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REPRESENTATION OF THE GENDERED SUBALTERN IN THE MALAYALAM FILM "VAISALI"

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ABSTRACT

Vaisali is a 1988 Malayalam film directed and edited by Bharathan.. It was an adaptation of a sub-story told by Vedavyasa to King Yudhishtira in the epic Mahabharatha. It is the story of Vaisali, a devadasi girl who was assigned the mission of seducing Rishyashrungan, the son of Mahirshi Vibhandakan and bringing him to Chambapuri to perform a mahayagam to bring rain. Vaisali is a mythical figure and myths are the most powerful tools used by patriarchy to subordinate women. Myths attribute to women a gender identity built on the binary logic and a sexual identity submerged within the phallic system. From the feminist perspective, the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata depict woman as a non-entity, totally subservient to man. The epic provides a context to showcase the patriarchal point of view which moulds our realities, fixes our values and limits our vision of individual possibilities. The ideal of womanhood to be sought and achieved is constantly presented by the media. All media discourse- including literature and advertisements work to construct social positions for woman as viewers, listeners and readers. Media discourses setup social positions for women that are based on stereotypical images of who they are and what they do. Media play an important part in constructing and reproducing these positions. Women are misrepresented in such a way as to arouse male sexual fantasies. Women are projected as objects of desire. . In the film *Vaisali*'s body becomes an object of male voyeurism, both of the male actor's and of the spectators'. *Vaisali*'s female body is shown in parts and both voyeuristic and fetishist images.

Key words: Patriarchy, Myth, subaltern, Visual media, Male voyeurism, Vaisali, Female body

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INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy is sexual politics and a form of rule by force. Feminism is an oppositional practice or a counter politics that takes its origin from the oppressive and exploitative nature of male – female relations that affect women. Man –woman relationship in a patriarchal society is structured as an unequal power relation of domination and

subordination where by women are controlled by men. Though woman is defined and differentiated by gender and sexuality, she is never free to express her desire and find an identity through that expression. Linguistic sexism restrains woman from articulating self, identity and sexuality. Patriarchy uses the male cantered language as an instrument of subordination and controls female sexuality.

The ideology weight of hierarchy and power, the problematic of subtly created spaces of binary oppositions, and the dynamics of superiority and inferiority traverse every realm of human experience and system of possibilities. No space is neutral, no product is apolitical. A sensitive, sensitized, seeking eye can recognize the overt and covert play of power/ politics in the multifaceted methods by which patterns and textures of subalternity and subordination are inscribed and reinscribed in the social and individual psyche. Culture, societal relationships, diverse institutions including family, education and religion, literature, sexuality all bear the imprint of hegemony and subjugation.

Language is one of the potent tools wielded by the dominant groups in society to create binary opposites. Prioritising one group naturally creates the other. Pushing certain groups to the margin, to the periphery, away from the vitality and vivacity of the centre necessarily involves the process of cultural Othering. The subaltern is thus created, burdened with the subordinated dimensions. The subaltern is imbued with the negatives at all levels, be it social, cultural, sexual or personal. The subaltern is the one who is denied an authentic presence. He/she is the one bereft of voice or dignity; one who is a mere zero, a cipher with no essential meaning or a sense of being. The gravity of the situation is intensified when the subaltern is a woman. She is denied a subject position. Her presence is not even authenticated; if at all it is done, it is only to enforce the superiority of the male counterpart. She is the deviant, the deformant, signifying all the lacks, the voids. The predicament of the female subaltern is the most miserable of all oppressive states. It is a lethal combination for the subaltern to be a woman. Her life, dreams, hopes and the basic right to a dignified survival are thwarted by multiple forces of oppression. She is a victim of racism, classism, and most importantly, of the primarily subjugating ideology of patriarchy.

Culture can be divided into Visual Culture, Print Culture and Cyber culture based on the media made use of. While Print culture and Cyber culture depend on printed medium and virtual world created by technology respectively, visual media are

the major means of interaction in Visual culture. Visual culture is broadly divided into film and television. There are forms of visual high culture like painting and sculpture. Over the years, film could get the status of an art, and consequently it has been given an academic status in universities. Television is still considered commerce or a trade. It is considered a business in spite of the technological advancement. In the silent era of films, there was lecture along with the motion pictures. Only after the coming of talkies did film industry flourish. All the classics were adapted in to films. Film is part of the culture industry. As films could produce more profit than any other industry, many corporate giants have branches dealing with production of films. Films are the most lucrative business. Women are frequently represented in the media texts as either fragmented or incomplete in some way. Women are faced with broken images, physical images of body as parts to be worked on.

This paper aims to examine how the female body of the courtesan (Vaisali), in the Malayalam film, *Vaishali* is presented as a site of oppression and tyranny and also how female body is inscribed with tools of patriarchy. It also examines how media and patriarchy work together at the commodification and objectification of female body.

Representation of Vaisali in the film

Vaisali is a 1988 Malayalam film directed and edited by Bharathan. Produced by Dr. M.M Ramachandran and scripted by M. T. Vasudevan Nair, it was an adaptation of a sub-story told by Vedavyasa to King Yudhishtira in the epic Mahabharatha. It is the story of Vaisali, a devadasi girl who was assigned the mission of seducing Rishyashrunga, the son of Mahirshi Vibhandakan and bringing him to Chambapuri to perform a mahayagam to bring rain. Shot in a lavish setting, *Vaisali* was a huge hit at the box office. This film, often considered one of Bharathan's best works, is also considered a cult classic in Malayalam cinema. The cinematography by Madhu Ambat was widely appreciated and won several awards.

Angarajyam, under King Lomapadan is suffering from severe drought. There has been no rain for the past twelve years as the result of a curse by a Brahmin. The film begins with King

Lomapadan's visit to Rajaguru, requesting him to return to Champapuri, the royal capital of Angarajya. Chitrangadan, the son of Rajaguru, was in love with Vaisali, daughter of a devadasi, which was against the social customs. Rajaguru had migrated away from capital with the aim of separating his rebellious son from his lover. Now, with the repeated requests from the king, Rajaguru decides to shift back to Champapuri to perform a yagam to please Lord Indra, the god of rain. On the night of his arrival at the capital, Rajaguru receives a mystic vision, in which his guru advises him to bring Rishyashrunan, the only son of Mahirshi Vibhandakan, to perform a mahayagam at Angarajyam. Only the son of Vibhandakan can save the nation. Rishyashrunan is a teenager, living deep inside a dense forest, along with his father, who is famous for his spiritual powers. Vibhandakan has taken care to keep his son away from the rest of the world since the day he was born. Rishyashrunan has not met any human being in his whole life apart from his father, and is unaware of the world outside his ashram inside the deep forest. Lomapadan and his group of ministers decide to send a beautiful girl to seduce Rishyashrunan and bring him to Champapuri. Rajaguru, who has a deep-rooted anger against Vaisali, asks the king to send her to the forest. Vaisali, daughter of Malini, a famous dancer in the palace, is also the illegitimate daughter of King Lomapadan, which he is unaware of. Malini, on the demand of the king, sets out with her daughter to the forest. While the rest of the team waits outside the deep forest, Vaisali sets in and meets Rishyashrunan and attempts to seduce him with her looks. He, unaware of the existence of any human being on the earth, is easily carried away by her exotic looks. But by evening, Vibhandakan detects the trouble and warns his son about the danger. But the teenager is again captivated by the charm of Vaisali. But soon realizing his mistake, Rishyashrunan decides to take up deep meditation to attain mental power to win over Vaisali, whom he mistakes for a Mayavi who has come to prevent him from gaining eternal happiness and salvation. Vaisali, who by now has fallen in love with him, is completely broken by seeing him in meditation in the midst of fire. She, in her final attempt at

seduction, starts dancing sensuously in front of Rishyashrunan, and succeeds in alluring and taking him to Angarajyam. But the boy hermit regains his senses at the boat and is about to curse her. Malini begs for mercy. On seeing Malini, another woman, the teenage hermit is surprised. Vaisali explains her mission to Rishyashrunan and convinces him of his power to bring rain. They start back to the kingdom. They are welcomed royally at the capital. King Lomapadan welcomes Rishyashrunan personally and takes him to the stage where the yaga has to be performed. Malini, who by now expects the King to accept Vaisali as his child, tries to move towards him, but is stopped by the Rajaguru. Rishyashrunan performs the yagam successfully, and it rains heavily. The entire nation is now in a joyous mood and they celebrate by singing and dancing. Vaisali and her mother Malini are completely forgotten by the King. The Rajaguru advises the King to offer Princess Shanta, his daughter, to Rishyashrunan, which means that the offspring of Rishyashrunan will rule Angarajyam after the time of Lomapadan. The King obeys the order and announces the marriage of the young saint and the princess, which is welcomed by the crowd wholeheartedly. Vaisali is heartbroken. Her attempts to reach the king end in vain and she along with her mother fall down on the ground. Her mother is trampled to death by the crowd. The crowd is no more bothered about them and the heavy rain continues.

According to the *Mahabharata*, Sage Vibhandaka's penances begin to frighten Indra, the lord of the heavens. Alarmed at the sage's increasing powers, Indra sends his *apsara* Urvashi to seduce Vibhandaka and destroy his penance. Rishyasinga is born of their union. Mission over, Urvashi abandons both father and son and returns to her heavenly abode. Maharshi Vibhandaka, overcome by hatred at her desertion, takes his baby son and retreats deep into the forests to rear his son in isolation.

Vaisali is a mythical figure and myths are the most powerful tools used by patriarchy to subordinate women. Myths attribute to women a gender identity built on the binary logic and a sexual identity submerged within the phallic system.

Myth is patriarchy's language and subjugates women. It is the law of the Father that

operates within the realm of myths. The masculine language connects itself with the masculine value system. It reflects the culture and ideology of patriarchy. Male view of culture and women's role in it are imposed as if the male perception is the only truth. This ideology is internalized by all irrespective of gender. In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes uses the term myth as indicative of any made up, illusory thing, the false representations and invalid beliefs prevalent in the society which we accept as "natural". According to Barthes, the role of the mythologist is to prove that what appears to be natural is in fact artificial construct which support existing power structures and construct a world for us and decide our place in it. Barthes suggests that myths not only reflect and explain perceived reality but also convey powerful messages about how this reality should be and how people should behave.

Myths are constructed in such a way that they legitimize certain perspective of culture, history and society. Fairytales and myths produce, conserve and transmit a female identity that is constructed as natural. In this context, Kate Millet observes: "patriarchy has a still more tenacious or powerful hold through its successful habit of passing itself off as nature" (1970:50). The patriarchal ideology of myth is hardly visible due to its defamiliarizing capacity. Only a female perspective can unravel the phallogocentric nature of myths and challenge their androcentric structure.

The female archetypes in Greek myths, denied of voice visibility and dignity, instil in women a set of values that confirm and justify their subordination. They counsel women on how they should be in order to survive in the patriarchal society. Victimized and ineffectual Alcestis, Iphigenia and Philomela naturalise women's victimisation and their silent submission to oppression. Male control of female sexuality is justified through the images of sexually aggressive Clytemnestra.

From the feminist perspective, the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata depict woman as a non-entity, totally subservient to man. The epic provides a context to showcase the patriarchal point of view which moulds our realities, fixes our values and limits our vision of individual possibilities. Even more pathetic is the fact that the dominant powers

have so naturalized the subjugation of women that she often fails to recognize the pitfall that she is in. She wails in that dungeon forever, often taking it as her ordained destiny to be always the erotic, the aberrant and the abnormal.

The mythical character Vaisali is a tragic figure and is ignored by all after she had successfully completed the task entrusted on her. She falls victim to the Rajagurus deep rooted anger against her as his son was in love with her. Rajaguru wanted to free his son from establishing a relationship with a devadasi. Even the king forgets his promise to Malini, Vaisali's mother. Malini expects the King to accept Vaisali as his child and when tries to move towards him, is stopped by the Rajaguru. She is trampled to death by the crowd at the end. And Vaisali is left all alone in the crowd. Even Rishyashrunga who is enamoured by her beauty accompanies her to Angarajyam, leaving his beloved father, also forgets her and marries the princess Santa. Here patriarchy and myth stand together to give away the message that woman has no right to desire; especially a subaltern woman has no choice in her life. The man designs her life and she has to act accordingly without any hopes and aspirations.

The position of hierarchy, the authority to dominate and subjugate, is nonetheless enjoyed by man. He creates the norms and these norms perpetuate his superiority. The literature produced by male authors, indoctrinated by the ideology of patriarchy, provides a prejudiced, mutilated graph of women. Women are misrepresented either as angels, the true emblem of purity and innocence, of service and sacrifice or as the evil temptress, the demon ready to tempt and lead man to havoc. The realistic portrayal of woman, who stands between these extreme cases, is conspicuous by absence in literature produced by male writers.

When this story of Vaisali was finally filmed by Bharathan, one of Malayalam cinema's auteurs, it stood apart because of the solid scripts, excellent dialogues, strong visual appeal, and plot lines which did not shy away from a realistic depiction of human relationships, including an exploration of human sexuality.

A huge commercial success when it first released, *Vaisali* has been called a *painting in*

celluloid, the *prettiest Malayalam film ever made* and Bharathan's masterpiece. It says much for the director's skill in extracting good performances from his cast that Suparna Anand who played the eponymous role turned in her career-best performance as the young courtesan who, entrusted with a job, finds that her heart leads her down a path that can only lead to destruction.

It also says much of Sanjay Mitra (Rishyashrungan), who was there to provide eye-candy, and that he did, in abundance. But the story was brought to life by the supporting cast, and what stellar performances they turned in! Geetha as Malini, the courtesan who wants a better life for her daughter; Nedumudi Venu as the royal priest who abuses his position to seek petty revenge against a young girl because his son fell in love with her; VK Sriraman as Sage Vibhandaka who, rejected by his beautiful wife, teaches his son that women are not to be trusted (ironically, his son will reject the selfless love of a young girl for no fault of hers); Babu Antony as Lomapada, the king who forgets an unspoken promise made to a lowly courtesan, and sacrifices the well-being of his illegitimate daughter to further the happiness of his legitimate one. It was an ensemble cast, and the three veterans (and one relative newcomer) raised the film beyond the strong script.

Bharathan had a well-earned reputation for being a master director. He spearheaded the middle-cinema movement in Malayalam, with his films treading the path between the art-house cinema of Adoor Gopalakrishnan and G Arvindan, and the purely commercial star-vehicles. That he cast several top 'stars' in his films did not, in any way, reduce the efficacy of his films - on the contrary, 'stars' seemed to shed their stardom and enter deep into the skin of their characters under his baton.

The ideal of womanhood to be sought and achieved is constantly presented by the media. All media discourse - including literature and advertisements work to construct social positions for woman as viewers, listeners and readers. Media discourses setup social positions for women that are based on stereotypical images of who they are and what they do. Media play an important part in

constructing and reproducing these positions. Many representations of women in media discourse are asymmetrical: there is an imbalance between the way men are represented and the way women are represented. Women are frequently represented in the media texts as either fragmented or incomplete in some way. Women are faced with broken images, physical images of body as parts to be worked on. The kind of discourses addressed to women often impart ideal images of what women should look like, and then demand women to shape to that ideal. This remaking does not stop at the physical aspects of being a woman, with the "right" shape or "right" size, but solicits a restructuring of personality and femininity. Woman's movements have encountered various types of resistance. These issues include sex role stereotyping women's self image and public image, the social role of womanhood, sexual revolution and the politics of phallogocentric language.

In the film *Vaisali*, Angarajya needs rain badly. And the king knew that the sage will not allow his son to accompany the royal retinue; neither can they use force against such a powerful *rishi*. History has been witness to many Kshatriya dynasties that have been decimated by the *tapas* of sages. Anga is already cursed and they did not want to invoke another curse. So what do they do next? Anga, in a masterstroke, the *ra jaguru* offers the solution to send a woman to entice the youth. Now there is a search for female body to lure the young sage. Here *Vaisali* as a human being is not given importance but her female body is what is demanded. The queen, not very enamoured of her step-daughter, is quick to point out that Shantha is beautiful and can destroy the *tapas* of any mendicant. But the *rajaguru* has other plans. The girl who is sent must know the art of seduction, he announces; and so, a competition is announced. The *devadasi* who wins the contest will be rewarded many times over. King Lomapada is dejected - he has seen no beauty among the competitors so seductive as to entice a *rishi* from his meditation. This is the chance the *rajaguru* has been waiting for. Angered by his son's continued rebellion and his determination to marry *Vaishali* come what may, the *rajaguru* informs the king that there is indeed such a woman - *Vaishali*, the young daughter of the royal courtesan.

King Lomapada visits Malini and asks her for her favour. Malini was a dancer in the king's court and the king who has already used her body for his sexual pleasures is now asking for the body of their daughter Vaisali. The suffering kingdom of Anga gets rain finally. Twelve years had passed since a drop of rain has fallen on its parched lands. Its Vaisali's female body which actually had showered this blessing on Angarajya.

One effect of being defined by sexuality within a patriarchal social and symbolic order is that women develop a relationship to their own bodies which is self-objectifying. The understanding that women's bodies are the objects of male gaze makes women develop a self-consciousness about how they look before others. According to Foucault, discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, docile bodies. Women's bodies are subjected in the sense that they are dominated, made to conform to particular institutional regimes; and practised in the sense they are made productive and useful. This is achieved not by physical coercion but by a form of surveillance- panopticism- which encourages one to watch oneself because we imagine ourselves observed by others. (Foucault, 1979:138).

The awareness of pervasive male gaze makes women fashion their bodies as sexually desired by men. In this context, Sandra Bartky states: "In contemporary patriarchal culture, a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgement. Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal other". (1988:72)

Male gaze is an alternative form of panoptic surveillance that compels women to overemphasize their bodies and physical appearance. A practiced and subjected body is one on which an inferior status has been inscribed. This inferior status makes the female body an object of male sexual fantasy.

Woman's body language speaks expressively, though silently, of her subordinate status in a hierarchy of gender. Self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy. It is also the reflection in woman's consciousness of the fact that

she is under surveillance in ways that she is not, that whatever else she may become, she is importantly a body designed to please or excite. This has been induced in many women, in Foucault's words, "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (1979:201). Objectifying her body creates an alienated effect in the woman's psyche. She feels alienated from her body, alienation from her very being. For many radical and lesbian feminists, patterns of dominance and subordination are not to be played with or celebrated. They are rather the evidence of the ways in which women's sexuality has been shaped by patriarchal society and culture.

Whenever the subaltern woman dares to speak out, to articulate, her anger or protest, she is not even accorded the agency to speak. Finally in the film when rain falls on Angarajya after a long period of twelve years, the whole state is in a festive mood and the King obeys the order of the rajaguru and announces the marriage of the young saint and the princess, which is welcomed by the crowd wholeheartedly. Vaisali is heartbroken. Her attempts to reach the king end in vain and she along with her mother fall down on the ground. Her mother is trampled to death by the crowd. The crowd is no more bothered about them and the heavy rain continues. Both the mother and the daughter is not given a chance to articulate a word and after enduring all the hardships and troubles. The tragic plight of these two females shows how a weak king can do wrong just by refusing to do what is right, and how women were mere pawns on a royal chessboard.

There is an inherent dichotomy between women in prostitution and married or single women. There is an intrinsic belief among normal mainstream women that sex workers are responsible for the dysfunction or destruction of their marital framework. And the pathetic fact is that they find it easier and convenient to entrust the whole burden of shame and responsibility on the sex worker. The concept of male gaze is introduced by Laura Mulvey in the essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." She discussed about the Hollywood commercial films. She argues that women are misrepresented in such a way as to

arouse male sexual fantasies. Women are projected as objects of desire. John Berger also discusses the same idea in his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972). Roland Barthes argues in *The Pleasure of the Text* that reading is an erotic process. It is like the striptease of a cabaret dancer; the reader skipping boring passages. Male gaze operates at three levels: visual, emotional and psychological. Gazes are also three types and all those are male gazes: 1. The gaze of camera. Camera was usually operated by men, and so came the usage "cameraman." 2. The male character's gaze on the female character on the screen. 3. Spectator's gaze at the female character. According to Mulvey, audience also have a male gaze. Teresa de Lauretis brought a new concept of "Double Identification" which discussed about the female gaze. There is a split in the spectators- male spectators and female spectators. Female, as part of the audience, identify with the audience and they have a male gaze at the female characters on the screen. Secondly, they identify only with the female audience and extend this identification with the female characters on the screen. After Teresa de Lauretis' book *Technologies of Gender*, Laura Mulvey revised her essay to include the condition of the female audience. First, a female spectator identifies with the oppressor and then with the victim. The female spectator is in a paradoxical position identifying with the male oppressor and the female victim. This is called "Double Identification." should be. The man, who is as equal a partner in the crime, is left unscattered.

Through visual media different kinds of representations or images of women are circulated. Such images are of two types: voyeuristic and fetishist. Both voyeurism and fetishism are psychological disorders in which there is an extreme sexual urge satisfied through sexual fantasies. Voyeurism is the sexual gratification obtained from the sight of fully or partially naked bodies. It can be body, body part, sexual acts or amorous conversations as in phone sex. Fetishism is the sexual desire related to objects. Objects are attributed with erotic or sensual connotations. Cosmetic ads are examples. A model applying lipstick on her lips is a highly erotic image. It is emblematic of the sexual act. Lipstick represents the

phallus and the lips, vagina. Both voyeuristic and fetishist images are used in visual media. Woman is not considered as whole human being, but reduced to parts of body or an object. Patriarchal strategies working in visual media aim at the commodification and objectification of female body, and aim only at the arousal of sexual desires. There are two major criticisms against male gaze: 1. These kinds of misrepresentations are made to be natural. Patriarchy collides with capitalism and enhances the exchange value of women. Women are appreciated for their use value and exchange value. Commodification of woman happens as a result. This Commodification is legitimised by the visual media through voyeuristic and fetishist representations of women. 2. These misrepresentations cultivate in woman an impression that it is natural to be gazed at. Only photogenic women are represented in visual media. The condition for being photogenic is "Looked at-ness." By imbibing these ideologies, women tend to improvise their appearance to be gazed at. Thus they tend to become beautified erotic objects.

Throughout the narrative *Vaisali's* body is a constant object of male curiosity and voyeurism. She is represented in such a way as to arouse male sexual fantasies and projected as objects of desire. She becomes an object of male voyeurism, both of the male actor's and of the spectators'. *Vaisali's* female body is shown in parts and both voyeuristic and fetishist images are used in the film *Vaisali*. The female protagonist's body is reduced to parts or an object and here media and patriarchy work together at the commodification and objectification of female body.

Conclusion

The term 'Subaltern' is originally coined by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to refer to landless peasants, who were the most marginalized people of the times, as a result of feudalism. Subaltern are the 'other' in terms of power – the 'other' of oppressors, colonizers or power setters. Post-colonial studies often converge with subaltern studies because both deal with oppression and resistance. Cultural constructs, like gender, race, class or sexuality etc are interconnected and are relative. When native literatures are considered,

race is often discussed with gender as in the case of black women who are doubly marginalized in the terms of race and gender. If the black woman is a proletariat, then the oppression becomes triple by the means of race, class and gender. If these are applicable to a lesbian in the same situation, then the marginalization is of four types viz class, gender, race and sexuality.

Vaisali faces multiple oppression because she is a female, a courtesan, and also the illegitimate daughter of the king. In the story, it wasn't the princess who went out to seduce the sage, but her half-sister, the illegitimate child born of her father's liaison with a courtesan. The courtesan agrees to her daughter being used as a pawn in return for the stamp of legitimacy. All this happens because of the conniving priest who sets to destroy everything that stands in his path. Even though her mother has promised Vaisali that she will never be pushed into their hereditary profession, finally she is left all alone. After the death of her mother she has no one to support her.

Multiple oppression is an interlocking system or a labyrinth of oppression. Different types of oppressions intersect or overlap and bring in reinforcement or increase in the intensity to marginalization. Subaltern body is the site of oppression or tyranny or ideology. Female body is also inscribed with tools of patriarchy. Several ideologies can be read and understood located from the subaltern bodies.

Myth is patriarchy's language and subjugates women. It is the law of the Father that operates within the realm of myths. The masculine language connects itself with the masculine value system. It reflects the culture and ideology of patriarchy. In the myth of Vaisali, patriarchy and myth stand together to give away the message that woman has no right to desire; especially a subaltern woman has no choice in her life. The man designs her life and she has to act accordingly without any hopes and aspirations.

The script pointedly describes what happens to ordinary people when political expediency intervenes; how a wily politician is willing to sacrifice everything, including his own son, on the altar of duty and social custom; how a weak

king can do wrong just by refusing to do what is right, and how women were mere pawns on a royal chessboard.

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