Of moustaches, turbans, and six-pack muscles and other stories: Constructions of masculinities in Tamil cinema and contemporary paintings

M.D. Muthukumaraswamy
Director of National Folklore Support Centre (NFSC), Chennai, India
DAAD Guest Lecture at Würzburg University, 1.5.2016 – 16.5.2016

It is a well-established convention now in Tamil popular commercial cinema narratives that the woman would pursue the man, express her desire for him unabashedly and on his rejection she would embrace renunciation or death. In relation to the stereotypical projection of woman as an embodied figure of monogamous chastity, a vamp, or a whore Tamil popular cinema constructed masculinity as a pristine pure form of ideal qualities. Till the 1980s, the Tamil film heroes need not necessarily be physically handsome and many old heroes wooed heroines with wigs and unconcealed paunches. After the 1980s, the Tamil film heroes became useless vagabonds and jobless minions but they needed to have well-endowed bodies. Parallel to this development we see in the contemporary paintings of the 1970s the depiction of moustaches and turbans as expressions of Tamil masculinity. From the 1990s the contemporary paintings depict athletic male bodies and the masculinities associated with them as symptomatic of our desire to own, use, and destroy the Nature and its ecological fragility. My illustrated talk would trace the changes in the perceptions of masculinity.

Tuesday, May 10 2016, 14.15 – 15.45
Am Hubland, Philosophiegebäude, Raum 8U11b
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