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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ARTICULATIONS OF MINORITY CULTURES IN ART AND CULTURE MISREPRESENTATION OF IDENTITY -A JOURNEY THROUGH THE MALIK AND OTHER MOVIES

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Abstract

Movies, from the time of its origin, are an integral part of our lives in articulating and shaping our thoughts, customs and cultures. No other art form has played that much influence on human lives. Generally, Majority of the people receive what they get as firsthand experience without examining the authenticity of its content. It is true in the case of majority of historical fictional movies. At times movies take up the role of an interconnecting link between Individuals, societies and events in the past and present, generations as well. At the same time it becomes a buckler for some facts related to a marginalised group ie; a community, caste, race etc etc. Thus the real identity is concealed for the sake of personal gains even for satisfying the authority or the main stream community. At this point the artist literally breaks all the rules and deceives his conscience and eventually his art. Major films of this kind distorts the facts, identity of the people places and individuals. In this paper I would like to examine the movie Malik that is released recently through OTT Platform in the light of socio political background of the events presented in the movie. Immediately after its release, a wide range of discussion was promoted through various media, social media in particular. Here my attempt is to analyze how far the movie is trustworthy for the present generation and the future generation as well. Besides, I would like to point out some other movies with similar features. Thus, the misrepresentation of facts, identity of individuals, places and communities come to light in this discussion. Always, it is better to find a solution to a certain extent- a reliable one – rather than mere talks amongst the public.

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Introduction:-

According to the Preamble of Indian Constitution, India to be a **Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic**. Though each term has its own meaning and significance, contextually the **Secular** needs more attention as it is related to the topic of discussion. It means **all the religions in India get equal respect, protection and support from the state**. In this respect each and every citizen enjoys all the fundamental rights and nobody is discriminated before law. If the people get respect on behalf of their religious beliefs, they must be accepted with real identity and it must be represented everywhere properly without any discrimination. To safeguard the equal status of the citizens, a classification of some communities on the basis of their numerical strength, and are identified as minorities by the some government departments. This paper examines how far the identity of muslim community,

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a region of muslim majority and occurrence of some events represented genuinely in the movies Malik ,Kuruthi and others..

Minority – The term defined

Minority in simple terms is defined as an existing group numerically less in number than the other groups, differ in matters of ethnicity, culture, religion and language. An updation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) the term Minority is as follows :-

“Adopted by consensus in 1992, the United Nations Minorities Declaration in its article 1 refers to minorities as based on national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity, and provides that States should protect their existence” UNHR (8)

Apart from defining, the Declaration ensures their protection mandatory by the states.

Indian Constituion , doesn't define the term but guarantees protection on Rights of Minorities.Both the Articles 29 & 30 ensures certain rights to minorities

Article 29 of Indian Constiution

The Article is as follows:

“Protection of interests of minorities.- (1) Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same. (2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them”

Article 30 of the Indian Constitution

The Article is as follows:

“Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions – (1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. (1A) In making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of an educational institution established and administered by a minority referred to in clause (1), the State shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under that clause. (2) The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language”.

Though Indian constitution do not specify ‘minorities’ in India classifies linguistic and religious minorities. Based on the numerical strength of a community when compared with other existing religious groups, a particular community comes under the category of a religious minority. Thus, in India Hindus serves a dominant position over the other communities. Since India is a Secular state, it becomes the duty of the government to conserve the religious minorities safeguard their rights.

The table represents the distribution of India's population on the basis of religion (courtesy : (Socio Economic and Caste sensus,2011)

Table 1.1.22
POPULATION TRENDS FOR MAJOR RELIGIOUS GROUPS
IN INDIA -1951-2011

(in %)

Religious group	Population						
	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Hindu	84.1	83.45	82.73	82.30	81.53	80.46	78.35
Muslim	9.80	10.69	11.21	11.75	12.61	13.43	14.2
Christian	2.00	2.44	2.60	2.44	2.32	2.34	2.34
Sikh	1.89	1.79	1.89	1.92	1.94	1.87	1.87
Buddhist	0.74	0.74	0.70	0.70	0.77	0.77	0.77
Jain	0.46	0.46	0.48	0.47	0.40	0.41	0.41
Parsi	0.13	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.08	0.06	0.06
Animist, Others	0.43	0.43	0.41	0.42	0.44	0.72	0.72

Source: Socio-Economic and Caste Census, 2011

The population of India by religion wise are 80% of the population practices Hinduism (1 billion), 14% with Islam(180 million), 2.3% with Christianity, 1.8 % Sikhism(21 million), 0.7% Buddhism(12 million) and 0.4% with Jainism(4.45 million).

Section 2, clause (c) of the National Commission of Minorities Act, declares six communities as minority communities. They are:

Muslims
Christians
Buddhists
Sikhs

Jains and Zoroastrians (Parsis)

Thus as per the above Classification Muslims and others are considered as a Minority groups .The topic of discussion is whether these groups are properly and realistically represented in all spheres including art

Minority Community and Human Rights

In 2005,A High level Seven member Independent committee was appointed by Dr Manmohan Singh to study the under representation of Muslims in social, economic and educational conditions of Muslims in India. The committee was headed by former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court Rajinder Sachar. According to the report condition of Muslims India is very much lower than SC and ST. Since they are recognized as the religious minority of the nation ,their rights must be safeguarded.Special attention was given to these minorities

“International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (ICCPR) Article 27 is too accepted as a foundation for all minority rights: “All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex language, religion, political or other opinion national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

Evidently, there are provisions in National and International legal systems to safeguard minority rights. Every educated citizen of our nation is aware of the relevance of these systems. Still, the real identity of these minorities are misrepresented or underrepresented in many ways and in many spheres. In one or other ways the question of identity is much more related to Human Rights

Identity and Human Rights

“Grounded in the work of Piaget and Erickson, identity models generally look at the development and negotiation of personal identity as impacted by societal categorization (what group others put you in) and how that category is viewed by self and others. Identity is thus formed through a reflexive process involving interaction between our self, others, and systems in our environment. These models explore the questions of "Who am I?" and "Who are you?"—racially, ethnically, culturally, class, etc. Ultimately, identity development addresses the question of group membership but also the impact of forced categorization by a "dominant" group”.

Jean Piaget and Erickson on the basis of the study on developmental stages of a child concluded that the Identity of an individual getting progressed and culminated into through various stages. It is against the law of nature to represent it in a different way. Besides, the misrepresentation of an individual or a community through any medium is a matter of denying justice.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW CLINIC UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY SCHOOL OF LAW stresses need for protecting The right to Identity through following statement:-

THE RIGHT TO IDENTITY PROTECTS AN INDIVIDUAL’S SIGNIFICANT AND KNOWABLE PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS.(2)

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW CLINIC UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY SCHOOL OF LAW

The Right to Identity as an Independent Human Right

In an effort to account for the range of rights implicated by identity, several commentators have attempted to define the right to identity through a relational lens, either as an overarching right that captures constitutive rights, or as a core right that conceptually unifies a series of related rights.⁷¹ These constitutive or related rights include at least the rights to nationality, name and family as enumerated in Article 8 of the CRC,⁷² as well the right to juridical personality⁷³ and the rights to equal protection and to judicial protection.(12)

The right to identity is an independent and fundamental human right protected explicitly and implicitly in international law. International treaties, jurisprudence, and scholarship conceptualize identity as the individual (24)

Minority Identity : Misrepresentation in movies

A lot of movies, in the past and present, depict particular individuals, sections or communities far away from their real identity, most of the times remain unquestioned. The characters belong to muslim community are represented as polygamic, uneducated or downtrodden and oppressed by male partner and so on. Some as underworld dons disguised as family man and social activist, female characters are only obliged to bear children and so on. Malayalam movies like Umma, Subaida and Khadeeja in the 60s, Ponmuttayidunna Tharavu, Thattathin Marayath, Kilichundan Mampazham and the list becomes so lengthy, finally Malik and Kuruthi. Movies like Recently released movie Malik directed by Mahesh Narayan, with Fahad Faasil in the lead role stands out from all the above mentioned as it deals with a real incident but was distorted. The story sets in the premises of Ramadappally and the protagonist decides to withdraw from his rebellious and turbulent life and moves for his Hajj Pilgrimage but arrested under TADA. From there onwards the viewers are exposed to his life as a leader of a community and all the more those who centered around him. The story is revealed through the narratives of his near and dear. The place Ramadappally is distorted name for Bheemappally and the riots shown in the movie is the rebellion occurred there. The protagonist's son is murdered in the police firing, a 16 year old boy dies in the 2009 Police firing. The police firing, according to reports, happened between 2.30 pm and 3 pm on May 17, 2009. It is the second-largest police shooting in Kerala after 1957 and resulted in the death of six fishermen, including a 16-year-old boy who was playing cricket on the beach. Another 52 were injured. Only under emergency, a gun shot is permitted, with strict guidelines. Everything started with a verbal fight between a local gangster and a restaurant owner but ended up in a rebellion and firing. Later a communal angle was given to the incident as it was the result of communal tension

between two communities. The authorities remained silence and ironically the whole blame was put on the shoulders of law and order.

Sulaiman Ali, as the hero is addressed in the movie moves to Lakshadweep with his lady love and friend's sister to begin a new life. Later at a point of time the place is represented as a center for storing disastrous weapons. Though the movie is noted for the fantastic performances of all artists especially Fahad Faasil, Nimisha Sajayan and Vinayfort, others also made their roles a memorable one.

While constructing narratives, it is quite common to depend on real incidents, facts people's lives and so on. But the authenticity of a narrative lies in presenting facts as facts. A slight deviation or distortion may have grave results. Especially, an event in which a lot lost their lives, a community who suffered a lot and a land which remained pure and peaceful if misrepresented or under represented through an art form for the sake of political or other motives, definitely it becomes a denial of human right and justice. Similar is the case of Kuruthi, the latest release which tells the intervention of extremity of religious spirit in human relations. Here also some facts are better told but everything is covered up and some facts are left behind to be filled by audience. Thus references on religion misrepresented on way or the other.

An article titled "Winnowing of fact and fiction in 'Malik' shakes up Kerala's collective amnesia" stresses the genuineness in presenting facts and events in the name of artistic freedom. From the very title the 'Collective Amnesia' is beaten by the similarities and connections with the events dominated in the film

"An ethical line needs to be drawn somewhere when you borrow liberally from real life to make your premise look realistic. After the riots, sensational reports of trucks laden with arms and the use of rocket launchers created an impression that deadly weapons had found their way to the coastal hamlet. A few days after the incident, a forensic team recovered Neogel-90 explosives from the area, giving credence to the theory and justification for the police firing, which was unauthorised. The Central Bureau of Investigation which probed the source of explosives filed a closure report four years later saying no links could be established between the riots and explosives. They also failed to establish how it reached the area. In 2010, Jacob Punnoose, the Director General of Police, Kerala cited an official intelligence report which said the Muslims in the region have 'inter-state connections and support of anti-national forces operating from across the border'".

Later developments after the Beemapally firing proved the innocence of the people and their land, the article follows

"Reny Ayline, an activist who had visited Beemapally as part of a fact-finding team for the National Council of Human Rights Organisation (NCHRO) soon after the firing, feels bringing in the terror angle was the most distressing element in the film. "We keep hearing about wars waged to ensure peace in countries like Afghanistan. Films like **Malik** do the same. They keep on demonising the Muslims, portraying them as people prone to crime and terrorism," says Ayline. It's true that the film is vocal in blaming the state for the violence, he says. "What's the use when someone mouths expletives at you for hours and in the end say they didn't mean to insult and the target was someone else?" asks Ayline, who feels the movie, is not different from the ones by directors like Shaji Kailas"

Thus the real purpose of art is not fulfilled, it's just a reminder that art is not for misrepresenting an identity rather to be humane and must stand for human rights.

Conclusion:-

As Justice Rajinder Sachar puts it in the Sachar Committee REORT on Minorities, "All religions have the same message. Thus Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family) shows the spirit of tolerance in Hinduism. Same message of humanity and common good runs through all religions. Thus Holy Quran proclaims: "All the created ones belong to the family of God..... so, an Arab has no precedence over a non-Arab, a white over a black." And Christ said succinctly: "All are children of God."

Ultimately the oneness, equality and justice for all must be observed and established in all respects

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