

LOST IN THE MAZE: KAFKAESQUE ALIENATION, SURREALIST FRAGMENTATION, AND THE SEARCH FOR THE MEANING IN KUTHIRAIVAAL

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ABSTRACT

A Peep into the cinematic exploration of the fragmented psyche of saravanan through Freudian dream analysis and repression. An exploration into lacanian identity crisis and portrayal of the signifier and the signified. The movie wondrously portrays magic realist story telling technique that grounds the surreal in every day. The story deploys the surrealistic aesthetics which dissolves reality into a stream of subconscious images. This paper analyses the meditation of selfhood, memory, guilt and unexplained desire not portrayed for the viewers to understand but to travel along and experience realism and interpret the signs and symbols just like how a psychoanalytic would interpret a dream. Walking along with the crew and viewing through the lens of Fraud and Lacan.

KEYWORDS: Kuthiraivaal, Kalaiyaran, Kafkaesque Alienation, Saravanan. Sharry Night

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INTRODUCTION

Cinema industry not only entertains and informs it also takes in its hand bold rather during topic and produces films. There was a popular song that man had evolved from monkey but his tail had not yet disappeared. Imagine to the Tamil audience, any audience for that matter bring back the fact that a man gets a tail overnight and furthermore trying to explain surrealism, and magic realism. And trying to bring in Kafka's transformation Lacanian mirror stage and the great Freudian psychoanalysis. Kuthiraivaal is a fascinating Tamil film is an awesome blend of surrealism, magical realism and psychological drama and goes on to create a dup narrative with a deep introspection. It does not stop there, the movie goes on to explore varied themes to make it rich for analysis themes like dreams, identity, existentialism and mythology.

The movie named Kuthiraivaal that is the tail of a horse is centred around Saravanan the protagonist, who is a cashier in a bank. He wakes up one morning to find that he has a horse's tail growing from his body. Perplexed and paranoid with such a bizarre transformation sets on an expedition to find out why this happened to him and in the process leads him through the jungle of ideas of concepts leading him to uncover the truth. He himself calls him fraud and goes on to narrate that the base of all this was his dream, where he saw a horse without a tail. He goes on to learn concepts from Van Gogh, a mathematician, a dream interpreter a deceased neighbour and many more individuals. The journey that Saravanan undertook was not only about physical transformation alone as he needed answers for memory, identity and existential uncertainly. The movie explores intrinsically Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacanian mirror theory and Kafkaesque

alienation. The major question that the protagonist is searching here is again about identity, if it is a self-defined one or something that is imposed upon us by external forces. Apart from the routine stories and dramas and the high budget movies soaring and flashing in multitudes, this movie challenges its audience and leaves its meaning open to interpretation rather than giving concrete answers. This story is also a big tribute to the legend of Tamil cinema MGR, who stood tall and broke all barriers is portrayed in all its his grandeur.

The movie plus the lines that demarcated a dream and reality, thereby exploring the multiple characters entangled in the individual and his subconscious state. It has a unique storytelling technique offering a novel thought provoking take on the existence of human beings on their identity. Mind boggling is the atmospheric cinematography which has visuals as a through blend of surreal and realistic elements. Though the story has a very strong life line without Kalaiyaran and Anjali Patil who delivered the most impressive performance would not have taken the movie any fan.

As the protagonist goes from pillar to post searching for a solution to his problem and to get an expert to interpret his dream. The second half talks about the girl who to a representation of the protagonist's inner self or subconscious mind. Yes, apart from the protagonist the girl in the movie who is highly mysterious and an exclusive figure. She is a theme representation who symbolises fragmented and repressed aspects of Saravanan's personality. It is only with her interaction with Saravanan, the movie goes off to decipher the theme of trauma, identify and blurring of reality any fantasy. She is not just another character but she serves as a catalyst for protagonist in his journey of self-discovery. She is the one who coaxes and instigate him to confront his inner demons and re-evaluate his relationship with that of other normal people in his work place and the society at large. Her enigmatic co actor ship in the movie adds a surreal and dream like atmosphere thereby leaving the audience to interpret the significance of his presence and symbolism attached to it. She symbolises purity, innocence and the naive vulnerability factors that Saravanan has lost or has repressed. She is able to mirror his own carefree and playful just his own childhood days, something that he had buried just below his adult responsibilities and carries the traumas of every day's imbalanced life.

Saravanan who calls himself fraud waking up to find he has a horse's tail growing mysteriously, this surreal premise is deep rooted in magic realism where the fantastic elements are blended with the happenings of everyday reality. The next bizarre concept is which are presented within a relatively realistic setting. These kinds of magical elements are not treated as something unusual or extraordinary or un explained quite the contrary all the characters take it as a part of day life of the protagonist and the people whom he approaches seeking remedy for his new found extension is not perturbed but offer casual remedies and suggestions. They go on to interpret it with ease relating it to various believes and concepts. The horse is a symbol of power strength, according to India a model to model new India. It was introduced as a power by the British. Horses always supremacy in everything. When we refer to speed, we call it Horse's speed when we refer to strength, we call it Horse power. It symbolises masculinity under one concept, a symbol of eroticism, a symbol of war and political domination throughout history. It is also the symbol of serenity and stability, but this kind of a horse in the dream of the protagonist is no majestic and beautiful as he goes on admiring the fragile creature reaching its hind legs he realises that the tail is missing, the same tail he possess when he woke up from his dream. The tail is a form that symbolises teasers of a women giving her all the beauty, Saravanan carries these teasers and every time the tail twitches he kind of electro cutting effect it felt by Saravanan. His whole body vibrates and baffled by the new turn off events one fine or not so fine morning he gathers himself and tries to hide of and more on but it should not be concealed or camouflaged, he sets off on a mission to find out why this happened and to find a solution, Only then does he realise that the tail is not visible to people around him. The suffered events and the ensuing journey of introspection, personal unravelling and speech for philosophic inquiry.

In the search for the meaning of the tail he gets to understand six different ideologies, whether it is the ultimate or the surreal needs to be comprehended and left to the understanding of the common man. Firstly, the tail is viewed as a symbol of suppressed desire and identity. Something that is primal, chained or eager deep inside Saravanan, which is crying out to be acknowledged. It is not just one emotion, it is a mix of unexplained trauma, unfulfilled desire, guilt of something that could not be resolved or set right and he has to carry the cross forever, something that he is not able to drop or make amendments. As he dwells deep into the deciphering of the meaning of the tail, he realises that it is not physical, it is purely metaphorically a baggage that is clubbed or calved in between his psyche and the past.

The Second concept is that of the collapse of linear time and reality. It is a blend of the past, present and the future as his journey strongly challenges the idea of linear time. In his journey for the interpretation of his dream and search for the meaning of the tail, he happens to encounter a lot of characters and events that are absolutely out of place and time. It is an indication of abstract ideas which are non-linear, a fantasy-like structure which draws one into reality. He gets to decipher that the solution to the problem that he is trying to comprehend is not outside but right within himself or his fractured inner self.

The kind of battle is between the dream and that of the reality paradox. As he is continuously battling through the maze, he is still not clear if he is still caught up in the dream or woken up to the brutality of reality of the dream any how he is wallowing in deep self-pity. The movie wondrously blurs the demarcating line between the dream and that of reality. The protagonist starts to understand that there is truth prevalent widely both in truth as well as dream. His existential crisis is prominently prevalent in both the realms. Finally, Saravanan realises that going in search of a meaning is a futile effort, when the basement of his own reality is a force and highly wobbly.

The fourth revelation is that of Loss of Identity and Dissolution of Ego. Appearance of a tail one fine moving force the protagonist to face his own fragility, his own tattered identity. What all he owned so far or rather adored with pride like his name which was christened with all glory, his occupation which he earned with all the hard-earned qualification & efforts and finally his own lovely memories are put to test. He has this identity. He realises that his identity is often built by the validation that he received from the outside would help him build his personality or his stature in society. It is the tail that totally distorts that image on the personality that he had slogged and built over the period of his so-called success story.

The fifth aspect is freedom through acceptance fortunately Saravanan begins to accept the tail that he has grown overnight and totally finds peace as he stops questioning and going from pillar to post trying to find a solution or trying to get rid of it. The acceptance finally gives him peace a huge sense of freedom from which he achieved all along through not in a physical sense but through a philosophical one. Only when he comes close to absurdity and understands its significance and relevance does he comprehend the inner truth even if it does not contain any logical or conventional explanations.

The final aspect is the Influence of socio-political commentary. The tail could be a reflection of the scenes that he had sustained due to social alienation or marginalisation, which could be a repercussion of his job profile and his absolutely disconnected lifestyle. His mental and emotional aspects both personal and political and are deeply intertwined.

The movie revolves around Freudian psychoanalysis and he himself rechristened himself as fraud and the whole world around him is filled with dreams, repression and unconscious desires. The movie as such unfolds like a dream. The visuals that picturised bizarre concepts and ideas through his unconscious journey. It also is highly sequential in portrayed and shifts between timelines. Another Freud's touch is repression and guilt. His nomadic journey in search for a meaning

for the horse tail all capsules with his past resulting in repressed trauma or guilt. Para praxis also known as Freudian slip is an error in speech, memory or physical action that is believed to reveal unconscious thoughts or desires. All the dialogues and behaviour of saravanan suggests involuntary expressions of the fears and desires that are hidden. A proper portrayal of unconscious subdued wish or train of internal thoughts which keeps racing across.

Lacanian Theory is wide spread in the movie. Jacques Lacan in fact went on to reinterpret Freud's psychoanalysis in terms of structuralist and linguistic lens. According to his theory Imaginary, symbolic and real are deeply reflected in the movie. The Imaginary order is a combination of images illusions and finally the ego saravanan or Freud the protagonist struggle for identify and he is bringing blessed being logic, dreams and projections. His perception of reality is totally fragmented projecting only a distorted image of his own ego which any individual will take pride in is thwarted which is all classic example of imagery. The second being symbolic order is portrayed differently in Saravanan's world with varied laws, structure and language. Saravanan world with varied laws, structure and language. Saravanan is not just baffled and roaming around, he embarks on a mission to make sense of his new found world. In the process he renames himself, and predominantly tries to interpret his dreams and decipher the signs that befall his eyes. The concept of the protagonist setting about to decrypt the symbols is associated with Lacan's symbolic order. The third concept is the real order. It is a concept that cannot be completely symbolised on fully comprehended something that cannot or does not portray meaning. The tail that grew on him one fine morning is a reality but it does not come under an logic or can it be explained to himself or others and the very tail shelters all the boundaries of the world that they knew within bounds another major concept of Lacan is his Mirror stage .Lacan says that the image an individual creates about himself may not be real it could be just an illusion. Saravanan is battling within himself projected to be so many things at varied gestures that he cannot be branded under a coherent self-image.

Kuthiraivaal also employs Van Gogh's art particular the "Sharry Night" like the swirling sky visuals, inner emotional turmoil and clear sense of searching through madness. We can make out the fitting parallel between Van Gough the great painter and the protagonist Saravanan who struggles with existential confusion and mental disarray. Hence the picturesque display is prominently dominant in emotional intensity, with a display of vibrant colours strewn in varied contours capsuled with turbulence which mirrored Van Gogh's life which is a through parallel to that of the protagonist saravanan who also has a fractured reality of the self. The images portrayed suggests multiple perception brings to right varied hidden truths which can be caged within an individual simultaneously with ease.

Another major visual in the movie is the portrayal of the sun and the moon at the same time in the sky. This concept symbolises both duality and unity, though it is not something totally impossible it is rare phenomenon to witness as a symbolic power. It capsules day and night, logic and emotion, consciousness and sub consciousness. It also signifies balance that is the image represents liminal space accountable between opposites much like the human mind which is sandwiched between reality and dream. In Kuthiraivaal Saravanan is shuffled between emotional states and simultaneous timelines similar to that of the sun and the moon co existing. A proper metaphor for being awake and dreaming at the same time and also being alive to the happenings of the outside world and introspecting, that is searching and questioning oneself at the same time.

Kuthiraivaal is bold venture which depicts the realistic portrayal of everyday life encompasses with magical elements. The direction goes on to explore more complex themes and goes on to use non-linear story –telling with fragmented narratives and self-referential elements which aligns with ease with postmodern library ideals, thereby challenging traditional notions of reality. The movie also employs Tamil folklore and incorporates mythology where local legends and cultural heritage is highlighted. This aspect adds a unique layer of depth and adds a beautiful meaning to the film which is an exploration of the intersection of the traditional life and that of the modern world. It beautifully draws Freudian and Lacanian framework of psychoanalysis. The bold venture goes on to explore themes of repression, identity and that of human desire with such intellectual vigour. Picturization of Van Gogh's visual and emotional intensity is evocative of the expressionist's aesthetics which goes on to foster deepen the film's symbolic resonance. It is a resonating and intellectually engaging portrayal of the fragmented self and offering rich material for psychoanalysis and cinematic analysis, which has a great scope for further study.

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