out to Roy when he picks up the call from the bus-stand. The waiter says that if Vishnu needs anything, he should contact him and Vishnu pats over his shoulder telling him that "he will", makes viewers realize that Vishnu have already come to Lisy lodge earlier and the feeling of discomfort regarding Vishnu's innocence begins to creep in. The suspicion grows over Vishnu when one he comes out of the room; he gets out the phone to call someone with cautious looks towards Jessy's room. The entry of Saleema

chechi, who is a pimp, elaborates how Jessy is brought there to be traded to Mebbukka in Mangalapuram. The sudden realization makes viewers shudder at how the good has turned evil and how the ‘mirror’ has been broken into pieces. Mebbukka, wants to see how Jessy looks that throws light on how she is to be taken as a prostitute:

Saleema *chechi*: Aren't you two going to Mangalapuram today?

Vishnu: Why did come here?

Saleema *chechi*: Mebbukka called me. Why didn't you pick the phone? And it's

impossible that you won't go anywhere without visiting this lodge.

Vishnu: We can't take her to Managalapuram now. I will do it in due course. I will do my work. I said I will bring her.

Saleema *chechi*: Don't celebrate honeymoon with her.

Vishnu's temper changes for the first time to Jessy shattering her phantasmagorical world of love in entirety. Jessy sobs and tells that her hands are paining because Vishnu is hurting her. Jessy who was used to get all the sweet talks of Vishnu now doubts on how one's character can change in an instant. Vishnu pulls her towards himself and reacts sweet at first, then aggressively shouting she “can't leave soon”. He throws her into the bed and attempts to rape her. Jessy says that she just wanted to see him but Vishnu responds that “it will alone be not enough”. Unable to comprehend what she has landed on, poor Jessy opposes him with all her strength but Vishnu is completely forcing on her and at that point viewers know that it just a routine ‘thing’ for him to trade girls after his sexual needs are done. He cheats all time with girls

through all the sweet talks over phone. He chokes Jessy by placing his hand on Jessy's throat and Jessy bites his hand. Further Vishnu violently beats Jessy, not once but twice which is a shocking slapstick to all the girls who develop fraudulent love relationships and do stupid things for virtual love without their parents' knowledge. The magical love is not anymore visible in Vishnu's eyes but pure lust alone can be seen. She could have been raped and sold out to a sex racket in Mangalapuram and she would have become a victim of circumstances had not Roy intruded on their 'privacy'. At first, viewers wondered why Roy would follow them and they hate Roy but right at this moment when Vishnu is about to force himself on Jessy, viewers pray that Roy would spring upon somehow. The moments explores how the subversion of roles of villain and heroes occur within no time and in real life, this lesson of how appearances are deceptive along with how things are not always what it appears come to limelight.

The division between the good and bad character starts to fall apart and the mentalities of viewers are all of a sudden inverted. The mirage of the heroes' deception washes off the audience from their ignorance and places the clear image out in the front. Jessy could not have been saved from the mess if Roy had not entered the scene timely. Annie (Tanvi Ram), Roys' cousin remarks that Roy is the "only one who can make things right" when speaking to Jessy. Towards the end, all the aporia dissolves as the sisters are arrested by Police as they are prostitutes and Roy beats Vishnu for some unknown reason of a quotation. Everyone thinks that Vishnu received what he deserved from Roy. The story has two moral lessons; never to completely fall into the pits of illusionary virtual world and never to judge anyone on some biased behaviorisms.

Kappela, the true eye-opener for all young girls in the virtual world who leave their parents to start a life with a virtual lover. The world is now not a safe place for girls especially in

the smart phone era where parents do not know what is happening inside their children's small phony world. The movie ends on an optimistic note but the world must ponder upon how Jessy's life could have been changed if Roy didn't appear. She may have been just another victim of Vishnu's love trap and she may end her life ashamed, after being sold over. Her family will be thrown into the darkness and how her little sister would endure severe trauma. Even in the midst of technological innovations parents should know that their children have all the means to get spoiled and corrupted with 'sweet talks' of online lovers. It is their responsibility to keep a check on them and their social circle so as not to lose them. The movie thus offers heavy moral insights to examine the division of good and evil in the world and how no one should be trusted in the online social media platform or through wrong phone calls as truth's face can be twisted. The paper analysed how proper demystification is essential with scrutinitzing visions as the movie, *Kappela* puts forward this basic idea to transform the mentalities of people with the first hand report of a person and delve deeper in order to find the 'real' rather than 'fake'.

Conclusion

The current generation trend is certainly technological and it has become indispensable not to negate the needs of the children who demand the branded new mobile once they reach eighteen or even before. Along with the useful side of technology, the increasing cyber crimes in the social networking sites are to be considered. The main targets in this virtual world are female gender. Women's trafficking is no new phenomenon. The enticement of the women through all misty love affairs is now rampant and the movie *Kappela* is best at the portrayal of this growing issue. The paper has keenly examined how a single phone call changed the ambience of a girl's life and how she neglected the caste, creed, social status and even looks and appearances for the

concept of love. Careful evaluation has been done to showcase the characters Jessy, Vishnu and Roy in the paper. Vishnu and Roy, the inter-reversal of the concepts of hero and villain, one appears angelic and other demonic. The movie offers a moral lesson to all the girls out there to be more careful in indulging in love relationships with anyone virtually. Recent crime cases show the viewers how deceptive and dangerous the world can be to the young people to step into love and how later there is an abyss of void awaiting, as the girls are betrayed sexually. The movie, however, provides a sanguine ending where a savior saves Jessy miraculously and the study demystifies the dichotomy between good and evil where the mentalities of people's perspectives are redefined. The paper also features how girls must be aware of fatalities and deathtraps in the twentieth first century for making their world more secure.

Notes

*Jenmi*¹: A term used to refer to the landed aristocracy of Kerala. In the past, *jenmis* were very esteemed landlords who owned much of the land in Kerala. Here, in the movie, Benny acts the only rich in Poovarmala who owns a textile shop and is in possession of his late father's immense inheritance.

*Rowdy*²: A criminal who beats people and does crime who is feared by other people and society.

*Chechi*³: The word is attributed to address someone of female gender who is elder than the addresser.

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