



The Paradigm Shift In The Portrayal Of The Hero Character In The Pan-World Film Avatar: The Way Of Water

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Abstract

Avatar: The Way of Water is a 2022 American science fiction film directed by James Cameron. It is the sequel to Avatar-1 (2009) and the second film in the Avatar franchise. In the first film Avatar-1, Jake Sully becomes Toruk Makto and defeats the threat from humans and saves the people and resources of Pandora. In the second film Avatar: The Way of Water, Jake Sully and his family are under renewed threat from the villain Colonel Miles who returned to Pandora in Recombinant Avatar form. The hero realizes the dangerous situation of his Omaticaya clan and decides to seek refuge with the Metkayina clan to avoid endangering the Omaticaya clan because of himself. He does not realize that he goes to endanger the Metkayina clan and it ends up in the battle between the Metkayina clan and the humans. Here the Hero's refuge decision makes the heroism understated. After sheltering the family of Jack Sully by giving a sanctuary, the Metkayina's leader does not become an alternate hero as expected. The film does not show a struggle to save nature and resources, but it shows the personal fight between Hero & Villain, both take turns threatening each other with their children and here the difference between hero and villain disappears, the movie becomes a double hero subject. This part two film is a typical revenge film that lacks sublime heroism and the director has shown that all the important characters as selfish. Moreover, Avatar-2 features some similar scenes featured in Part-1 and those stereotypically repeated scenes are not giving surprise but show the director's sentiments toward Avatar-1.

Keywords: Paradigm shift, Heroism, refuge, revenge, sentiments

Introduction

The 2022 American science fiction film *Avatar: The Way of Water* directed by James Cameron, produced by Lightstorm Entertainment and TSG Entertainment. It is the second instalment in the *Avatar* franchise and the follow-up to *Avatar* (2009). In the movie, Jake Sully (the hero) and his family flee from his Omatikaya clan in search of safety with the Metkayina clan of Pandora since they are once again threatened by humans.¹ The movie shows the endless fight between the hero and villain which may continue in further instalments.

The personal fight

In the first part, there is a war to protect nature with the general aim of saving trees and natural resources. But in the second part, the film shows the fight between the two individuals' hero and villain. The villain Colonel Miles attempts to kill Jack Sully and his family, the cause of his death. Knowing this, Jake Sully takes sanctuary in an inhabited reef region called Metkayina. Chasing them there as well, Colonel Miles tries to destroy Jake which leads to the fight between the Metkayina clan and the humans.¹ At the beginning of the fight, Colonel Miles tells Jack Sully to come out alone on behalf of his children and makes the Metkayina clan stand down. Moreover, during Jack Sully's surrender, Colonel Miles stops firing on him and tells "If we hit him now, the Metkayina people will hit back". Here the Director reveals the film about the personal fight between Hero and Villain.

The paradigm shift in Heroism

In *Avatar Part 1*, the hero saves his people, saves nature, saves the resources and defeats the humans who came to exploit the natural resources. Heroism was complete in *Avatar Part 1*. But in *Part 2 Avatar*, the hero is under renewal threat by humans and he realizes his Omatikaya clan should not be endangered because of himself. The hero tells his wife "If the people harbour us they will die" and leaves his Omatikaya clan and seeks Uturu (refuge) with the Metkayina clan of Pandora. He does not realize that he goes to endanger the Metkayina clan. In Pandora, while living a life with nature, the hero and family may have sought a separate place to live instead of seeking refuge. The Tsahìk of the Metkayina condemn Jack "This you call victory? Hiding among strangers, It seems Eywa has turned her back on you." Here the Hero's Refuge decision shows a shift in the depiction of heroism. Moreover, the hero does not understand if the Metkayina people harbour his family they will die. After giving the sanctuary to Jack's family, the Metkayina clan faces a fight against the humans and only at the last minute do they realize that Jack Sully is the reason for that battle. In the climax fight scene, the Tsahìk of Metkayina blames Jack 'You brought this upon us' and here his heroism seems to be understated.²

No character is shown with heroism and the characters of Jack Sully and Neytiri were written as supporting characters. After sheltering the hero, the Metkayina clan leader does not become an alternate hero as expected and he also becomes a supporting character. The villain often extracts the hero's children and threatens them. In return, Neytiri threatens the child of the villain to hit back. Thus both of them take turns fighting over their children.

When a small fight happened between the boys of the Omatikaya clan and the Metkayina clan, Jack Sully tells his younger son to ask for apologies and at the same time he asks his elder son what would you do with other boys. The son replies that they beat them nicely and Jack Sully replies that is good. He shows his bravery to the Metkayina clan who gave them sanctuary and here his heroism seems to be not mature.

Missing 'Save Nature'

The movie shows the fight between hero and villain and nothing shows about saving nature or resources. The Metkayina clan has a kinship bond with Tulkuns as their family members. The RDA private sector marine group hunt Tulkuns for Amrita and the dead Tulkuns are buried underneath the sea. The sea Na'vis are unaware of this. Colonel Miles uses a dead Tulkun as Bait to trap Jack Sully. When the Metkayina people see that dead Tulkun the Metkayina's head announces the war to protect Tulkuns. Jack Sully interferes and gives them an idea to tell Tulkuns if they are shot with a red tracking beacon, they are marked for death, and call for him to silence that red weapon. In that way, he stops the war to protect Tulkuns and says to his wife Neytiri that the humans are not hunting Tulkuns, they are hunting Jack's family.³ When the villain extracts his children he starts to fight. The climax fight happens on behalf of kidnapping their children and not for saving Tulkuns. The hero doesn't try to save his resources but thinks to save his family, shrinks to an ordinary person and there is a shift from heroism. In the first part of Avatar, all the clans of Pandora unite together under the Toruk Makto to fight for their home, nature, and planet. This was missing in part two and Jack's focus is on family bonding and his attempts to save his family and the conflict unfolds emotionally screened as a complete emphasis on family sentiments and narrative-wise Avatar-2 is a typical revenge film.

Selfish characters

In the intro scene, the voiceover says 'The most dangerous thing about Pandora is that you may grow to love her too much'. But it was not shown as loving nature or living in harmony with nature. The Villion Avatar is instructed to look into some payback and Jack Sully would be at the top of the list. He is also telling "Go Na'vi, full tilt all the way, that means we eat na'vi, we raid Na'vi, think na'vi." If he does the same he will start to love Pandora but he not loves Pandora and always burns with a deep hatred for Jack's family. Jack Sully also cares about his family only and Neytiri also fights only for her children.⁴

Stereotypically repeated scenes

There is a similarity between the introductions of Jack's avatar in part-1 and Colonel Miles's avatar in part-2. Both show some violence initially and calm down later. The dialogue "We are not in Kansas anymore" told by Colonel Miles in part-1 is repeated by Colonel Miles Avatar in part-2. Jack Sully tells "One life ends and another begins" when he steps into his brother's shoes in part-1 and the same dialogue is repeated by Jack Sully in part-2 on migration to the Metkayina reef region. The dialogues "My daughter will teach you", "Why me?", "That is decided" are also used in both instalments. Taming the Ikran (Mountain banshee) by Jack Sully in the first part is repeated by Miles in the second part. Thanator attack in part-1 and Akula, a large marine predator attack in part-2 show some similarity and both are important turning points. The exploitation of Unobtainium in part-1 is replaced by killing Tulkuns for Amrita in part-2. The dialogue "I see you, you are one of us" is told by Neytiri in part-1 and by Tsireya in part-2. The climax Eye-opening ending is essential in part-1 which is sentimentally used by Director in part-2. The stereotypically repeated scenes are not giving surprise which shows the director's sentiments toward Avatar-1.

Discussion

In the film Avatar 2, humans once again visit Pandora with the intention of exploiting her resources. They also travel with Colonel Miles' Avatar in order to seek down Toruk Makto and his family. Otherwise, the native Na'vi people won't be killed by humans, and the movie will simply focus on the conflict between the Hero and the Villain on a personal level. When Jack Sully asks for Uturu (Refuge) to flee Colonel Miles, it signals a change in how bravery is portrayed. The hero decides to fight primarily for the extraction of children rather than the exploitation of resources and in the climax fight, the Tsahk of Metkayina accuses Jack Sully, saying, "You brought this upon us," after realizing the reason for the Tulkun's death, here the act of heroism here appears underestimated. The movie turns into a double hero topic when the villain and the hero alternately threaten one another with their offspring. In addition, the Jack family demonstrates their bravery towards the Metkayina clan, who provided them with refuge, although his gallantry here looks immature. The plot progresses with a greater emphasis on familial sentiments, the fact that Avatar-2 is a traditional revenge film without any surprises in the stereotypically repeated scenes reveals the director's sentiments towards Avatar-1.

Conclusion

The request by Jack Sully for Uturu (Refuge) marks a shift in how the hero is portrayed as valiant. When Tsahk of Metkayina learns why Tulkun died, she accuses Jack Sully is the reason behind and this is when the heroism seems to be understated. Moreover, Jack appears to be immature in how he displays bravery towards the Metkayina clan, which provided them with refuge. The act of valour here seems underappreciated as the hero chooses to fight largely for the extraction of children rather than the exploitation of resources. Combining all these elements, the film illustrates the paradigm shift in the hero character's portrayal.

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