



From Jallikattu to 777 Charlie: Portrayal of Animals

Dr S C Bamarani, Asst Professor

Government Arts College for Men, Nandanam Chennai 35

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Abstract:

The paper entitled 'From *Jallikattu* to *777 Charlie* : Portrayal of Animals' elucidates the picturisation of animals in the recent South Indian Movies. Three movies, *Jallikattu*, *RRR* and *777 Charlie* are discussed in the paper. Human - animal bond is the prime motive of this paper. The movies taken for study are different in their own ways. In each movie the bond between animal and human is at diverse level. But the directors of these movies try to illuminate the significance of animals in human life and how the animals drive the human. The animals here are used to bring out the state of man and his dependency on the nature around him. If apocalyptic movies talk about doomsday in a pessimistic way, animal movies centre around the fact that blending with nature is the simple formula for the human survival.

Key words: human, animal, bond , movies, dependent, different, blend, survival.

Animals have been portrayed in different manifestations in films. They perform myriad roles, differing as well. A therapist, a saviour, a prey so go their relationship with humans. From the past , the relationship between human and animals has been "enduring despite their relative lack of practical utility or material value for humans and, in this sense, presenting a challenge to evolutionary theory" records James A. Serpell.

Animals have been pictured by primitives on caves, and now they occupy a vital role in human lives as it is portrayed in many films. While historic movies exhibit the heroic spirit in animals, comedies or cartoons show them mischievous. Either way animals and their representation in films have created a deep impact in human. This paper attempts to trace the portrayal of animals in the recent south Indian movies, released from *Jallikattu* to *777 Charlie*.

The movie *Jallikattu* (2019) by Lijo Jose Pellissery is all about a buffalo chase, a chaotic chase, by a group of villagers for a sumptuous meal. Here the group of men who are in run for the buffalo

are exhibited as rough and unyielding. The movie depicts the "raw side of human beings, that we are worse than animals," according to Rahul Rawail, Chairman of Film Federation of India Jury. The animal that escapes forms the centre around which all the other characters move.

The movie is horrific and dark, to go with the skin of its protagonist, the buffalo. The buffalo causes havoc wherever it goes and it is due to the life threat. Every character wants the animal to be killed for their selfish motives right from Kaalan Varky, his sister, a group of young boys to a priest. The animal is in run to surmount from the beastly desire of the humans around . The chase that begins from the butcher expands to a village. The crowd keeps extending that it turns to be egoistic and each one tries to prove their masculinity in capturing the animal.

The animal's behaviour could be justified as it runs to save life. But the supposed to be civilised men are uncouth and wild in killing the animal, all for its meat and the ceremony behind it. The crowd swiftly gets into the carnivalesque atmosphere , to the contrary it intimidates the animal and the viewers. The carnivalesque state soon turns to be occupied with frenzied attack over human themselves rather than capturing the animal.

When the director brings the buffalo in front of a man consumed with prolonged illness, he is the only soul that finds solace in seeing the animal as a representative of Yama, the God of Death. The perspective from which the sick man sees the buffalo from a window, though illusionary, seem to be a liberation for the sick heart. Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* states the same, that human behaviour is driven by life and death instincts. Here in this movie, the director has woven the characters around it , where the huge mob is driven by the death instinct, aggression, risky behaviour and reliving trauma.

Freud writes, "Nearly all the energy with which the apparatus is charged comes from the inborn instincts, but not all of these are allowed to develop to the same stage. On the way it over and



again happens that particular instincts, or portions of them, prove irreconcilable in their aims or demands with others which can be welded into the comprehensive unity of the ego” (6). The characters in *Jallikattu* are purely driven by their inhumane instincts surpassed by ego. The representation of animal is rather extensive, as it is intended to reveal the barbaric human character or his instinct. The buffalo is just a symbol here to show the chaos that human beings create to satisfy their pleasure and ego. While *Animal Farm* adopts anthropomorphism by picturing the animals that exhibit human characters, *Jallikattu* employs Zoomorphism, the attribution of animal-like mental states to humans. To quote Lijo Jose Pellissery in an interview to *Reader's Digest*, “They all have something that binds them. We are talking about life, death and afterlife”. His three movies, *Ee.Ma.Yau* (2018), *Jallikattu* (2019) and *Churul* (2021), a trilogy that talks about life, death and after life. The movie ends with the quote from *The Book of Revelation*, “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small”. Lijo Jose Pellissery’s picturisation of the men running as savages fighting for the animal and the last cry of the buffalo for life deeply penetrates the viewers questioning the mad mob behaviour of men. The movie clearly states that animals wreak havoc for safety, but humans are more dangerous as they are barbaric for their pleasure.

The next movie is *Rise Roar Revolt* (2022, popularly known as *RRR*), a revolutionary-era blockbuster. Rajamouli’s movie is about the British rule in India, the two legendary friends, Ramaraju and Bheem, fighting against it in their own ways. Rajamouli has many a time used animals as symbols in his movies. His movies *Sye*, *Eega*, *Bahubali* and *RRR* showcase animals in different forms. The negative character in *Sye* is closely linked to the bull, a house fly in *Eega* is a reincarnation of a man struggling to save his lady love, in *Bahubali* horses and bulls are used voraciously to show the traits of the kings and tigers, wild animals are like saviours in *RRR*.

RRR has an extensive use of animal imagery throughout. Here the animals are used to hunt the human beings, atrocious by power. From the beginning of the movie to the end, the animals appear either in single or a group symbolising the characters they are with. The hunted deer is synonymous to the little girl captive Malli, who is rescued by the firm and forceful, Bheem compared to a tiger.

Bheem is shown fierce in an encounter with a tiger. In the process of taming a tiger, he is shown equivalent to it. Though it seems to display the valour of Bheem, the relevance is disclosed later, surprising the viewers. Ram is compared to a horse and he is closely associated to it. He is stern in his decision, steadfast throughout. Animals play a vital role in hunting the atrocious power. Hunter-hunted theme is strikingly well displayed in the movie. While the civilised group is shown as cruel, it is the tribals with the help of the animals slay the harsh. Boldness is innate in them, may be as they grow with animals. His motive is to save the girl who is separated from the family. The emotional bond she developed with Bheem, forces him to go to any extent to save her from the British clutches. His motive is not as bigger as Ram. Ram as a son of a freedom fighter desires to free his country. But Bheem from a simple tribal family unaware of the general oppression is solely motivated to save Malli. Unless he befriends Ram, his motive is just to save her.

In an interview, Rajamouli records that movies like *Benhur*, *Patriot*, *Apocalypto* have inspired him to make action sequences more creative and unimaginable. His characterisation also exhibits animal features in a large scale. While saving a kid from fire, strangers Bheem and Ram communicate from distance. Animal signals and human language blend well in saving the kid from fire. Though at distant the impulse to save the kid, as an animal saves its kid from its prey, unite them in the noble task.

Rajamouli uses a snake as a bond to link the broken bromance. The snake bitten Ram when attended by Bheem and men from his tribe, sees the real identity of Bheem. The venom dwindles but not the fervour to catch Bheem who is hiding himself from the British.

The creativity of the director is unleashed, when the animals are let out from the truck. The epic fight scene is the breath-taking one where the animals break out from a truck taking the audience in awe. With the help of the animals Bheem tries to rescue the little girl. The scene unfolds the reason behind Bheem’s encounter with animals and his massive act in taming them. Animals attack the British but it gives a sigh of relief to the audience as the once uncouth is given back. Rajamouli picked animals and it is like an animal army attacking the meek, cruel human. The animals aid Bheem in his mission.

Though Bheem is pictured strong as an animal, he is innocent. With Ram and Bheem, valour



meets intelligence and thereby they accomplish their mission.

The movie 777 Charlie is about the bond that changes the life of Dharma. The bond he develops with Charlie, a dog, makes his life meaningful. When the other two movies show animals as prey and hunters, this movie shows animal as a therapist. The movie is directed by Kiranraj. The movie's popular one liner delivers the essence of it, "If you're lucky a dog will come into your life and fill your heart with love".

According to The United States Army Medical Department Journal (AMDJ), "these animals not only provided protection; they also could offer stress relief and a sense of pride to their human counterparts." The director, Kiranraj, an animal lover, has pictured the movie with universal appeal. The movie talks about companionship and it has many scenes that beautifully records the bond between a dog and a human. It touches the audience and leaves them teary-eyed.

Ancient cave art in Borneo captures the bovine-type creatures and domestication of animals. It demonstrates the role of animals in human civilization. Great epics of India show the dogs and how they accompany human in their tough times. Animals are true therapists. They are an aid to people with physical challenges, a therapist for people who have suffered loss. When they embrace loneliness, it is animal that help them come out of it. They show the world from a different perspective.

In 777 Charlie, when Charlie comes into the life of Dharma, his loneliness is addressed. It is because of Charlie, he gets a family. The road trip that he takes with Charlie, changes his life completely. According to the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI), the human-animal bond is "a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that is influenced by behaviours that are essential to the health and well-being of both." Here in the movie Dharma suffers from anger issues owing to the stress of losing his family in an accident. He is in a state of total depression that he embraces loneliness. Charlie, who is left on the streets, follows him. She is uninvited initially, but she becomes everything to Dharma

Charlie escapes from a breeder, sees a saviour in Dharma when he attacks a group of people. It is when Dharma saves Charlie from a road accident he decides to keep her with him until he finds a human family for her. The first to befriend Dharma and Charlie is a little girl. She helps Dharma in taking care of Charlie. When Dharma searches for

someone to adopt Charlie, she does her best to get rid of them.

Dharma is completely broken when he learns about ailing Charlie and the reason behind it. Their travel to Himachal Pradesh, resolves lots of issues. He finds Charlie's breeder and saves the animals through an animal rescue team. He finds a friend for him and Charlie, Vamshi and Blacky. The scene where Charlie and Dharma hug each other on a snow clad mountain break the audience into tears. Charlie dies leaving her kid to Dharma. Dharma gets a family and the street where he lives was once against dogs. But after the advent of Charlie the whole street celebrate Charlie with her statue and her kid who is also Charlie. The advent of Charlie not only changes the lone life of Dharma but also a whole lot whom they meet.

The three movies Jallikattu, RRR and 777 Charlie are totally different. The portrayal of animals in these movies are again not the same. In Jallikattu it is dark, in RRR it is wild, in 777 Charlie it is consoling. In all the movies animals are the same but it is human who uses them to fulfil his motive. Human use it as functional and also as a companion. Movies have a major role in depicting them as it gives an emotional feel. Basically there is a primal connection between animal and human, finding them on movies is quite appealing. Directors use animals to show sensitive and controversial themes. Animals in the three movies are a tool to exhibit the true identity of man, who is dependent and is completely reliable on the flora and fauna around him. These movies show the far he moves from nature, the more he loses. Such movies carve themselves a niche by highlighting the fact that man is not as powerful as he thinks. If apocalyptic movies talk about doomsday in a pessimistic way, animal movies centre around the fact that blending with nature alone is the simple formula for the human survival.

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