



THE BEAST WITHIN: ANALYZING ANIMALITY WITHIN HUMANITY IN THE MOVIE "JALLIKATTU"

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ABSTRACT

Humans consider themselves as superior moral beings unique from others. Lijo Jose Pellisserry's (LJP hereafter) masterpiece film "Jallikattu" is the brilliant evaluation of hidden animal instinct lies within the human. It uncovers the animality within humanity. In this paper, I endeavour to analyze how effectively the movie manifested that the humans still possess primordial instincts and are drawn towards fleeting sensations and worldly delusions. Moreover, it stands as a wakeup call for the audience. The paper concentrate on the hidden meanings beneath the surface. It peels off different layers of the human ego, his unquenchable thirst for domination, endless greed. The conflict between beast vs beast rather than beast vs man is displayed.

Keywords: Animality, humanity, plebeian humanism, Anthropocene, instinct

Humans consider themselves as the most powerful creatures of the world. They live in the assumption that they enjoy superior moral status and have greater value than the lives of pigs, buffaloes, elephants or bulls. The central pillar of our social, political and economic system is that humans have eternal souls whereas animals are mere ephemeral bodies. This powerful myth justifies humans' action of killing animals (Harari, 2016: p.101). The recent spellbound movie of Lijo Jose Pelliserry titled "Jallikattu" is the brilliant evaluation of real human behaviour. It is predicated upon the understanding of animality within humanity. The natural acapella background music provided an immersive experience to the audience.

The movie emphatically uncovered that humans can be animalistic than animals themselves. Despite all the civilizational transformations, it is impossible to get rid of the social spectrum of our ancestors at stone ages. "The deep sensory and emotional structure of humans haven't changed

much since on the stone age" (Harari, p.80). It is a dark tale with intense thematic representation projecting the dark side of humans through the narration of a cliché story. The storyline revolves around a buffalo who escaped from a slaughterhouse and create a mess in the whole village. It affects the peace and calm life of the villagers. Later, for acquiring a piece of meat, they dare to attack each other and reach to the extreme of killing. It reminds the viewers that we are living in a dog eat dog world. Notwithstanding, external guidance and supervision, human disagree to shed off his animosity and brute forces within himself.

In this paper, I would endeavour to unleash the hidden beast with humanity and its impact on the real world. The struggle for existence and the natural selection are considered as two driving forces of the theory of evolution. Evolutionary biologists always concentrate on the anatomical or morphological characteristic changes such as the human eye, the size of the brain, the use of language

system, the ability to move on two legs etc. Nevertheless, Darwin's claims for continuity between human and animal worlds, humanity is seen as a higher plane of existence without any animality. Another myth justifies human superiority by saying that among all the species of the earth, only humans possess a conscious mind. The mind is a flow of interlinked sensations, emotions, thoughts and feelings such as love, hatred, pain, agony, revenge and pleasure (Harari, p.105). The movie attempted to uncover the discourse of animality lie buried within a human. It manifestly exhibits that humans are drawn towards fleeting sensations and worldly delusions. "Anthropological and archaeological evidence indicates that archaic hunter-gatherers were probably animists: they believed that there was no essential gap separating humans from other animals (Harari, p.75). Every character is built with negative shades and imparts the beastly hidden nature in each human being. The beast within the character Antony led him to attack Kuttichan, his enemy for the success of sexual domination towards Sophie. Moreover, their fight for the bull is to publicize masculinity. Later after trapping the bull, Antony gets the courage to kiss Sophie forcibly and ensures himself that now he got the right to do it. The beast within the mob dares them to burn police jeep when the village turns to a chaotic situation.

"Jallikattu" does not merely revolve around a buffalo but take a heuristic turn in which LJP championed so vehemently. It tried to unveil the latest complex political structure implicitly and makes the viewers ponder beyond what they saw. Indeed, buffalo stands as the symbolic representation of victims all over the world. Buffalo runs and destroys various things to protect its own life. Indubitably, the movie displays the conflict between beast vs beast rather than beast vs man. Though some identify this movie as an exaggerated portrayal over a trifling matter, it signifies the possibility of frenzied viciousness by the mob over trifle matters. It has thrown up diverse perspectives and perceptions and brings forth a great deal of discussion. The highlight of the movie, pyramid scene is, in fact, a wake-up call for the audience. LJP infuses the thread of Plebeian humanism through

immersive visualization. People attack Antony in the form of eating. This climax scene has been effectively foreshadowed through the dialogue of kuttichan; "the tastiest form of meat was none other than the human flesh". It creates a stun and fear on the audience. It peels different layers of the human ego, his unquenchable thirst for domination, endless greed.

To be a human means to reduce instinctive behaviour and become a conscious being, able to think and decide as a cultural and rational tool. Sigmund Freud following Darwin divided the human brain into 'lower' parts that we share with animals which have brutal animal instincts and 'higher' part that is uniquely human (Doidge 2007: p.297). The movie effectively shows the implications of discourses of animality by applying tools such as eroticism, base drives, absence of civilised manners, etc. It poses a few questions to the audience to whom the world belongs to and who are real animals. Thus human self with disdained animal nature is projected rather than the moral human nature. To make the audience aware of this danger, an old man presages that "even though they walk on two legs, they are real animals..." The ancient human scene at the climax is a dire warning that men continue to share the primordial instincts and wilderness from the forest that is ready to be unleashed anytime. People's unconscious mind is still living in the stone ages. Irrespective of higher conscious development, every civilised being is invariably an archaic man at the deeper level of his psyche (Greenslade,1994: p.67).They lose control of their mental and psychological processes. The chaotic situation created by a single buffalo to the whole village represents today's chaotic society itself. In *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Freud argued that the primal instinct hidden within us is exalted in fantasy or pathologised in violence. Here the primate behavioural responses of the mob stand as the actant which leads to burst out human's hidden beastly nature.

The movie is predicated upon the understanding of the dichotomy of civility and savagery and that of conscious and instinct. It detectably displayed that man couldn't overcome the brute force within himself. LJP illustrated the

Anthropocene epoch to show the real impact humans can produce on earth, in general, its habitat in particular. "Homo sapiens became the most important agent of change in the global ecology" (Harari, p.72). Anthropocene is an epoch which shows global change and ecological revolution brought by humans. It vehemently reminds us that we should fear the danger of humans rather than the destruction caused by volcanoes, asteroids, earthquakes, etc. Since 1970, wildlife populations have halved. At present ninety percentage of the large animals in the world are either humans or domesticated animals (Harari, p.72). Moreover, the interior beast within every being is connected more with the racialized unconscious than that of the individual unconscious. The intensity of carnal passions of fear, lust, greed and revenge displayed in the movie exemplify this. Human's ability to control instinctual impulses give it a moral superiority as I mentioned earlier. If this rational control has been lost, humans will turn to mere animals that is of violent, brutal, infantile and lustful nature.

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