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## **DALIT LIFE OF 'KAMMATTIPADAM'; A QUEST THROUGH THE VISUAL PORTRAYAL OF DALIT CHARACTERS OF THE MALAYALAM MOVIE 'KAMMATTIPADAM'**

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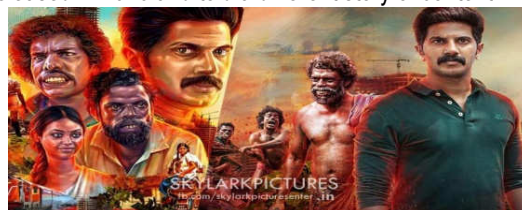
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### **Abstract**

*'Kammattipadam' is a recent Malayalam movie (2016) directed by 'Rajeev Ravi' a leading director in the Malayalam cinema industry. As a new millennium movie, 'Kammattipadam' was a great success in its different style of storytelling and content. The movie tells a story of a gang of people living in 'Kammattipadam' an area of the outskirts of the metropolitan city 'Kochi' in Kerala. The story has some connection with real incidents happened in the history. During the early 1950's the city Kochi started its rapid growth. Before that it was a small junction named 'Ernakulam' and mostly inhabited by local people, majorly 'Dalits' with their agriculture and all. But later urbanization took place and made 'Ernakulam' junction into a metropolitan city named Kochi, the whole scenario started to change. The young generation of the native people began to victimize in the growth of the new city. Newer generation of 'Kammattipadam' showed no interest in the traditional way of life. They are become a quotation team of the area for their daily life. 'Kammattipadam' tells the story of these people who are forced to sacrifice their lives in the violence and gang war. There are two characters 'Ganga' and 'Balan', both are 'Dalits' and portrayed in the movie as the pillars of violence and intolerance. 'Kammattipadam' can be categorized as a gangster movie with all its characteristics. The Director 'Rajeev Ravi' brilliantly made characters suitable to the story and placed them in apt places. Especially the 'Dalit' characters of the movie have been got a large attention from the audience. Dalits are considering as untouchables, oppressed, and marginalized. Even the great art cinema, itself failed to show the real life of 'Dalits'. The Malayalam film industry is one among the popular cinema industry in India produces around one fifty films per year. This article is dealing with the visual portrayal of 'Dalit' characters in the movie 'Kammattipadam'.*

As an introduction I am forced to say about the relation between the Malayalam movie industry and Dalit people. What was the space of Dalit people in films or the whole scenario of film field? When and How Malayalam cinema history portrayed Dalits? In the early period of nineteenth century the cinema industry of Kerala started to grow. The first movie of Malayalam was 'Vigathakumaran' which was produced and directed by a young businessman named J C Daniel. J C Daniel is the father of the Malayalam films, and his first movie 'Vigathakumaran' was a soundless movie which exhibited in the Capitol theatre at Trivandrum. Beyond the cinema story the first movie 'Vigathakumaran' has to tell a story of a Dalit women who acted in the movie as a leading character role. Her name was P K Rosy and there are a lot of controversies already taken place in the cinema intellectual world of Kerala and beyond. P K Rosy was the first Malayalam actress, and she was the first victim of upper class hierarchy from the cinema industry, may be in the whole scenery of cinema. Whatever, P K Rosy was a Dalit Christian and she was assigned to act as a

Nair lady (upper class) role in the film 'Vigathakumaran'. This act made anger among the upper class people of Kerala. What happened to P K Rosy was pathetic; an angry mob let fire to her hut and made her to flee from the area where she lived. The reason was that 'a Dalit acted as Nair lady'. This initial tragic incident was the first indication that explains how Dalits are welcomed to films? What is their space in cinema? Anyway then if we look up on the whole history of Malayalam cinema we could only find a less number of Dalit films or Dalit oriented films. And most of them failed to portray the real life of Dalits. 'Kammattipadam' is a new millennium movie released in 2016 and told a different story of content.



There is one scene in the movie 'Kammattipadam' that explains the intensity of the issues inside each 'Dalits' are facing in the day today life living in 'Kammattipadam'. 'Balan', one of the major characters of this movie desperately asked to his father about what he teaches to him for the survival the future. 'Balan' and his family come under the 'Pulaya caste' (Dalit) and traditionally following the agriculture for the survival and that is no more relevant. Due to the rapid growth of urbanization, the fields of agriculture are turned to concrete fields. 'Balan' is very much aware of the upcoming trend of life in the 'Kammattipadam'. He tells his father that these paddy fields won't help us because these fields are going to be the place for buildings and factories soon. He believes only in his own will power for fight with the fate. But there is no other way before him rather than being a gangster. This scene explains the reasons that lead Balan's life as a gangster leader of the area.

'Balan' was a normal kid and one day he responded against the atrocities made by the upper class men to his father. While doing some agricultural works in the field with his relatives, some upper class people began to beat his father by questioning about the ownership of the land. The sudden action made by the upper class people made 'Balan' angry and forced him to react in the same way. This was the first incident in Balan's life that made him capable to question atrocities against him. And this was the first reasonable incident that leads his life into violence and caused for Balan's life into a catastrophic end. Through this incident, Balan's will power is revealed to the people living in the village. There are people for misuse Balan's courage and turn his life into wrong way. The same night when the incident happened, 'Balan', his younger brother 'Ganga' and the character 'Krishnan' were treated by giving alcohol by a person named 'Surendran Aashan' who is running a petty shop. This can be considered that the point where "Balan" and his peers turns the wrong channel of life. 'Surendran Aashan' uses the lives of the young generation of 'Kammattipadam' to build himself as a rich person; with the help of 'Balan' and team he began to expand his business world. But later 'Balan' realizes the facts that

'Surendran Aashan' was using him to make himself as rich.

The movie 'Kammattipadam' is also a Dalit movie where it portrays Dalit identities of the place 'Kammattipadam' and their life. 'Balan' and 'Ganga' are the two major Dalit characters of the movie. In this movie Rajeev Ravi, the director introducing these characters attached with criminality and absurdity of life. The physical attire of both 'Balan' and 'Ganga' has black complexion with restless face and their teeth are completely mismatched to their face, it only helps to accelerate fearsome. The introduction of the adult 'Balan', is ensuring their status of life. 'Balan' fearlessly quarrels alone with a group of people to sell black ticket in a movie theatre. For that he completely loses himself and threatens everyone through foul language. 'Balan' is not cared about the undressed attire in the huge crowd while the clash happens. We can see the alcoholic nature of 'Balan' in most of the scenes of the movie. The alcohol addiction also makes his life more complicated. After the quarrel 'Balan' treats everyone who helped in the time of quarrel with alcohol and gave cash to each one, for 'Balan' it was not help but it was their profession. Balan's this act is only helps to other group members to start a criminal life. The character 'Balan' is always seems restless and alcoholic. For the livelihood, 'Balan' gradually becomes the head of arrack business and he distributes it all over the places with the support of him team.

Balan's family life was not a successful one. He falls into a love affair with a lady, and she is from a Dalit converted Christian family of the local. 'Balan's mother refuses to enter 'Rosamma' ('Balan's wife) in the house where they lived. Balan's mother makes conflict with this, but 'Rosamma' is not giving seriousness of mothers act and she enters the home without Mother's permission. 'Balan' was a person who is fully controlled by the land mafia of the area. The growth of the urban area is also gave fuel to the criminal life of 'Balan' and 'Ganga'. Once, 'Balan' forcefully attacks his own relatives on request of 'Surendran Aashan' the business man and land mafia of the place. But it was heart breaking incident for 'Kochutty', the father of 'Balan'. And his father is dying because of heart attack due to this reason. It was an

incident that started to collapse his family atmosphere. In the time of father's funeral, he seems sad and he covers his emotions by drinking alcohol. Later 'Balan' moves from his place and living with his wife in other house. But there also 'Balan' is seems very distressful with many things. Once an event of alcohol drinking, he expresses his worries to his friend 'Krishnan'. Even after a few years of their wedding 'Balan' was not able to see birth of one child. 'Balan' is cursing himself for not having a child. The bond between the 'Balan' and his wife 'Rosamma' was not smooth and fine. She was really worried of 'Balan's' life, because she was aware about that 'Balan's' life is in danger. 'Balan' is not getting even a peaceful death; he was murdered by making a pre-planned vehicle crash while they are travelling to town. But his wife and friend 'Krishnan' luckily escapes from the accident. Throughout the journey 'Balan' was worrying about his life. While he is dying, he was unconscious by alcohol and he was yelling himself about the pitiful fate of his life.

Nobody will forget the character 'Ganga' whoever sees the movie 'Kammattipadam'. A strong character with peculiar characteristics have been really amazingly acted by Vinayakan, and won the best actor of the year by the state government of Kerala. Apart from 'Balan', 'Ganga' is the one character that got large attention from the audience. 'Ganga' was Balan's only one brother and right hand of all his activities. 'Ganga' has some peculiar characteristics like eccentric behavior and all. The character 'Krishnan' got captured by police and sent him into the sub-jail for committing a crime. While releasing him, 'Ganga' is coming for receiving 'Krishnan' from the jail. In this scene 'Ganga' does not know how to control his emotions because of happiness. 'Ganga' was always like that. After the death of 'Balan' the whole gang separates and 'Ganga' continues the criminal jobs for survival. The truth was that 'Ganga' was not able to do any other job for finding money. Violence was the only one job he knows. So he sticks on that. 'Ganga' was always obedient to his brother 'Balan' but not in the case of 'Anitha'. 'Anitha' was the girl whom 'Ganga' loved. But 'Anitha' doesn't like 'Ganga', because 'Anitha' has a connection with 'Krishnan'. She actually loves 'Krishnan' from the childhood itself. But 'Ganga' not ready to allow her to continue the relationship and he forcefully marry

her. But the same way of Balan's life, 'Ganga' was also failed to make a good marital relationship with 'Anita'. The alcoholism almost destroyed his social life and he loses his control over him. The desperate life made him almost mad, and the same time some quotation team coming to take his life. 'Ganga' was betrayed by one of his friend 'Benny'. After a marriage function both Benny and Ganga comes in to a hotel room. There a team of criminals were waiting for 'Ganga' for complete the revenge. But 'Ganga' luckily escapes from there and comes to Surendran Aashan's home for rescue himself from the threat. 'Ganga' really scared about his life and begging to 'Surendran Aashan' for helps him. But there also 'Ganga' could not get any help but death. 'Surendran Aashan' was already annoyed by his activities. 'Mathai' the right hand of 'Surendran Aashan' bring 'Ganga' to a flat where 'Aashan' is living. The entry of 'Ganga' disturbing 'Aashan' and he refused to give help to 'Ganga'. But 'Ganga' is not ready to leave from there because of the fear inside him. 'Surendran Aashan' very much annoyed by the decision taken by 'Ganga'. For 'Aashan' there is no other way rather than killing 'Ganga' to save his life from the disturbances. 'Ganga' believes that the 'Aashan' will help him to protect his life from the criminals. The just before the death of 'Ganga', he calls 'Krishnan' to inform that he is safe. But 'Surendran Aashan' is killing him by a golf stick from the backside.

The other Dalit character of the movie Anitha is one of the fine examples of Dalit women life in real. 'Anitha' coming through many situations in life, where, she can't express herself to anyone. In the childhood itself 'Anitha' loves Krishnan and she really wanted to live with him. Their love story starts from the school life. In an occasion of the school sports meet 'Anitha' is being insulted by some of the school students, and 'Krishnan' could not tolerate this and he responds by beating them. It shows the depth of his love to 'Anitha'. 'Anitha' is also waiting a long time for the releasing of 'Krishnan' from the Jail. 'Anitha' was a good student and also interested in extra-curricular activities. But she could not find a good job in the future. She goes to a tailoring centre to find the bread of the day. Once 'Anitha' told 'Krishnan' about her desire to marry and live with him, because she feels it is already

been late and some proposal also started to coming for her. And she also feels worry about Ganga's wish to marrying her. When 'Krishnan' trapped into some troubles 'Anitha' is helping him and trying to stay with him. One day they are planning to run away and to live together as they wish to. 'Krishnan' ensure that he will come back to bring 'Anitha' in the evening. 'Anitha' is waiting for 'Krishnan' with all her belongings in the evening. But on the way to 'Anitha', 'Krishnan' again being caught by the police. 'Anitha' knows nothing about that and she continues her waiting for nothing. Later 'Anitha' forced to marry 'Ganga', but the marital life of 'Anitha' and 'Ganga' was not a good one. 'Anitha' never likes 'Ganga'. 'Anitha' also tries to make issues with 'Ganga' whenever she got opportunity. She never give a life that he wanted to be. After missing 'Ganga', the character 'Krishnan' is coming to 'Anitha' for enquiring about him. At the time 'Anitha' was working in petrol pump, and living in a dilapidated home surrounded with many walls. This is show the harsh relity of life that leads by her. In this occasion 'Anitha' is not hiding her emotions to 'Krishnan', she almost looks like fragile and lose all hopes. The last time also she wishes that 'Krishnan' will bring her with him. But Krishnan's intension was only to find 'Ganga'. Once 'Anitha' reveals that she was waited for a long time for the arrival of 'Krishnan'. 'Anitha' was a lady with never fulfilled dreams, and she never gets a life as she wanted to be. The portrayal of the life of 'Anitha' was a distressed reality of Dalit women life.



There also some other Dalits characters in the movie like Balan's father, his grandfather and his mother also portrayed very carefully. The character 'Kochutty', the grandfather of 'Balan' and 'Ganga' have an important role in the film. 'Kochutty' was a person who would like to help everybody, and he got respect from the people of the area. One day 'Kochutty' has to make correct his son

'Balan' on his thoughtless activities. But 'Balan' doesn't hear a word of 'Kochutty' and questions him about the way he teaches him to live. This makes 'Kochutty' so much sadness, and leads him to death. Here 'Kochutty' faced a pity death in the end of his life. The fast growing urbanization changes their life. They compelled to live in dilapidated houses in ugly situations. They cannot change their life.

'Kammattipadam' is a movie which explains the destruction of the life of Dalits due to urbanization. In the end, people of the area forced to escape from the harsh reality and many of them could not. The growth of city makes everybody's life into a complex situation.. The prominent characters like 'Ganga' and 'Balan' and other Dalit characters of the movie are victims of this. The land mafias and quotation teams and their gang war causes for the death of both and 'Ganga' and 'Balan'. The whole life they spend to help the land mafia and they killed by the same people, this is shows the anti humanitarian approach of city life. The characters are born in the midst of large paddy fields and grown by the influence of nature. But later they are facing the freedom less life. The movie shows the fine example that, the dead body of 'Ganga' is bringing through a narrow route where it is difficult to even a single person could pass. Because the whole area already surrounded by huge constructive buildings. In the movie Dalits are being portrayes to show the harsh reality of life. Even it is Ganga, 'Balan' or Anitha. Their life was without any colors or happiness and also ends tragedy. They are living for the sake of destiny. So that the movie 'Kammattipadam' was a visual portrayal of Dalit life victimized in the urbanization.

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