

the birth of the Indian Superhero

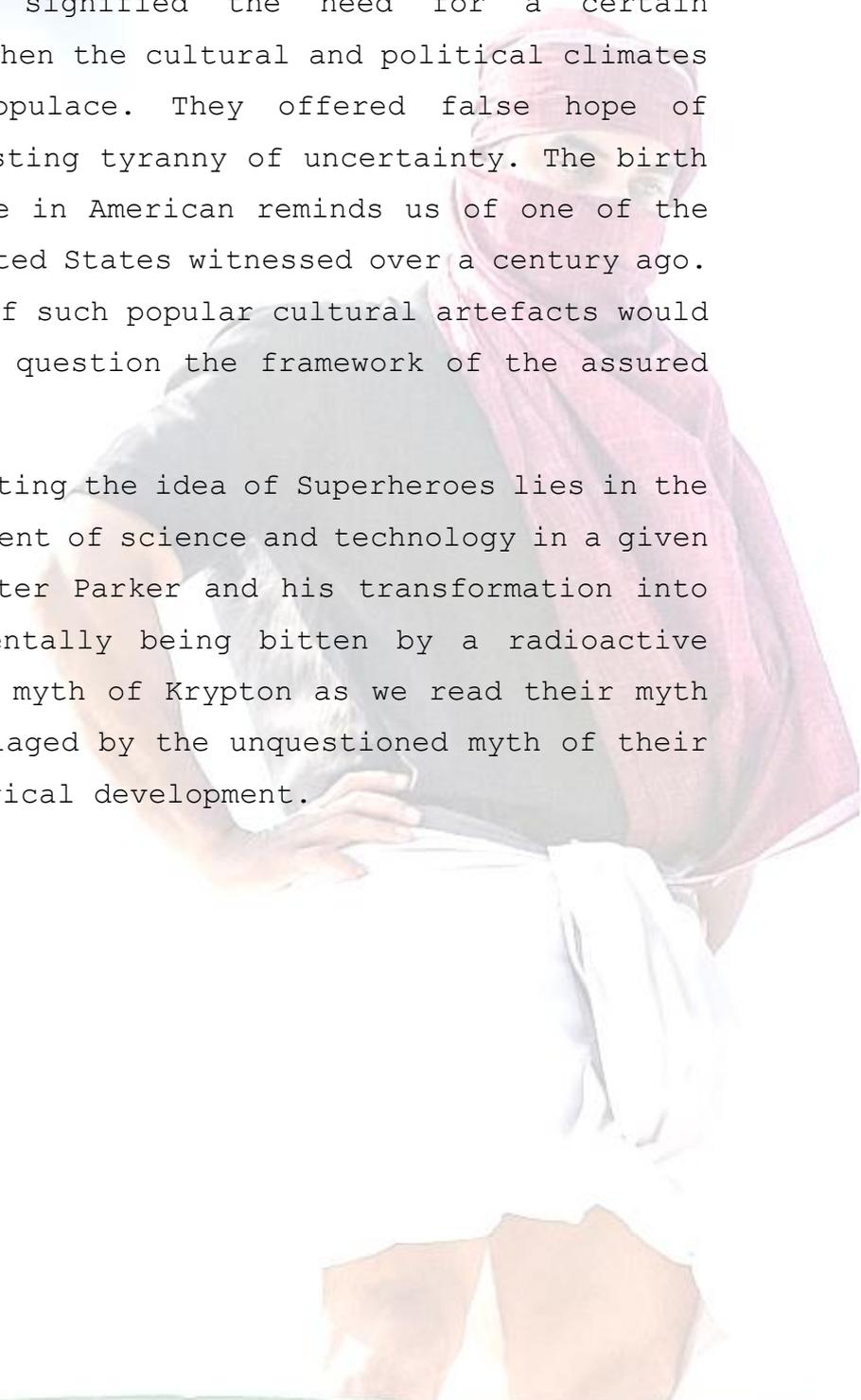
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Superheroes are Americans, made in Hollywood and are destined to protect the Great American Dream. They now have an opponent in India. The moment we think of American Superheroes, we are reminded of the mighty skyscrapers, the abundance of responsibility as Spider-Man says, "with great power comes great responsibilities." The Marvel heroes have pushed the world of superheroes to an imaginary and illusionary periphery, with a large number of costumed vigilantes that now shape the domain of popular culture.

Superheroes inherently signified the need for a certain definitude of escapist when the cultural and political climates grew tough for the populace. They offered false hope of liberation from the existing tyranny of uncertainty. The birth of the Superhero culture in American reminds us of one of the worst times that the United States witnessed over a century ago. The gaining popularity of such popular cultural artefacts would make a social scientist question the framework of the assured insulated future.

A prerequisite for accepting the idea of Superheroes lies in the advancement and development of science and technology in a given society. We accepted Peter Parker and his transformation into Spider-Man after accidentally being bitten by a radioactive spider. We believed the myth of Krypton as we read their myth and their origin camouflaged by the unquestioned myth of their scientific and technological development.





Tovino Thomas as as Shibu in a still from Minnal Murali.
(Photo: Netflix)

In his 2021 Minnal Murali (trans. Lightning Murali), Basil Joseph scripted the first superhero venture of the Malayalam film industry. Though the film has invited the warmth of many film reviewers and critics who questionably view, compare and judge, the superhero genre is typically meant only for the western film industry and the film industries of economically advanced countries with exceptional film production technology to their advantage. One of the major restraints in such production is the budget and technology, but I hold that Basil has put in a considerably appreciable effort.



Guru Somasundaram as Shibu in a still from Minnal Murali.
(Photo: Netflix)

Jaison and Shibu (Guru Somasundaram) were struck by lightning on the same fateful night, giving both of them almost the same sort of powers. Both were scorned by the women they loved, and later they realized that they had always have been outsiders.

The excellence of Minnal Murali in the perfection with which its cinematic language is scripted. It has the essence of Superman, Batman and Spider-Man but is closer to Thanos. We also find elements of Iron Man 2, Ant-Man, and Black Panther in Shibu, whom Basil calls the second hero of the film. The film also leaves a scape and invites a scholarly reading against the Biblical background.

The location and settings of the films invite a special mention. We had always imagined that Superheroes could survive and exist only as a part of the urban metropolitan cities with skyscrapers and fast-moving trains. Unlike the Superheroes of Hollywood, Minnal Murali is set in a small village called Kurukkanmoola, where life moves at its own leisurely pace.

Jaison, alias 'Minnal' Murali (Tovino Thomas), like many other youngsters of his age in the early 1990s, cherished the dream of migrating to the United States, but he had hardly ever stepped out of his native village. In the initial shots, we see him always dressed up as a city man.

It is almost a self-contained world, and despite his dreams of making it big abroad, his concerns are mostly related to the land that he belongs to

Minnal Murali, in a way, subtly mocks at the use of Mask and costume, which has always been a quintessential part of Superheroes. Unlike the American superheroes, who have on their shoulders the burden to save the entire country or sometimes even the entire planet, 'Minnal' Murali's responsibilities are much smaller but second to none.

'Minnal' Murali operates in the local context and is waiting for the new villains.

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