

Latent Objectives: A Study on Narratology in the Tamil Film Captain Miller

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Abstract

Narratology is the study of narrative frame work, a theoretical foundation for discovering and sharing tales through various media. Tzvetan Todorov, a Bulgarian narratologist, introduced the term 'narratologie' from French. Tamil cinema plays a significant role in shaping Tamil society's life and culture, but few films have addressed and eliminated casteism. Captain Miller, a 2024 Indian Tamil action, adventure film, is a 2024 film directed by Arun Matheswaran, set in the 1930s during the British Raj. The film incorporates Todorov's narrative theory of equilibrium. The film also incorporates Ambedkarism, a philosophy followed by Dr. Ambedkar, focusing on fraternity, democracy, communal electorates, and conversion out of Hinduism. The hero, Captain Miller, prefers the name given by the British, reflecting the role of colonial influence in their lives.

Keywords: Equilibrium, Ambedkarism, Colonialisation, Todorov.

Narratology is the study of narrative frame work. It is a theoretical foundation that the tales are discovered and shared through a wide range of media such as oral and written languages, gestures and so on. The same narrative can appear in many distinct ways. The expression 'Narrative Turn' is an essential concept in Narratology which refers to an increased excitement for narrative research. Tzvetan Todorov created the term 'narratologie' from French.

Cinema has become an important element in Tamil's lives. Tamil Cinema plays a significant role in shaping Tamil society's life and culture. Tamil cinema industry has existed for almost a century, yet few films have addressed and eliminated Casteism. However, while the rest of the films depict the dominance of high-class abominations and pride in their position. Majority of Tamil films recreate the dominance over the marginalized or low caste people.

Captain Miller is a 2024 Indian Tamil language action, adventure film Directed by Arun Matheswaran. The film sets in the 1930s during the British Raj, focusing on a former British Army soldier's rescue of his village. Themes of revenge and harsh realism are prevalent in Arun's films, which he says sets them apart from other revenge themed Tamil movies. He listed Akira kurosawa, Jim Jarmusch, and Seijun Suzuki as some of the directors who have influenced his work.

Tzvetan Todorov, a Bulgarian narratologist and Todorov, a prominent figure in Russian Formalism, was born in Sofia and moved to Paris for postgraduate work. Todorov's main focus was on the

formal properties of narrative, specifically its syntax and rules of combination. He distinguished between propositions and sequences, showing that every proposition has a limited number of possible outcomes. This insight was used in his book, 'The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre', which remains the standard reference in genre studies.

Todorov proposed The Narrative theory of Equilibrium In his essay entitled 'The two principles of narrative' in the year 1971. The essay says that a narrative has five formal elements equilibrium, disruption, recognition, resolution, new equilibrium.

This research paper incorporates Todorov's narrative theory of equilibrium with the film captain Miller. Equilibrium, the first stage of Todorov's theory Where everything sets out to be normal. In the film Captain miller the beginning of the plot reflects that there is an equilibrium of everything being normal by the incident of pechaiamma narrating the story of their idol Koranar To the people of the village. The story is not a written one but its oral story which gets modified from one generation to another this reflects that this is a normal incident which continues for Many generations.

This film also incorporates Ambedkarism. It is and philosophy followed by Dr. Ambedkar. It focuses on fraternity, Democracy, Communal electorates, and conversion out of Hinduism. Anal Eesan's Introduction scene depicts Ambedkarism, in which he wears blue and red attire with them with a wanted notice of this picture in his hand. Ambedkarism is depicted indirectly through the attire of Anal Eesan and this is not the only scene which depicts Ambedkarism but there's also another scene when this Anal Eesan gets Attacked by the British soldiers and when he was taken into the medical care, and that building holds the picture of Dr. Ambedkar which directly Implicates the ideology of Dr. Ambedkar.

The Hero himself prefers to be Miller (captain Miller) which reflects the role of colonial influence in their lives, even though he is against the Britishers, he preferred the name given by them. These people face Double Marginalisation from the upper caste people as well as latent Marginalisation of the Britishers, by providing them the thing they longed for i.e., Respect, food and shelter.

"You Joined the Military for The Country

But He Joined Military for Respect" (00:29:13)

The longing for Respect made Anal Eesan to join Military to be in some high position. Eesan as he gets his new name from the Britishers, goes Infront of the mirror and says his name with certain higher position like Sepoy Miller, General Miller, Jawan Miller, and Captain Miller. one of the soldier asks the character sembeta that of he gets a name Stephen, and that soldier criticizes him that how a cow herder can have such a name. but western cow herders also have the possibility of having the name Stephen as their name and these people think that only those upper class or the British Monarchies have such name.

The second stage of Equilibrium according to Todorov, is Disruption which occurs when the state of Equilibrium is disturbed. Here in the movie Captain Miller the state of Equilibrium is disturbed by the event when the Britishers asking the newly joined soldiers to shoot the people who are indulged in non-violence asking for freedom. Stephen, one of the fellow soldiers had a guilty feeling of killing those innocent people and he rubs his hands with guilt. This can be related to Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's Macbeth

"I Have Blood on My Hands, It Can Be Washed Away

Only With My Blood" (00:38:34)

Realisation, the third stage of Todorov's Narrative theory of Equilibrium which states that the narration emphasizes the previously noted interruption. As Miller killed those innocent people he went to live in the forest with that guilt. Then he goes on to join a gang which indirectly indicates LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) through the gang's signature symbol of mask with two holes and it is evident through the dialogues of kannaya and vincent pillai.

"We had lost a lot of freedom fighters kannaya!

I need obedient Tigers. Also, I need barbarians who can rip off the tree" (00:54:31)

Fourth stage of Todorov's Narratology theory is Restored order which is defined as a character who has been driven by the psychological need to resolve uncertainty. When Anal Eesan fights back with the Britishers to help his village, here the order starts to change slowly. Also to be noted that there's change of stereotype when Eesa had a conversation with Thaenu, one of the Member in the gang.

The Final stage of narrative theory of Equilibrium is New Equilibrium where a new order is formed as Anal Eesam saves the villagers from Britishers and as he resembles the statue of Koranar it can be understood as he's the one who will lead the village, and new Equilibrium is formed. Thus, the movie Captain Miller satisfies Todorov's Narrative theory of Equilibrium.

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