



Into the Labyrinth of Mind: A Journey through the Psychological Space in *Munnariyippu*

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Abstract:

The concept of psychological space delves deep into the relationship between mind and space. Psychological space can be understood as a person's 'lived in' space irrespective of the physical environment in which he/she lives. *Munnariyippu* is a 2014 Malayalam mystery movie, directed by Venu, which explores the intricacies surrounding the human mind. It is a brilliantly scripted film that presents a character, Raghavan, whose perspectives about everything is quite different from a common man.

Raghavan doesn't believe in values of freedom, loyalty, happiness, truth or reason in the sense as understood by others. He, therefore, exhibits traits of nihilism in believing in nothing, devoid of moral or metaphysical convictions. He is quick to remove anything that comes in the way of his definitions, even if it means the killing of the intruder who comes in his way and his notion of 'freedom' is which he enjoyed by being in jail. This study attempts to analyse the complex operation of psychological space regardless of the external physical environment. A journey into the complex labyrinth of mind in the movie is made to unravel its mysterious space.

Keywords: Psychological space, inner space, ontology, self-image, body-image, nihilism

Inner space is, of course, not the usual physical space, and is not tied only to body images. It is affected by self-boundaries that are more emotional and psychological in nature. There is a correspondence on the ontological level to the relation between the self-image and the body-image. In other words, just as self-image includes body-image in object relations theory, so in the experience of

space, inner psychological space includes the notion of space as spatial extension. Inner space is not restricted to spatial extension, just as self-image is not restricted to body-image, which is analogous to spatial extension. Here we can appreciate how the findings of object relations theory regarding the relationship between self-image and body-image help us to understand more clearly the concept of inner space, and to extend our insight into the nature of the mind as space. This inner space is bigger, more open, more encompassing than the notion of space as spatial extension. Focusing on the dissolution of the boundaries of the body-image, which are mental analogues of physical boundaries, tends to prejudice us towards seeing space as spatial extension. But dissolving these boundaries, which are mental in nature, helps us open the experience of space to other dimensions that are more psychological. We see that spatial openness is only one dimension in inner space. In short, mind space is the human faculty to which are ascribed thought, feeling, etc.; often regarded as an immaterial part of a person.

Munnariyippu is a mystery thriller movie which explores the intricacies surrounding the human mind in perceiving the ideas of freedom, crime, and punishment. The movie steadily unfolds itself to question subjective interpretations regarding 'real freedom' and nihilistic tendencies set within the modern capitalist framework. The film moves around a prisoner and a journalist who tries to unravel the air of mystery that surrounds him. It is a brilliantly scripted film that presents a character, Rakhavan, whose perspectives about everything is quite different from a common man.

Mammootty plays the role of Rakhavan, a man convicted of double homicide, a prisoner who refuses to leave prison even after he has served his sentence. The film grows out of constant meetings between this mysterious prisoner and a curious journalist, Anjali Arakkal, played by Aparna. Anjali is a freelance journalist who incidentally chances upon the person called Raghavan.

She gets access to his writings in which Raghavan interprets world around him in his own way. Sentences like "Does the reflected image in a mirror looks back at him or does it accepts him and comes along with him"; "A Prison should be a place for people to understand their mistakes and correct them rather than a place for punishment"; "Life as a struggle before death". All this makes her attracted to the mystery Raghavan has built. Further Raghavan's outlook on freedom and responsibility with his own brand of philosophy impresses Anjali and she decides to write a feature about him. The featured article, titled "The Brain behind the Bars", gains much attention and proposals come for publishing Raghavan's

biography with his philosophies. Anjali decides to use this opportunity to make a name for herself with cooperation from Raghavan's side. Raghavan is much happy about the newly gained attention he is receiving. Anjali decides to visit Raghavan in jail and process release for him from jail. After release she finds accommodation for him and compels him to write-up events and interpretation of them for making it a book, though Raghavan hesitates. Tension rumbles subtly every time she tries to make him write. The persuasion of Anjali is met with the weak, helpless gazes of Raghavan, his evasive eyes flitting around like flies avoiding a lizard. The answer Anjali seeks is whether Raghavan was guilty or not, whether he was a victim of false judgment. The pursuit of truth is not frantic; it is rather an entrusted exercise for the journalist who has signed a contract. For her, the mystery of this man is meat for her book so that the volume could meet the demands of her publishers.

While Anjali brings out the ambitions of a journalist and the instincts for survival, Raghavan unearths the roots of the prisoner. He builds up the mystery with a swath of innocence, touches of philosophy and the weakness of a loner. Raghavan is a simple man who loves to lead a simple and lonely life. Anjali is a junior journalist who wants to prove her mettle in her professional life. As part of her profession she enters the life of Raghavan. When she gets him released in the hopes of authoring a book on his life though, things don't go as she planned. For Raghavan, she becomes an intruder upon his personal freedom or space.

There is an instance where he reveals his ideology about freedom as "Removing elements that obstructs the person is known as freedom. If it happens in home, it is called as domestic abuse. If it happens in society it is revolution. Irrespective of where it happens where there is revolution, blood will spill". Anjali's colleague Mohan advises her to not pressurize a person who was reluctant to come out from jail. This is another hint of Raghavan's obsession with the freedom he enjoys in the jail.

Eventually, Anjali faces problem when the deadline to submit the material for the book is nearing and Raghavan has not even started writing, above that there are other journalists who try to get full picture of Raghavan's Story. She decides it is best to move Raghavan to an undisclosed place. Anjali is pressurized by the publishers. The new accommodation and lack of facilities irks Raghavan. Anjali's marriage seems almost fixed with a Chackochan (Prithviraj) and she decides to leave the book publishing

project and settle the deal in court. Anjali meets with Raghavan and gives his diary and money received from jail for his rehabilitation and lashes out at him. Raghavan smirks at her. Raghavan gives her the full script of the story. Skipping through it she comes in grip with the reality of Raghavan's true nature. Fear creeps under her skin. Raghavan murders her with one blow to the head. Finally, Raghavan is shown peacefully sleeping at Jail. Photo of Anjali along with his other victims is seen pasted near to Jail Wall as trophies of his victory to his own psychotic idealization of freedom.

The protagonist in the movie is portrayed as having multiple layers, with his own rational explanations guiding his actions as opposed to the reasoning of others. Raghavan is a man convicted of double homicide, a prisoner who refuses to leave prison even after he has served his sentence. The film grows out of constant meetings between the mysterious prisoner and a curious journalist, depicting the psychological intricacies of the former who is reluctant to write about him when the latter persuades him to do so. This reluctance may be because his inner space is not linear and hence he cannot give expression to it. While the mainstream sees him as being 'abnormal' or 'different' he stays indifferent to such comments, and find bliss through his own understanding of the world.

Raghavan doesn't believe in values of freedom, loyalty, happiness, truth or reason in the sense as understood by others. He, therefore, exhibits traits of nihilism in believing in nothing, devoid of moral or metaphysical convictions. He is quick to remove anything that comes in the way of his definitions, even if it means the killing of the intruder who comes in his way and his notion of 'freedom' is which he enjoyed by being in jail.

Raghavan seems to be nihilistic in his thoughts. Jail is a metaphor for isolation. While society sees it as an obstacle to freedom, Raghavan a nihilist, sees it as a door to freedom. 'Bhaarangal Ekke Eduthu Vekkyuga' (unburdening oneself), is a phrase one hears in the movie. This is a subtle reference to nihilism.

In the movie, Anjali moves him from the claustrophobic atmosphere of his lodge room to a lush green rural area. This is where Raghavan gets clarity about his intended course of action. This is shown in the scene where he is lighting up a bonfire and hears the sound of a lizard. In the beginning of the movie, as credits roll, a dead lizard is shown being moved by a group of ants. The ants are not

responsible for the death of the lizard (it is preordained), however, they certainly are an agent in its destruction. Similarly, Raghavan , does not see himself as responsible for the death of his wife or daughter of his Marwadi boss, but only as an agent in their destruction. That is why he constantly maintains that he didn't kill them. Their death in his opinion, are preordained, hence the significance of the title 'Munnariyippu'(premonition). The Malayalam word 'Munnariyippu' means warning and the film makes it clear that this warning is for those intruders who try to forcefully access into someone else's psychological space or freedom. Jail, usually, is a metaphor for isolation. While society sees it as an obstacle to freedom, Raghavan sees it as a door to freedom.

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