

Representing Relations of Power: A Reading of Select Films of

Adoor Gopalakrishnan

Thesis submitted to University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English Language and Literature

by

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Ph.D Registration U.O No: 3522/2018/Admn

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “Representing Relations of Power: A Reading of Select Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan” is an authentic record of my studies and research carried out under the guidance of Dr. Viju M.J, Research Guide, Research & PG Department of English, St. Thomas' College (Autonomous), Thrissur. I hereby certify that no part of this work has been submitted or published for the award of any degree, diploma, title, fellowship or recognition.

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This is to certify that “Representing Relations of Power: A Reading of Select Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan” is a bonafide record of studies and research carried out by Ms. Anu Antony under my guidance and submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English. To the best of my knowledge, this research work has not been previously formed the basis of award for any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar titles. Its critical evaluation represents the independent work on the part of the candidate.

Place: Thrissur

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Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge ICSSR Centrally Administered Doctoral Fellowship for their assistance to pursue this research.

I also acknowledge and thank Shri. Adoor Gopalakrishnan for his valuable insights during the personal interview done as part of research.

I am immensely grateful to my research supervisor Dr. Viju M.J, Assistant Professor, Research & PG Dept. of English for his support and valuable guidance throughout the tenure. I am ever grateful to him for the monitor and encouragement.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. T. Muraleedharan, Former HOD, Dept. of English, St. Aloysius College, Elthuruth for his support in the field of research.

I am grateful to Dr. Fr. Martin K. A, Principal-in-charge and Dr. V.M Chacko, Dean of Research, St.Thomas' College (Autonomous) Thrissur for their constant support. I would like to thank Dr. Anto Thomas, Head of the Department, and the other teachers of the Department of English, St.Thomas College (Autonomous) Thrissur, for their help and support during the research period.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Chacko Jose P., Principal, St. Aloysius College, Elthuruth, Dr. Sijo Varghese, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Govt. College, Kuttanellur, Ms. Bindu Jose, Associate Professor Dept. of English, Sacred Heart College, Chalakudy, for their timely and sincere help at various stages of my research.

I also express my thanks to all fellow research scholars of the Department of English for their continuous help.

I would like to thank librarian Mr. Sanjo Jose and the non teaching staff of St.Thomas' College (Autonomous), Thrissur for their support during the period of research.

Also I express my gratitude to my husband Mr. Jose Stanes, parents, in laws and children for their whole hearted support and love to make my research possible.

Anu Antony

A NOTE ON DOCUMENTATION

I, hereby, would like to acknowledge that documentation in the thesis is prepared in accordance with the style format suggested by *MLA HANDBOOK* (9th Edition)

Contents

Chapter One	: Introduction	1
Chapter Two	: State as a Norm of Power: A Study of <i>Elepathayam</i>, <i>Mukhamukam</i> and <i>Kathapurushan</i>	38
Chapter Three	: Normativity as a Construct: A Study of <i>Kodiyettam</i> and <i>Anantaram</i>.	113
Chapter Four	: Home, Class and Gender as Apparatuses: A Study of <i>Vidheyam</i> and <i>Naalu Pennungal</i>.	166
Chapter Five	: Conclusion	235
Chapter Six	: Recommendations	248
	Bibliography	250
	Appendix	i-iii

Chapter 1

Introduction

The proposed research work is based on the reading of the films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan (Adoor), which foregrounds the power implications embedded in the socio-political milieu of Kerala in the twentieth century and investigates the resistance in that context. The study examines how all levels of society share in the circulation and representation of power relations. The reading attempts to explicate how the culture produces and internalises constructs such as family, caste, and gender, which are irreplaceable sites of power. His plots on power discourse are set against the transition of Kerala from feudalism to modernity.

Adoor, born in Kerala, is a well-known Indian film director. He has made twelve films and over forty documentaries, most of which are set in his native state of Kerala, in southern India. They are *Swayamvaram* (*One's Own Choice* 1972), *Kodiyettam* (*The Ascent* 1977), *Elepathayam* (*Rat Trap* 1981), *Mukhamukam* (*Face to Face* 1984), *Anantaram* (*Monologue* 1987), *Mathilukal* (*The Walls* 1989), *Vidheyam* (*The servile* 1993) *Kathapurushan* (*Man of the Story* 1995), *Nizhalkuthu* (*Shadow Kill* 2002), *Naalu Pennungal* (*Four Women* 2007), *Oru Pennum Randaanum* (*A Climate for Crime* 2008), and *Pinneyum* (*Once Again* 2016). Most of his feature films, with a few exceptions, investigate the power structures and relationships in the Travancore region, which was a princely state prior to 1956. Adoor himself has experienced some of the most momentous periods in the history of this region, and he recreated the same through the narrative medium of cinema. This research project shall try to discover the power structures embedded in the socio cultural history of Kerala that the films of Adoor

apparently narrate. The films also reflect Adoor's writing of the history of Travancore.

The reading of the films will concentrate on the dynamics of culture, its historical foundations, practices, and manifestations. The field of cultural studies encompasses a range of theoretical perspectives to unearth the history of a narrative. Adoor actually tries to transcreate his own experience with a particular age in his films. It not only gives enjoyment but also makes the viewers think and relate to a universal experience. The films chosen for the study to analyse power relations are *Kodiyettam*, *Mukhamukam*, *Elepathayam*, *Kathapurushan*, *Anantaram*, *Vidheyan*, and *Naalu Pennungal*. Here, the select films are read both as literary and visual texts. A close reading of the literary and non-literary signifiers in the select films of Adoor could reveal how he interprets the political scenario of Kerala in a certain period, especially its impact on the culture, action, and attitudes of characters and subsequent shifts in power relations.

Cinema plays an important role in societal representation, echoing the voice of the times. The films of Adoor, in particular, showcase the nuances of the structures of society through meticulous, lengthy, and close-up shots of individual actions and expressions. The films of the earlier generation also influenced him in his work. There are also influences from the film movements, foreign cinema, Indian art cinema, and world cinema in his perspective and contributions. It is relevant to look at a brief history of Malayalam cinema to study how Adoor was influenced and created a unique signature in filmmaking.

Vijaykrishnan in his work *Malayala Cinemayude Katha* traces a brief history of Malayalam cinema. J. C. Daniel made the first film in Malayalam, called *Vigathakumaran*, in 1928. He himself acted, directed, produced, and wrote the screenplay for the film. He founded the first film studio, Travancore National Pictures Ltd., in Kerala. C. V. Raman Pillai directed a historical film, *Marthandavarma*, in 1933, based on his own novel. *Baalan* by S. Nottani was the first talkie in Malayalam. *Jnanambika*, directed by Nottani, and *Prahlada*, by K. Subramanyan, were released at the beginning of the 1940s. *Prahlada* is the first mythological film in Malayalam. The directors of these films were non-Keralites. P. J. Cherian's *Nirmala* was the first Malayalam film to incorporate a song and dance sequence. *Udaya* by Kunchacko and *Maryland* by P. Subramanyan were the first studios and produced several films in the 1950s and 1960s.

The films *Neelakuyil* and *Newspaper Boy* of this decade, to a certain extent, confine themselves to the problems of society. Realistic problems have started to take on narrative roles. Untouchability became a core area of discussion in the film *Neelakuyil* by P. Bhaskaran and Ramu Kariat. The theme of Italian neo-realism influenced the theme of the story in the film *Newspaper Boy*, as it represented the theme of poverty in all its bleakness. It is also called the first Malayalam cinema in the tradition of art cinema.

It is difficult to pin point the general characteristics of films in the first half of the twentieth century. As it was the birth of the Malayalam cinema industry, the films of this era discuss multivalent themes. The commercial benefit was the aim of the directors. But certain filmmakers played a didactic role in the thematic concerns of good and evil and spiritual stories. *Kandam Bacha Coat* (1960) was

the first Malayalam feature film in colour. The genre of adaptation became common in the 1960s, and *Chemmeen* by Ramu Kariat was based on a novel of the same name by Thakazhi Sivasankarapillai. The film *Iruttinte Aatmavu* by P. Bhaskaran adopted the short story of the same name by M. T. Vasudevan Nair. *Oolavum Theeravum* by P. N. Menon in 1967 heralded the entry of art cinema, or parallel cinema in Malayalam, and it gave a new sense of thought to the new wave of cinema in the 1970s.

The decades between the 1970s and 1990s are described as the 'golden age of Malayalam cinema'. There is a shift in the aesthetics and narration of cinema compared to the earlier generation. The development of art cinema was significantly aided by K. G. George, Padmarajan, John Abraham, K. R. Mohanan, and others. In addition, this was the time when G. Aravindan first appeared with his masterpieces, like *Utharayanam*, *Kummatty*, *Thampu*, etc. The second part of the 1970s saw the release of Adoor's *Kodiyettam* and P. A. Backer's *Kabani Nadi Chuvannappol*. By fusing the characteristics of the new wave with the mainstream, Padmarajan and K. G. George paved the way for a new Malayalam film genre called medium or semi art cinema (Babu 91).

Malayalam cinema becomes modern with the release of Adoor's film *Swayamvaram*. Though films like *Oolavum Theeravum*, *News Paper Boy*, *Neelakuyil*, and *Chemmeen* experiment with viewers' tastes, Adoor's film *Swayamvaram* took Malayalam cinema to national and international acclaim. He made innovations in the composition of shots, music, and knowledge of time. Adoor's *Elepathayam*, *Anantharam*, *Mukhamukam*, and other regional fervors have achieved international acclaim. The political turmoil in Kerala became a

theme for the avant-garde film makers of the decade. The cinemas of John Abraham and Shaji N. Karun were discussed for aesthetic and thematic concerns of the age.

The 1990s brought into society blockbuster cinemas, which are focused more on the plot and story such as *Manichitrathazhu* by Fazil and *Swaham* by Shaji. Malayalam cinema received national and international acclaim for films such as *Marana Simhasnam* by Murali Nair, *Guru* by Rajeev Anchal, and others, which received national and international acclaim for Malayalam cinema. Adoor made three films, *Mathilukal*, *Kathapurushan* and *Vidheyan*, during this decade, and they are some of the notable productions in art cinemas during the decade.

The first decade of the 21st century contributed films of different genres. Slapstick comedy was employed by directors such as John Antony, Lal Jose, and Sasi Shankar. Kamal's *Meghamalhar* and *Perumazhakalam* were different, with music and rain as significant signifiers in the development of the plot. The films which reflected the characteristics of art cinema in general are Adoor's *Nizhalkuthu* and *Naalu Pennungal*, Sarath's *Sayahnam* and T. V. Chandran's *Susanna*. The revolutionary middle cinema that emerged in the 1980s has grown into the contemporary Malayalam cinema, which is characterised by the combination of popular and art (Babu 92). The social issues are discussed and narrated through post-modernistic representations in the films, and the experimental films are called new generation films, such as *Ozhimuri* and *Kammatipattam*.

Films by Adoor, *Oranum Randu Pennnm and Pinneyum* take a pragmatic approach to contemporary issues. Malayalam cinemas adopt different themes to suit the voice of the ages. Innovative techniques are used to capture the themes in the new generation of films. High-budget and low-budget films are produced according to the theme and form of narration. Earlier Malayalam films reflected the crux of Kerala, such as the influence of reformist forces such as Sree Narayana Guru, class renaissance movements, land reform bill, Agrarian Relations Bill, and the Congress Party Struggle. The plots of the films trace the context for the setting of the films. The films *Navalokam* (1951), *Neelakuyil* (1954), *Newspaper Boy* (1955), *Rarichan enna Pouran* (1956) etc. reflect the rise of society against class caste discrimination and the deprived condition of the lower classes.

Malayalam Cinema entered a new phase with parallel changes in the policies of the state. This produced changes in the political, economic and societal phases. Later, film societies and art cinemas created a new aesthetics and critical appreciation. Man is examined as a lonely or in an existentialist phase rather than a social animal. The trends of the Malayalam cinema in the new direction can be discussed under the influence of world art cinema in general and Indian art cinema in specific.

Art Cinema is quite different from the commercial or main stream cinema in its content and narration. David Bordwell describes art cinema as a different genre with its own characteristics (Barry 152). The initial phases of art cinema can be seen in Italian silent film *L'Inferno* and D. W Griffith's *Intolerance*. Indian art cinema is unable to create its own path in the onslaught of mainstream cinema.

The art cinema got influence from other sources such as leftist and nationalist Indian People's Theatre Movement (IPTA) which started in 1940s. The art cinema excludes songs, dances and the established narrative formulae of commercial cinema. It made experimentation with form style and structure. The characters exhibit more realism. Comedy is employed as a satire to bring the social sense. The language of the film is experimented to bring together the visual signification.

Art cinema concentrates more on the identification of the film as an art form. John Hood says that the surface characteristics such as props and mise en scène, the costumes, dwelling and domestic décor (Hood 7) are important. The art films are slower in action compared to the commercial films. The author says that the slowness is deliberately employed by the film makers to enhance and intensify the impact of the theme. The films of Satyajit Ray provide the viewer time for reflection and absorption and it is essential to the understanding and experiencing the film as an art form. The mode of slower action leads to lack in the spectacular. There is little special effect and even the violence is "restrained and nonphysical" (8). The art films rather provide an aesthetic and cerebral experience for the viewers.

According to John W. Hood in *The Essential Mystery*, art films represent the marginalised and socially inferior in its realistic form. Women are also delineated in art cinema with admiration, respect and compassion. But this is often ambiguous as it speaks about gender disparities embedded in a culture. The criticism often raised forward against art cinema is that it always emphasises on the darker side of India ridden with poverty; it may narrow down the image of the country.

The art cinemas provide a great space to the regionalism. The 'Indianness' of Indian art cinemas can be derived from the socio cultural context. The contextualisation and settings of the films in urban areas with grand architecture and costumes may fade the Indianness. Films set in rural India are often necessarily marked by reference to certain traditionally determined social structures made fast by history as well as to traditional forms of livelihood and traditionally honoured customs and values, giving these films a notably Indian character.

The art cinema is also known as 'regional cinema'. It studies the nuances of the socio cultural strata of a region. Adoor and Aravindan made films in their own regional language, Malayalam. Ritwik Ghatak and Satyajit Ray made films in Bengali. Shyam Benegal and Govind Nihalini directed films in Hindi. Bengal and Kolkata are safely featured in the films of Ghatak and Dasgupta, respectively. The art cinemas of these film directors often chose villages for their locations.

Geography is one of the significant factors that contribute to regionalism. At the same time, taking into consideration the characteristics of art films, it is observed that geography does not contribute to the crux of the study. But Bengal and Kolkata are featured in the films of Ghatak and Dasgupta. Regionalism is less visible in films set in cities. W. Hood observes that the regional identity is more drawn from the particularities of the history of a region. He opines that "regional cinema" is a better term to describe the non-Hindi commercial cinema. The main transformations in regional history that influenced the lives of people often form the plot. Mrinal Sen has brought out the references to the Bengal famine of 1943 in his films. Dasgupta made films that are set in the context of naxalism but with a personal focus on history in the background.

There are Hindi commercial films that have proven artistic and technical excellence. The capitalist marketing mode works by creating a popular need and cultivating a belief in people that they will provide what they need. The vast publicity in the press and on television ensures income, viewership, and success for commercial cinema. Though the commercial film industry represents the bulk of Indian cinema, there is an alternative Indian cinema whose films have a greater respect for the intelligence of an audience and whose directors try to depict the nuances of the real world.

The national art cinema influenced the Malayalam directors, and Adoor pioneered the same in Kerala. Adoor rejects the label of being addressed as 'parallel cinema' for this genre. According to him, maintaining these films as a separate genre is a very narrow and absurd perspective. He prefers the term 'new cinema'. It attempted to examine the conditions of human life. Adoor graduated from the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune in 1965 and founded the Chitralekha Film Cooperative in Thiruvananthapuram as an agency for the more efficient production and distribution of noncommercial films (Hood 157). Adoor relies on the aesthetics of the language to produce the desired effect. He examines the power entanglements at all levels of society. He evaluates and critically modifies the established systems of film aesthetics. He keenly analyses the social scenario of Kerala in detail to discuss and translate that into a realistic narrative.

Power is seen everywhere in the society. It is mandatory in all forms of relationships. Art copies society in different manifestations. When power is inherent in society it can be reflected in art forms such as literature, film, dance forms, painting, folklore art etc. Since the study aims to focus on films the

concentration will be limited to the layers of power structure in films. The films in general capture, the heroic attributes pertained to masculinity in relation to gender, fantasy, horror, science, violence etc. The study aims to analyse the realistic conditions of social, cultural and economic existence. Power is established through different norms. Adoor uses paradigmatic set of signs in the form of mise en scène. It probes into deeper meanings together with the plot of the story.

Michael Foucault, a French historian has investigated the delineation of power in the culture and the society which is constituted not only through political ideologies but also through the inculcation of invisible and abstract ideologies. The application of Foucault's perception of power in the text identifies the operations of power not only in the form of dictatorship. It rather concentrates how the self and the society mutually intersect in the problematisation of power. Foucault's theories are associated with the post structuralist and post modernist perspectives. Paul Rabinow in *The Foucault Reader* cites what Foucault himself has told about his conceptualisation of power:

The goal of my work during the last twenty years has not been to analyse the phenomenon of power, or to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our analysis, human beings are made subjects (208).

Power is understood and studied in various realms and aspects both knowingly and unknowingly. Foucault in an interview with Michael Bess says:

Power should not be understood as an oppressive system bearing down on individuals from above, smiting them with prohibitions of

this or that. Power is a set of relations. Power should not be defined as a constraining force of violence that represses individuals, forcing them to do something or preventing them from doing some other thing. But it takes place when there is a relation between two free subjects, and this relation is unbalanced, so that one can act upon the other, and the other is acted upon, or allows himself to be acted upon. Therefore, power is not always repressive. It can take a certain number of forms. And it is possible to have relations of power that are open (Bess 2).

The study investigates how human beings are made subjects and objects, which is an ongoing process in the arena of power relations. It is a never-ending process in which oppressor and oppressed never take fixed positions. It may vary according to economic, social, and cultural factors. This work attempts to look at the films from the perspective of power relations. Power is impossible to define unless it is defined within a specific set of relationships.

Adoor's films are solely based on the relationship between human beings and society. The society is made up of a complex web of power mechanisms, including visible and unseen manifestations of power. The thesis tries to look at how Adoor, as a film maker, reflects it through the plot and narrative aesthetics of the film. The function of power is visible in both human beings and animals. It is difficult to live in a society which has no hierarchy. Power can be defined in the terms of oppressor-oppressed relationship and in the productive aspect in terms of the well being of a society.

The study follows the methodology of Michael Foucault's conception about power in general to look at the power relations implied in the plot of the

film. Man/woman is the centre or the locus tied up with constructed signifiers of the society. State, gender, caste, normativity etc. form the core concepts in the study based on select films. These are often perceived as the sites of power. The study probes into how human beings are made objects and subjects in the complex relationship with these sites of power.

Semiotics and related structuralist and poststructuralist perspectives on aspects of modern society and popular culture provide powerful conceptual and analytic tools to study the cinematic representation of class, gender, race and other socio cultural realities in a more precise fashion. This include the leading structuralist idea of signification working through prominent, culturally constructed binary oppositions, for example, culture/ nature, male/ female, white/ black, West/ East, to which value laden meanings are attached (Chandler 102).

Foucault aims to isolate techniques of power. This is explained in *The Foucault Reader* edited by Paul Rabinow. Foucault “overemphasised the inner articulations and seemingly self-enclosed nature of social scientific intercourses” (Rabinow10). Foucault speaks about three modes of objectification. The ‘constituted subject’ is not a ‘subject’ in the first mode. “Rather the constituted subject can be seen as a victim caught in the processes of objectification and constraint-most obviously the case for prisoners and mental patients” (10). The second mode of objectification involves a scientific classification and so the relation to domination is more oblique. In Foucault’s work *The Birth of the Clinic*, he speaks about how body is treated as a thing in 19th century in the clinics. The spatial, temporal and social compartmentalisation brought dividing practices among human beings. The third mode is subjectification. He says: “It concerns the way human being turns him-or herself into a subject” (11). The dividing practices

seen in the first two modes show an inclination towards domination and brought dichotomies such as vagabond populations, working class, marginalized etc. This contributed to the various studies of power and recognised by theorists.

The persons or the object forms an active self through the isolation techniques. He further says that the self formation takes place through a variety of “operations on [people’s] own bodies, on their souls, on their thoughts, on their conduct” (11). Foucault says how sex was brought as a holding key to the self understanding. He further explains about the growing obsession with sexuality and show how the individual and race joined in a common set of concerns. So, he says that it is important not to draw sharp line between the processes of subjectification and dividing practices (11).

Foucault in the “The Subject and Power” speaks about the ‘state’ as a new form of political power. The study makes use of these theoretical percepts to read the conceptualisation of state in the films of Adoor. Foucault states:

Most of the time state is envisioned as a kind of political power which ignores individuals, looking only at the interests of the totality, or I should say, of a class or a group among the citizens. But I’d like to underline the fact that the state’s power (and that’s one of the reasons for its strength) is both a totalising and individualising form of power (14).

The select films for the intended study can be analysed with the Foucauldian notions of sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower. Foucault specifies about the new links between the state and the individual in Europe with the advent of renaissance. The analysis of power in these films can be explained in terms of sovereignty. He says that it is “a theory that goes from subject to subject that

establishes the political relationship between subject and subject” (43). According to him sovereignty is related to a multiplicity of power relations. But the power is not defined exactly in the political sense. Rather they are capacities, possibilities and potentials.

The political sensibility can be established only if there is a fundamental unity between possibility and power. The aspects of power derive from this unitary power. He further says that power works in accordance with certain legitimacy and it allows the law to function as such. Foucault in his work *Society must be Defended* attempts to bring out the operators of domination (45). The study attempts to find out the effects of authority of state on the people and also how these people react to the imposed dominance. They are analysed in a plethora of web of power relations. The power of the state becomes inevitable and it is studied through the percepts of new historicism. The state plays a dominating role and the culture becomes an instrument of the state apparatus in the centralisation of the power. Adoor recounts history of the Kerala.

Foucault speaks about the “art of the government” and its scope is wider in “On Governmentality” (1978). They spoke on “governing of household, souls, children, a province, a convent, a religious order, or a family” (8). Political formation was implemented as it included all forms of activity, “from the smallest strings of the soul to the largest military maneuvers of the army”. He says:

The art of government ...is concerned with...how to introduce economy, that is the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family...how to introduce this meticulous attention of father towards his family, into the management of the state (Foucault 10).

Society is the target according to Foucault. When he says about the concerns of the government it looks into how to introduce economy and order from the top of the state through all aspects of social life. Foucault concludes in “On Governmentality”:

the things which the government is to be concerned about are men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation fertility, etc. men in their relation to that other kind of things which are accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death etc. (11).

This becomes a semantic article in locating the terminals of power relations between man and society. Here the society is represented by government or the state. The involvement of administrative power of the state in Kerala becomes the subject of the study in the select films. Though the study looks at subjectivities and self formation it also details the forms of subjugation embedded in the mode of objectification.

Foucault’s line of thought goes in well with Adoor’s representation of state in the films *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam* and *Kathapurushan*. The study discusses how the protagonists are subjugated and the sovereignty is operated in the act of subjugation. The reading also tries to locate the narrative of history in terms of new historicism. So, it again emphasises the need to the read the filmic text as a space where power relations are made visible. It is studied not to analyse the features, for example, matrilineal nair families or the impact of land reform bill on

the land lords. Rather it makes an attempt to trace the power relations of a particular age.

The ideologies of class, religion, community and the society in general are traced in the films. The ideological structures of the above construct the normal and natural and those who deviate from the norm are considered uncivilized and abnormal. They occupy the position of the 'other'. So, the study attempts to investigate how it constraint individual identities. The legitimisation of power is seen or it can be analysed as an act of indirect domination.

The state considers it as their concern to foster the growth and life of the population. It rather becomes a duty embedded in the art of government. Foucault details about the regime 'biopower' in *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*:

Bio-power brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge power an agent of the transformation of human life...Modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question (143).

The films of Adoor, as in regard with the relations of power, looks into how the other pole of the bio power 'body' is studied in different manifestations of power. It becomes both subject and object, master and slave, powerful and powerless in the relationships. Foucault extends the definition about 'body' in *Discipline and Punish* as "an object to be manipulated and controlled" (260). It is also examined to complement the general study of power relations in the proposed chapters.

Foucault also speaks about the concept of 'technologies' that is also pertained to the objectification of the body. It comes as an object of study in the select chapters of study. The methods of oppression or subjugation can be studied

in terms of ‘disciplinary technology’. Foucault speaks about this in the work *Discipline and Punish*. He says that disciplinary control can be found in different forms such as prisons, workshops, schools, hospitals etc. He says that this can be achieved through specific means.

Adoor makes frequent use of tropes such as court, prison and police. They are forms of disciplinary control in the films of Adoor. *Mukhamukam*, *Kathapurushan*, *Vidheyam*, *Naalu Pennungal*, *Mathilukal*, *Nizhalkuthu*, *Oru Pennum Randanum* etc are the films in which the disciplinary procedure is intended to assure orderly behaviour. Of course, it is linked to the intricacies and complexities in the plot. But the study shows how it is perpetuated to bring control and how it is related to complex power relations of the state and the formation of the self.

Foucault says that it is linked to capitalism. He emphasises the techniques of disciplinary control such as spatial control and the other methods integral for capitalism. Adoor brings out the conflict in *Mukhamukam*- the bourgeoisie and the workers, and the self of Sreedharan trapped in the mechanisms of power and discipline. This becomes more enigmatic in the spheres of subject and power. Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* draws Jeremy Bentham’s model of panopticon and it serves as a ‘shorthand’ to state other technologies of power. Foucault’s core perspective on the concept of panopticon defines power and, its design is a “diagram of the mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form” (205).

The analysis of the films becomes incomplete if it confines only to the literary analysis. The study intends to encapsulate the visual signifiers which are replete with meanings. They are considered as signs. The ‘signified’ gains meaning in the contextual analysis. Adoor concentrates on the *mise en scène* of

every shot. Adoor himself has rejected the idea that he has used symbols in his films. He concentrates on inner reality rather than surface reality in the films. To represent the inner reality on screen the actions are important. It is impossible to speculate the meanings or thoughts in the mind of a character without his/her actions. Similarly, Adoor has intellectually used props to complement the dialogues and the mindset of the characters in each shot. Adoor prefers to label them as metaphors as it stands for something.

The connotative reading of the film involves the study of non literary modes of representation in cinema. The reading of the films attempts to discover the metonyms and it is associated with interplay of meanings. Adoor has employed metonyms to invest plurality of meanings associated with the psyche of the characters. The psyche is not something which cannot be directly represented. The visual art is supplemented with more devices to incarnate abstract meanings to signs.

Adoor says that film has a specific language of its own. The film constitutes images equivalent to words in poem, colours in canvas and sounds in music. The film maker makes creative edition of images and sounds. They do not have an independent existence of its own (Gopalakrishnan, *Cinemayude Lokam* 6). Christian Metz's work *Film Language: A Semiotics of Cinema* formulates the study on the expressiveness of cinema through the methods of linguistics developed by Fredinand de Saussure. He makes use of the study of digesis and Fredinand de Saussure's structural study of paradigmatic and syntagmatic signs, both literal and visual elements in cinema. Metz perceives paradigms as cinematic techniques to represent objects. It is meant to represent different types of shot scales such as close shots, medium shots and long shots. It also focusses on types

of lighting, types of camera movements, as well as transition between images such as straight cuts, wipes and dissolves etc. (Yacavone 246).

Metz analysed images in the form of shots. He considers different ways of editing images and sees how it becomes a 'self contained syntagma' (247). The study of semiotics provides a space for the film directors to effectively use its language to represent the socio cultural realities. Pierce speaks about how the signs are differentiated from the conventional ones which resembles direct meaning. A symbol may not necessarily relate to what it represents. It is different from icons. Icons work according "to recognisable formal or structural resemblance between the material sign token (e.g. representational picture) and its (absent) object" (248).

Peirce uses the term 'index' in *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic* to define how a sign is used to refer the mind to referent object or an event. The relationship between the two can be based on a connection that is natural or motivated (Pierce 281). Yacavone in "The Expressive Sign: Cinesemiotics, Enunciation and Screen Art" says that the films have a multi faceted symbolic dimension (Yacavone 248). The connotations in films can be brought under this category. The symbolic can be used to meant the "narratively submerged thematic deep structures of cultural binaries" (249). He further talks about that culturally mediated signification is always in operation in both the construction of film images and their comprehension (251). Adoor makes use of the props in the shots which are imbued with the meanings of culture. He prefers to define these props as the metaphors than symbols. Adoor can be considered as an auteur in his uniqueness in the use of metaphors. Peter Wollen in *Signs and Meaning* extends the definition of *auteur*. The *auteur* theory does not limit itself to acclaiming the

director as the main author of the film. It implies an operation of decipherment; it reveals authors where none had before. For years the model of an author in cinema was that of the European director, with open artistic aspiration and full control over his films (Wollen 77).

Wollen speaks about two main schools. He distinguishes between *auteur* and *metteur en scène* (78) and his distinction is based on connotative, expressive and, denotative representations in a film. He elaborates their functions:

The work of the *auteur* has a semantic dimension, It is not purely formal; the work of the *metteur en scène*, on the other hand, does not go beyond the realm of performance, of transposing into a special complex of cinematic codes and channels a pre-existing text: a scenario, a book or a play...The meaning of the films of an *auteur* is constructed *a posteriori* – the meaning semantic rather than expressive- of the films of a *metteur en scène* exists *a priori* (79).

Wollen admits that there exists a controversy in the distinction between *auteur* and *metteur en scène*. Adoor prefers to address himself as an *auteur*. Wollen also adds what Geoffrey Nowell Smith tells about the uniqueness of an *auteur* and *auteur* theory. According to him the purpose of the criticism is to discover as follows:

superficial contrasts of the subject and treatment a hard core of basic and recondite motifs. The pattern defined by these motifs...is what gives an author's work its particular structure, both defining it internally and distinguishing one body of work from another (80).

Wollen mentions about the director Howard Hawks to extend the understanding of *auteur* theory. It becomes possible to uncover certain features which marks a

unique Hawksian signature in his films. Wollen comments that his films exhibit same thematic preoccupations, motifs, visual style etc. (81) "...Roland Barthes constructed a species of *homo racinianus*, the critic can construct a *homo hawksianus* the protagonist of Hawksian values in the problematic Hawksian world" (81). Wollen says that "What the *auteur* theory does is – to take a group of films- the work of one director- and analyse their structure" (104). There is obviously an "Adoorian approach" (Baruah 39) reflected in the films of Adoor. The props in the films of Adoor are poignant to represent both the narrative and the aesthetics of the film.

Adoor in the interview (See Appendix) does not admit that he has used symbols in his films. He says that he prefers to understand them as metaphors. Adoor shows metaphors related to village life in *Kodiyettam*, communism in *Mukhamukam* and ancient heritage in *Elepathayam*. They are vital in those shots. There are shots in his films which focus only on the props. It wholly ignores the presence of characters. They do not function as a symbol, but it produces different meanings for a viewer. Windows serve as a meaningful prop and metaphor in his films. Adoor uses the bars of windows as props in almost every film. He takes close shots of characters behind the window bar. It may signify the entrapment in the lives of the characters. The window bars which appear with out the presence of characters are also a recurring metaphor in his films. The open window and close window in each shot have significance in relation with the narrative of the plot.

Adoor says that the most important aspect about the filmic language is the artistic integrity. It encompasses many things such as the intention of the film maker, the form of conveyance, the approach and the mode of its representation.

The film maker needs to invent a unique method of representation to convey the message. He/she should know about the craft to present it with the art of aesthetics. Unless the film maker has sound knowledge about the craft of the film he/she has to dependant on others. Then the film fails to inculcate the self incarnation of the film maker. Adoor noted 'plasticity' as one of the limitations of the film. In a film viewer has to overpower the artistic uniqueness of the actors to comprehend crux of the film, in comparison with a novel (Thomas 79).

The mise en scène of the film contributes to the preferences of the filmmaker. Adoor has his own choices in the selection of elements for the mise en scène. That too distinguishes him as an *auteur*. The originality of an auteur lies not in the subject but rather in the technique, that is, the aesthetic use of mise en scène. It is through mise en scène that everything is represented. The meaning or the communication between the film maker and the viewer through the intellect use of mise en scène is perceived as "implicit or symbolic meaning" and "symptomatic or repressed meaning". David Bordwell in *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* speaks about the four kinds of meaning produced from the reading of a text. They are referential meaning, conceptual or abstract meaning, implicit or symbolic meaning and repressed or symptomatic meaning. In the case of first three meanings it is clear for the text what it is doing. The symptomatic or repressed meaning goes well in tone with the artistic representation of *auteur*. Symptomatic meanings are meanings that the text divulges involuntarily and are assumed to be at odds with the referential, explicit or implicit ones. Taken as individual expression, the symptomatic meaning may be treated as a consequence of the artist's obsessions

or phobias. Taken as a part of social dynamics, it can be traced to economic, political or ideological processes (Bordwell 8).

Adoor's special preference for the cultural and contextual props in shots shows his identity as an auteur. Adoor intellectually uses paintings and pictures in the background especially in the films *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam*, *Naalu Pennungal*, and *Oru Pennum randanum*. He brilliantly uses animals as metaphors to convey the meaning. The street cat in *Swayamvaram*, elephants in *Kodiyettam* and *Kathapurushan*, rat in *Elepathayam*, hen in *Anantaram* and lamb in *Nizhalkuthu* function both as signs and props. They add meanings to the plot of the film. The rat functions both as a metaphor and character in the film.

F. M Thomas says that the life is visible in the films of Adoor. The tradition surroundings and more than that the very familiar Kerala is implicit in the films of Adoor. Though the study intends to read the multifarious power operations in the select films, Adoor's other films discuss the complicated relationship between individual and society.

Adoor in an interview with Anil S. says:

Every minute detail used in his film is not a coincidence. Every bit is willfully put there. Every bit of object that you see on the screen is willfully kept there. Each and every composition is willfully created. Also each and every moment has got a meaning. Let's talk about the camera movement. For me if camera moves from one object to another, it should reveal a better idea about something. It should reveal something more. Otherwise it cannot be done.

Because each and every moment, the audience is expecting something more than what you have already shown. (Gopalakrishnan, *Samakalika Malayalam* 76).

He says that it is quite hard to notice the visible camera movements. Adoor dismantles the conventional use of sounds in his films. The other films of the same era employ the sound of music to add intensity to the mood of emotions. According to Adoor the music of violin in a particular scene is used to signify the emotion of melancholy. So, he says that it is not a contribution rather a representation of overemotions. It conditions preconceived emotions of the viewers.

Adoor speaks about the aesthetic innovativeness in the use of sounds in his films. It works at a sub conscious level. The music becomes a leit motif in his perception. Sometimes it has sub themes. It unites at the climax. According to him background music has its own form. It is not subservient to the plot. It has its own entity and existence. This is same in the case of sound. Adoor brought the innovativeness in the use of sounds in his debut film *Swayamvaram*.

The very first scene of the film is a lengthy continuous shot which captures a long journey. It takes four minutes in the screen without any dialogues. But Adoor says that the viewers are not visually trained to grasp the movie. They are conditioned to understand a film only through the mode of storytelling. Adoor emphasises the role of visual signs to read a film. The silence or the absence of the sounds highlight the significance of visual signs and it further unfolds the plot of the stories. There are many references underlined in such films (78).

The sound of rain in the film *Swayamvaram* acts a metaphor of joy and bondage for the character Viswam. Again, the sound of rain becomes an apparent

signifier to reflect the pensiveness of the scene. The sound becomes a dominant trope compared to the other factors which contribute to a scene. Adoor hardly uses background music. Adoor generally uses natural things, trees, birds, and animals as props. The coconut trees and crows play a significant role. It is intentionally added to prioritise the natural props which nullify the prioritisation of plot and story. Adoor says that he was the first one to use sync sound in the country. He speaks in an interview titled “Always on my Terms” given to *The Hindu* about the use of music in his films:

The decisions on music are taken based on the theme of the film, not to heighten the emotions in the dramatic scenes or to reinforce what is shown on the screen. You resort to such gimmicks when the scene that you created fails to convey the emotions. In *Kodiyettam* the protagonist is aimless. If there’s music, it tracks the whole thing in particular direction, which I wanted to avoid. I have used a Kathakali song in the final sequence though. The study of the select films also discusses in general with the use of sounds and how it works in relation with the production of meaning (Gopalakrishnan 3).

This thesis acknowledges the different studies based on the films of Adoor. Most of the studies focus on individual films of Adoor which appears as seminal papers. There are quite exceptions such as Suranjan Ganguly, Parthajit Baruah and Gautaman Bhaskaran who have analysed the films on the basis of textual reading. Rateesh Radhakrisnan and Pradeep. K. have attempted to look at the themes of masculinity and space, respectively, in the films of Adoor in their dissertations. Suranjan Ganguly offers a compelling analysis of socio historical contexts of

Kerala in the films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan through his work *The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation*. He examines how Kerala's abrupt displacement from a princely feudal state into twentieth century modernity has shaped Gopalakrishnan's complex narratives about identity, selfhood and otherness, in which innocence is often at stake and characters struggle with their conscience.

Lalit Mohan Joshi and C.S Venkiteswaran in the work *A Door to Adoor* discusses how Adoor's films map the history of region from inside, for all his films are autobiographical in a way and are about different aspects of Kerala society and life. They deal with human conditions at the most elemental level and it is their keen observation and intense sensibility about the 'local' that makes his films universal in appeal.

Prathajit Baruah in the biography *Face to Face: A Cinema of Adoor Gopalakrishnan* has highlighted the importance of the works of Adoor in showcasing social concerns and social interpretations in his movies.

Rateesh Radhakrishnan's "Masculinity and the Structuring of the Public Domain in Kerala: A History of the Contemporary" examines masculinity discourse alongside Kerala modernism. He investigates the portrayal of Unni in *Elepathayam*, as well as the relationship between masculinity and the breakdown of matriliney. Pradeep.K's "A Discourse Analysis of Spatial Practice and Women in Adoor Gopalakrishnan's Films" highlights the spatiality of women as well as modalities and social practices of space.

Adoor Gopalakrishnan's *Cinemanubhavam* consists of two parts. The first section deals with the narrative style and the aesthetic sensibility, and the second

part is about the personalities associated with his film life. Adoor's own collection of the published screenplays of 11 films discusses the setting and plot and the objective analysis of his works. *Adoorinte Chalachitra yathrakal* discusses literary and non literary textual critical analysis of films.

The intended study seeks to present methodology in terms of power relations in the selected films. Despite the fact that his films are studied in the context of Kerala's journey to modernity, the subsequent analysis questions the specific conceptions of power discourses. These signifiers have both oppressive and generative functions. The study dissects the constructs by employing filmic text and visual signifiers.

The second chapter is titled "State as a Norm: A study of films *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam* and *Kathapurushan*. The protagonists Unni (*Elepathayam*), Sreedharan (*Mukhamukam*) and Kunjunni (*Kathapurushan*) are docile in the power knowledge correlations but at times, they are resistant and make struggle. Their docility further tends to confrontations and instability. The self and society undergo in a perpetual conflict of power relations. The formation of knowledge takes place at both levels. Foucault explains the theory of sovereignty in "Society must be Defended". Foucault does not believe in the juridical model of sovereignty. Rather he explains it in terms of "subject to subject cycle" (43). Foucault abandons the concept that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended. Also, he says that we should not think that the power makes mad. Rather it produces conditions of knowledge. Paul Rabinow briefly talks about the power knowledge correlation in "The Body of the Condemned":

We should admit, rather, that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. These “power knowledge relations” are to be analyzed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system; but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known, and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of knowledge and their historical transformations (175).

The third chapter is titled “Normativity as a Construct: A Study of Films *Kodiyettam* and *Anantaram*”. The films are intended to analyse with the percepts of Foucault’s conceptualisation of disciplinary power. Disciplinary power is practiced through surveillance and knowledge. The concept of gaze is important as the people tend to regulate themselves as they think that they are being watched. Foucault defines an individual action in terms of society. The individual actions are realization and forced to discipline themselves. Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* provides insights to examine how the characterisation of the protagonists can be looked at as “fields of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed” (182). All individuals are defined in terms of particular norms defined by sovereignty and society. The norms are analysed in this chapter according to how society

normalises the notion of masculinity. Foucault says that disciplinary power shapes and normalises subjects who eventually become, speak, think and act in similar manners (177-84). Deborah Johnson perceives disciplinary power as system of knowledge and considers individual as an object to be known in relation to the others. He further says that those who deviate from the norms are labelled abnormal. The corrective or therapeutic techniques are used to rehabilitate them in the margins or norms (Johnson 149–69). The non conformity with the norms is deviation. The indifference or uniqueness is considered as inferior. When the indifferent ones are forced to being disciplined, it becomes an act of subjugation and subordination to an order by disciplinary strategies.

Sankarankutty is a naïve character who does not adhere to a particular ideology or thought. He lives in the moment and never possesses a serious outlook towards life. The study analyses how the traits of hegemonic masculinity attempt to overpower or influence his identity. The reading explores to analyse the transformation in the characterisation of Sankarankutty. Ajayan in *Anantaram* is an object on whom the power is exercised. The masters of the school, caretakers of the home induce the mechanisms of punishment. He is always under a hierarchical surveillance. Ajayan introduces himself as ‘a case’ and adopts a documentary technique. Foucault extends his philosophical analysis in “The Means of Correct Training” how the techniques make each individual a case. The case is no longer, as in casuistry or jurisprudence, a set of circumstances defining an act and capable of modifying the application of a rule; it is the individual as he may be described, judged, measured, compared with others, his very individuality; and it is also the individual who has to be trained or corrected, classified, normalized, excluded etc. (Rabinow 203).

Foucault speaks about the concept of madness or perversion in the society. He re (reads) the actions that is declared 'unnatural' or 'sick. He critically looks into the practice that how it becomes legitimate to use force on 'deviants' or 'even imprison them in order to try and make them normal'. The study finds to see the ambiguities and power orientations in the seclusion of the unnatural or non normative.

The fourth chapter is titled "Home, Class and Gender as Apparatuses: A Study of *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal*". The sovereign power and disciplinary power act in the process of subjugation and power relations in the discussion of the select films. Gender, class and home are significant factors which contribute to the operations of power in these films. The depiction of 'caste identified women' contributes to the investigation of how the women exercise her sexual autonomy. Megha Anwar and Anupama Arora observes in their study: "In emphasising caste as a significant analytic, we explore if and how the defining characteristics of the new women morph when caste intersects with gender under a neo liberal regime" (Anwar 152). The analysis of the women characters in the select films of this chapter probes into the representation of women whose identity is "reconstituted or destabilised within patriarchal relations that are cross-hatched by caste" (152). The investigation allows to track the abstract relations of power according to the hierarchical manifestations of class. The chapter also looks into the complexities that originate from the intersection of the signifiers family, caste and gender.

The dalit representation is significant in the reading of power relations in this chapter. The lower caste, who are known as dalits, "are found to be in deep turmoil, face constant humiliation and growing erosion of their identity and sense

of being part of civil society, the nation and the state”(Kothari 1589). Farhana Naaz speaks about the structural violence on the subjugated category (163). The economic precariousness, caste status and patriarchal status are the domains on which hegemony is structured. The study analyses how these factors act in the operations of power. Gayathri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern speak?” explores the ways in which hegemonic structures are oriented. This chapter also looks at the discourse analysis of Michael Foucault. The characters are in a process to build a space of their own. Louis Althusser’s The “Ideological State Apparatus” and Antonio Gramsci’s “Hegemony” are studied to dismantle the power operations through master- slave relationship and the man- woman relationship. The home also becomes a significant trope in the narrative and the study will investigate how the absence of home becomes a pragmatic tool in the exploitation of the subjugated.

Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* says that “discipline makes individuals; it is the specific technique of power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (170). His concept of panopticon can be extended further to how he defines a norm. In the case of norm or in system of normalisation there is no particular pivot to make judgments or to impose will. Foucault in *The Foucault Reader* says that “A system of normalisation is opposed to a system of law or a system of personal power” (Rabinow 20). Foucault defines it in *The History of sexuality Volume 1*:

a power whose task is to take charge of life needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms...Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendor...it effects distributions around the

norm...[The] juridical institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative and so on) whose functions are for the most part regulatory (28).

The “normative rationality” underscored the authority of sovereign power and law. Later the advent of medicine, psychiatry and other social sciences in the nineteenth century formed what Foucault calls ‘systemic normalization of law’ (21). It is explained further that it means what is normal and what is not in a given set of population rather than strict adherence to the codes of right and wrong (21). The gender normalizations attributed to the understanding about the notions of masculinity and femininity can be explained in the light of Foucauldian normative rationality. The character of Ajayan in Adoor’s film *Anantaram* can be studied through the lens of normative rationality of Foucault.

Foucault studied the power of knowledge over the minute behavioural aspects of people in a society. Those are forced to occupy the position of ‘other’. Apparatuses are used as part of normalizing technologies. Dossiers entail authorities to produce a ‘totalizing web of control’ (22). It attempts to achieve an ‘increasing specification of individuality’ (22). Foucault says in “The Subject and Power” that the liberation from the web of power means:

...to liberate us both from the state and from the type of the individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries (216).

When the individualisation and the liberation are read in the light of the Adoor’s films, there are characters (Sreedharan of *Mukhamukam*, Kunjunni of

Kathapurushan, Ajayan of *Anantaram*, Thommie of *Vidheyan*, Kamalamma of *Oru Pennum Randanum*, four women characters (Kunjupennu, Kumari Chinnumamma, Kamakshi) who tried to shackle the individuality intertwined with politics, state and intra familial relationships. They succumb to different forms of subjectivity, at times, subjected to self. Unni of *Elepathayam*, Sankarankutty of *Kodiyettam*, Madhu of *Swayamvaram*, Basheer of *Mathilukal* and Kaliyappan of *Nizhalkuthu* are representatives of society who are subjected to the individualization and totalisation of power structures. Foucault in *The Foucault Reader* speaks about punishment in the work *Discipline and Punish*. Obviously, it is explained as a power exercised on the body. He makes general proposition:

systems of punishment are situated in a certain “political economy” of the body: even if they do not make use of violent or bloody punishment, even when they use “lenient” methods involving confinement or correction, it is always the body that is at issue- the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission (Rabinow 172).

Foucault again says about the power inflicted on the body in “The Body of the Condemned”:

body is also involved in a political field; power relations have immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs
(Rabinow173).

Adoor uses the tropes of subjected body and objected body in his films. The ‘body’ is deciphered as an object on which the power is exercised upon. Adoor captures the scenes of physical brutality in the films *Anantaram*. It often takes the form of punishment and repressive effects. It takes the means of judiciary and

state and often practiced as the means of reform. Foucault's study of microphysics on the power defines as "it is not the 'privilege' acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic position-an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated" (Rainbow 174). Kaliyappan in Adoor's film *Nizhalkuthu* becomes only an instrument in the act of capital punishment. Though he assumes power it is problematic.

Though the study primarily focusses on the select films for the representations of power there are adequate references to the multifarious nature of power in his other works. Adoor's films *Swayamvaram*, *Mathilukal*, *Nizhalkuthu*, *Oru Pennun Randaanum* and *Pinneyum* trace and develop the sense of power dislocations. The search for "home, self and identity" (Ganguly, *The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 80) become significant issues in these films.

Adoor's *Swayamvaram* dismantles the pre conceived perceptions about the aesthetics of cinema and adapts the language of neo realistic cinema. It explores and opens up the frustrations and dilemmas in Kerala in the post Nehruvian period. Viswam and Sita who leave their home to live together, confront a society of grim realities. Adoor documents the perplexities of the unemployment and economic crisis of middle class society in the decades of 1960s and 1970s. The society plays a pivotal role in shaping the lives of this couple. Viswam is a representative of the generation who struggle in the confrontation with the society. They are unable to recognise the indirect involvement of power in the moulding of their lives. Sita and Viswam live in a precarious space of power entanglements.

The resistance is meagre though they attempted to break the boundaries in the decision of wedlock.

The film *Mathilukal* brings out the solitude and confinement of the character Basheer. The film is an adaptation of novel of the same name by Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. The film foregrounds the dislocation of the character Basheer as he is arrested during Gandhi's Quit India movement. Rather than an analysis of how reality coincides with fantasy through the characterisation of Narayani and Basheer the film looks into how the prison cell serves as a trope of subjectivity. He finds himself suddenly transformed into an outsider in the alienating precincts of the jail (121). The jail as a signifier serves as a metaphor of power. Ganguly speaks that it can be signified as a reading of human condition and also relates to the condition of India under the rule of British. Basheer's attempt to discover liberty, creative freedom and personal transcendence enables him to define sense of humanity (123) and it can be read as an act of resistance .

The film *Nizhalkuthu* narrates the tale of 'otherness' through the characterisation of kaliyappan. He is the official hangman of the state and he is forced to do an act of execution. Kaliyappan is reluctant to take that job. But the state insists that he should take up that deed. His conscience never allows him to take that act and the he suffers from an inner conflict. The physical dislocation to boarder village as part of the designation of the duty underlines his identity of otherness. The state offers him rewards such as nontaxable land and monetary benefits. This can read as an indirect mechanism of oppression of the Repressive State Apparatus. The ideological and repressive apparatuses of the state come into conflict.

There is virtually no scope for subjective choices, for stepping outside the rigid codes and rituals that govern almost every aspect of human behaviour. It is a feudal world that exists outside time and history, its people trapped in a relentless cycle of recurrence. In fact, the sense of inevitability is so pervasive that is accepted without question as a fact of existence. Kaliyappan's identity as the other is constituted by and exists within this paradigm. As a creation of the state, he must live exclusively on its terms (132).

Though Kaliyappan fails to make the resist will of the state he escapes the fate. But the power as a chain is dispersed in the society. Kaliyappan's son Muthu becomes the victim to continue the act. The otherness and subjectivity are addressed in the narrative of the jailer through the story of two lovers.

The film *Oru Pennum Randanum* (A Climate for Crime) portrays three stories "Kallante Makan" ("The Thief"), "Niyamavum Neethiyum" ("The Police"), "Oru Kootukaran" ("Two men and a Woman" and "Pankiyamma" ("One Woman, Two Men"). These stories reflect the voice of disillusionment and disintegration after the second world war. Unemployment and the shortage of the basic amenities prompt people to indulge in crimes. The plot of the narrative is Kuttanad in Travancore. The first story "Kallante makan" revolves around the character named Neelantan. He finds theft as the only job for his survival and the sustenance of his family. The ideological and repressive power apparatuses in the form of police/state, school, neighbourhood and family deny Neelantan his own identity. The second story looks again into the concept of justice as a problematic concept. Power acts as coercive and oppressive. The story portrays the picture of two police officers and how they manipulate power as a weapon against the

powerless. The rickshaw driver of this story is denied justice and he is forced to remain silent. If the previous story speaks about the power as oppressive in the form of state, “Oru Kootukaran” narrates about power as chauvinistic in gender relations. It portrays the story of a man who impregnates a woman. He attempts to escape from the responsibility. The family and society became crucial factors for him to make a choice. Justice becomes problematic here as it is an abstract notion. But Krishnankutty takes the decision to take up the responsibility to marry the woman. The last segment of the film “Pankiamma” (Two Men and one Woman”) is a narrative of resistance which dismantles the conventional moral codes ascribed for a woman in the patriarchal society. She is bold enough to establish her freedom and makes own choice about the male partner in the sexual relationship. When the first three segments trace the ambiguities in relation with power structures of ideological and repressive regimes such as class, state and gender, “Pankiyamma” deals with the resistance and productive aspects of power. The wife of Neelantan in “The Thief” and the character pankiyamma in “Two men and a Woman” represent the ‘new woman’ and attempt to reverse the cliché roles attributed to women.

The film *Pinneyum* deals with the contextual plot of murder by a person named Sukumara Kuruppu to fake his own death to claim the amount from insurance, in 1984. Adoor employs this as the background of the plot through the characterisation of Purushothaman Nair.

The resistance becomes passive and at times, rebellious in the films. The study also documents the analysis of the back ground music, sound and actions to represent the resistance. As the study documents on the plurality of power operations it also attempts to read the co existence of resistance in the films.

Chapter 2

State as a Norm: A Study of *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam* and *Kathapurushan*

The transition of Kerala into the phase of modernity serves as the primary plot in the analysis of the films. The films of the last quarter of the 20th century reflect social realism. There was a noted transition in the themes and plots of Malayalam cinema as it transfigured the trajectory of events in the social and political domain of Kerala. The films taken for discussion in this chapter trace the political history of Kerala. Specifically, the films deal with the social structure of Travancore and how the caste, class, and politics of a particular generation build power structures.

The narration of history is abstract. Adoor's delineation of history in the films is not a factual account of political and cultural events in Kerala over a span of time. Rather, he represents how the events of the time affected the lives of the generation in which he also lived. Because Adoor comes from a nair matrilineal family, the ideologies of the caste and class to which he belongs are visible in the films. The contestations and insecurities of the individual life are frequently addressed in art films. These entrapped individuals are a part of a turbulent society that constructs the former. Adoor problematises the power structures in society. The select films in this chapter are inspired by true events that occurred in Kerala, as well as in India as a whole.

The study of the films in this chapter contributes to the understanding of sovereign power and its perception in society. The state has an authority over society, and the study explores and details the power operations in various aspects. The film's narrative incorporates the implication of sovereign power through

allusions and references to policies and political implementations in the state of Kerala. Michael Foucault in *Power/Knowledge* says that “the state is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology, and so forth (123). The power of family, religion, gender, caste, etc. is brought under the control of the state. Foucault says that “it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things; it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, and discourse” (120). There are transformations in the hierarchies, which also prove that power travels not only from top to bottom but also vice versa.

The protagonists of *Elepathayam* and *Kathapurushan* represent characters who are defiant and refuse to be fixed in the flux of history. They were landowners of feudal families. The political entanglements of Kerala as a state form the backdrop for these films. The reading of power structures in these stories is analysed to understand how they condition discourse, society, and government. The study of class in the films *Elepathayam* and *Kathapurushan* functions as subversive forces to attain hegemony, as the dominant will to power. Nietzsche in *The Will to Power* says, “The dominant will to power needs the will to resistance in order to be manageable and exist” (438). “If the dominant will to power fails to contain the will to resistance” he writes, “it results in the establishment of a new centre of power organization” (439). The abolition of matrilineal systems and the new developments in the political sphere in Kerala dismantle hierarchical systems. The constant struggle in the political sphere leads to the decentralisation of power. The dominant elements cannot manage the resistance of the ruled class or the suppressed. This paved the way for the new establishment of hierarchical

segmentation. This emphasises the post structuralistic reading on the instability of the position of the centre. So, power is not fixed. It moves from the centre to the periphery and vice versa.

The stories of *Elepathayam* and *Kathapurushan* unfold the state of powerlessness in the hands of the protagonists. The term protagonist is used here to describe something other than an individual. Though Adoor refers to families in particular, it tells the realistic story of a generation of a state. This study intends to find out how power is dispersed. Foucault says that power runs through the entire social system. It is a productive network. It shifts from one system to another. Cultural institutions and political organisations function in a specific manner. It is developed through the takeover of materialistic signifiers, which hold power. It can be materialised both through legal and illegal means. For Foucault, power is not repressive; rather, it is productive. But when the films of Adoor are analysed, it becomes clear that power manifestations are both repressive and productive at the same time.

The implications of Kerala's matrilineal system, the formation of the first elected communist government in Kerala, the Land Reform Bill of 1969, and the Gulf migration of the 1980s are discussed, and this chapter intends to look at the impact of the same on society from the perspective of power dislocations. The discourse of the age, to be specific in the film, is the period between 1940 and the 1980s, which is studied to understand how hierarchies have turned into structures of power in the state of Kerala. Foucault in *Power/ Knowledge* underlines the statement that knowledge endorses the position of power and vice versa. The selected films give the social background of Adoor's age. The narrative

representations of the matrilineal system, the land reform bill, and the political engagements enhance the plot.

Kerala was not formed as a state before 1956. Under princely rule, the British units Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore were formed. These are brought together in accordance with linguistic reorganisation, which means that people speaking the same language are created during the presidency. V. Aiya Nagam in *Travancore State Manual* speaks about one of the legends associated with the origin of Kerala. The myth about Kerala's origins reflects the plurality of hierarchies in the forms of class. Parasurama threw his axe from Cape Comorin to Gokarnam, the sea receded, and Kerala was formed. To populate the new area, Parasurama introduced a special race of Brahmins, the Nambuthiris, and gave them ownership of all the land and its unique customs, which facilitated their return to India on the other side of the Western Ghats. Next, he brought the sudras, the nairs, to act as the servants and bodyguards of the nambuthiris (210-212). Sudras belongs to the one of the lower classes and Nambuthiri belongs to the upper class of Hindu caste.

The legend about the origin of Kerala justifies the upper caste's hierarchical privileges, to a certain extent. Power is a chain that is observed in all social relations, whether they operate at the levels of caste, class, family, etc. The dominance and subservience between Nairs and Nambuthiris are obvious in the hierarchical order of social relations between them. Because resistance is required for power structures to exist, the study also investigates acts of defiance by the powerless or oppressed in the late twentieth century. Power operates not only

from top to bottom but also vice versa. The films of Adoor actually portray the act of resistance from the bottom and the decline of upper-caste dominance.

According to Robin Jeffrey in *The Decline of Nair Dominance*, the Travancore began to show upper caste Hindu dominance fifty years before Travancore fell under British suzerainty. The extent of their dominance is believed to be in northern and central Travancore. The biggest land owners were Syrian Christians, but Nairs occupied most of Travancore. They considered themselves the clean Hindu caste, ignored Syrian Christians, and expected submission and subservience in the most ingenious way from their caste inferiors. This is obviously captured in the attitudes of the characters in *Elepathayam* and *Kathapurushan*. The position of Nairs as one of the dominant castes is justified by the definition of the modern anthropologist Dumont Louis on dominant caste:

A dominant caste has relatively eminent right over the land; power to grant land and to employ other castes. . [and thereby] to build up a large clientele, not [to] say an armed force; power of justice..., generally speaking monopoly of authority...,... the dominant caste is often a royal caste, [or] a caste allied to royal castes (Dumont 207).

It is important to understand the factors that have led to the merging of three regions: Travancore, Malabar, and Cochin. The resolutions and committees were formed to bring the three regions together. As a result of the discussions, Travancore and Cochin were merged on July 1, 1949. The States Reorganisation Act of 1956 separated the four southern states of Tovala, Agastiswaram,

Kalkulam, and Vilavancode and a part of Shencottah Taluk from Travancore and Cochin, and they are in Madras state. Later, the districts of Kasargode taluk and South Cannore were added to Travancore Cochin. These three united regions constitute Kerala as a state, which came into existence on November 1, 1956 (Jeffery 239).

G. Arunima's *There comes Papa: Colonialism and the Transformation of Matriliney in Kerala Malabar c. 1850-1940*, Robin Jeffrey's *The Decline of Nair Dominance* and K. Saradamoni's *Matriliney Transformed: Family, Law and Ideology in Twentieth Century Travancore* give a detailed account of the studies based on the matrilineal kinship system held in Kerala. Arunima says that the abolition of matriliney in Kerala was practiced and made possible through a series of legislative interventions in the early twentieth century. The multiple factors, such as the influence of colonial administration, western education, and the role of missionaries, made the people in Kerala think that these practices are inferior. The English adopted and practiced a patriarchal system, and they considered the system of sambandam¹ absurd. The men from the Nair community began to work outside the home, and they got married and formed nuclear families. They urged the necessity of dividing the family property and needing the individual share. The Travancore Will Act of 1899 states the right of the wives and children to acquire half of the self-acquired property from the father. It is the first time that children's rights have been recognised. In November 1912, a bill appeared before the legislative assembly demanding the partition of *Taravad* (ancestral home or property). However, because the three Nair community members were conservative, the demand for partition was dropped.

The Nairs followed the matrilineal *Marumakathayam* system of inheritance based on the matrilineal joint family called *taravadu* (ancestral residence). There is a common female ancestor, and all the members of the family descend from her. The management of the financial and domestic affairs of the home is entrusted to the eldest male member of the family, *Karanavar*. The individuals have no right to claim or own the property; rather, it was held or shared in common. G. Saradamoni describes about *taravadu* in her book *Matriliney Transformed*:

A *taravadu* in its simplest form would consist of a mother and her children with their maternal uncle. In its complex form it would include a mother her children both sons and daughters, the latter's children and their descendants however distant. Menon emphasised the presence of a *karanavan*, the oldest woman's uncle, brother or son...Right to the property were traced through women and not through men. Each of the mothers and her children and descendants in the female line formed a *tavazhi*, literally meaning a mother's line (62).

The *taravadu* comprises three or four generations and likewise contains different branches from a common ancestor. There is no legal marriage or woman is not getting married off and stay in other home. She can live in her own home with the children. Each woman has a room of her own and she can have relationship with male partners from the class of Nambuthiris, Kshatriyas, Nairs or non malayali Brahmins. The male partner who wants to have relationship with the woman has

to negotiate and obtain the consent from the *karanavar*. She details about *Sambandam*:

Nayar women entered into conjugal relationship- sambandham, which literally means alliance-with men of their caste or caste above theirs. By and large it was also between families of equal economic status. Children born to the women belonged to their tharavadu, where they had the right of maintenance (65).

It is called *sambandam*. A woman can have *sambandam* with number of men. The men could hold little right over the children. The woman holds more power. G.

Arunima in *There Comes Papa* says:

Matrilineal marriage did not alter the property and other rights that women had within their natal tharavadu... Matrilineal women differed from their patrilineal counterparts in two important ways: marriage did not sever their ties-affective and economic-with their natal homes, and children, irrespective of their sex belonged to their mother's *tharavadu* (13).

The study here does not attempt to provide historiography but rather to demonstrate how the shifts in family structure, from matriarchal to patriarchal, have influenced power relations. The Nair families possess a major share of the land. The community living habits of these families help them to hold property and wealth without partition. Power is located in a single centre.

Robin Jeffrey in the article "Legacy of Matriliney: The Place of Women and the Kerala Model" writes that the Nairs themselves took the initiative to convert matrilineal law to patrilineal and establish the right to individual shares of

the family's collective wealth (Jeffrey 651). Between 1896 and 1976, at least 20 pieces of legislation were passed to modify and ultimately abolish matrilineal practices relating to ownership and inheritance of property and legal guardianship of children (43–44).

The close examination of the films reveals the distribution of power in Kerala society. The rewriting of lived history or one's own culture is dependent on the perceptions of the reader and writer. Adoor was born into a nair (one of the groups of Hindu caste in Kerala) matrilineal joint family. *Marumakathayam* means a form of inheritance by sisters' children as opposed to sons and daughters. This is a form of matrilineal inheritance and the lineage is traced through female line. The Kerala Joint Hindu Family System (Abolition) Act, 1975 (Act No. 30 of 1976) abolished *Marumakathayam* or joint family system prevalent among the Nairs of Hindu caste. But there are families who still confine to the practices of matrilineal inheritance. The system has its own experiences, stories, and perplexing questions. The culture of Kerala is reflected as a dominant trope in the films of Adoor.

Even after the legislation in the first half of the twentieth century, the families confined themselves to the joint family system and held the property without partition. Power has shifted from women's hands to men's hands. As ancestral property has been divided, power has shifted to the family in general. So, the power is dislocated or dispersed. The power confined to an individual *karanavar* (eldest male member of a family) and *karanavathi* (eldest female member of the family) is also ruled out, and it is shifted to individual members.

One of the resources that bestowed power was land. The possession of land gives power over economy. The reformations in the ownership of land during the rule of the leftist party of Kerala appear as a context in the reading of the films *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam*, and *Kathapurushan*. Adoor meticulously delineates the dilemmas and struggles encountered in the lives of the protagonists. The land reform bill of 1969 has had a wide impact among all castes in Kerala. Though the legislature passed land reform bills in 1960, 1963 and 1964 it became an amendment in the year 1969. The chief minister C. Achutha Menon ensured the rights of tenants and the bill came into force in the year 1970. As a member of the Nair caste, Adoor has witnessed and understands the impact on Nair families. He has narrated that in his films, *Elepathayam* and *Kathapurushan*. Both of the protagonist families in the films suffer from financial distress. The agricultural profit of landlords, known as 'janmis' decreased as the government imposed limits on land ownership. Gradually, that led to the financial crisis. But general studies and surveys found that it ended the caste and class inequality that prevailed in Kerala. And also, it offered ownership of land to the tenants, so they gained power gradually.

The Land Reform Bill took land of the land lords and restored the same to peasants. This is one of the steps that led to the shift in the power structures of Kerala, and it is well brought out in the film. In his study, Asish Rajadyaksha observes it as: "regressive authoritarian feudal states into ones ruled by communist agendas" (Rajadyaksha 20). The agitation known as *Vimochana Samaram*, or Liberation Struggle, by the non-communist parties took a serious turn. The Governor of India reported to the president that the constitutional

administration has dissolved and issued a proclamation taking over the administration of the state under Section 356 of the Constitution of India.

It is equally important to understand the constitutional developments, as they play an important role in the reading of Adoor's films. The general elections are one of the most important things to note here, and they serve as the plot for Adoor's films. The Agrarian System was implemented in Kerala during the communist regime in India. The bill was passed by the revenue minister, K. R. Gouri Amma, during that time. This bill shattered the feudal nature of landlords during those decades, causing a schism in power structures. The slogan 'land to the tiller' literally gave power to the peasants. The land monopoly was one of the power holders, which gave them authority. They were financially strong. This bill states that cultivable waste land would be given to the tillers.

The communist party split in 1964 into the CPI and the CPI (M). There were internal tensions and power politics, which led to the breakup of the party into two. Various scholars have researched and studied the cause of the Sino-Soviet split. In 1964, in conjunction with the widening rift between China and the Soviet Union, a large leftist faction of the CPI leadership, based predominantly in Kerala and West Bengal, split from the party to form the Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPI (M). Kerala's state legislature was held in February and March 1957. The Communist Party of India and a few independents supported by it secured 65 of the 126 seats in the legislature. This brought an end to the president's rule on April 5, 1957. The communist party, under the leadership of EMS Namboothiripadu, came into power. The policies of the Communist government evoked opposition and led to its agitation.

To be specific, Adoor's films *Elepathayam*, *Kathapurushan*, and *Mukhamukam* trace the power displacements in the history of modern Kerala. The viewers can read the historical and political background of the age, which forms the core of the stories of the films. Though these three films vary in structure and narration, there is a common thread that binds them together. Adoor, as a young boy, became a part of the events, and that apparently comes as a theme for the films.

Elepathayam and *Kathapurushan* are two films that explore how power distribution affects people emotionally and physically. *Mukhamukam* also analyses the power dispersions in the political context of Kerala and deals with 'political'. Unni and his sister, Rajamma, represent the old order. Unni, who holds the position of *karanavar* in the matrilineal system, has also lost his status. The study unfolds how the displacement in the position of the protagonist changes the power dynamics in the familial structure. Unni's attempt to reclaim his authoritarian status was futile. The film *Kathapurushan* also points to the loss of power at the hands of the central authoritarian character, *Karanavathi*. It represents the old matrilineal system in which women held power and the decline of that power as a result of the system's abolition.

The reading of the films provides a poststructuralist interpretation. The poststructuralists reject the idea that structures are self-sufficient. It is an interrogation of binary oppositions. Instability is one of the major themes of poststructuralism. This instability emerges from the complexity of human beings and the impossibility of escaping structures. The protagonists of the films chosen for this study are described as complex. It counts on weaknesses, pretensions, and

fears. The study of the characterisation critically questions the problematic legacy of power implications in the state of Kerala. The poststructuralist study involves an erudite examination of signs, which are produced by aesthetics and politics. Post-structuralism cannot be described as a theory but as a set of theoretical possessions. The very core is the self-reflexive discourse, which is aware of the tentativeness, slipperiness, ambiguity, and complex interrelationships of the text and its meanings. The concept of language also has to be studied scientifically to understand its various undertones.

Post structuralism emerged in France in the 1960s as a critique of structuralism. There are many perceptions that the poststructuralists accept from structuralism, and there are things that they resist. Roland Barthe's *The Death of the Author* marked a significant metaphorical turn, which contributed to the production of multiple meanings from a text. Not only is the author's intended meaning reflected here, it is impossible to form a concrete deduction. So, the text is deconstructed to study it. Deconstruction can be termed "applied post-structuralism". It can also be called "reading against the text". Deconstructive readings uncover the unconscious rather than the conscious dimensions of the text. The ordinary things that usually fade or go unrecognized are brought to the forefront through the practice of deconstruction. In such a reading, inconsistencies and complexities are highlighted, and new meanings of the text are explored. This practice of reading is called "oppositional reading" to unmask the incongruities. The discord reflected in the selected films is typical of post structuralism.

The films are non-linear, and the meanings of each shot in relation to the props and the dialogue give wider contextual meanings. The deconstruction

reveals a text's or film's disunity. It can be interpreted as the nature of language itself. Deconstructive criticism posits the undecidability of meaning for all texts. The texts reveal contradictory discourses and gaps within themselves. Deconstruction demonstrates not only that hierarchies can be inverted or reversed but also that the whole opposition can be undermined or collapsed.

The post structuralist reader must be able to use a variety of perspectives to create a multifaceted interpretation of the text. These interpretations may be contradictory. It makes the assumption that there is no singular, universal, unified truth. The frameworks must untie, and the structures become unstable or decentered, according to them. Post structuralism is also concerned with power structures, or hegemony, and how these elements contribute to and maintain structures to enforce a semblance of hierarchy. The study points to a new historicist assumption in the sense that it postulates the plurality and hybridity of human nature.

The reading of these films provides a new historicist reading of Kerala. The new critics disagree that the texts' intrinsic relationship with the historical and biographical background. The realistic representation of signifiers in the films of Adoor can be understood only through social and historical context. The study is examined and handled according to new historicism, where both the literary text and the non-literary context are given equal weight. Old historicism views history as the 'background' of facts to foreground the literature. The Derridean belief that there is nothing outside the text or that everything is available to us in 'textual' or narrative form causes old historicism to break down such hierarchies and follow a parallel reading of literature and history. It also examines history as it is

represented and recorded in literary texts. By constructing a historical framework and situating the literary text within it, old historicism takes a hierarchical approach. In essence, new historicism focuses on the 'word' of the past, whereas old historicism is focused on the 'world' of the past (Barry, *Beginning Theory* 167).

Old historians, according to Foucault, attempted to reconstruct the past by using historical documents as a source. They also appropriated facts and details to hide any illogical components and produce a narrative of history that appeared to be cohesive and according to the language of the day and age. New historicists, on the other hand, examine source documents from within to comprehend the inherent cracks. Instead of a continuous chronology of reason, this new strategy works to multiply discontinuities in the history of ideas. As a corollary to Foucault's view of knowledge as a manifestation of power, new historicists emphasise and take delight in discontinuities in a post structuralist manner (Barry168).

This chapter's research attempts to unearth selected films as products of contextualizing cultural and intellectual history. There are films that are the products of the particular social conditions of Kerala and share the same prejudices and ideologies. These films as texts are considered political, economic, historical, and cultural readings of the particular era. This method is known as the 'new historicist reading'. These films can be read in the context of other films and literary texts in Malayalam in order to foreground the social conditions of their production.

The realistic approach of Adoor in the selected films is studied as a new historicist approach that focuses on the text of the films as an arena of power relations. According to Hayden White in *Metahistory*, history is written according to the historian's current context and needs (White 4). Adoor wrote about Kerala in the latter half of the twentieth century, especially the Nair families in *Elepathayam* and *Mukhamukam*, from a nair perspective, taking into consideration his background and ideologies. His education has influenced the formation of these ideologies.

The new historicism does not intend to read history through the lens of grand narratives but rather to investigate conflicts and oppositions. Adoor's films focus on subversive movements, in the light of the new historicist reading of the texts. The conflicting and anarchic perspectives on the political and cultural entanglements are also brought into the narrative of the films.

The research in these films acknowledges the textuality of history, specifically the complexities of institutional and social power relations. The historicity of these texts is determined by power relations. The new historicism acknowledges the constructedness of history. The dynamics of power determine the shape of these narratives.

The new historicist reading explores the assumptions of Marxism in the narrative of the films. Images of cultural forms and practices are frequently associated with material conditions. As it serves the dominant culture of the time, Adoor adopts the caste system and political formulations of the decade. A new historicist reading of the films of Adoor shows how the genre supported the

dominant class. It reinforced the class structure of Kerala. It constructed specific notions of identity: the typical parasitic nature of Unni as a landlord, Kunjunni as the pampered son of the Nair family, and Sreedharan as an upholder of Marxist ideologies. It preserved and normalised gender roles. It can be seen in the portrayal of female characters in certain films. They confine themselves to the traditional roles of women. But Adoor also gives space for the representation of characters who want to resist the existing notion. Here, new historicism examines how the film as a cultural form supports, questions, or subverts established beliefs. It is inextricably linked, either positively or negatively, to the dominant classes' beliefs. It is associated with the Nair caste, or communist ideologies in society, in the reading of the films.

The new historicism emphasises the intertextual nature of all texts and looks for echoes of law, religion, politics, medicine, and other discourses in the literary texts of an age. This is clearly evident in the Malayalam cinema of that age. The art cinemas and the films of select directors reflect the age. And to be specific, the *mise en scène*, dialogue, props, illustrations, etc. reflect this.

The methodology of new historicist study recreates culture into the filmic text and thus examines both literary and non-literary texts. It is inspired by Clifford Geertz. 'Improvisation' is a term used by Stephen Greenblatt in *Renaissance: Self fashioning*. It means the way in which an individual seeks to enter into power relations. This term highlights or underlines the perception that all identity is fictional. The characters in these films behave in such a way that they alter or tune their identities according to changing power relations. It is not an abstract phenomenon. Adoor uses his aesthetic sense to represent these ideas

on the screen. Identity is generated through repeated performance and narratives. These performances of the characters are modes of reading in socio-historical contexts. It enables an individual, or, to be specific, a caste, class, or political movement, to enter the system of power. New historicism says that the attempt to adapt, accommodate and resist reinforce the power structures. But the study does not agree with this viewpoint partially, as in the films of Adoor, the resistance sometimes overpowers the dominant. It underlines the Foucauldian presumption that power does not reside in the center itself.

The new historicist term 'circulation' refers to the way in which power circulates through different texts in the form of discourse, such as how the images of Queen Elizabeth are circulated in pastoral poetry. Malayalam literature and film depict the image of Nair men and women. In this aspect, O. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha* is a representation of the period. The costumes and names of the upper caste men and women obviously reflect the circulation of power. The names and the roles attributed to lower castes make a sharp contrast to this.

Greenbalt uses the term 'Cultural Poetics' instead of new historicism' near the end of the 1980s. Cultural materialists believe that the new historicist readings are apolitical. There is no question of agency on the part of the marginalised. According to them, the dominant power structures absorb resistance. But at that point, Adoor, as the cultural materialists argue, focuses on the possibilities of subversion and resistance.

The films display the power struggles of a certain period and generation as encoded in the history of Kerala. It cannot be traced as the true history; rather, it

problematizes the history, which is here studied in the context of the Nair matrilineal system, the Land Reform Bill, Gulf migration, subversion of gender roles, and caste hierarchies. The films can also be seen as how history is conceptualised. This study aims to contextualise the plot of films in the form of power entanglements, especially how sovereign or state power acts upon the people.

At its most basic, the film depicts the collapse of feudalism in modern Kerala. Adoor tells the story of a Nair *taravadu*, who once held a position of power in society. Adoor reads the lives of Nair families in Kerala at a specific point in time through this family. The transition from *marumakatayam* to *makatayam* (lineage through children) has caused a rupture in the property, which was once concentrated in the centre as the common. The shift in power relations is evident, and the cause of that is clear to a viewer who knows the political history of Kerala during that time.

The production of meaning in a film occurs through the inter relationships of various codes. The moving and still images, sounds, recorded noise, musical sound, etc. contribute to the signification process. Though the film speaks about the repercussions of the matrilineal system and the ravages of feudalism, it is never stated in the film that the story is about such things. The images, costumes of the characters, plot of the story, props, noises, background sounds, etc. are taken as signs. These signs produce meanings at different levels.

The very title 'Rat Trap' or *Elepathayam* signifies the condition of the residents of a *Taravadu* in Travancore. Adoor uses it as a metaphor. The old

house, surrounded by a large plot, itself holds power, though it is in a dilapidated condition. The home as a trope is used in the film to display their economic stability in the past. The dilapidated condition of the home is a representation of power dislocations. The socio-economic changes in Kerala during that time point caused the descent of power from the hands of those who once held it. Suranjan Ganguly comments that the “brittle, eroded foundations” of the home make it synonymous with homelessness. He observes:

The subject of these films is their liminal existence as outsiders caught between the past and the present. This unreal in-between space becomes the site of their physical dislocation, which takes the form of a neurotic obsession with power that they exercise on their immediate family members or the community at large. And yet, officially, the men have no real access to power. This strange contradiction—power within powerlessness—only confirms their perverse otherness (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 31).

The props establish the plot and character of the film. There are different types of props, namely instrumental props, metaphorical props, cultural props, and contextual props. Instrumental props are common in film because they are used for their intended purpose. Metaphorical props are symbolic of a particular meaning. Cultural props convey meaning within a particular class or society. Contextual props acquire meaning according to their place in the narrative. The cultural props, such as the easy chair, traditional lock on the door, easy chair, courtyard, heap of coconuts, etc., carry significant meaning. The traditional

wooden easy chair installed in the long verandah on which Unni sits exemplifies the power he once wielded in the previous social order. The scene in which Unni sits on the chair and summons Rajamma to shoo the cow away demonstrates Unni's parasitic and chauvinistic nature.

The opening establishing shots of the house include the lamp stand, the oil lamp, the chinese jar, the heavy ancient door, the iron keys, key holes, the abandoned cot, the aesthetic design of the wooden ceiling, and a non-functional wall clock (Baruah 86). Also, there is a musical instrument called a harmonium in their house, which shows the financial soundness of their family in the past few days. These can also be seen as the props, which clearly indicate the system of power. Though the film discusses the disintegration of the feudal past, props point out the luxurious past that they once enjoyed. These props are part of the set design that establishes the film's narrative. This serves as one of the narrative techniques that enables and generates the narrative contexts of the Nair caste in Kerala, which has a rich feudal past. It was also influenced by the actions of characters, motion, and silence.

The torch used by Unni is an example of a metaphorical prop. During the *tharavadu's* heritage, the torch can be seen as a watchguard. It has the power to show its surveillance and authority against others. It is used as a symbol of power, which gives Unni a sort of security. The character Unni always holds the torch. The torch as a signifier is reinvested with the appropriation of Unni's attempt to make him believe in or recapture the power of the landlord. The torch is used as a sign in two different shots. Unni points the torch light at a passerby, and he shouts

and expresses his anger to Unni. He also lights the torch against Meenakshi on the village road.

Unni still tries to keep the power he has. The director also tries to give the character Unni to obtain voyeuristic pleasure. And at the same time, the fear of society and his awareness of his identity made him nervous, so he switched off the torch. The breaking of the torch glasses by his nephew represents the loss of power in an indirect metaphorical sense. But the light of the torch is used even in the last shots when Unni is intruded on and at the sound of breaking the door of the granary is heard. And in this shot, the village people who chase Unni light the torch against him.

Unni is presented as a character who represents the community of the past feudal order and who declines to become a part of the new social system. The character of Unni challenges the hierarchical structures of power that exist within the domains of class and caste. Adoor frequently employs the dialogues as a satirical weapon to highlight power structures.

Unni acts as an exponent of the patriarchal system. Unni is portrayed as a weak, timid member of the family. Though these are read as signs, the reading attempts to unearth the roots of this system. Unni's inability to adapt himself serves to reveal the background in the form of power structures.

Unni plays a central role of authority among his two sisters, Rajamma and Sridevi. Unni's attitude towards them obviously reflects his selfishness and egocentricity. Though he has a patriarchal nature, he is physically and mentally weak. He is not strong enough to express his basic emotions. Through this

character, Adoor explores the dichotomies and ambivalences in the matrilineal system. The background of the plot can be read from the images and dialogues. As explained earlier, the film reflects the nature of those who remained inactive during reforms in the class and caste systems.

Unni maintained financial stability and caste superiority in the past. The clues that Adoor has used as props in his film enhance the aesthetic charm, and even the noises add to the meaning. The study intends to bring out the power relations within the changing family structure. The film displays the dilapidated conditions of those cultural props, which were once indicators of class and economic dominance. The decay of these assets indicates financial instability. The reading of the cause of this gives an idea about the decline of matrilineal systems among Nair families and the land reform bill. The character Unni is considered the beholder of wealth, status, power, and privilege. Being the *karanavar*, Unni was granted authority over the land and property. The structure of the film can be read as an offshoot of the reaction to the abolition of the joint family system in 1976. Unni is a character who is not ready to part ways with his sisters.

The plot of the film frames Unni as a parasitic character who depends upon his spinster sister Rajamma for his daily rituals. Unni wants the privileges, so she acts as a dutiful slave. Unni denies the attempt to get her married off, as he thinks that a share of the property has to be given. Here, gender is a problematic factor in the matrilineal and patriarchal systems. The character Rajamma does not have the voice to express her desire to get married. The subversive role of the gender hierarchy is evident in the characterisation of Rajamma, and Unni exploits her to enjoy his privileges. He never takes any initiative to get the younger sister

married. He refuses to give the share when his elder sister Janamma and son Ravikuttan request it. Unni's escapism is cautiously reflected in two different shots. Unni is not ready to speak with or tries to avoid his elder sister and his son.

Unni is the one who is threatened in the film's opening scenes. The very image of Unni and the rat trap are often related. The rat trap even becomes a synonym for power when there is enough food in it. The rat takes no effort to escape. The rat is not aware of the consequences. The rat becomes powerless and understands that it is a trap when the feed is over. There is a constructed association between Unni and the rats. Unni's *taravadu* is also powerful as long as it has wealth. When the wealth is dispersed and the granary is empty, they are unable to maintain the home. The policies of the state act as an exertor of power, and they disrupt the carefree and idle attitude of Unni.

Unni screams at night because he believes a rat has bitten him. He cries out for the help of his younger sisters. The weakness and fearful nature of Unni stand in contrast to his sisters' attempts to chase it and trap it in the rat trap. He is a man who is interested only in himself. There are other scenes in the film that show the fragility of Unni. He is a defiant who is not strong enough to chase away the cow who intrudes on their courtyard. He abandons a journey because he must cross a mud pool.

The idle nature of Unni is vividly understood when he remains apathetic to the sisters' hint that some thieves have intruded on their plot to take the coconuts. He is not ready to disturb his sleep. Unni's obsession with his own body made him stick to certain demands, such as a hot water bath. His extreme attention to his

nails and moustache reveals his self-absorption. This can be seen as a form of narcissistic pleasure that he has obtained from it. Unni's lament in the last scene shows his complete defeat at trying to live as a man according to codes structured for a society. Literally, the film also clearly turns upside down the courage and power associated with males through him. It is a satire on men who live in leisure and idleness. Adoor shifts the position of the central male figure in the cinema. It breaks the conventions of focusing the heroic attributes on the male character.

The character Unni represents a community, or he is one of the representatives of the male characters. Adoor tries to tell a story of a community who lived in his time. When the axiom of hierarchy is shifted, there are those who tend to change and those who cannot accept the change. Some resist and challenge the change with their power.

Adoor describes Unni's apathy toward the changes outside throughout the story. Through Unni, he introduces the characters in his family and the village. Unni's confrontation with others, which she opens to the spectators, can be read in parallel with the connotations and denotations of her age. The study does not intend to focus on the historical context of the era, but rather on how the film deconstructs power structures. Class, caste, and gender are obvious seats of power. It is unavoidable to represent an age without these constructs. When Adoor tells the history, to be specific, through the narration of the filmic text, there is a deconstruction of the history. Family and society are relevant signifiers that produce and mould power systems.

Unni becomes a character of satirical nature when he is placed in a context of power relations. The very narcissistic nature of Unni makes him think that he holds some power. But his weakness is revealed when placed in contrast with his sisters. He always needs the help of his sister. Though he possesses external power (the status of being a male), his will power is insufficient to express his sexual desire. Unni became sexually attracted to Meenakshi, and his nervousness is an after effect of his powerlessness and repressed sexual desire. He considers it a forbidden passion. Being the *karanavar* of a reputed and aristocratic Nair family, he thinks that he has to adhere to and practice structural code. While reading a letter from Sreedevi's book, Unni's facial expressions are highlighted.

When his sister Rajamma becomes ill, his chauvinistic attitude is revealed. He has taken no initiative to give her medication or even attempt to inquire about the illness. His attitude becomes chauvinistic when he insists on hot water and tea. He is not concerned about others. His elder sister Janamma spoke about their sister's illness and Unni is totally apathetic towards it. He asks about other women in the home to serve his needs. The film raises concerns about the role of women being reduced to mere slaves who must serve the needs of men. Here, Unni is a man who never does any physical labor or gets involved in any activity. His insistence on getting food on time and the discomfort that results when there is a delay shows the gender disparity.

Unni considers women subservient to men. But he does not play an aggressive role. Through him, Adoor paints the idleness of a generation, a resultant of feudalism. He always plays a passive role in the fulfillment of his responsibilities. Adoor questions or dismantles the structural unity of the family.

He does not have heroic attributes. He is physically weak and a nervous and fearful man. But at the same time, being the male member and the head of the family, he insists on the privileges.

The character named Vareed Mappila, an old tenant of their family, also speaks about the irresponsible attitude of the character. When there is no yield from the coconut trees, he complains that the trees are not properly manured. Though this hints at the irresponsible and carefree nature of Unni Adoor, it implicitly speaks about the economic instability of Nair families. Unni is the product of a generation that lived with leisure and idleness. Since the property was held in common, they could hold land titles. This raises worries, hardships, and challenges. The land reform bill of 1969 posed a serious threat to these families. Adoor presents the crisis of that generation through the dialogues. Also, he shows the servile nature of the characters like Vareed Mappilai. He does not even ask for the wages for his work, and he talks about their dependence on Unni's family. So, through these hints, Adoor depicts the old picture of Unni's ancestors and *taravadu*. At the same time, this makes a compromise with the present scenario.

Unni's nature of escapism from his elder sister Janamma and his son Ravi shows his unwillingness to share. They are aware of the laws and rights. They question them and ask about their rights. In the family property, male and female family members have equal rights. Unni's authority in the family and the attempt to dismantle the authority are presented through them. The sister, Janamma, brings her elder son to claim their share. Unni does not respond to anything when she asserts her rights over the property. She tries to establish her rights in the home through his son. The nephew does not show any respect to the uncle. He considers

and tries to claim ownership over every property in the mother's home. Though Unni dislikes this and considers this a violation of his private space, Unni does not have the courage to ask him back.

There are two reasons for the apathy in this case. It was discussed earlier that they have the right to assert the claim according to their share in the matrilineal property. As a result, Unni is powerless to intervene. And also, the other thing is that, by nature, Unni does not question anything. He remains silent in the face of any intrusion into the home. When Unni is placed in a specific context, he occupies or contains power. Unni still holds the power of the old feudal order. The old feudalism does not have power in the plot discussed in the film. Unni's hold over the powers can be associated with the concept of erasure. The concept of erasure was developed by Martin Heidegger in the book *Being and Time* (1962). It is also influenced by poststructuralism. 'Erasure' means the traces of a sign exist, not the sign as an entity. In the case of Unni, power as a repressive apparatus plays no role. Physically, he is also a powerless character. However, his dominance over characters such as Keshu *Ammavan* (uncle), Mathaikutty, and, of course, his sister Rajamma is an example of this. They did not react solely because of the hegemonic characteristics of his caste and class' ideological assonance. Unni insults and shows resentment towards Mathaikutty and Keshu *Ammavan* in the guise of his dominant status in the caste.

Unni's evasion of the people who came with a notice and receipt reflects his poor economic situation. Unni never wants to hurt his ego by being powerless. Adoor employs this shot to help the audience understand his past and present situation. They are programmed to read the sign indicating that they have arrived

to collect funds. Unni's ego never allows him to speak about his poor economic condition. Unni also wishes to flee the person who delivered the legal notice.

The last shots show Unni's lament and inefficacy. The infirmity and helplessness are rooted in his unconsciousness, and the realisation that he has no role to play in history reveals more than Unni's identity crisis. Rather, it speaks about the crisis of a community in history. The speculative introspection transforms into aversion to the new power systems, and the impotency is complete. The last scenes can be seen as a nightmare. Unni becomes neurotic not due to the psychological imbalance but because he cannot accept the status of being powerless. Unni's running in the last shot shows his attempt to escape from the new social order. A door frames it through a metaphorical representation.

In the final scene, Unni is shown from a high angle. The high-angle shot is used to diminish the power of its subject, and the low-angle shot is used to enhance it. High-angle shots represent vulnerability or powerlessness, while low-angle shots represent dominance or hegemony. However, claims about such fixity are not always consistent, as it is sometimes used as a defamiliarisation technique. Unni's drowning and ascent to the steps do not provide an answer or climax in the last scene.

The film attempts to locate power dynamics in the portrayal of female characters. Here, the submission and dominance of the women are in contrast with the role of the character Unni. Unni represents the old order and ideologies. Being a signifier in the power system has various levels of significance.

The characterisation alludes to women's roles in the matrilineal system. Matriarchy provides freedom and grants rights to women. The three women characters who break the conventions are Janamma, Sridevi, and Meenakshi, the worker women. The conversation between Janamma and her brother Unni traces the legislation for the abolition of the joint family system. She is bold enough to express her right to inherit. She questions the unwillingness of her brother to give her share. First, she sends her son to ask about her share. Later, she comes and asks for her share of the property. She discusses the irresponsibility of her brother with the estate manager, Vareed Mappilai. She openly discusses with him the disinterestedness of Unni in giving the share to his own lineage. She also asks for her share of the crop. She threatens Unni that her husband will come and ask for the same. Janamma, the character, tells the story of a matriarchal society that once existed. This explores how women are changed with reference to social change. When she insists that the system of joint families has existed and that its abolition has swayed its power, Adoor points out the existence of matrilineal and patrilineal systems.

Though new critics disagree with biographical criticism, the plot of the films points to the matrilineal system that prevailed in Kerala. Adoor himself admits that he has witnessed things, and the things that he has known intimately became the plot for the stories. The study does not intend to delve into the nature of matrilineality through the character of Janamma. Rather, it studies how power relations in the system and gender dichotomies were constructed. G. Saradamoni, in the book *Matrilineality Transformed*, speaks about how matrilineality originated in Kerala. The historians studied the fact that patrilineality existed in the past and

matriliny came into being later. The origins of matriliny are debated by Padmanba Menon and P. T. Sreenivasa Iyengar. The myth says that Pasurama, the mythological founder of Kerala, introduced the matrilineal system. He ordered sudra women to satisfy the desires of Brahman men, and they had to put off their chastity (Menon 198). It is also said that this was concocted by the Nambuthiris to establish their superiority. The other reason cited is that they did not have conjugal relations with many castes, including lower sub-divisions of Nairs. Another reason is that Nair men had to join the military, and army women were supposed to take care of the house and properties.

Saradamoni opines that these have not offered any identity or security to women. Actually, it prevailed among both the landed upper caste and the landless lower caste. Matriliny offered better status for women than patriliney. She holds the opinion that Matriliny has offered identity, security, and autonomy to women. However, theorists and anthropologists have attempted to persuade us that women in matrilineal families were controlled, if not oppressed, by matrilineal kin.

Adoor speaks about the age that shows the disintegration of this system and at the same time contains the traces of it. The study attempts to provide a parallel reading of both the literary studies and Adoor's films. Both the authors of books and the auteur have witnessed and become a part of this system. However, they have strategic differences in their interpretation of the age.

Rajamma is a character who possesses internal strength. But to a certain extent, she carries the traces of the old matrilineal system. She is submissive to her brother, who is rooted in the authority of *Karanavar*. She is the victim of all kinds

of oppression. Rajamma does not have an opinion of her own. Even though she has a desire to marry, she does not express it. When a marriage proposal is brought to her, she does not express an opinion. She curiously comes to hear about the proposal. But it is also understood that it is a vague attempt. Her brother has no intention of marrying her off because he believes he has to give her the share or the dowry,

The sound of aeroplane is used as a contextual metaphor. It is intentionally employed as a metaphor for flight. She could never see it, and her vision became pale at the sight. It can be read as impossibility of escape for Rajamma. Because of the sunlight, she could not see the plane. The overwhelming power of Unni over Rajamma prevents her flight from the home. The spectators also can not see it, and only her sister Sreedevi saw it. Sreedevi's ability to see shows her impending escape.

Domestic responsibilities are an example of servitude. In the spatial structure, she never comes to front space of the home. She always stands behind the door to express her opinion. She comes outside only to perform household duties. She cleans with a broom to chase the cow out, and in another scene, it is shown that she is taking pepper from the tree. She is a woman who has internal power. She is more courageous than her brother. Unni looks through window from the home, while Rajamma stands on top. Unni's attempt to move into an interior space again shows his inertness. Rajamma atleast makes an attempt to break the bondage in the film.

Sreedevi is the offspring of a new order. She breaks the conventions of domesticity attributed to women. She is presented as a character in contrast to Rajamma. She is the one who went out to study. She is preoccupied with herself and bold enough to give voice to her passions and desires. She always cares about herself. Adoor, most of the time, takes the viewer to read Unni through the eyes of Sreedevi. She mocks at the fear and nervousness of Unni in her mind.

Adoor poignantly uses the significance of the title 'The Rat Trap' through this character. He uses the long shots of Sreedevi taking the trap and drowning it in the pond. This literally symbolises the killing of a rat. But it also shows the death of the old systems. And Sreedevi, as a representative of the new generation, takes the initiative to kill the rat. She, as a woman, does not confine herself to silent servitude.



Fig: 1 Sreedevi in the film *Elipathayam*

Adoor tracks the long shot, which takes almost one minute of her walking through a plot full of trees. This implies that she is attempting to take a new shift by drowning the previous ones. Her color of dress is poignant, as red denotes the color of revolution and spirit. Sreedevi can also be seen as the representation of resistance. She is ready to embrace the spirit of a new life. She makes her own life decisions. She is not as submissive as Rajamma, who never takes a decision for herself and leaves it to the men of the family. Sreedevi believes that her life must be run by her choices. She knows it is obvious and understands the attitude of her brother, who wants to break with tradition and the old aristocracy.

J. Devika's study in the work *Kulasthreeyum Chandapennum* is significant in the reading of this character. She says that there are two binary oppositions in the addressing of women: *Tharavattil Pirannaval* (a woman who belongs to aristocratic lineage and high class order) and *Chandapennu* (a woman who belongs to lower class strata). A woman who adheres to the values and traditions of *Taravadu* and belongs to a class of high order is an aristocratic woman, and a woman who works out in paddy fields and belongs to the lower caste is a *Chandapennu*. *Taravadu* is considered the epitome of class and economic power. The power structures of class and caste are reflected in these dichotomies. These systems, however, have become questioned and problematic by the late twentieth century. There was a rupture in the structure of these systems. According to Devika, western education has influenced the generation of the 19th century, which rejected some systems and encouraged the new reforms. This generation brought about reformatory changes in the Cochin and Travancore regions. They are forming the new public sphere. With their efforts, they openly discussed the

measures for reform in news articles, magazines, and discussion forums. They thought about how to reform their own caste and class. Devika adds that these were carried out by Syrian Christians and Nairs. According to her, the people who got privileges from the socio political changes were these Renaissance thinkers.

The value system of these neopagans includes an inclination towards the property laws of the capitalist system, the upliftment of society through the economic growth of individuals, the conditions for a competitive economic function, etc. Actually, this was influenced by western countries. However, the basic principles of equality, fraternity, and brotherhood have a western influence as well. But these neo-uplifters have practiced them without compromising their ideologies. They did not give women equality with men in the gender structure.

The last decades of the 19th century were a time of intense criticism of the caste system in general. The missionaries and companions argued that this system, which in God's eyes was equal, created by God, and separated mankind, was contrary to nature, man, and God alike. There were some who wrote outside of missionary influence, borrowing egalitarianism from Western political thought. The two groups had one thing in common: the claim that the difference between men and women could be explained by their physical characteristics. The missionaries and other reformers alike argued that nature itself had endowed them with the physical qualities and attitudes of men and women, through which the social status of men and women should be determined.

Accordingly, the woman's proper place was said to be the home. It came down to the responsibilities of housework, childbirth, raising children, and the

responsibility to influence family members through emotions in general and lead them in the right direction. New writers and missionaries argued that the home, as opposed to the outside world, was a place where peace and love could prevail, and that nature instilled in every woman the qualities that she deserved. Love, kindness, forgiveness, affection, the power to influence other human beings through words, tears, and requests—all these are innate in a woman. However, they lamented that traditional family practices did not nurture such qualities at all and that the real "femininity" of women in traditional families was simply wasted. Educate women in a way that nurtures their "special qualities," change family habits, and reform marriage practices—these are suggestions put forward by many authors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to reclaim the "true femininity" of women. The gender differences existed within a society though the caste system was eradicated. Inherent in this was the notion that differences between men and women would not interfere with their equality. In societies where the home and the outside world have the same power and recognition, there is a growing optimism that gender equality will come naturally (Devika 74-77).

Adoor problematizes the character of Rajamma. She performs the role of submissiveness. Through her characterisation, he also gives voice to the power structures embedded in the reform movements of this particular age. Actually, through each of the female characters, he analyses and, at the same time, leaves the spectators to reflect on the ideological power operations embedded in the gender dichotomies. Janamma and Sreedevi, the characters, spoke out against the idealised role of women. When Unni is not ready to compromise his personal comforts, these two satirise him and do not pay much attention to him. Sreedevi

gives preference to her personal interests. Rajamma also does the same, and both of them give importance to their personal space. Rajamma also at one point ridicules the sisters' lack of interest in the need for property.

Though Rajamma plays the submissive role, she is also aware of the hegemonic characteristics of class dominance. When the worker woman Meenakshi requests permission to bathe in their home's pond, she expresses her displeasure. Here, Adoor problematises the grudges prevalent against the lower caste. Through its characters, the film raises questions about the caste and class systems of Kerala. The lower caste starts asking questions about their rights. And there was also the influence of the reform of the caste system through missionaries and western education.

Adoor's attitude toward the lower caste is expressed through three characters. The treatment of Unni towards the character called Keshu Ammavan shows the false pride and self-esteem of Unni. When Keshu Ammavan speaks about a marriage proposal for Unni's sister Rajamma, Unni rejects it. When he insists on the proposal, to justify his deed, Unni taunts the character Keshu Ammavan (uncle) as the person who came to their house as *sambandam*. Even though *sambandam* was considered a normal and accepted relationship during that time, Unni attempts to insult the character called Kesuammavan for being related to their family through *sambandam*.

The dominance and subservience in the matriarchal structure of the family are represented here, as well as how power structures influence submission. Keshu Ammavan admits that he is related to Unni's family through the *sambandam*. As a

result, there is no authority in matriarchal power relations to intervene in the decisions of the woman's partner. The eldest male member, or *karanavar*, of the family has power to take decisions. This questions the rupture and instability of power structures contained in family relationships of family. At the same time, his response includes an insulting remark about the decline of economic power. And he subtly attempts to undermine norms and power structures that were once thought to be natural and neutral during the matriarchy.

The representation of the character Mathaikutty foregrounds the Gulf Migration of the particular age. Mathai Kutty is the son of Vareed Mappilai. The attitude of Unni towards Mathai Kutty shows his egoistical nature and caste dominance. There is a scene in which t Mathaikutty, visits Unni's home. Unni shows his dominance and aversion toward him. He had a high financial status at the time, despite the fact that his father and forefathers were the only dependants of Unni's family. Through this character, Adoor also speaks about the changed financial conditions in the lives of the people. People from the lower castes began to migrate to Gulf countries in search of work. The mass migration of people from Kerala to the Gulf from 1972 to 1983 is called the Gulf Boom.

Gulf migrants, many of whom were from the working and the lower-middle classes, gradually gained social status. A myth was in the making: that of the 'Gulf man'. Gulf migrants were highly sought after as bridegrooms. Their attractive earnings, irrespective of their shortcomings, enabled them to marry into wealthy and respected families when they returned home. The Gulf Dream has

also found its expression in Malayalam cinema and literature (Malayalam Manorama Year 1990).

The Gulf migrants gradually gained social status. But the representatives of the old generation were never ready to embrace the changed social scenario. Mathaikutty brings perfume for them. His and his sisters' attitudes highlight false pride and the gradual acceptance of equality. Rajamma brings him tea and extends hospitality. But Unni intentionally hurts the pride of Mathaikutty by mentioning the tedious work conditions of the Gulf immigrants. Saradmoni in her work *Matriliny Transformed* says:

The economic changes of the late nineteenth century and the strictness of the new legal system had ruined many tharavads. From Nairs to Christians and even Avarna Hindus, there was mounting evidence of wealth. Such a transfer, coupled with the spread of egalitarian ideas among the same groups, posed a threat to the social position and the local political dominance of Nairs, which few could ignore (243).

The other, which depicts the condition of class power relations, is Meenakshi, the worker woman. The very characterisation of this lower-caste woman as vulnerable questions the power relations embedded within the text and outside the text. The depiction of a lower-caste woman is presented as the other. The power politics are embedded even in the physical representation of the dalit woman, Meenakshi, in contrast with the nair women, the sisters of Unni.

The use of popular characters as upper caste women emphasizes the binary representations of civilized/uncivilized, beautiful/ugly, and so on. Christina Romeo, in her paper titled "The Decathected Dalit Body in Malayalam Cinema," says that the dark skin and unattractiveness associated with dalit characters are often repeated and the condition of the same is imprinted in the social mind, and the spectators fail to overcome such stereotyped presentations. The dark-skinned characters are presented as the other, or the film makers intentionally made them dark on the screen to represent the Dalit. She says that when the lower caste is represented on screen, they are created as the "other" of the dominant upper caste women. So, such a woman will be devoid of identity, and the spectators will identify only the laboring body. In contrast, non-dalits establish their intellectual and social superiority.

Meenakshi is portrayed as sexually vulnerable as a lower caste woman. Adoor typifies the subjectivity of a lower-caste woman as a product of sexual objectivity. As a member of the lower caste, she considers herself and her body as an object to be devoured by patriarchal constraints. Her submissiveness shows the servitude of the caste and gender hierarchies.

In her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", Laura Mulvey discusses how films are consumed to satisfy the masculine appetite for scopophilia. Here she says how the male gaze, as the representation of power, controls the passive woman on screen. She defines the woman as "a signifier for male others bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions" in a patriarchal culture. Here, the character Unni tries to suppress his fantasies, while the character Meenakshi tries to instill pleasure in him. She

has been rendered passive, and her efforts to make Unni gravitate towards her are another form of passive submission. She also tries to incite pleasure through sexual overtones and gestures. One way Adoor problematises the age is through the representation of marginalised people, and the film's marginalised characters are identified by an identity imposed on them by the ideological and hierarchical operations of the caste system. The self of these individuals resists the given identity and desires or admires an identity that elevates their status to that of the privileged or upper class.

The film *Kathapurushan* narrates the political history of Kerala through the parallel changes in the lives of a Nair family. The study attempts to look at these changes as changes in the power operations of Kerala. It seeks to examine how the sovereign and disciplinary modes of power act. The intended analysis uses Foucauldian perceptions of sovereign power as legislative, prohibitive, and censoring in *The History of Sexuality: An introduction* (Foucault 83-85). The film is not a factual account of political events. But Adoor narrates the political happenings from his perspective, and he is a product of power discourses. Adoor says that the film is partially the story of his own life. He draws the characters from his life. Every political system or ideology is a representation of power. When it is part of history and narrated, the author's perspective also holds some power.

Gautaman Bhaskaran in *Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Life in Cinema* says that every system must adapt and change. There are characters in his films like Unni in *Elepathayam* and Sreedharan in *Mukhamukam* who do not adapt themselves to this system. They are unable to adapt to the neo power systems.

This film unfolds the political turmoil between the 1940s and 1970s. The shifts in the power systems, such as political and caste systems are narrated through the story of Kunjunni.

The film unfolds the growth of the protagonist, Kunjunni. Adoor, as an auteur, reads the age of the same period through his perspective. Adoor's ideologies, beliefs, and attitudes intervene in the depiction of the age. The props serve to speak in the film like *Elepathayam* to speak about the old aristocracy of the nair *taravadu*, to which the protagonist Kunjunni belongs. Adoor frames the shots in such a way that they sketch much more than the surface reality. The big house, wooden frames and windows, furniture etc. are used as metaphors that create a narrative space for the plot.

The representation of class is significant. When Adoor speaks and represents the family of Kunjunni, the dependent individuals or characters in their family, called the other, always serve them as subordinates. The family of Janamma, the female maid, and Veluchar, the manager, serve the family as servants. They address the character Kunjunni as Kunjunni *yajamanan* (master). This makes him aware of the disparities that make up the social and economic aspects of the relationships. Ganguly studies: "Despite living under the same roof, these others clearly do not share his sense of home and class. Their presence underlines an unequal feudal structure of wealth and privilege" (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 144).

Ganguly, in his study, observes that Kunjunni has entitled himself to be superior in relation to the family of Janamma, including his friend Meenakshi.

“He registers the difference but does not reject it as perverse” (145). The difference in the class of hierarchical division is exemplified in spatial structure as well. The servant Janamma and her family live in a part of the house that is for servants. They do not have a space of their own. The manager of the house, Veluchar, also has a reserved space in the home. Both of them are devoid of spatial identity.

Domestic space is divided along lines of class and labour. Kunjunni can grasp this intuitively because he moves between his space and their space. The fluid movement between separate realms enables him to stay within and yet stand outside the hierarchy that governs the divisions within the household (145). Kunjunni is portrayed as a weak character in his childhood. He is dependent on others for his needs. Though the old generation consists of Veluchar and Janamma, the position of the *vaidyan* (physician who deals the treatment with ayurvedic medicine) and the astrologer is also significant. They are aware of the social and economic marginalisation created by the ideological structures of caste.

The dependant servants’ servitude to their families is due to ideological affiliations with the class and creed. Actually, Adoor creates ‘spaces of the other, (144) through the representation of the marginalised main characters Veluchar, Janamma, Meenakshi, PachuPillai, and the younger children. Though the fluidity of movement takes place between the two spaces, the positions of being in the privileged class and the underprivileged class function as the sites of power disparities.

There is a scene in which Kunjunni comes back from school crying, and the reason he gives is that the teacher there calls him 'petty bourgeois'. Actually, this becomes an insult for Kunjunni. This raises questions about the hierarchical disruptions in the seats of power. The decline in the economy has caused dislocations in their status. The caste reform movements, the influence of Gandhian values, and western education made the lower class aware of their rights. The term 'bourgeois' obviously applies to Kunjunni which pertains to the economic security and class hierarchy of him in the ancient days. The Encyclopedia defines the term 'petty bourgeois' as "a transitional class in which the interests of the major classes of capitalist society meet and become blurred; the petty bourgeois is located between these two classes in terms of its interests as well as its social situation". It represents a distinctive form of social organisation in which petty productivity is mixed with, and owned by, family labor. This was replaced by Nicos Poulantzas, who defines the term on the basis of ideological, political, and economic criteria. According to him, they are unproductive wage earners and the carriers of ideological dominance.

The social class structure is very predominant in Kerala. The *Nambuthiris* (one of the classes of Hindu caste) belong to the top of the class hierarchy, and Nairs come below them. As explained earlier, they are land owners. They controlled a major portion of the land. The lower castes were the tillers of the land. They have undergone numerous tribulations. The film points out the changes in Kerala, which can also be read in parallel with social reform and democratic movements in Kerala. The study attempts to look at how these changes have taken

place and how they caused the shift in the power structure from the centre to the periphery.

The caste system prevalent in Kerala is the root cause of the tribulations suffered by people of lower caste people. The law was not egalitarian. There were untouchability and unapproachability. There were restrictions on intercaste marriage and social mobility. Manual labor was considered as a degraded occupation by the upper caste and the land lords. The influence of missionaries and western education resulted in changes to the rigid caste structure. The subversive forces questioned the social practices of discrimination in Kerala. The nationalist and reform movements paved the way for changes, such as the abolition of caste and class as sources of power.

The movements led by Sree Narayana Guru campaigned for equality. He questioned the Brahmin hegemony and fought against social disabilities. The changes witnessed in the last phase of the 19th and earlier phases of the 20th centuries could be taken as a cultural and ideological struggle against the hegemonical constraints of caste hierarchy. Adoor witnessed the result of these in his life. The erasure of these tribulations and their aftereffects were contested. The problematic relationship between the upper caste, especially the Nair class, and the political and non-political movements is narrated in the text of the film through the family of Kunjunni.

There is a scene in which Kunjunni returns from the school in tears, and the reason for his grief was the comment made by the master in the school. The master insulted him as a petty bourgeois. Veluchar's reflection on this remark was

significant. The master belongs to a class lower than the family of his master's (Kunjunni), and Veluchar criticises the master as he has once passed in front of their home with chappals. Though the caste reformation has swept away such customs those were insisted on the basis of class divisions, Veluchar represents a generation that neglects to comprehend the changes. He criticises Gandhi's principle that everyone should be treated equally. Though it creates a light sense of humor about the innocence of Veluchar, it reflects the undeniable dominance of power. Veluchar's perspective on his master's family's class hegemony underpins his egoistical pride as well as his opposition to reform movements that shackle their dominance. Veluchar's extreme servitude towards the master and, through that, the upper caste, is significant here. Though this is a short scene, it again points out the age and influence of the Gandhian movement in Kerala. It reinforces his class superiority along with the portrayal of his age. When history is represented, a powerful figure is mentioned, and Adoor speaks about the consequences of that. The assassination of Gandhiji and the reverberations it caused in Kerala are depicted in a long shot of a procession of white-clad congress leaders. Though Veluchar criticises Gandhi's principles, he and the mother of the family could not understand the reason to murder such a person as Gandhi, whose principles are based on 'ahimsa'.

The arrival of Vasu, the maternal uncle of Kunjunni, points to the parallel struggles of the era. Actually, Adoor gives importance to mini-narratives through the filmic text. Vasu was an adherent of Gandhian principles. Later, it is understood that he left the Gandhian movement and told his friends that real freedom could be obtained only through revolution. Adoor emphasises the

importance of individual activists for change once more. But at the same time, he fears the forces of the state—the police. Every system holds power, and that power is not absolutely pervasive. It is also productive. It has resistance. Ganguly says:

For Gopalakrishnan, history is a set of variations on a theme—a series of interactions, conflicts, transformations, and refinements through which society and humanity evolve. It is an ongoing process with no pause and no promise of utopia. The individual, by virtue of his or her actions, is an integral part of this process and, in turn, is shaped by the forces he or she sets in motion. There is thus a continuous struggle to define oneself in relation to the state and ideology. According to Gopalakrishnan, it is one's moral duty to oppose all systems once they become inevitably good and oppressive. As he observes, "Any system . . . soon begins to develop its own mechanisms of defense. . . It tries to annihilate individual dissent. Human progress has been mainly possible because individuals have kept fighting that kind of encrustation" (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 142).

The post modernist reading is relevant here because Adoor interprets the movements as mini-stories. The importance of each decade is portrayed through the representation of a landmark movement. But it is not portrayed as a major theme. Adoor reinvests it with the critical perspective of the auteur, and the artistic vision is also significant. The communist electoral revolution of 1957 has a

great impact on the lives of the people in that decade. Adoor presents the victory of the communist party through a shot that shows the heading of news articles. As a mini-narrative, Adoor tries to present the parallel condition in the lives of the people. The land reform bill of 1969 is a landmark event in the rule of the communist party. It represents the decadence of power inherent in the hands of a class. As in *Elepathayam* Adoor, the author recaptures the aftereffects of the event. Because the land economy was a signifier of power for the upper classes of society, restrictions on the possession of land led to a loss of power. Adoor has experienced and witnessed the crisis and captured the same in the films.

It is not narrated as a major event, but the reading of that event is possible through the actions. The financial condition of Kunjunni's family is weak. They are unable to hold Janamma's family. Adoor brings a tragic note to the scene in which Janamma and family bid farewell to their master's home. The spatial relations implied in the scene are also important. The women occupy the major space of the frame in this shot. Janamma, the maid, is more powerful than her husband. Pachu Pillai, her husband, is physically weaker than his wife. The maternal grand mother 'Karanavathi' plays a dominant role in decision-making, in the home of Kunjunni. Adoor tries to provide a gentleness that binds the boundaries of the master-servant class division. Despite the fact that the lower class is a beneficiary of the land reform bill, they prefer to remain subservient in the scene.

When Veluchar criticises the bill here, it is Kunjunni who supports it. He says that they too have rights on the land. The land actually belongs to the tiller. The ideology of the party to which he belongs is reflected in his thought. The

scene depicting Veluchar's plea to the police to release Kunjunni, as well as the police's attitude toward him, is an example of extreme servitude to power. The police's inhumane attitude demonstrates the pervasiveness of power.

The state becomes synonymous with power, and the subjects are compelled to submit to its will. The land reform bill has created tensions. Here, the devastated condition of Kunjunni's family becomes more complicated. They had already spent an amount on sending his maternal uncle Vasu to England for higher studies. They have spent money on Kunjunni's education, for example. As a result, they are helpless and unable to support Janamma's family.

Adoor narrates the turmoils in Kerala's political sphere with Kunjunni's life. Through Kunjunni, he represents a generation that is trapped in hidden power structures. The unseen power that acts as a decisive factor in the lives of the people is narrated through him. The plot of the film incorporates Jeremy Bentham's concept of panoptic surveillance and Foucauldian notions of power. The ideology of Marxism has influenced him. His perspectives are left-biased. He dislikes the label 'bourgeois'. He is addressed as a 'bourgeois' by his friend in the college.

His involvement in Naxalism is represented through how the police subdue the movement. He becomes actively involved with the Naxalite ideology. It represents the voice of an age in which the youth are influenced by the Naxalite movement. The naxalite uprising of the 1960s arose as a reaction to feudalism and bourgeoisie, as well as the degeneration of Kerala's communist party. The educated, radical youth fought for their rights.

Adoor brought this experience only in this film, *Kathapurushan*, and narrated how the state intervened and repressed the movement's trajectories. There are films such as *Amma Ariyan* by John Abraham and *Aaranayakam* by Hariharan that have narrated about the naxalite movement in Kerala. In the film, *Kathapurushan* Adoor does not trace his experiences as a naxalite but rather as a signifier of the power structure. He intertwines it with the trajectory of events in the political history of modern Kerala.

Kunjunni is a character who develops his reflections and perspectives in response to the needs of society. His youth inclination toward leftist ideology, as well as influence from his uncle, led him to join the party. The repressive apparatus of the state tries to resist the movement. Being a member of the feudal family itself, he fought for the rights of the downtrodden. The film also captures the repression of the police to subdue the activism, in the case of his uncle and himself.

Adoor picturises the period of black emergency through the representation of visuals. It traces the efforts to block the printing of inflammatory literature. It again questions the freedom of press and Kunjunni's attempt to resist it shows the co existence of resistance together with sovereign power. Adoor traces the origins of naxalism and its evolution through a collection of printed materials. The power of the printed literature in a state is also reflected. The power is in the form of the brutality of the police to destroy the printed literature that supports the Naxal movement. In a single shot, the color red is used, which indicates the suppression and attack of the police. There are no shots that clearly show the police attack. But

it is conveyed through a single shot that is full of red canvas. In a consecutive shot, the sound of beats and boots is heard. It reflects the repression of the police.

Adoor traces each epoch in an artistic and intelligible way, as it does not deviate from the plot. But power structures in each epoch are chosen with subtlety. The power of the state during the emergency period is also pointed out here. The paradigm shift in power (plurality of power relations) in the hands of the political party suspended people's rights. The national emergency declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi between June 25, 1975, and March 21, 1977, imposed restrictions on fundamental rights. The prime minister has the authority to rule by decree, suspend the elections, and curb civil liberties. The police hold the power, and Adoor associates it with the police activism and the resistance of the naxalites to overthrow it.

The attempt by Kunjunni to publish the book *The Hard Consonants* reflects the resistance of the power structures to stop its publication. It again shows the imposition on the individual to get his work published. He has to check whether the political climate is right enough for its publication. He seeks the help of a journalist friend, and when it is published, the government bans its publication. As a realist, Adoor, through Kunjunni, recreates himself. This is a direct reference to attacks on the freedom of a writer. It limits his or her artistic freedom. The power incites opposition. This book is described as 'explosive' by his friend. The process of making the book has taken place during the emergency period. The brutal suppression of the Naxal movement in Kerala made him write about the plight of the people under an authoritarian regime. It is obvious that he has copied the facts of the political sphere that he has known intimately.

The props used in this film play an important role in contextualizing the power representations. The wooden frames used in the house, like in *Elepathayam*, signify the dilapidated condition of the home. However, the shots of these props reveal additional meanings. The window is a prominent prop in Adoor's films. The spatial representation also signifies power entanglements. The wooden frame of the door, through which Kunjunni's mother is shot and which always remains in the way of the door, represents the repressed self of women. The shots taken as she is positioned inside the frame of the window reflect subjectivity.

The *kindi* which is made of bronze (a type of pitcher found in old Kerala houses), is shown in the opening scenes. There are such copper vessels of different shapes in different parts of the home. Adoor takes one medium shot, in which there are only vessels. It shows the past financial heritage of the family. Adoor visually depicts the decline of power by changing the props. Kunjunni enters his adolescence, and the financial situation deteriorates once more. So, there is a shift in the use of the props. The *kindi*, which is made of copper, is changed to a vessel made of steel. That visual is brought in together with the arrival of his uncle Vasu as an ascetic.

The grandmother's golden chain is highlighted in the shots that focus on her costume. It shows her past aristocracy and richness. Again, the degradation of their economic condition is stated through the scene, which shows the servant Janamma and her family being sent away from the home. So as a token of help, the grandmother handed over the golden chain to Meenakshi. She is the only one to remind her that she has property. Being the *Karanavathi*, she is portrayed as

powerful and is also a member of the matrilineal system. She holds power and authority in the home, though she has a gentle nature toward everyone. There is a scene that shows both the long shot of the grandmother and the pointed arch roof of the home together. It speaks about her dominance and authority.

There are big bedsteads with wooden carvings in the home which also shows their ancient glory. Every cot in the home is built with heavy wooden frames. The wooden cot acquires significance as Kunjunni sleeps on this and the picture of that cot is taken from outside together with the open wooden frame of window. This cot is symbolic of the family's power. Later the significance becomes more understood when a person approaches Kunjunni asking whether he has plans to sell the home. He brings the suggestion that when they put the cost for the home they should add the specific wooden cot kept in the first floor. It was the cot of the forefather of Kunjunni. The person wants that for his father who was once servant of their home. He considers that as a symbol of proud and power.



Fig: 2 The wooden cot in the film *Kathapurushan*

When the economic condition of Kunjunni's family becomes weak he has no hesitation to sell off the property. At the same time the servant becomes rich enough to own the property. The shifts in the power structures are indicated through the intelligent representation of props intertwined with the plot of the story.

The ancient structure of the house as a prop becomes devoid of power. The ancient house stands for the ancient heritage and glory of the Nair *taravadu*. But it acquires meaning only in the light of economic power. The decline in economic status has reduced the structure of the home to the status of an object. Meenakshi, the wife of Kunjunni, makes a metaphorical comment about their plight in that house. They are like trapped rats. For them, the house is the only reminder of power. Their decision to sell the house is an attempt to shed the outer manifestation of hierarchy. Kunjunni is ready to make a deal about the house, including the wooden bedstead, with the son of their old servant.

The character Kunjunni is more practical than Unni in *Elepathayam*. When Unni wants to live as a trapped rat in the old house, Kunjunni makes an escape from the trap. They sold the property and bought a new plot. Kunjunni does manual labor, and the jump from the plot of the old, big *taravadu* to the small house shows the power shift. Again, the old house, symbolic of power, belongs to their servant. Thus, cultural props take on significance in *Elepathayam* and *Kathapurushan* in order to reflect power structures.

The stammering of Kunjunni can also be taken as a defense against the power system in the school. The school's rigid system imposes principles on everything. The school serves as a metaphor for the construction of structures for

everything in this case. Kunjunni strives as a child to master the Malayalam consonants with verbal clarity. When he looks and enjoys the sight of a lamb eating the leaves, the master becomes impatient and furious, and he tries to impart the learning. The master's anger against him is also a rage against the class superiority of Kunjunni. Stammering can be seen as a sort of resistance against the rigidities of the power system.

The very title of his literary output, *The Hard Consonants* is resistance against the authorities. The title literally refers to the allusion made to his hardships in mastering the consonants. When he becomes an activist and writer, he recognises the forces against artistic freedom. Power relations act as an underlying factor in the acceptance and publication of literary output. The press itself is denied freedom of expression. The ruling parties hold power and impose restrictions on artistic freedom. Kunjunni's style of realism is evident in his act of resistance against his disagreements with the authorities. He refuses to open the letters from the editors together with the returned books.

Kunjunni makes an attempt with a journalist friend to publish the book. The government bans the sale of the book. Though it is an imposition on the freedom of speech, Kunjunni's reaction becomes a metaphorical allusion. He laughs at the news, and he starts speaking without stammering. Ganguly claims that the government's decision demonstrates how much the authority "fears the unsavoury truth of his work" (152).

With his pen, he can defy or combat the power. Ganguly says: As Kunjunni speaks with passion, empowered by his sense of purpose,

his stutter is cured for good. In this respect, it is really his triumph, and it frees him through his laughter from precisely the forces that seek to oppress him. (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 152).

Here the operations of power do not come to an end, and it is a play between the oppressor and the oppressed. The positions of the oppressor and the oppressed vary and are often abstract. It is not necessary that the power play by the oppressor is always pervasive. It is productive at times. Kunjunni shows his defiance towards society through his words, and the government fears the power of the same.

There is a jump cut from the shot in which he applies bear fat in the second phase of life. He becomes a young man. His shift in ideologies, with a preference for the ideology of the class system, demonstrates his defiance of dominance within him. But he is a character who tries to erase the hierarchical boundaries. Adoor represents that through the scenes in his childhood. Meenakshi acts as a more powerful child than Kunjunni in their relationship, and she provides support for him. Like that, when Kunjunni sleeps with Veluchar, he takes into account the racism. Kunjunni's being addressed as *Yajamanan* is the only hierarchy that existed between them.

Kunjunni's attitude towards Marxism and Naxalism later shows his apathy towards the ideologies of his own class. He agrees to the dictum that the land belongs to the tiller when Veluchar shows his dissent towards the land reform bill. The marriage of Kunjunni with Meenakshi is also another spark that ignores the

class system. Even Kunjuni's uncle Vasu says that was a good decision. Kunjuni never tries to hold the ancestral property, *tharavadu*, as a symbol of power. He shows happiness when someone comes forward and is ready to take the property. He has no hesitation or reluctance when he comes to know that he is the servant. He is hostile in his treatment towards him, unlike the character Unni in his attitude towards Mathaikutty.

The printed literature and processions represent a specific position in the film to convey a variety of messages. Adoor uses a long shot of a procession of Congress party workers in white to convey the news of Gandhi's assassination as well as the period of the story. Adoor attempts to speak about the influence of Gandhian idealism in Kerala through this and a previous shot in the conversation between Vasu and his mother. Political turmoil and displacement are also discussed in printed literature, particularly in news articles.

The shot that covers the first half of a *Deshabimani* news paper shows the news about the passing of the land reform bill and also how the parallel reading of non-literary text reflects the party's ideology. The newspaper occupies the most prominent space on the screen. The *Deshabimani* news paper often supports the ideology of the leftist party. It is also shown how partiality is implied in the process of writing.

Adoor again uses moving images of the front pages of different Malayalam news papers in a single shot, such as *Malayalam Manorama*, *Mathrubumi*, *Janayugam*, *Kerala Kaumudi*, and *Deshabimani*. The study attempts to consider these images of news articles as non-literary texts. It represents the

power structures in the political sphere of Kerala. It depicts the inner and outer conflicts in modern Kerala, and he tries to depict the rise and fall of power structures between the 1960s. It gives a glimpse of the Naxal activism of the 1960s. The headlines of the news point to the naxal attacks against the police stations in Pullalli and Wayanad and to the murder of the policeman. The particular shot ends with the conspiracy to overthrow the left-front government in Kerala. This particular shot shows the political undercurrents of a decade in which naxal activism was at its peak. It also tells about the naxal activities in the colleges. It is often linked to Kunjunni's naxal underpinnings.

The brutal attacks of the Naxals against the feudal land lords and their revolt for the rights of peasants are implied in the glimpse of news papers. The consecutive jump to the shot in the printing press shows a glimpse of the booklets and articles that favor naxalism. The police conducted a search of the printing press and found clandestine literature. The medium shots of the focus on Mao Zedong's "The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains," "Revolution through the Barrel of a Gun," "Naxalbari Peasant Revolt," "Learn from Telangana Strike", etc. are the articles that promoted the naxal spirit and urge among activists. These are considered clandestine, and the printing and distribution of them are considered illegal. The power of the police as a repressive force acts against activism. The Naxalites are regarded as a threat to the country and the state. The news about the overthrow of the United Front (left) government in the *Deshabimani* news paper, with which the shot concludes, demonstrates power struggles within the party between the CPI and the CPI(M), as well as opposition party moves against the United Front. The sound in the shot is powerful. The

sound of the printing machine and the force that makes it silent show the dominance of Juridico's discursive system of power. To clarify the time period, Adoor employs the contextual prop "Calendar" by the Kerala Government, which states the year 1968.

The women characters in the film are powerful. The grandmother, Janamma, the servant, and Meenakshi make bold decisions. To a certain extent, the male characters in the film are ineffectual. Kunjunni's father, Vasu, and Janamma's servant's husband, Pachu Pillai, are unreliable to their family. They have not succumbed to the responsibilities and duties of gender definitions. They are non-normative in the gender roles defined by society in familial relationships. This attains meaning when these characters are placed in a matrilineal context.

The plot that surrounds these characters takes place at a time before the abolition of matrilineal systems (1975). The women have to take care of themselves and their children. Kunjunni's father has deserted his wife and child, and he appears only once in the film, during her funeral. Pachu Pillai, also being irresponsible, was away from the family without taking care of them. Vasu, the educated uncle of Kunjunni, was sent to England for higher studies. However, he abandoned his studies and briefly joined the Gandhian movement. He quit and became ascetic in the last part of the film. He himself admitted guiltily that he had not fulfilled his obligations to his mother. The three men's apathy is evident in their treatment. "The failure of all three men as husbands and fathers is placed within the self-indulgent, enervating culture of feudalism. It is women who always pay the price, as Kunjunni discovers, watching his mother pine away and die prematurely" (Ganguly 149).

The fluidity of power relations or the shift in the structures of power is evident. When Kunjunni comes to call Meenakshi his life partner, her father refuses. He says that he is not ready to send his daughter off with a stuttering criminal. Despite his class in the hierarchy, Pachu Pillai's attitude shows the reversal of power. Here again, power becomes more of a strategy than a possession. Here, Adoor overthrows the opposition between the subject and object. Again, Kunjunni is ready to give him ten thousand rupees for Meenakshi. Here, Kunjunni overthrows the practice of dowry, in which the male partner is privileged.

Kunjunni grew up in a matrilineal culture with an authoritative male figure in her family. The authorial figure in Kunjunni's home is the grandmother, and her exercise of power is gentle and firm. Kunjunni has imbibed the nature of her grandmother. But at the same time, the film problematises the void of the father figure. The family often faced questions from the others (the astrologer and physician), and the attempts made by them urge the necessity of the father figure, and at times they construct the notion of otherness. Despite the inquiries made by Kunjunni's family, he has not responded. This is an offshoot of and a rebellion against the matrilineal system. The father figure has excluded himself from the responsibilities and duties. Kunjunni also wants to know about his father from Veluchar. He, despite the otherness imposed on him, needs the father figure in his childhood. Kunjunni's grief over Gandhi's death is a contextual metaphor that emphasises the need. Ganguly says:

The tears may seem strange until we place them in the context of his own father's absence, which he keenly feels because of the

social attached to it (when the ayurvedic physician inquires about the man there is a cut to Kunjuni lowering his eyes) and that translates into his sense of rejection. Although brought up among women in a matrilineal society, the boy is fully aware of the power and status of men. Even divinity, he discovers, is predominantly male in terms of gender (when he spends the night in Veluchar's room, the servant sings a hymn to god Rama). And in the larger world outside, men, like Gandhi, embody paternity and make things happen. Denied his father's stabilising presence, which would have helped him achieve both self definition and respectability, Kunjuni has identified with the country's pre-eminent symbol of fatherhood and now orphaned like the rest of the nation. It is his first encounter with the symbolic-in political terms-and anticipates his subsequent immersion in public life as an activist. As for now, Kunjuni struggles to overcome his sense of loss by rubbing fat above his lip. The hope is that it will sprout a moustache and thus accelerate his growth toward the confronting security of manhood (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 148).

The breach delivery, stutter, limp etc. are the markers of otherness. The one who is abandoned by the father adds to the social stigma constructed by the society. The decline of the feudalism and the economic depravity of the family add severity to these signifiers.

The film *Mukhamukam* discusses the life of a character who is a strong adherent of communist ideologies. His life is discussed in parallel with the rise

and fall of the Communist Party and its split into two. The film does not adopt a linear narrative to tell the story. There are discrepancies in the character of Sreedharan. Adoor has adopted a complex narrative pattern to tell the story. Through the character Sreedharan, the film posits the central discussion on communist ideologies. The film never draws a caricature of a powerful man who has heroic attributes to lead the movement. He is a powerful figure who possesses strong principles of the party's ideology. But the very portrayal raises questions about the aspect of power in the plot of the story and the characterization. Power is implicit in the plot of the story. The study attempts to look at the power encapsulated in different layers.

The story uses the technique of documentary to place the character. As in the film *Kathapurushan*, Adoor introduces the character through images of printed literature. The very uncertainty and ambiguity implied in the headlines add to the dimension of power. The film centres on the question “Who is Sreedharan?” and the answer to the question is told through a series of answers to this question.

The beginning of the film itself provides an obvious write-up about the period of the two parts of the story. The hint about the age is crucial to understanding the power structures of the age. The film is more than just an examination of party politics and its split. Rather, it discusses the conflict between the systems, which can be cited as power structures at a point in time.

The film's main point of contention is the conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. These terms acquire significance in the context of the rule of the political parties in parallel with the context of the age. Adoor denies reading the film as a criticism of the political party.

Sreedharan, the main character, is a trade union leader. Actually, through him, Adoor traces the power of organisations. Their act of power can also be read as an act of resistance. The industrialisation of Kerala led to the loss of manual labour. Adoor portrays the parallel growth of trade unions in Kerala. The formation of trade unions is a power tactic against the oppressor or the owners. Here, employers are seen as oppressors. Trade unions are formed to protect workers' rights as well as to protect employers from tyranny. It is a signifier that provides access to power.

The first shot depicts the after effects of industrialisation in Kerala. By far, the transition from manual labour to machine systems has caused unemployment. This is a realistic depiction of Kerala, where many people lost their jobs. As a protest against this, a trade union is formed to take over the lost jobs. Karl Marx writes about the trade unions as the instruments of the working class against capitalist oppression (Lozovsky 1). It can be considered resistance or power formation. In the first part of the film, power is not conceived, as it comes only from a central source, but it reverses and the voice of the oppressed is heard. Though Adoor denies the reading of the film as Marxist, the film obviously involves a tacit reading of the political power structure in Kerala.

A long shot that incorporates images of men and machines depicts the process of manufacture of tiles and its transition from manual labour to industrialisation. Sreedharan, an enigmatic character, holds certain power over the people. He has the power to influence the comrades through his thoughts on Marxism ideology. The study here attempts to read the operations of power in prominent power structures over time. The trade union as a system of power and resistance is exemplified through the character Sreedharan. The portrayal of the

character Sreedharan represents how a particular person or movement holds power and challenges the dictum for a certain period of time. The study comprehensively discusses the period and how trade unions wielded influence. The trade union movement originated in a coir factory industry in Alapuzha, Travancore, in 1922. It stood for the rights of working-class people to speak for them against capitalist society or the bourgeoisie. Mahatma Gandhi speaks about the trade union as something that entails all aspects of a worker's life, both at home and at work. It also intends to extend the moral and intellectual power of labor, and it raises the position of the labourer from mere slave to master. Pramod Varma and Suriya Mookerjee, speak about the functions of trade unions in "Trade Unions in India":

The activities of the association include collection of funds for the welfare of the labourers, medical assistance to the labourers, to establish a library and reading room ,to fight for compulsory primary education for all , and to fight against untouchability and other unjust practices (Varma 80).

Adoor has incorporated the functions of a trade union through the strike conducted by Sreedharan. The images of the process of manufacture make it clear that it is the production unit for tile manufacture. As the advent of machinery reduced the need for man power, the labourers lost their jobs abruptly. The labourers are the product of oppression. As every organisation is a form of power artifact, here the trade union organisation speaks for the labourers.

Adoor delineates the condition of poverty-stricken homes due to the loss of jobs. The costumes and mise en scène are expertly woven to fit the plot of the depraved condition. The labourers demanded that the dismissed employees be taken back. The power of their trade union movement makes the employees not

want to withdraw from any of the compensations. The power of the union or the strike by the labourers is not portrayed through processions. Rather like other films, the images in the words are powerful. It has a greater impact on the audience than the dialogues. The demands of the workers are conveyed through the written words on the placards. The central position of the protagonist, Sreedharan, who gives his extended support to the workers, makes their strike strong.

As strong as the workers resistance is, the management's power is also strong. Adoor has incorporated the functions of a trade union through the strike conducted by Sreedharan. The images of the process of manufacture make it clear that it is the production unit for tile manufacture. As the advent of machinery reduced the need for manpower, the labourers lost their jobs abruptly. The labourers are the product of oppression. As every organisation is a form of power artifact, here the trade union organisation speaks for the labourers. The management is unwilling to agree to the workers' demands. The power of the oppressor coincides with the power of the oppressed. Here, when the power representations of the age are delineated in a way that also takes care to integrate the minor struggles of the period. Even the leader, Sreedharan, never holds the designation of leader of a political party. But he has influence over the people. He does not impose a juridico-discursive mode of power, and it is not pervasive. They obey him here as the power is productive for them to obtain their rights. The image of Sreedharan in the temporary shed in front of the factory, who is on hunger strike, and his followers with placards that reveal the reason for the strike is a powerful image.

The strike gets significance in the light of the Marxist reading of the film. The study attempts to read the turbulent events of political history here. The trade union organisations stand for workers and Adoor places their thematic significance in the plot through the Marxist interpretation of events and images. The representation and development in the characterisation parallel the inflections on Kerala's ruling political party. As the ruling political party acquires certain power over the subjects, it can be productive, pervasive, or both. Here it can be interpreted as the rise and fall of a party worker at the primary level of reading. Adoor depicts the state and the political power structures involved in it to represent the same. However, he does not limit himself to the rise and fall of a single political party; rather, he represents minor political movements and how they work together to build and play power in the state. This is also important in the representation of an age, as the film does not intend to represent powerful personalities or leaders. Rather, Adoor tells about age through the lives of ordinary people and their struggle with the politics of the time.

Through the representation of the strike in the initial shots of the film, Adoor intends to present the dilemma of the Marxist part of Kerala. The electoral victory of the communist party in Kerala in 1957 and the split in the party into two in 1964 parallel the two parts of the film and also the two images of Sreedharan. Though Adoor repeatedly denies the political film label and instead intends to depict his character's psychological trauma. The factors associated with the trauma are studied in relation to age.

Harold Crouch, in his paper "AITUC and Split in the Communist Party," says that the close link between AITUC and Marxism is stated in the writings of Karl Marx himself. The trade unions always support improving the conditions of

the workers. That would never take place under capitalism. The working class' consciousness is used to wipe out the effects of capitalism. Marx stated: "That the militant state of the working class, its economic movement, and its political action are indissolubly united". He says that the close connection between the CPI and AITUC can be seen in the organisations, which are influenced by the writings of Karl Marx.

The power and authority that the party and union have over the people are narrated through Sreedharan in the first part of the film. He is a character who never submits himself to anyone and who is bold enough to resist any kind of temptation. He is not ready to withdraw himself from the strike when the factory owner comes to mediation talks.

The meetings and classes represent the party's power. Every association is a form of power. The techniques of montage and "the image reality dichotomy" (Ganguly, *The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 28) of the film dismantle the conventions of the circular narrative. Adoor is studied as a realist. The appearance of Sreedharan in the second part is ambiguous, in that it raises the question of whether it is realistic or if Adoor deliberately uses these scenes to undermine the effect of realism. The posture and the setting of the scene in which Savithri knows about the arrival of Sreedharan and the death of Sreedharan are the same. In his study, Ganguly raises the question of whether there is any passage of time. He says that Sreedharan's arrival is an answer to the intense desire of his followers to concretise their ideologies.

Adoor questions the authority and power of Sreedharan in the second part of the film. Silence itself becomes a major trope in the characterisation of

Sreedharan. He says nothing in response to his wife's or friends' questions about his absence in the past. The image of Sreedharan as an alcoholic with a total disregard for the responsibilities of home and party fades. He takes or requests money from people in order to drink alcohol. He steals money from Savithri's purse. But he does not say anything when his son is being accused of it by Savithri. The characterisation of him as a person is flawed. The complete exclusion of the person from what he was in the first part shows the abstractness of power operations.

Sreedharan's contempt for the party and disinterest in the party's decisions demonstrate that he has evolved significantly from his previous self. The party's deviation from its ideologies and beliefs might have resulted in a shock in his mind. The uncertainty about his whereabouts over the ten years also deviates from the realistic portrayal. The changes in party ideologies in the state in particular and the country in general have affected the policies.

Antonio Gramsci, in *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, speaks that “social democracy has tended to see the relationship between workers and intellectuals in the socialist movement in formal and mechanistic terms, with the intellectuals—refugees from the bourgeois class—providing theory and ideology (and often leadership) for a mass base of non-intellectuals, i. e., workers” (132). Sreedharan in the film serves as an intellectual who belongs to the first category according to the above terms. Sreedharan's personification as an ‘organic intellectual’ in the first half clearly defines Gramsci's conceptualisation of the same about their role in production and work organisation, and on the other hand by their ‘directive’ political role, focused on the party.

Sreedharan belongs to the dominant group of individuals, and in the second part, too, it is evident that a spontaneous consent has been given to him by the supporters of the party. Gramsci says that such consent is the result of the prestige and confidence that the general group enjoyed. The party members who are anxiously waiting outside his house to listen to him is an example of the power exerted by him on the group.

Sreedharan belongs to the rural intellectual class and holds a certain power over the people. His command of the party's ideologies gave him power. The members of the party have respect and admiration for him, even in the second phase. The dislocation of power from the centre, that is, the party, held certain strength when it was known as the Communist Party. The split of the party into two causes a schism in the party's ideologies. It has shattered Sreedharan's faith in the party. When the leaders of the two split parties approached him, he was indifferent in his attitude.

Sreedharan imbibes a certain kind of power from the ideologies of the leftist party. In the second phase, no one in the party or the family knows about the reality of Sreedharan's disappearance during the rivalry in the leftist party. But for them, he is a powerful leader. Even though he seems disappointed and weak, the villagers, especially the people of the party, hold a sort of hope in him. He was the person who led them. But disdainful of his political affiliations, he is a powerless person. He bears some of the blame for his inactivity in the activity.

The split of the party into two in the film represents a fall in the party's ideologies. His friend Damodaran tells him the reason for the breakup of the party.

He indirectly accuses Sreedharan for his disappearance during the split in the party during the Calcutta conference in 1964. He has not come forward to clarify his position. Sreedharan's expressions in this shot reveal more of his opposition to the decision and party split. His lowering of his head in front of Damodharan shows his resentment and resistance towards them.

Damodaran quotes Lenin's statement that those who take a stand against the basic interests and revolutionary spirit of the working class are labelled as reactionaries. They weaken the proletariat and thereby motivate the interests of the bourgeoisie. Damodaran tells this to justify his appearance at the party. The film makes use of photos as props, and in this particular shot, the framed photographs of Lenin and Marx add authenticity to his statements. When he speaks, the image of the party hammer and sickle in a red frame appears, along with the party name Communist Party of India (Marxist). It speaks more forcefully about the party's ideological regimes. The dictum of the party founders holds the power to create discipline, and those who deviate from it are called reactionaries. Sreedharan lost his position in the party, but his framed photo underlines his previous position in the party.

There is a scene in which Mathukutty comes in front of him and offers him the post of a cashier in the factory. Sreedharan feels a sort of contempt toward him, and it is vividly reflected in his expression. Mathukutty is seen as an opportunist in this shot, and Sreedharan is unable to stand with them. In the middle of this, a shot shows the character Sreedharan in severe stomach pain. He finds liquor to be his medication. It suggests that he is an alcoholic who is unable

to resist it. His addiction and irresponsible attitude toward his family cause him to deviate from the norm.

Damodharan pays a visit to Sreedharan to justify the expulsion of Sreedharan from the party. He again cites Lenin to say that the “proletarian movement passes through various stages of growth. At every stage, a set of people stagger, stop, and drop out of the movement’s march forward”. The camera frame is important in this case because it focuses Sreedharan in a single frame in a long shot. Sreedharan’s subjection is very much evident in the shot.

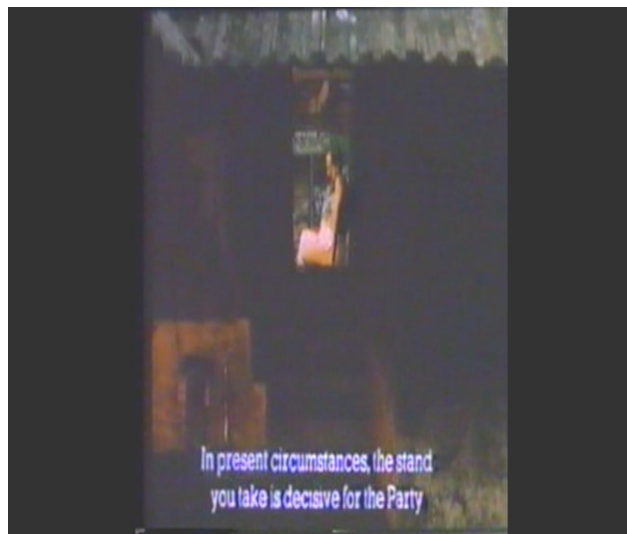


Fig:3 Sreedharan in the film *Mukhamukam*

He underlines the name of Lenin to emphasise the power implied in the statement.

The silence of Sreedharan is shown to imply his dissatisfaction and resentment.

Suranjan Ganguly says:

The portraits of Lenin and Sreedharan on the wall confirm this further, since both are now images without substance for a community that once worshipped them as heroes. Ironically, it is

only in this form that they are kept alive. For Sreedharan, who has returned from the dead, the only context for living in such a world of shattered ideals is memory and trace, which his portrait exemplifies. This is evident in the way the camera frames the silent, withdrawn Sreedharan in relation to his image (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 23).

The theories of Marx and Lenin are used as a weapon by the leaders of the party to justify their deeds. The first phase of the film reflects power as an act of instrumentation for the benefits of proletarians. It gives emphasis to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Sreedharan is the representative of the working class, and he takes classes to educate them on how the working class holds power. He is influenced by Lenin's idea of a revolution to defeat capitalism. Sreedharan, a staunch Leninist, used the theory and tactics of proletarian power. But in the second phase, Adoor poignantly criticises how the statements act as mechanisms of power for the selfish motives of opportunists. The term 'opportunist' refers to someone who is ready to adapt or change their principles according to the situation. Even the red colour in the background reinstates the leftist ideology.

The very structure of the film does not follow a circular motion. The ambiguities and anomalies in the structure itself speak about the relations of power in the plot of the film. Chidananda Das Gupta, in "Adoor Gopalakrishnan, The Kerala Coconut" says:

There is intense pressure in *Mukhamukham* for the revolutionary returning from exile to break into a torrent of words about his life in the absence, the changes in his ideas, his relationship with his

party, and his future plans—about all of which he maintains a stony silence, creating a powerful tension. The lack of explanation infuses ambiguity; the audience is induced to speculate and decipher meanings on its own. Its presumptions, set ideas, and knee-jerk reactions are all shaken off one by one, until the audience has to face the last alternative, the true one, however unacceptable: that the man has had enough; he just wants to be left alone with his drink (Gupta 2).

Harris in a comparative study based on two films John Abraham's *Amma Ariyan* and Adoor's *Mukhamukam* makes significant observations about the character Sreedharan. He says that the reality or the truth is questioned when Sreedharan takes a turn from a political hero to a normal man with limitations.

Though the film at the primary reading conveys the power transitions and tensions in the communist party, it also analyses the gender structures. Sreedharan is a powerful and charismatic leader. But he is timid and shy in his attitude towards the women. The female characters seem more powerful in the film, like *Elepathayam*. The party comrade Vilasini and his wife Savithri are the two female characters in the film. Vilasini is a party worker, and she serves well for the purpose of the party. Sreedharan is an introvert in his relationship with women. But Vilasini is confident in expressing her desires and thoughts. There is a scene in which Sreedharan comes to visit Damodharan, the brother of Vilasini. Sreedharan is not bold enough to speak to her in the absence of her brother. When she understands that it is a matter regarding party matters, she says that men alone do not form unions. She is a woman who speaks about the need for the

involvement of women in the party. Sreedharan's passive nature, on the one hand, shows his commitment to the party. He emphasises that a communist should sacrifice pleasure, gain, and personal relationships. It can be analysed as an intentional desertion for the principles of party. On the other hand, it shows the timidness and inert nature of his attitude towards women. He avoids listening to Vilasini when she comes forward to speak. Suranjan Ganguly says:

Vilasini's account transforms Sreedharan into a dissembler who represses his natural inclinations to maintain a clear separation between his private and public selves. The flashback ends with her admonition that women should be part of male-dominated trade unions. He points out that she is the one who has been asked to organise them. "Once again, we detect ambiguity: Sreedharan remains aloof, but his desire to bond with Vilasini is expressed in his sidelong glance with her (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 20).

Adoor meticulously uses the space, actions, and dialogue in the shots when Vilasini and Sreedharan come together in the frame. He does not have the intensity of the charismatic speaker in his dialogues with Vilasini. In terms of gender and familial relationships, Sreedharan's relationship with Savithri is problematic. Sreedharan never criticises his role as a devoted husband in his relationship with her. He feels physical attraction towards her, and the male gaze in him works just to satisfy his sexual urge. He exploits Savithri and her father for his personal benefits. He never listens to Savithri. But she performs the role of a subordinate wife. Her subjectivity becomes more evident in the second part. He

holds a chauvinistic attitude in his deliberations, and she is supposed to provide financial help for his deeds. Even though he is not legally married to her, he considers male privileges to be taken for granted.

The three films explore the investigation of power in terms of sovereign control. The study also explores and foregrounds the disciplinary and bio power, modes of power regimes. The plurality of power operations, both direct and indirect, contribute to the reading of the select films in this chapter. Resistance must be muted at times, but it is clear that resistance occurs as a struggle against, bourgeoisie, state and society. The resistance of Sreedharan is even strong in the second phase of the film also. He adopts silence as a strong weapon to express the resentment towards the split in the party.

Chapter 3

Normativity as a Construct: A Study of *Kodiyettam* and *Anantaram*

The various forms of education or ‘normalisation’ imposed upon an individual consist in making him or her change points of subjectification, always moving towards a higher, nobler one in closer conformity with the supposed ideal. Then from the point of subjectification issues a subject of enunciation, as a function of a mental reality determined by that point. Then from the subject of enunciation issues a subject of the statement, in other words, a subject bound to statements in conformity with a dominant reality (Guattari 143).

Normative is something that is taken for granted as normal in a space; it is based on the norm, be it patriarchy or supremacy, that is, gender, class, or caste. It is not a concrete state of being. Normalcy can be defined in terms of power relations, taking into account the cultural ideologies of a state or region at a given time. Sukhpreet Kahlon, in the paper “Feminism and Non-Normative Relationships”, says that family, religion, culture, state, etc. as an institution, is a decisive factor in what is being decided as a norm. Marriage within heterosexual relationships, as well as marriage for the purpose of procreation, is legal.

Normativity is not just restricted to heterosexuality. There are the docile feminine virtues attributed to women in a patriarchal society. As the discussion centres on the films of Adoor, as mentioned already, there were transformations that happened along with the transition to modernity. Those transformations have touched the seats of power referred to as caste, class, gender, state, etc. Those are

reflected in society in general. Adoor chose the characters that deviate from the normal order and also the people who refuse to come out of the hierarchical discourse. The chapter attempts to look at what is constituted as the normal order or normativity in the contextualisation of masculinity. There are male characters who are perceived as non-normative in the context of Kerala's historiography and the plot of the stories of the selected films, which are set in the second half of the late twentieth century.

According to Sukhpreet Kahlon in "Normative and Non-normative Feminisms", the markers of normativity may not allude to sexuality alone. Class, caste, gender, race, etc. can become determining factors for the categorisation of normativity. Normalcy occupies the seat of power. Poverty, being black, being unhealthy, and so on are all considered 'other' and 'non-normative' (404). Caste and gender are significant factors that determine identity and power, and they contribute to the categorisation of norms. The control of the patriarchal class and the upper class facilitate oppression and resentment. They determine what is normative and what is not. The study does not intend to directly address the psychological quandary, but rather to conduct an investigation or parallel reading of the power entanglements that cause the deviation from the norm.

Since film is a visual medium Adoor as an auteur uses the camera to showcase the subtlety in the characters; the *mise en scene* and the close, medium, and long shots of the camera movements are used to emphasise these features. Though Unni in the film *Elepathayam*, Kumari's husband in *Naalu Pennungal*, and Thommie and Bhaskara Pillai in *Vidheyan* are discussed as the study of other power representations in other chapters, they also are non-normative, in a certain

way, in their characterisation. The state, caste, gender, family etc. are decisive factors in the categorisation of excluded.

Adoor's films are frequently read as social documents of Kerala. The ambivalence of human nature is foregrounded in the study of dualities of normativity. The internalisation of social systems and those systems themselves are preconditioned by the entangled codification of power networks. The social, political, legal, familial, and economic traditions engage and disseminate the bodies of knowledge. There are people in society who do not understand or observe the changes that have occurred. It is hard for them to discriminate between the present and the past. They lost their relationship with the existing society of the time.

Viswam of *Swayamvaram*, Unni of *Elepathayam*, Sankarankutty of *Kodiyettam*, and Sreedharan of *Mukhamukam* are the characters who are not confined to the dictum. They are introvert and timid characters. They represent the turbulent times of that particular age. The characteristics of each character locate the functioning of underlying power through ideologies in society. The study aims to investigate the shifting domains of power in Kerala society. The empirical insights of the auteur address the attitude, power, and knowledge that govern a particular time and age. Foucault in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* considers modernity as an attitude and also in relation to one who questions and transfigures the present (Rabinow 309).

Foucault examines the notion of 'normal' and how such a position is generated in society. The ideological and repressive apparatuses of society decide

the conditions for normativity. He says that the subjects themselves are also responsible for the internalisation of values and dictum embedded in a culture. The principles for the exclusion are such that they do not conform to the normalised order. Foucault's percepts on hierarchical observation, normalising judgment and examination form the techniques of surveillance on the characters and this forms their identity as non normative.

The consciousness of the gaze or the surveillance leads to one's own subjectification. Sara Mills in *Michael Foucault* says that each individual plays a role in society for the reproduction of knowledge, and power is established when the other accepts and acknowledges what is laid down by power. The knowledge-producing institutions build the truth, and that truth leads to power or hegemony; it decides what is normal for a culture. In the book *Power after Hegemony* Lash Scott says that a model of implementation to discipline oneself is done because subjects consider that they are culpable or obliged to limit themselves under the effect of power.

Gerald Mc Laughn says that this makes the people to think to restrict or limit their behaviour to meet the expectations of the society. Foucault in the *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* speaks about how people participate and build their own subjectivity. Foucault says that the subjectivity is not fixed. It varies with the time according to the dictates of subjectivity and dominant discourses in a particular culture and context. Foucault problematises the notion of power. He dismantles the stability of structures and probes into the challenges involved in internalising subjectivities and resistance (Ali 13).

Dianna Taylor, in the article Normativity and Normalization in "Foucault Studies," cites four works of Foucault: *Psychiatric Power* (1974), *Abnormality* (1975), *Society Must Be Defended* (1976), and *Security, Territory, and Population* (1978). Norms, according to Taylor, are associated with power relations. According to Foucault in *Psychiatric Power*, 'norm' is understood as the prescription for the conceptualisation of a disciplinary society (Foucault 55). Taylor cites Foucault's *Abnormal* and identifies norm as an element upon which 'power exercise' is founded and legitimised (Taylor 50). Foucault examines the study of norms in more detail in this book. Norm functions as a means for correction. Its purpose is not to exclude, but rather to construct "a positive technique of intervention and transformation, to a sort of normative project" (50). Foucault uses the term 'biopower' in the work *Society Must Be Defended*. Controlling the rate of population growth as a measure to ensure health and life is a strategic mechanism of biopower to discipline the state. Foucault argues that this form of power employs it as a methodological tool to bring discipline and regulation to the body and population. Foucault concludes by saying that this norm is one of the signifiers that encapsulates power in society. In *Security, Territory, and Population* Foucault speaks about the multifunctionality of power as the norm in the contexts of discipline and biopower. The methodological analytical strata are used for the norm according to the context of biopower, and the preconceived notions determine the norm according to the context of discipline.

It is important to examine why Adoor has created such characters and why in his films the story revolves around these people. Adoor focuses more on the

characters and mise en scène than the story. C. P. Ramachandran says in the article “Adoorinte Purushan” that the characters of Adoor stood in sharp contrast with the heroes of mainstream cinema. The audience is more accustomed to appreciating characters’ extraordinary physical strength, vengeance, and masculine vigour, particularly male heroes or protagonists, than a real person in life. This makes human beings non-human and seduces them to deviate from the conditions of the historical process and contemporary life. This treatment of Adoor transports the audience from mainstream cinema’s magical realism to the harsh realities and dreams of realistic narratives (Ramachandaran 93).

This chapter concentrates on the non-normative characterisation of gender discourses. But the dichotomy of normal as normative and non-normal as non-normal is itself contradictory. As previously stated, ideological constructs that classify the same are not fixed entities. When these polarities in characterisation are studied, it is to be examined to what extent the characters in the selected films are unique. It also discusses how Adoor has problematised the concept of non-normativity in the films. The study focuses on non-normatives, or those who exist within a gender but do not fit into the defined traits of masculinity and femininity.

The narrative space in the films is appropriated for contestations between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinity. This chapter delves into the films *Kodiyettam* and *Anantram*, in which the plot progresses through the actions of non-normative characters. The protagonist of the film *Kodiyettam* is Sankarankutty, and Gopi played the role. It will be partial and prejudiced to compartmentalise certain characters as normative and others as non-normative. Here, taking into account the post-structuralistic interpretation, the meaning of the

term 'non-normative' is not fixed. The idea of normative is defined by society, and in that sense, it is abstract, as it changes according to what is upheld by a particular society as being normative. Sukhpreet kahlon speaks about the young girls marrying off to much older men, for example, was accepted and the norm among Nambuthiri and Muslim communities decades ago. The widow's remarriage was considered non-normative. In time, those concepts have changed, so it is fluid in that sense.

The study postulates the concept of non-normativity in the discourse of masculinity. In *Masculinities and Culture*, John Beynon distinguishes between maleness and masculinity. According to him, maleness is biological, whereas masculinity is cultural. It can never shed the traits of culture. Masculinity is not in the genetic make-up of a male. It is imbibed or inculcated through culture, and people learn to reproduce it in appropriate contexts according to time and age. R. W. Connell in *Masculinities* defines the term 'hegemonic masculinity' as successful ways of being a man in particular places at a specific time. Cornwall and Lindisfarne use the term 'subordinate variants' to describe the other forms that are inferior and inadequate in comparison with the others (Beynon 16). Hegemonic masculinity is established through different forms of power. At the same time, this notion attains significance in relation to subordinate variants or non-hegemonic masculinities. Here the study attempts to argue how the subordinate variants of masculinities are presented as non-normative. But the term does not mean that they are not normal or abnormal. Sankarankutty and Ajayan from the films *Kodiyettam* and *Anantram*, respectively, are treated in relation to the other characters in society. In the case of Sankarankutty, he faces a crisis due

to the conflict between the individual and society, whereas in the case of Ajayan, it is a conflict between the individual and the self. These conflicts are the signifiers of non-normativity; to be specific, the term attains more significance when placed in the context of power structures. John Beynon says:

Power entanglements shape subordinate or non-normative identities in specific contexts and at specific ages. Hegemonic masculinities are considered normal or normative. Beynon says that hegemonic constructions win ideological consent, and the alternative constructions are considered inferior or marginalised. He argues that masculinity cannot exist as a property of a person but as a social ideology (Beynon 17).

Non-normativity is also a deviation from the defined norm of social ideology. Derrida uses the term 'difference' to imply that there is no presence of a being without the absence. This points to the reading that non-normativity also exists in parallel to normativity.

Derrida's argument postulates that the binary oppositions are arbitrary. Saussure offers the structuralist interpretation that everything is defined in terms of opposition. But Derrida, in his theory of deconstruction, proves the instability of these oppositions and the privilege of one over the other. Cornwall and Lindisfarne say that masculinity can be interpreted differently in different contexts. The characters in the films of Adoor display different types of masculinities, and to be specific, in the selected films, they depict the representation of conflict and consensus in the discussion of masculinity. The

literal definition of the word 'masculinity' acquires significance according to an individual or person. R. W Connell provides four definitions of masculinity from four perspectives, as well as, what characteristics they entail. The positivist definition of masculinity is explained in relation to 'pattern masculinity', in which groups of men and women are differentiated; it is related to psychology and also how men and women act in a specific culture to which they belong.

A normative definition holds the view that masculinity is the social norm for the behaviour of men. It assumes that toughness is a synonym for masculinity. However, it raises the issue of the degree to which each man corresponds to the quality of toughness. It is contradictory that only a few men could enact or copy the heroic features of maleness in a culture (Connell 70). True, in Malayalam art cinema, Adoor reflects not the society's powerful, tough male characters, but rather the odd ones who hardly fit the normative definition of masculinity.

A semiotic approach to the definition of masculinity derives from poststructuralist and feminist analysis. It is defined in terms of non femininity, and it also attains significance in the context of the post-structuralist assumption that the term 'masculinity' cannot be defined unless it is placed in a relational aspect with femininity. Here in the selected films, the representation of masculinity is analysed in "a system of gender relations" (Connell 71). Sankarankutty in *Kodiyettam* and Ajayan in *Anantaram* display certain oddities in their movements and dialogue. The story and the screenplay of the films are structured around them, and a spectator who closely observes their movements would consider them social misfits. But it is not necessary that they are misfits in every age and culture.

The notion of social fitness in gender is constructed by society. Female masculinity and male femininity are not considered normal in the culture, and they are regarded as outcasts or 'others' in the minds of people. The power of norms works out in the distinction between normal and abnormal, or normative and non-normative. The normativity of gender specificities is established as a principle. Foucault in Paul Rabinow's "The Means of Correct Training", says that normalisation is one of the greatest instruments of power at the end of the classical age. It also speaks about Foucault's claim in *Discipline and Punish* that the power of normalisation imposes homogeneity. This study attempts to read how non-normatives attempt to adhere to homogeneity in their practices.

Connell's study on four broad areas of masculinities analyses how they are classified in the relations of power and how such characters appear in cinema. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant status of men as being powerful and occupying a hierarchical position. It is not necessary for hegemonic masculine figures such as film stars, fantasy figures, etc. to be powerful. She says that hegemonic masculinity is not always the same. It is masculinity that determines the hegemonic position in particular gender relations. It is always contestable. Subordinate masculinity is always referred to as gay masculinity. Heterosexual men with an inclination towards feminine traits are also termed 'subordinate men'. Complicit masculinity refers to a slacker version of hegemonic masculinity. There are men who do not completely allude to the dominant traits of hegemonic masculinity. Marginalised masculinity refers to the forms of masculinity other than hegemonised masculinity (76-77).

Not only is it [the cinema] an important supplier of paternal representations, but it orchestrates for the male subject the projections so necessary to his sense of personal potency. Its images, sounds, and narrative structures are drawn from the ideological reserve of the dominant fiction. (Silverman113).

This chapter inquires and investigates how they are portrayed as variants of manhood or alternative masculinities in filmic texts.

The chapter makes to analyse the depiction of deviated identities from accepted fixity, in these select films. The masculine and feminine attributes and general accepted characteristics of each gender become problematic here. The significance of the hero with the physical and emotional strength lost the centrality. “Malayalam cinema’s conservative backlash has come to be characterised by the idealisation of a feudal past, a political posturing, unconcealed male chauvinistic and sexist bias, and a strident revivalist rhetoric” (Pillai 110). Because they deal with the most basic human dilemmas, K. G. George's movies never cease to terrify and enchant audiences. They illustrate the various levels of oppression and violence that exist in human relationships and serve as the basis for our social structures in the process. With the man-woman interaction at its core, he examines this issue in all of its varied manifestations within various social contexts and hierarchies of power. His stories raise troubling concerns about us and our society without using sentimentalism, sloganeering, or any other form of voyeurism (Venkiteswar 1).

Images of hegemonic masculinity in men emerge from mainstream cinematic tradition. Here, the discourse of normative and non-normative characters are central to the understanding of gender bias in Kerala. It is obviously linked to the conceptualisation of power. In his book "The Subject and Power," Foucault discusses dividing practices. In this case, Foucault classifies the subject into dichotomies or polarities such as good/bad, sane/insane, etc. This concept is expanded upon in the examination of how a specific subject is divided among himself in a power-structured society. Economic and familial structures also play a role in the process of power relation signification and production. Foucault also speaks about the form of power that differentiates an individual, about how he or she is marked by a specific identity.

The study does not intend to compartmentalise normative and non-normative characters. Rather, it attempts to investigate how masculine and feminine notions of identity are produced with the advent of modernity. Studies on the crisis of masculinity and the concept of the emancipated woman gained prominence in narratives in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. But they are related to the abolition of matrilineal society and shifts in the power system from matrilineal to patriarchal. It's also covered in depth in the previous chapter.

It is problematic to compartmentalise the term 'normative masculinity' under the title of 'hegemony'. Hegemonic masculinity is considered the ideal form. Here, Adoor contextualises notions of multiple masculinities. John Beynon's definition of masculinity extends and problematises the term. The figures of the breadwinner, sole protector of the family, and the powerful are well

known to Malayalam film goes with a Kerala cultural background. The film plays an important role in shaping people's perceptions of masculinity or machismo. Rateesh Radhakrishnan studied masculinity narratives and attempted to define Malayalee machismo through the character Jayan in his research thesis. He discusses how the physical features and the character in the film are related, as well as the heroic attributes that Jayan had in the minds of viewers. He analyses how the notions of masculinity are disrupted in the context of modernity in Kerala through the discussion of *Elepathayam*.

It is critical to map how previous Malayalam films depicted male characters. The film *Vigathakumaran* pictures the male character in an exalted position. As the films of the 1940s capture the freedom struggle movement, they celebrate the heroic qualities of those who participated in it. This era's films present patriarchy-accepted and stereotyped male norms specific to an era and culture. The protagonists of the Malayalam films of this decade are characters with a strong sense of individuality. *Vigathakumaran*, influenced by Phalke's *Krishna Janmam*, depicted man as equal to God. The inevitable patriarchal nature of man is evident. It can be explained in either way, as the earlier films influenced the culture of men being presented as the ideal and sole protector. This concept normalises how a man intends to be partially or wholly integrated into society.

Most of the male protagonists in the films of the 1950s are characters who belong to financially rich families. Though communist ideologies predominated in the genre of drama during the decade, their reflection is not noticed much in the films. The film *Navalokam* to some extent echoes communism, and the character Kuruppu is an embodiment of toxic masculinity. The marital conflict between

Kuruppu and his wife, as well as her refusal to live as a slave, keep her away from him. She breaks her *thali* chain, and this can be seen as one of the few films that looks at the liberation of women. However, the male characters Kuruppu and Gopi wield considerable power as landlord and worker, respectively. The films followed the stereotyped structure, which gives centrality to the hegemonic portrayal of men. The 1950s saw the emergence of two new actors, Prem Nazeer through the film *Marumakal* and Sathyan through the film *Aathmasakhi*. Both of them were characterised as powerful and romantic heroes in their debut films.

The protagonists and heroes of the films of the 1960s are also representations of hegemonic masculinity. The film *Oodayil Ninnu* traces the resistance and fight of the rickshaw puller Pappu. He is a character with ethical and humane considerations. *Bhargavi Nilayam* also traces the enthusiastic effort of the novelist Madhu in the process of revenge by Bhargavi against the toxic masculine character Nanukuttan. The characters Parekutty (Madhu) and Palani (Jayan) in the film *Chemmeen* strive to get Karuthamma, and both of them are characterised as such to present their vigour and character to get her. The film *Murapennu* revolves around the love affair of two men, and they have to face hardships. However, the two male characters perform in order to serve their heroic deeds. Velayudhan in *Iruttinte Aathmavu* is a protagonist male character who differs from the powerful, capable heroes of the previous two decades. Velayudhan is not powerful enough to fight against the powerful family members. He is portrayed as a mentally retarded individual who is doomed to the family's coercive pressures for his identity. He is a forerunner for the characters in art cinema who fail to meet the normativity or the judgmental norms of society.

Velayudhan's plea in the last phase of the film, "I am mad. Chain me", shows the inescapable nature of the ideological power imposed on madness.

The film *Adimakal* presents the condition of the male character Raghvan (Prem Nazeer), who is also unfit for the hegemonic masculine role. He is depicted as a character who is hard of hearing and speech-impaired. His name is not addressed, and he is simply referred to as 'Pottan' (a satirical way of addressing a person who is dumb and deaf). He never reacts back and accepts his own victimisation and subjectivity. He even comes to accept the fatherhood of the abused woman's illegitimate child. Actually, it is against the norms of masculine constraint. But the self-victimisation and servitude make him acknowledge it.

The 1970s saw the rise of new wave films, which cast a realistic light on the complexities of human individuals and society. The Italian and French films influenced the directors of Malayalam films, which is reflected in the theme and application. Adoor Gopalakrishnan's *Swayamvaram* pioneered a new dimension in the treatment of characterisation. The characterisation of Vishwam in *Swayamvaram* is a representation and incarnation of the middle class angst of post Nehruvian democracy and pre emergency era. The crisis faced by the character is a replica of the economic and social problems in the transition of Kerala into modernity. There are people who have limitations and challenges to move forward in the waves of the society. Those are considered as the other, and in the art films they deal with the realistic problems of society in ontological and existential plane. He is unable to resist the challenges in the modernist society. The state to certain extends holds and raises power and the gradual development of the plot subtly presents how the identity of Viswam is problematised. Gender becomes

contestable here and he has to support as the breadwinner of the family. The unemployment and its corroding effect on younger generation are drawn in the film *Swayamvaram* and it is regarded as the first new wave of Malayalam cinema.

The reading of Aravindan's *Sita* emphasises the anguish of Rama. It does not portray Rama as someone who is vested with heroic qualities. Rather, it depicts the anguish and dilemma of young Rama in the epic, who can be viewed as a metaphor for men. Aravindan has humanised the divine characters and cast tribal people for the roles. The society becomes difficult, and the character Rama represents a man who faces it head on. The conflict between the exercise of sovereign power and the urge for enlightenment, the constant call from the inner self, is foregrounded. His film *Kummatty* reflects the urge for freedom, which is presented through a symbolic representation. The films are an exploration of the inner lives of the people, though they have not concentrated on non-hegemonic masculine constraints.

This chapter specifically tries to locate the masculinity that deviates from the contextualization of the male protagonist's function of serving as a model of power. Adoor's male characters are similar to Howard Hawks. "Which is the normal, which is the abnormal?" asks Peter Wollen in *Signs and Meaning*. Hawks recognises inchoately that to most people, his heroes, far from embodying rational values, are only a dwindling band of eccentrics. He says: "Hawk's kind of men have no place in the world" (84). The study does not intend to erase the presence of non normative. Rather the study elucidates how such constructs are perceived in the society.

Adoor has used the trope of ‘discipline’ and how it creates modalities of power in the films *Anantaram* and *Kodiyettam*. Foucault defines ‘discipline’ as a specific technique of power. Individuals are both objects and instruments of the exercise of power. He adds the power of the methods such as hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and their combination leads to the examination (Rabinow 188). He further talks about how the hierarchical surveillance form as a mechanism of power in the eighteenth century. It is defined as

multiple, automatic, anonymous power; for although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network “hold” together and traverses in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another: supervisors, perpetually supervised (192).

The characterisation of Sankarankutty offers a critique of the definition of masculinity. Normativity is established in the portrayed society of a Kerala village, where cliché relations of patriarchal power are maintained in man-woman relationships. The discourse of masculinity will be examined at the individual, family, society, and state levels in general. The conceptual elaboration of the term ‘masculinity’ in the narrative of cinema is discussed in the context of Kerala during that time. The setting of the film is the 1970s, and that was a time during which the split in the Communist Party happened. Adoor paints the picture of Kerala in its idleness and inertia. Adoor weaves the relationship between Sankarankutty and other characters in the story, despite the fact that he encapsulates the growth of a naive and immature character like Sankarankutty into a mature male.

The power representations in terms of gender are studied, and that is analysed through the character of Sankarankutty. His relationship with his family and society is studied with reference to how non-hegemonic masculine constructions are formed in a society. The relationship with his sister and wife is studied in detail to subvert the notions of hegemonic masculinity. Power discourses also examine normative femininity. Other characters in the society include both men and women; reading about Sankarankutty's interactions with them provides a problematic explanation for the placement of norms. His relationship with the truck driver plays an important role, and he, as a signifier, represents power struggles in terms of masculinity.

Sankarankutty in *Kodiyettam* alludes to the literary term 'buildingsroman' that narrates his growth from an immature person to a mature one with identity. Adoor describes him as a man who is uneducated and does not hold any political ideologies. However, he becomes a part of political processions and crowds for politicians' speeches. The character Sankarankutty is portrayed as an individual who never tries to understand himself in society. Adoor employs powerful images of rustic contours to vividly paint the leisure life of Sankarankutty. He is placed in a society in which he upholds the image of non hegemonic masculinity. The other characters are represented with the attributes of dominating masculine traits.

Sankarankutty is an ineffectual character. The family plays an important role in the growth of the character. To speak about his family, in the first phase of the film, the relationship with his sister Sarojini is captured. She has more emotional strength than her brother. Adoor frames her with a very broad vision. It is considered the male member of a family's responsibility to be the breadwinner

and earning member. Though females work, they just support the males. But here in the film, Sarojini is the only earning member, and she supports her brother. He is incapable compared to her sister. She is a maid in a house in Thiruvananthapuram.

There is a scene in the film where she pays a visit to her brother. She bought a shirt for him and gave it to him. She also cooks the food and serves it to him during this short visit itself. It is also evident from the film that she regularly sends money orders to her brother as financial support. Here, Adoor takes a paradigmatic shift in the characterisation of a woman as the sole earning member of a family. This takes an innovative turn from the films that feature patriarchal society portray men as the earning members, and so they serve the dominating status of the family.

Sarojini has to cook and serve the food in the film, despite the fact that she is the earning character. She stands and serves the food. Though both of them occupy the same plane in their spatial positions, she never sits with her brother. Here also, Adoor gives the traditional subservient role of serving the food to the woman, while the man focuses only on eating the food. In most films, the scene of serving the food serves as a metaphor. In films like *Kodiyettam* and "The Virgin" in *Naalu Pennungal* Adoor, to a certain extent, satirise the gluttony of the male characters.

Another apparent characteristic is the representation of masculinity as irresponsible and femininity as responsible. Shyma P. in the paper "Contesting the Modern Sreenivasan and Chintavishtayaye Shyamala" says:

The inability of the masculine identity to facilitate the narrative allows it to demonstrate other able subject positions. An irresponsible masculinity within the realm of family threatens its very existence in the way in which it disrupts the public-private divide (88).

Here, Sarojini also adopts the role of a matchmaker to find a partner for her brother. She takes on the responsibility of handing over the duties to another woman. But here, Sankarankutty never takes an effort to marry off his sister. She remains single, and in the second phase of the story, it is understood that she herself found a partner of her choice. She does not seek or wait for the consent of the brother. She represents the new woman who has established her identity in economic, political, and social spheres. It imposes challenges on the other sexes.

The responsible male ought to control and discipline the private space of the family so that it helps in the construction of the larger national public. An alternative imagining of masculinity, one that is unable to control the private space by being responsible and undisciplined, becomes a threat to the patriarchal national space (88).

Here also, we can see a drift in the choice of a woman taking decisions over her life, as the character Sreedevi does in the film *Elepathayam*. The masculinity of Sreedharan is not questioned. But the discussion centres on how it is established according to normative masculinity in the social system of Kerala. His

relationship with other women is also questioned and discussed in light of his role as a representative of patriarchal society.

His relationship with Kamamma is discussed on a sensual level. For him, she provides food, and he does the work, like cutting wood, for her. He has the freedom to get into the house. Sankarankutty primarily approaches her for the food, which she serves to his satisfaction. But her serving of food also gives some sort of sexual pleasure. But he never shows it. The other character, Sukumara Pillai, plays a dominant role in society, but he is powerless to express his emotions. He silently suppresses his desire for her.

He suspects that there is a relationship between Kamamma and Sukumarapillai. But as he has a respectable position in society, he hides it. Though Sankarankutty knows it, he is not powerful enough to ask for it. Sankarankutty hardly expresses vigour and manliness, as he is apathetic to such traits. The hegemonic traits are not present in him. Adoor deftly weaves a non-normative character into the powerfully constructed society, but one who is realistically normative. Here, non-normativity is not fixed. The relationship with the other characters makes him change.

Sankarankutty's relationship with his wife is a poignant one to demarcate his character. He is not responsible for looking after the home. Santhamma openly complains to him about his irreverent attitude toward leading a family. Even the other female characters show their resentment toward him. He bothers to ask whether she had the food only when he has completely consumed it. The newly wed couple goes for a walk together in one scene. A group of children approached

him to take the ball to the well. Sankrankutty, a playmate for them, naturally offers to go with them. Here, Santhamma indulges and withdraws her husband's attempt to go with them. Again, when the children repeat the same need, Santhamma interrupts their talk and orders them in a bold voice to go away. Sankrankutty is not bold enough to refuse their invitation and go on with his priorities. He likes to go with them more. This shows a detachment or escapism from the responsibilities entrusted to a male or husband. In another way, it can be considered his longing for freedom. But when the character Sankrankutty is placed in a larger context, his role cannot be explained, nullifying the power relations.

A lorry comes in at high speed and splashes mud all over him in one scene. It is only normal for everyone to respond to it or to use harsh language to communicate their reaction. Sankrankutty has no expression in this picture. His perspective on the situation is the most noteworthy aspect of the scene. He is surprised at the truck's speed rather than cleansing himself. He connects the truck's speed with its denotation of power. He truly admires people who operate large vehicles, like trucks. He classifies those as characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. It is clear at this point that he views himself as someone who does not adhere to hegemonic or normative masculinity. It is clear that he respects and admires the person who spins the steering when Santhamma shares her outrage and indignation to it. She argues that wearing wet attire makes it impossible to travel anywhere. However, he claims that can be wiped, therefore he has no desire for revenge. Later, it becomes apparent that he does not accept any accountability for raising a family. Santhamma is more emotionally resilient than her spouse. She

is often portrayed as the victim of womanhood, which is expected to suffer in marriage. Reciting lyrics from a song from a movie perfectly captures her outburst or reaction. The sentences have significance because they highlight and criticise the decision and subservience of a woman in marriage. It is claimed that a woman must endure the pain. It is often said that a woman has this obligation.

Santhamma and her mother Bavaniamma are strong characters in contrast to Sankarankutty. Her mother takes a bold step by taking back her pregnant daughter to their house. She has made a decision of her own, and she is not willing to submit the life of her daughter, though he is not ruthless. Here, the character Sankarankutty does not exhibit the traits of toxic masculinity. However, the irresponsible and childish nature of a man who plays the role of a husband causes a significant rupture in his personality, and Adoor characterises him as a representative of dislocated masculinity in a social system.

Santhamma and her mother neglect Sankarankutty when he pays a visit to see his wife and the child. Adoor arouses sympathy in the audience in a shot in which Sankarankutty begs in front of Santhamma's mother to see his wife and child. She, on the other hand, is not ready to let him in and has sent her daughter and grandchild with him. He bears their insults and pleads before them again and again. She questions his status as a man and his irresponsible nature. When he comes to see his child, she asks him: "Are you a man?" Despite the fact that he silently bears the jibe that calls his machismo into question, Suranjan Ganguly says that his identity as a man is thrown out here. He is associated with the 'other', which is the 'emasculated male' (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema*

of *Emancipation* 74). He reads the transformation of Sankarankutty as an effort 'to recover his lost phallus' (74).

Adoor frames the shot in which she trims the palm leaves with a machete. The props used here are a powerful signifier to show her resentment. Her actions sound like a reaction against him. His machismo is questioned, and he leaves the place with a sense of betrayal and disillusionment. Through his character, non hegemonic masculinity is portrayed. He never questions them or responds to them. He is ineffectual, and his helplessness is portrayed in a medium-long shot. In two consecutive medium shots, Adoor, as an auteur, captures the bold attitude of Santhamma and the helpfulness of Sankarankutty. She raises her voice and tells him that she is not ready to live with him. Her mother also makes it clear that she is not willing to send her daughter. She echoes the voice of a 'new woman' who dismantles the conventional role of passive suffering woman. Here, Adoor takes a distinctive stand by saying that they have their opinions. This is a strong move against patriarchal society, which holds the authority of decision-making.

Adoor's film questions and problematises the traces of matrilineal power in the society. Here, power makes him submissive. But it is not coercive. It has a positive effect on him because he gets a job as a truck driver's helper. There is a shot in which Sankarankutty asks the postman whether he has any money orders. Though the name of her sister is not mentioned, it is clear that he requires her money. It is a sort of exploitation. He does not do any kind of work, and he plans to completely depend on his sister for his financial needs. There is both domestic and financial exploitation of women. In the portrayal of a woman, she is independent, supports her brother, and makes decisions for herself. Even for her

brother, she consults the matchmaker to make his life secure. She represents a new woman who works outside. But in contrast to that, there are people who find it hard to accept that an unmarried woman is working in a faraway place.

Sankarankutty's life is transformed by his friendship with the truck driver. He regards him as a powerful individual. He identifies the concept of machismo with him. Sankarankutty admires and respects folks who work with powerful things. The elephant and truck symbolise power. The mahout and the truck driver are considered powerful and strong. The truck driver (nameless character) teaches him discipline and power. He signifies power and hegemonic masculinity.

Sankarankutty's companionship with the driver teaches him the features of constructed machismo in society. He does not know how to drive or how to handle a vehicle. The wheel of the truck stands for power and later the driver exerts some power on him. This can also be analysed as how discipline, as a mechanism of power, acts on him. Suranjan Ganguly compares them to a dominant father figure who displays his authority over the surrogate son. The driver is assertive and has a strong hold on his cleaner. In this case, power or authority is only exercised because the subject, or Sankarankutty, serves the servitude (75). The norms, such as staying away from liquor and remaining alert and vigilant, are formed as tactics to perpetuate discipline. This is emphasised as a notion of the positive effect of power.

Adoor narrates how a society constructs normative machismo. The signifiers such as “speed, machine, and technology” connote power, discipline, and the abuse of women.



Fig: 4. Sankarankutty in the film *Kodiyettam*

The gradual development of him as a self-reliant man who recognises his own space in married life as a provider underlines the notion of power. Ganguly makes a close analysis of the transformation: “The stops two make on the road are also eye openers for him. If he had initially been drawn to a phallogocentric machismo, he will now reject it as a model, finding it utterly degrading both for the perpetrator and his victim” (75). The driver’s visits to his wife and children and also to his mistress represent power structures.

The male plays the active, dominant, aggressive role, and the female serves as the passive, submissive sexual subjectification in the relationship. Sankarankutty perceives how the male role or ‘machismo’ has permeated and established itself in familial and societal relationships. The driver does not display any emotions when he sees the wife. He has authority over them. The wife performs the clichéd domestic duties. He has control over them. By closely observing their actions, Sankarankutty unknowingly assimilates the hierarchical

codes prescribed for a male in society. Also, he learns the responsibilities of a husband and father. The emasculated man gradually progresses toward masculine identity. In the case of the driver, masculinity itself attains different phases. When he addresses the women on the road, he has sexual overtones. For Sankarankutty, these are all new experiences, and this also hints at the gaze of male and female subjectivity.

The driver exerts a strong and intimidating influence over the mistress. He also saw the transformation of his master into an aggressive character toward the woman. Here the character named Savithri, being his mistress, is supposed to fulfil her functional role. When the driver asserts his authority and claims ownership over her, she becomes a commodity. His violence and anger in this shot dismantle the notion of hegemonic masculinity, and here toxic masculinity is foregrounded. Though Sankarankutty is a silent observer or witness, Adoor highlights patriarchal privileges in society, and this idea is implanted in his mind. He is portrayed as an innocent character. However, Adoor does not portray this character as a dominant male in the film. Rather, he shows how the changed man has defined his familial space. He becomes a responsible man who cares for others.

The film redefines the need to establish masculine authority in terms of marriage as an institution. When it is again defined with responsibility and order, it curtails freedom. Here, marriage also builds power structures. Adoor powerfully delineates how it constructs discipline as a medium of power in the life of Sankarankutty. Marriage defines a specific space for male and female. In a family, there are ideological attributes for normative masculinity and normative

femininity. Sankarankutty's disregard for familial responsibilities creates tension in the film and positions him as the 'other'. Non-normative subjects are those who deviate from these standardised norms.

Adoor depicts a cross-section of a rural village in Kerala in the film. The male characters, except the lorry driver, lead a life of leisure. According to Surnjan Ganguly, the village was shaped by the legacy of feudalism. The culture Adoor has recreated in this film is a panorama of "wasteful self-indulgence and degrading machismo (63). He clearly states the life of the men of the village:

The men live suspended in a time warp, outside all norms of productive social living- a community of outsiders. They are repeatedly associated with mindless consumption and a demeaning corporeality that symbolizes their depraved form of otherness. Some are callous fathers and husbands; others cheat on their wives. A few have short fuses that ignite suddenly and unpredictably. Most of their pathetic displays of power are directed at women. Emotionally and morally stunted, these men blindly subscribe to an oppressive ideology of self serving status (63).

The male characters other than Sankarankutty employ their chauvinistic attitude to exploit the women. The sexual implications in the talk of the minor characters display their attitude towards women as mere commodities for sex. Sivan Pillai's gaze and approach to Santhamma in the absence of her husband clearly depict the chauvinistic exploiting nature of toxic masculinity. Santhamma is a passive victim to his looks, and she tries to resist her resentment through

words and action. Her resistance is clearly visible. Here, Sankarankutty is unable to understand the toxicity of this character.

Sankarankutty's encounter with the character Mahout Paramu Pillai is one of his first steps towards the resistance. He has an admiration and respect for him as a well-trained mahout. Sankarankutty yearns to be a mahout, which he considers to be symbolic of power. He wishes to receive training from him. The mahout who occupies a heightened spatial position is considered the one who assumes power. Sankarankutty's inner desire to acquire power or a dominant position in society is evident here. However, during the conversation, the mahout (referred to as 'aashan') expresses a sexual overtone when he inquires about his sister's whereabouts and expresses an explicit desire to use her body. This provokes Sankarankutty, and this is the first time in the film that a voice of resistance is heard from him. He expresses his opposition by breaking the bottle. From the sounds, Adoor makes it clear that there was a physical encounter between them, and this shot directly jumps to a close shot in which the driver handles the steering of the lorry. Sankarankutty's transformation is visible here; his gradual awareness to bring out the man in him is visible. His own need for transformation is emphasized in the scene.

The society plays an important role in highlighting masculinity. There are male characters who simply lead a life of leisure and idleness. Their perspectives and viewpoints on contemporary politics indicate that they have no faith in the system. Minor characters such as Vareed Mappila and Cheriachan do not adhere to the party's or political ideologies. The film makes references to the expulsion of a party member and sarcastic remarks about the people who participate in political

parties. Sankarankutty is willing to join any of the parties in exchange for liquor and food. He has suppressed his own identity or can be read as a subordinate masculine figure. He does not have an opinion of his own. His fear and lament before the police clearly portrayed his self-victimhood, and it underlined the non-normative masculinity in him.

Other forms of masculinity are non-normative because hegemonic masculinity is considered the norm. But as argued earlier, it is influenced by culture, time, religion, etc. Adoor creates characters in the film, including the driver, mahout Paramupillai, and Sivan Pillai, who embody toxic masculinity. Sankarankutty only understands himself when he comes into contact with other people. These characters are aggressive. They exert an intimidating power over the others, which makes them victims.

Sankarankutty becomes the non-hegemonic or subordinate male in the play of the power structures. He is powerless to respond. According to Foucault, one can exercise only because there is someone to exercise. The power of toxic masculinity is exercised here through the strong ruthless dominance over the weak. Any form of power or masculinity emerges in a culture or a localised area not because it is superior but because one group manages to impose their will or authority on others. 'Toxic masculinity' is referred to as the aggressive form of power that is acted upon by both males and females. Some of the characteristics include sexual assault and domestic exploitation. It can be destructive.

Women are the victims of the toxic masculinity in the film. The character Paramupillai treats women as a commodity to satisfy his sexual desires. When

Sankarankutty resists, he turns violent. Here, one exerts his brutal power and authority over the powerless, as he says that he would take the sister of Sankarankutty as his mistress. The character Pankajakshi is a representative of the women who accept the victimisation. To a certain extent, Sankarankutty also accepts the servitude, as he needs to become a mahout. However, because power and resistance coexist, Sankarankutty also attacks back.

The other character who shows the attributes of toxic masculinity is the truck driver. The characteristics of masculinity, speed, pleasure, and adventure are interrelated. Images of racing vehicles and powerful vehicles are often associated with masculinity. As the one who owns and handles a powerful and big vehicle like a truck, he holds power and it is read through the perception of Sankarankutty. He is not familiar with varied vehicles or their handling. He has great admiration for the speed of the vehicle. As previously stated, he is surprised by the speed of the lorry rather than an act of resentment. The driver stands for masculine vigour and intimidation.

His adventurism, reckless driving, and use of liquor are the constructed associations of the significations of hegemonic and toxic masculinity. He has no sympathy for anyone. He has not exchanged peasantries with his family. He also pays a visit to a mistress, who regards the woman as her property. He is arrogant and ruthless toward her. He maintains certain hegemonic assertions of stereotypical masculinity. He commands and assigns tasks to Sankarankutty, such as cleaning his lorry. He also tells him that he will teach him to drive.

According to Foucault power shapes forms of behaviour rather than the curtail of freedom. He says in *The History of Sexuality: Volume one*: “If power was never anything but repressive, if never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it?” (36). There is conformity together with repression. Foucault says that power is intelligible in the forms of technique through which it is employed. Here, the gradual transformation in the character of Sankarankutty can be considered a technique of conformity, an elementary condition for every conceivable notion of power. Ganguly’s words on the influence of the driver’s companionship with Sankarankutty underline Foucault’s argument in *Power/ Knowledge* that power is implicated in the manner in which certain knowledge is applied.

Sankarankutty attacks and resists the implication of the sexual exploitation of his sister. He is a complicit, masculine character who remains passive. But when the power becomes coercive and he realises it is encroaching on his territory, he reacts. It is clearly portrayed in his attitude and reaction towards Sivan and Paramu Pillai. Similarly, he is made to understand what is normative about the institution of marriage. The normative constructions of gender are also formed according to them.

Sankarankutty is a passive and submissive according to gender constructions based on knowledge and power. The character Sukumarapillai assumes a respectable position in the film. The power structures define the dichotomies between normative and non-normative views of femininity and masculinity. When non-normative and normative, or hegemonic, masculinities emerge, the former always has power over the latter.

In the film, Sankarankutty, as a passive observer, suspects an illicit relationship existing between Kamamma, a widow, and Sukumara Kurup. He never asks Kamamma about it. When Sankarankutty overhears their conversation, it almost becomes clear that Sukumarakuruppu has exploited her. But Sukumarakuruppu refuses to admit the illicit offspring as it destroys power and hegemonic status in society. As stated by Kamamma, women are victims of exploitation and regression. She suppresses her victimhood because of society's unstated hegemonical constraints or control over the sexual relationships of women. She committed suicide because she did not have the power to withstand the questions of society as a widow.

At the same time, there are women who represent the resistance of new women. It is the resistance against the entanglements of these power structures that makes them powerful. There is a poignant shot in the second phase in which Sarojini comes to the home with a young man unknown to him. Sankarankutty fears the questions of society, and he mentions his concern in a conversation with her. It is not mentioned in the film whether they are legally married or not. For that, she ridicules the society and replies sarcastically in a medium-long shot: "What society?" Tell them to go away. And the props used in this particular shot are also significant. She takes the chaff out of the paddy grains. She looks outward while Sankarankutty is within. It might be regarded as a retreat from the cliché peripheries. The man is portrayed as a hard-working character who is independent. His hard work and vigour are in sharp contrast with Sankarankutty.

Santhamma and her mother-in-law are the other female characters who broke the silence. Being a man who is childish and naive, he always plays with

children. He is involved in playing with a kite. Many scenes highlight his naiveté and lack of a serious outlook on life. They questioned his irresponsibility and ‘brand’ him as a ‘weak, spineless male’ who is quite non-normative in the hegemony constructed by society.

The gradual transformation in the characterisation of Sankarankutty defines the conformities of the power structures of the society. The companionship with the lorry driver teaches him how a male turns out to be. The power constructions of the society dictate the responsibilities and mannerisms of a male in the society. The film again questions the ‘bread winner’ role attributed to the male member of the family. The emotions and reactions of Sankarankutty dismantle the conceptions about hegemonic normative constraints of the society. Ganguly studies about the development in the characterisation of Sankarankutty as a “transformation from a quotidian state to that of a full-fledged adult, husband and father occupies most of the film” (64). Adoor talks about Sankarankutty as “floating” character who “ starts asking questions and, in the process, slowly becomes an individual” (Datta 26). The film can be read as documentation about how the complicit or non hegemonic traits fails to complement the fixities of masculinity.

The film *Anantaram* speaks about the instabilities and insecurities that surround the life of the character Ajayan. The fact that he was born as a deserted child in society marks him as the other. “*Anantaram*, is conceptually and formally, perhaps Gopalakrishnan’s most ambitious film about the outsider in which he seeks to describe the inner world of a schizophrenic who can’t separate fact from fiction” (Joshi 9). The story adopts the technique of metafiction to tell about the

life of Ajayan. Adoor employs the first-person narrative technique used by Ajayan to speak about his own story.

The film travels on realistic and non-realistic planes to demonstrate the wavering mind of the protagonist. When other films place the central characters in relation to the politics and cultural aspects of the state, this film dismantles the very identity of a character. The conflict between the individual and the self attains meaning in a very different context. The film does not discuss subjects like caste or class, the seats of power entanglements. But he is treated as non-normative in a closer analysis. His discretion in society is examined in relation to the society and the family. The word 'abnormal' is applied to Ajayan in the context of psychoanalytical reading and 'non-normative' in the context of hegemonic and non-hegemonic power relations constructed by society.

The protagonist, Ajayan, is analysed in light of the power relations constructed in the plot of the film. In the filmic context, Ajayan is a non-hegemonic masculine character in comparison to other characters. He has internalised the notion, and he ponders the aspect of his marginalisation in the family and society. Adoor, through the character Ajayan, calls into question the 'otherness' attributed to him in the power structures of family and society. The narrative structure of the film is linear. Adoor combines elements of realism and fantasy to highlight the abnormality of storyteller Ajayan.

Ajayan's non-normativity and abnormality are discussed by himself. Here, non-normativity is defined in terms of the norms of a culture, and the deviation from those is non-normativity. The abnormality in the personal traits of Ajayan is

defined in terms of psychoanalysis. Both of these complement and intersect each other in terms of entrapment and subjectivity. Foucault in the work *Abnormal* analyses how the act of normalisation is formed, discusses the case studies, and the way in which it is established “without ever resting on a single institution but by establishing interaction between different institutions, and the way in which it has extended sovereignty in our society” (8).

In the first phase of the film, Ajayan narrates about the uncertainties of his parenthood. He suspects that he is an illegitimate child. The very uncertainty of parenthood places him as the other. He was raised by the staff of the hospital where he was given birth. He grew up in the hospital under the care of the staff. The wailing of the baby is a representation of the very uncertainty he experienced as a little child. There is cause for Ajayan's powerlessness. The life a baby spends in the hospital curtails his freedom, and that also acts as a major trope in the film. The reading of the character Ajayan in the paper “Psychiatric Disorders in Malayalam Cinema” is observed as follows:

Protagonist of *Anantharam* (1987) is an orphaned child denied love and opportunities who develops hallucinations of his step brother's fiancé showering him love and compassion; this psychotic could have developed to compensate for the lack of such a figure in real life. The film also depicts him gradually developing negative symptoms of asociality, avolition and anhedonia (Ratnakaran 197).

He also speaks about the next phase of growth in the home of the doctor. Though the doctor adopts him, he feels a sort of alienation. His alienation in that home is

described in different stages. He is provided with food and shelter. He is portrayed as a smart boy who is curious to observe and read everything around him. There is hardly any dialogue or conversation between him and his surrogate father. He is a child, and it is quite normal to have doubts. The complications were exacerbated by the fact that he and his father seldom spoke to one another.

There are scenes in which the doctor asks him only necessary questions. He always does as he is told and never responds. He has internalised his orphanhood, and that contributes to his non-normativity. Actually, the non-normativity is inflicted or enforced on him by the family and society. His relationships with the doctor, whom he calls doctor uncle, his foster brother, three servants in the home, teachers at the school, and the people of the village are problematic. As explained earlier this film has limited scenes where the surrogate father and the son come together. He also speaks about the next phase of growth in the home of the doctor. Though the doctor adopts him, he feels a sort of alienation. His alienation in that home is described in different stages. He is provided with food and shelter. He is portrayed as a smart boy who is curious to observe and read everything around him. There is hardly any dialogue or conversation between him and his surrogate father. He is a child, and it is quite normal to have doubts. The very lack of communication between him and his father added to the complexities.

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relationships with the doctor, whom he calls doctor uncle, his foster brother, three servants in the home, teachers at the school, and the people of the village are problematic. He never asks his father anything. But as a responsible person, he tries to arrange the basic necessities such as education, food, and shelter. He never feels an emotional attachment towards him. There are certain dialogues between the doctor and his son. The lack of an emotional bond later paved the way to a sort of psychosis. But the story drags at certain scenes, and the picture is not wholly clear. Parthajit Baruah speaks about his alienation represented in the film: His sense of isolation and rejection are intensified after this incident, and his sense of belonging either to a family or to the society around totally frayed. Ajayan feels a gnawing sense of loss (Baruah 109).

He suspects that they have purposefully delayed in informing him of the doctor's death. He raises questions to himself about his relationship with the doctor, whether he is an uncle, foster father, or his own. When he reaches home, the funeral rites are done by Balu. Ajayan does not ask in front of others the reason for not informing him. Balu says that it would be difficult for them to face the questions from others about his identity. The presence of Ajayan is deliberately ignored by Balu and an uncle. They consider him an outsider. This is also an example of how familial relationships are given a standardised shape and any deviation from that is considered as non normative. The subject or reason against it is defined or given the position of 'non-normative'. Ajayan has no fixed position in the family. His relationship with others in his family is also not known.

There is a scene in the first phase itself that shows the marriage of his brother Balu. Ajayan, in a close shot, watches their marriage. He is seen as one

among the crowd. He closely observes the bride, Suma. The scene shifts to another one in which Ajayan, in another shot, watches the movement of her sister-in-law, Sumangala. It is difficult to read the perception of Ajayan. His actions and sight are not normal. Ajayan feels the severity of his situation when his brother gets married. He feels a strong attraction to her. But at the same time, he knows it is a "forbidden" (Baruah 109) attraction.

He immediately leaves home for the hostel. He finds himself an alien in the family and in society. Ajayan enjoys writing letters as a way to express himself. But he does not have the boldness to write it. In the representation of power structures, he sees society as patriarchal and hegemonic. There are powerful hegemonic characters in mainstream cinema who survive the tribulations of society to lead a life. Here Ajayan's growth as a normal character with the traits of normative masculinity is retarded, and instead a perversion in his growth is seen.

The home and society play an important role in the building of these structures. The three servants in the home are the signifiers who incite in him the feeling of otherness. In the first phase of the film, there is a scene in which the food is served to the little Ajayan on the floor. He is placed in a dimly lit room, possibly the kitchen, to demonstrate his powerlessness. In the second phase of the film, Adoor gives a more vivid picture of how these individuals take power over him and silence him.

The school that Adoor represents in the film plays the role of a repressive state apparatus. In a Foucauldian reading, the school is both a dominating

mechanism and a disciplinary mechanism. The close analysis of Foucault speaks about how the disciplinary mechanisms in schools function as a form of power. The study attempts to look in detail at the delineation of school as a mechanism of power to exert authority and surveillance on him. He is portrayed in the first scene of the movie as a witty character with a distinct personality. But it is made abundantly explicit how the teacher regulates this. He shows up late to school in a particular scene. He was made to stand in the classroom by the teacher since he was late. The classic power display model is used here, with the master and students depicted on two distinct planes. Ajayan, a powerless character due to his orphan status, is regarded as the other in the school. But he answers all the questions smartly. And at last, when all the students were made to stand, the teacher asked a question about the relationship between a sunken ship and history and how it is connected to the act of writing in modernism. His sharp intelligence and the presentation made the master uncomfortable. But he is forced to make him sit. The question that the teacher has asked has a strong connection with the narrative of the film.

The scene in which two senior boys attacked him shows the dominant attitude of powerful people in society. He has a crush on a senior girl. And two senior boys attacked him based on this issue. They bully him in the road and throw away his books. He is unable to respond immediately. They questioned him as an authority. The helplessness of Ajayan is presented in a close shot, and the very next long shot shows how he has thrown a stone aiming at the head of one of the boys.

Punishment is used to discipline or sideline the subject once more. Ajayan has to bear severe punishment from the headmaster. The authority figure, the headmaster, beats with the stick. He asks Ajayan whether he will repeat it. As a logical response, Ajayan claims that he would do the same whether someone attacked him for no reason or not. This is considered a boast of pride, and she whips him again and again. He continues this until he raises his voice to stop. This was a blow to his mind and body.

The severe punishment he has to bear from the drill master also plays an important role in Ajayan's life. He becomes the first to cross the finish line in the running race, and when he was on his way to reach the finishing point, he ran back and again reached the finishing point. The master denies the prize and announces the names of others. When he questions that, the master resists and talks about his running back. Ajayan defends his reaction by claiming that no rule states his point. The students whistled, and the master was humiliated. However, this scene depicts an attempt to silence through punishment.

The fact that Ajayan was denied the winning position shows society's attitude towards excluding an exceptional athlete like Ajayan. The society operates as a panopticon, intently monitoring his every move. When he defeats the authority, he uses it as a weapon to silence him. Because the opposition is implicit, Ajayan responds. It is, however restrained. According to Foucault, discipline produces docile bodies. Adoor intentionally mentions in this scene how he challenges the hegemonical constraints. He opposes the ideological apparatus of disciplinary institutions like school. The subjects were subjected to discipline as a system of economy or as a mandatory part of the rule based on their observation

and control. Those who do not comply with the acts of disciplinary mechanisms are monitored and controlled.

The other act of humiliation and torture he has to suffer is in the tent where shooting is done. As Ajayan spoke about himself, he was good at sports. A scene depicts his skill in precise aiming. He could gain coins from the shooting game. Here the authority goes for the proprietor, and he deliberately throws him out from there. Here, too, he was physically tortured. The torture is used as a weapon to show the power of the body.

The body becomes an object for the application of power. Ajayan's body becomes an object through which power is enforced. His subjugation made the action more tangible. Power dynamics operate and play out across all levels of society. The school and the public exert their disciplinary powers on Ajayan. Ajayan's exceptionality is being tortured, and it actually paved the way for non-normativity. The presence or absence of abnormality or non-normativity is determined by the society in which it exists. A sphere of cultural, intellectual, and economic systems dictates how non-normativity, or to be diplomatic, exceptionality, is acknowledged and curtailed in a community. In the second phase of the film (the film does not mention any such divisions), Adoor turns the audience to another stage of narration that shows the psychosis or schizophrenic nature of Ajayan. Ajayan himself says that his story is not over. The narration is filled with inconsistencies and indefinites. The second phase deals with the narration of Ajayan from an uncertain scene. This phase also unfolds the passion of Ajayan towards his sister-in-law, Balu's brother. Through his sharp gaze

towards her in the first phase, Adoor hints at this. It is unclear to the audience, and they are made to read it as a forbidden attraction.

Adoor employs the technique of fantasy and fiction to represent the mind. When Ajayan tells the story, it's difficult for the audience to tell the difference between reality and fantasy. The fantasy is a product of the disturbed mind of the protagonist, Ajayan. He also details how each person in the family contributes to this trauma for Ajayan.

The old male servants of the home act as signifiers of power and trauma for him. They instill fear in him. They told him the stories of ghosts. These become horror nightmares for him. Though they are servants, they exert power over him. Being an outsider in that home, he internalised the fear and subjugation. He also expresses a sense of loneliness because there is no one to talk to in the house. Walking backwards and running backwards act as signifiers in the delineation of non-normativity. Taking steps forward is the normal way. It is an indication of a deviation from the normal way of thinking. It can also be read as how he deconstructs the constructed thoughts.

His vision is also not normal. He understands the severity of his own condition, and Adoor presents the drastic nature of his relationship with the character Sumangala. He always longs for the companionship of a woman. He is an adult child who has been denied his mother's comfort. He is trying to find that comfort in a woman. Adoor presents the involvement of a woman in the life of Ajayan with effects of realism and magic realism. He feels a sexual attraction towards his sister-in-law, Sumangala. And here the same character appears before

him as another woman whom he calls Nalini. He could not differentiate between Sumangala and Nalini. He himself raises doubt about whether there is a character named Nalini. The recurring appearances of Nalini in front of him raise doubts for the viewers as well. Her gaze at him also makes it seem as if he finds some sort of sexual satisfaction through her companionship.

A psychoanalytical approach can be made to analyse Ajayan, and the post-structuralist reading studies the problematisation of Ajayan as the abnormal or non-normative in the power structures of society. There are seven scenes in which the character appears as Nalini to Ajayan, and the sexual gaze that she sees in him is not non-normative. Rather, it can be read as a desire of the male to foreground his repressed sexuality. It only becomes strange in that sense when he questions whether what he sees is fact or fiction. It could be an intense desire for seclusion or a confused psyche. He also came up with the name Nalini. There is no particular sequence in which she is introduced as Nalini. Adoor presents those scenes with a sense of belief and disbelief at the same time. Nalini is seen in the first scene in a moving bus. The window of the bus comes as a signifier in between them. The window and the door are two prominent tropes used by Adoor. This becomes recurring in the shots in which Ajayan and Sumangala come together. In terms of Ajayan's relationship with Nalini, he is ineffective at maintaining a relationship with a woman.

The scene that shows Nalini coming to the college hostel to see him can be read as an imagined reality. Even so, he is terrified of society. He asks whether anybody has seen that she is coming to the room. He opens the door partially and stands behind the door, blocking her way. His facial expressions and gestures

show his fear of the others. He is uncomfortable with the thought of what others might think. A woman coming alone to a men's hostel is unimaginable for Ajayan. He longs for her companionship and gaze, but at the same time, he fears that it is against the norm. It's because the society in which he was born promotes normalised behavior. He was being humiliated and punished by two senior boys for his friendship with a senior girl.

She appears in front of him whenever he longs for the presence of a woman, specifically at the beach. Ajayan sees her as a woman who knows her completely, whether they have shared anything about each other or not. Whatever his inner mind longs for, he recreates that in his own story. The appearance of a character who is thought to be Nalini's father added more ambiguity to the belief in her presence. In the following scene, Nalini rejects her father's claim. She says that her father died seven years ago. Ajayan becomes confused and does not know what to believe. The study here is not intended to remove the scenes' confusion or disbelief. The ambiguity adds charm to the art of narration. But here, the presence of a father figure displays authority and shows how the character Ajayan is silenced. He is powerless to respond. Even if the presence of such a father figure is the fantasy of his own fearful mind, he sees it as an exertion of the power of the disciplinary society. As the resistance is inherent in the power relationship, he wants to defend that. The very next scene with the character Nalini erases the possibility. So, she gives Ajayan the option of believing it or not.

The forbidden attraction toward his sister-in-law becomes a deviant from the normal order of ethics and morality. Sigmund Freud uses the term "sexual repression". He argues that there are natural sexual instincts in every individual.

But society constructs and imposes restrictions on expression. The problem of sexual repression is defined as one of the psychological problems of mankind. Freud says that sexual repression leads to psychosis.

Michael Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality, volume 1*, criticises repressive hypothesis about sexuality as a social construct. But during the 17th century, the bourgeois exerted power over sexuality and insisted that sex without the purpose of procreation be repressed. It holds the view that the energy wasted on sexual needs may be diverted to economic productivity. Foucault says that this turned into a new discourse that is centred on science. Foucault admits that power is oppression and subjugation. But he also argues that power exists in all relationships. There are instances where the repressed can exercise power, and this power shapes concepts.

Ajayan kisses the hand of his sister-in-law and she withdraws her hands in shock. Adoor shows consecutive close shots, which show both of their reactions. It intensifies the seriousness and forbidden nature of the action. But it is not known whether that is a reality. Ajayan writes in a letter to Balu about his sexual attraction toward the sister-in-law. But at the same time, in another shot, he rejects the idea of sending such a letter.

According to Freudian analysis, children who lack maternal care have sexual attraction to those who are also in relation. He also discusses the possibility of having relationships with those who are related by blood. He says that the lack of maternal love distances a child from the family. This type of child is more likely to fall into the society's forbidden relationships.

Ajayan finds another way to express his passion. It can be read as an invention of his own mind. He knows well that the attraction toward Sumangala, his sister-in-law, is a violation of moral ethics. Here the repression of sexual desire takes on a new shape, and he finds a way to gratify his feelings with another woman. Sexuality was suppressed in society.

Ajayan speaks about how he willingly internalises the physical and psychological torture from three male servants. The servants play another role in the boy's life: they feed him bizarre tales that undermine his precarious hold on reality. Ajayan's tendency, as an adult, to confuse the real with the imaginary could have its source in such moments of utter disorientation. The three men could thus be said to contribute to his psychotic condition, especially when they manage to instill fear in him through their concoctions (Ganguly 116). The compounder once beat him severely when he whistled in his ears for fun and it disturbed his sleep. It was too much for the little boy to bear. He screamed, but no one came to his aid. Ajayan once saw a woman in the verandah, and when he inquired about this with the servants, they replied that it was *yakshi* (demoness). He was scared, and the very next day he was bedridden with fever. He longs for security.

The woman character Yogini Amma's presence is also unclear. Ajayan speaks about the things that he has known. He does not know the relationship of that character to him or the doctor's family. He says that he has seen her only once, when he was bedridden due to a fever. His uncle was saddened to learn of the death of the same doctor. But he says that he does not have the courage to ask about it. He always kept a distance from him.

A reading of the character points to the fact that he is an exceptionally brilliant character. In the first phase, he boasts arrogantly that no one could ever beat him in sports. He is portrayed as someone who deviates from the norms and dictums of society. But at the same time, he is exceptionally brilliant in sports and studies. Ajayan's dual perceptions and vision, as well as his understanding of himself, demonstrate how such a person is treated in society. This provides information about the larger structures that control an individual in a society.

Michael Foucault, in "Psychiatric Power", speaks about the medications used to cure madmen as instruments of power. There are relations of power, one of which is to minimise the power of madmen. In the case of Ajayan, he is not insane enough to be isolated from, but he lacks the normal perception of being a character that society expects. Esquirol provides four justifications for the treatment of mental illness. They are to assure the security of the subject or patient and his or her family, to free themselves from the influence of society, to overcome their own resistance, the necessity of medication, and the need for the moral and intellectual habits that have to be practiced by the subject. Foucault reads this in the context of power. He says that the medication gives the doctor or asylum more power. He says that the patient becomes a subject devoid of rights who is under the complete control of the doctor (48). Here, Ajayan is not taken for any treatment. The only treatment given to him is shown as a mention of the tablet by Balu. But he is placed in the centre of relations of power constructed by the knowledge of psychiatric power.

Adoor uses surrealist elements also to represent the psyche of Ajayan. There is a scene in which Ajayan watches with extreme excitement that a hen

drops the egg from the top of the roof and Raman Nair catches it. But at the same times he addresses hen as Mathai and asks the same whether he could have told before dropping the egg. And in the very next scene itself he finds Mathai and the hen that makes the sound to drop the egg outside. Adoor shows another scene in which Ajayan says that there is heavy rain and thunder and at the same time he finds Mathai bathing, taking water from the well. The viewers are confused to read the scenes whether they are the hallucinations of Ajayan. The shot taken from outside the window to focus Ajayan is a metaphor about his entrapment.



Fig: 5. Window as a metaphor in *Anantaram*

It becomes difficult to distinguish between fantasy and fiction. Ganguly says:

Ajayan's psychic state fascinates Gopalakrishnan because it produces in young man an urge to narrate. Ajayan wants to make sense of his life, and from he adopts-story telling- is, of course, inherently creative. It may not produce great art in his case but he takes on the role of the artist without becoming one. Accordingly,

Ajayan offers us an elaborate construction of what he believes is the objective truth but, in reality, it's a recasting of events to suit his personal agenda. Because he's schizophrenic, his narratives become the rationale of an irrational man ("The Narratives of Dislocation: The Theme of Outsider in the Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan" 20).

This can also be read as an act of resistance against the construct of himself as a deviant from the normal. He speaks for himself and he is conscious of his own turbulent mind. Michael Foucault, in his work *Madness and Civilization*, explores the dichotomies and problematic relationship between madness and unreason. The meaning of these terms is interdependent, and of course it is post structuralistic. The unreasonable can barely exist without reason. He says that madness is a social construct. The power regimes and the cultural constructs establish the madness and the unreason. So, it is not determined which one is true and which one is not. These are the two different phases of the human mind.

The film ends with a shot in which Ajayan, a small boy, counts the steps to a pond in two different ways: one in evens and the other in odd. It shows the two different perspectives of the human mind. Adoor says: "Ajayan at the same time is an introvert and extrovert" (Appendix ii). The characterisation of Ajayan becomes problematic and paradoxical in the relationship with society and family. The deviants and the variants are constructed by society. Here, the study attempts to read how society fixes the abnormality in the power relations and deconstructs the estrangement in the portrayal of the character Ajayan. Though the conflict is between the individual and self familial and societal relationships maintain power

structures. It can also be seen as the character's representation to justify the psychological picture. Here, he does not say that his deeds are justifiable.

Foucault says that madness is arbitrary in *Madness and Civilisation*. He considers madness as something located in a cultural space in the society. The very title of the work shows the contradiction. The madness is fixed by the civilisation and the power determines the civilised. The abnormality of Ajayan is read as a mental illness when his brother Balu reminds him about taking the medicine. From this point of view, it makes clear that he has mental illness. Foucault studies about the conceptualisation of madness in the society.

Foucault aims to analyse how, as a matter of principle, institutions that produce knowledge are able to establish, what it means to be an ordinary person, in particular, the media and the educational system. They will use examination and differentiation technologies to classify us as subjects if we follow what they consider normal by the episteme of our time and location. Those who do not fit the conventional criteria are referred to as "not quite subjects". They are frequently kept out of society while incarcerated, receiving mental health care, or living in poverty. Such discriminatory/disciplinary behaviours compel us to follow the culturally normalised standards in order to achieve the status of being considered normal. We thus bring ourselves under control to fit in the identity that is provided for us because we feel as though we are being watched and judged; we become docile bodies. As soon as the subject is conscious of the gaze, he or she assumes the role of the principle of his or her own subjugation. We internalise institutional and cultural norms because we consider them to be the standard, and we construct our own personal panopticon as a result (Gutting 75, 84).

This describes how power functions as an unidentified force that motivates us to think and act in ways that make it challenging, if not impossible for us to do differently. Madness, in Foucault's view, does not exist on its own.

It is a result of the social and cultural factors that give it rise to and characterise it. Ajayan's deviation from the standard codes and the cultural and institutional emphasises his subjectification. The voice over of Ajayan gives more authenticity about the narration of the life. He understands his own denial of identity and problematises his own subjectification.

When Sankarankutty in the film *Kodiyettam* makes an attempt to conform with the constraints of the gender Ajayan asserts his own notion of identity. It becomes clear through the voice over of Ajayan. He justifies for his own non conformity and foregrounds the unseen terminals of power. He brings into foreground those who exert power on him. When the characters of other films internalise or accept their servitude Ajayan questions the society. Ajayan tries to find the rationale to his irrationality. Ajayan's confession about himself, or the metafiction element of the film, conveys the notion of the subjectivity of his own self. Foucault's lecture on "Technologies of Self" encapsulates the notion of how a self is evaluated. He reads it as the procedures that exist in every civilization and are prescribed to individuals in order to maintain their identity.

Ajayan's analysis about himself and the given inclusive space in society is evaluated. He considers his foster brother Balu a role model. He is considered to be perfect and superior. Ajayan says that he is envious of Balu. At the same time, he studies himself, the confessional mode of narration, and his own justifications, which distance him from a normativity established by society.

Both films use the parallel representation of normative polarities to update the discourse of masculine normative transgression. The resistance can be studied through the characterisation of Ajayan, as it implies a conflict between the self and society.

The study discusses how the stardom of Mammooty (character of Balu) is developed in the film. Here Balu the character gains significance only in relationship with the character Ashokan (Ajayan). During that time, he plays powerful or protagonist roles. But in this particular film, Ashokan, who has not played many protagonist roles, plays the major role. Adoor takes the film at a time where Mammooty is given protagonist roles. Though the argument has not gained importance at the level of literal aspects of study it points how the film maker dismantles the stereotypes and hierarchies associated with stardom.

Both the protagonists, Sankarankutty and Ajayan make an attempt to move into the constructed dictum of normativity. For Sankarankutty, the attainment of identity is achieved through a sense of belonging. He acquires certain features such as responsibility and becomes empathetic to others. There is not a transformation in the case of Ajayan. He speaks about himself and explains the reasons for the oddity. Adoor in the interview says that Ajayan is both an introvert and extrovert. Though the concept of normativity is fluid in its conceptualisation the ideological constrains in terms of gender and class adhere to the societal and cultural constructs.

Chapter 4

Home, Class and Gender as Apparatuses: A Study of *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal*

This chapter attempts to look at the most varied and yet most functional aspect of power engagement in society. It investigates the role of family caste and gender as sociocultural artefacts in the relationship between the dominant and marginalised classes in society. Adoor spots the discourses of absence of home, class, and gender as problematic in the films *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal*. These two films, *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal*, are adaptations of Zacharia's "Bhaskara Pattelarum Ente Jeevithavum" and Thakazhi Shankara Pillai's "Naalu Pennungal", respectively. Both films clearly reflect the various operations of power in the form of the family and the master-slave dichotomy. Power becomes relational. The study discusses the estrangement effect of power and how gender and class produce the 'other' and how the 'other' assimilates servitude.

Marital and master-slave relationships become paradoxical in the sociocultural discourse. The class based racism is implicit and the film exposes the main stream classes of Hinduism in Kerala and Zamindars in Southern Karnataka. It analyses how the structured ideologies are made to treat the marginalised class as the 'other'. The study engages in a critical analysis of marriage as an institution identified or reinforced through class and gender segregation in *Naalu Pennungal*. The film *Vidheyan* poignantly discusses the exploitation and affiliation of the dominant and the subjectivity and servitude of the marginalised.

Priya Menon states that the characters in Adoor's films are "more fractured than flawed" (83) and the concept of identity in terms of home and class in the films *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal* obviously reflects the dislocations and struggles. The chapter draws on multiple critical perspectives to draw the interconnections between class, caste, and gender that lead to domination and subordination in both films.

Adoor reflects the contours of marginalised sections in *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal*. Marginalisation can be defined as the social exclusion of an individual or group of individuals on the basis of race, colour, class, caste, gender, state, etc. Power acts as the dominant factor in the dichotomy. Adoor reinforces the influence of region, caste, class, gender, etc. in these films. The dominant group's ideological power regimes determine the norms and mechanisms of oppression. The powerlessness of being immigrants lead to social seclusion in the peripheral narrative of the film *Vidheyan* and also the toxic nature of patriarchy is questioned.

The protagonists of the select films in this chapter suffer alienation. Alienation acquires significance in the study as it analyses the portrayal of the marginalised section. Amandeep Kaur and Sahil Sharma in the chapter titled "Alienation of the Other: Examining Marginal Narratives in Select Punjabi Films" studies about the alienation of the oppressed class:

We argue that the rural and urban continuum of alienation, while its nature can be different in these films, not conveys the notion of exclusion but also allows the existing status quo of caste hierarchy

to remain in a state of permanence. The state of liminality that the characters live through, does not remain transient but becomes a permanent part of their existence (290).

The study foregrounds temporal and spatial alienations of the migrant characters in the film *Vidheyan*. It is same in the case of two characters Pappukutty and Kunjipennu. Amandeep Kaur and Sahadeep Sharma say: “This marginalisation comes with an economic brunt of being landless and a sociological brunt of being the other” (291). “The relationship with the space influences the way the marginalised communities resist against the societal structures” (292). The reading of the marginalisation in these films entails “caste oppression, social and political exclusion, violation and humiliation of women, underscoring of their vulnerability, apathy of the political and feudal representatives” (292). There are obvious subaltern representations in these films.

Thommie in *Vidheyan*, Pappukutty, and Kunjipennu in the first story, “Veshya” (“The Prostitute”) in *Naalu Pennungal* belong to the oppressed or subaltern in their respective films. Also, the titles are complementary in their servitude. In both films, the narrative emphasises how the subalterns are subject to the hegemony of the ruling class. This chapter studies the subjectivity that arises from immigration, which pertinently ascribes violence and indiscrimination through the narratives of the films. The characters of Adoor are stamped as outsiders in the social structure formed by class relations.

Thommie in *Vidheyan* is a converted Christian, and the fact that he is an illegal immigrant in the narrative of the film emphasises him as the ‘other’ to the

viewers. Also, he sets himself up as servile to the master, who is considered to be the native of the locality. He was appointed as a local tax collector during the colonial period. He continues the reign of power even after the British has left India. The non-native space for the oppressor also intensifies the exploitive nature of the dominant. Bhaskara Pattelar shows his hegemonic attitude to Thommie, and he is unable to resist. Adoor meticulously takes the shots and writes the screenplay, which shows the toxic nature of exploitation. The nature of exploitation is different in the first segment, "The Prostitute". Pappukutty and Kunjipennu are from the lower class strata in this town. Like the illegal migrant in the case of Thommie, they do not have a home of their own. The trial scene in the film clearly reflects the constructed binaries in the class.

Pattelar's inhuman treatment of Thommie, as well as Thommie's reaction to it, shows how he has internalised his subjugation. Thommie acts as a subordinate to his master, and he has no complaints against him. There is a scene in which Pattelar spits at Thommie, and he wipes it away with a smile. In the first part of the movie, there is harsh and inhuman treatment of Pattelar. Thommie addresses Pattelar as *Yajamanar* (an address to the master).

The servitude of Thommie through the toxic nature of power reflects the nature of Louis Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus. The marginalised class internalises their lower position. Adoor exemplifies this through his many shots. Thommie's posture with his mouth covered demonstrates his submissive nature. Though the relationship has the phases of affiliation and exploitation, submission and intimacy work as a cohesive force between them. There is intimacy with

Pattelar as he provides land and food for him. They were pushed to the margins by economic necessity and host culture.

The notion of being homeless and the class act as the apparatuses and signifiers which stand for the subjugation. The apparatus of the class in the plot attributes the label of *Pattelar* and *kudiyar* (tenant). The conceptual categories of home and class are framed in the milieu of feudal Dakshina Karnataka, also known as South Canara, in the Kerala Karnataka border of India during 1960. South Canara is a place located in the border between Kerala and Karnataka. Priya Menon raises questions in her study:

The ways in which power signifies itself between those empowered and those who are enchained by its present an ethical and moral predicament that invite analysis within the class contexts of *Patelar/Kudiyar* relations in Kerala. Why does the enslaved subject acquiesce to the status of object? From what place does the complicity or submission arise? Is subservience absolute in power relations? Is there a venue for possible resistance(s) within the restrictive plasma of power for the powerless? (31).

Adoor historicises the concept of 'home' to contextualise the power structures. The identity of being a settler in an alien land becomes the primary cause of servitude in this case. Zacharia chooses South Canara (Dakshina Kannada) as the plot of the story. The district falls under the state of Karnataka. As a border district located between northern Kerala and Karnataka, it shares cultural similarities. In the pre-colonial period, South Canara was part of Kerala's

Malabar region. When Tippu Sultan signed the Treaty of Srirangapatnam in 1792, the whole of Malabar came under British rule.

The British administrators gave the charge to the feudal chiefs to collect taxes from the *Kudiyans* (tenants) for the lands they were given as lease. It actually reignited the feudal monarchy that existed at the time. They handed over the sums of money to the British that they had collected from the tenant peasants. The land lords were called Pattelars or Janmis in Malabar. The Malabar Kudiyan Act of 1929 hardly benefited the peasants. Zacharia explores the ideological power of the landlords over the tenants, irrespective of the rights gained by the tenants through the story. The study attempts to read how Adoor has adapted the story of the *Pattelar-Kudiyan* relationship in terms of class and home as sites of power.

Thommie acquires a liminal position in the newly accumulated space of Dakshina Karnataka. He becomes both the victim and the object of the toxic power play. Power is visible in this film in its most rude and raw form through the relationship between master and slave. The study identifies the representation of Thommie as 'subaltern' as he is an outsider in Karnataka. So, he is denied the status of native identity. The period depicted in the film is the post Second World War period, and basic necessities were scarce in Kerala at the time. Many of the people in Kerala are forced to migrate to other places in search of land. Thommie and his wife are outsiders in Dakshina Canara, a newly migrated Karnataka town. Adoor, in *Vidheyan*, subverts and transgresses the constitutions of the characters as subject and object, and master and slave, in the established power relations.

The study attempts to read the immigrant and minority identities in the film *Vidheyan*. Thommie, as a migrant in this film, is subject to border effects. But the border in the film is not synonymous with geographical boundaries but rather a legally acknowledged citizen and officially non-existent subject. Here an attempt is made to define how power functions heuristically in the relationship between the acknowledged and the officially nonexistent. This dichotomy serves the oppressor and oppressed in their relationship.

Priya Menon says that there is a desire for an idealised psychological and physical space as home makes him (Thommie) succumb to the exploitation of authority (Menon 88). Thommie alludes to power as a subject of the settler community in Dakshina Kannada. As power is a chain of subjectivity Pattelar was also a victim of tyranny during the British reign. When the British introduced the system for collecting taxes at the time, Bhaskar was someone who exerted power over the settlers and was wielded by them. Kerala settlers are immigrants who work for Kerala's native settlers. As Thommie encroached on five acres of land at Ichlampadi in Dakshina Kannada, which is under the control of Bhaskar, he was considered an illegal immigrant. He exerted power over the settlers and was wielded by them.

Adoor says that Thommie's acceptance of abuse seems natural because he believes that he has no roots to claim in this alien land (Menon 96). The unfamiliar language and space make him feel alienated in this land. Adoor says that when the soil under one's feet is not one's own, then the person is at the mercy of someone who wields power (Joshi 93). The concept of home is problematised, and an attempt is made here to heuristically determine how the

(dis)located home functions in the subjectivity of Thommie. To elaborate this argument Martin and Mohanty defines the home:

where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; not being home is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself (196).

This insight looks into power relations established in the space of home for Thommie in the film *Vidheyan*, and Kunjipennu and Pappukutty in *Naalu Pennungal* . In the film *Vidheyan* power alludes to home not as a site of constructed plot. Rather it refers to a dislocation in the boundaries of space. The absence of home as a constructed entity with legal documents functions as reason for the subjugation. The characters in these films confront alienation exclusion lack of social recognition etc. The politics of location or dislocation and homelessness is central the study of home as a site of power relations.

John McLegod, in his book *Beginning Post Colonialism*, says that home acts as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a sense of our place in the world. It tells us where we originated and where we belong (210). But many people will have to leave their land in the process of colonisation, migration, eviction, etc. and also search for new places in search of land, agriculture, scarcity of food, etc. The immigrant community always feels a sense of alienation in the new land. They often face discrimination, which affects them in physical and psychological ways. John McLegod further says that ‘home’ is a concept of nationalistic representation. He says that home is a place where we are welcomed,

and as an idea, it stands for security, shelter, stability, and comfort. He raises the question about the condition of the migrants who started to live in a place far from their birthplace (210).

Migration entails establishing a new home in a new land that cannot be claimed as their own. In this aspect, the migrant will be considered 'other' and 'powerless'. In the case of Thommie, he has even encroached the land. So, he has no legal right over the land, which leads to its subjugation. Again, the differences in class, caste, race, and gender contribute to the oppression. Thommie never wants to remain in a ghettoised position. So he serves to act as a slave towards Pattelar. In return, he gets a job in the toddy shop and is allowed to stay in the encroached place. So, it is quite natural for a migrant to get satisfied. In return, he has to submit his identity. So, there is a gain in power for the coloniser.

The first shot was fired from the vacant chair with the gun against the wall. This prop gradually gains the meaning of power when Pattelar occupies the seat. When the film begins, the first shot itself shows a hierarchical difference in the positioning of Thommie and Pattelar. Pattelar asks Thommie to ensure whether he is a settler in that place and questions him about the land he has acquire.

He exhibits his toxic personality towards Thommie. But, Thommie, being a settler has no right to question back his actions. He sexually exploits Omana, the wife of Thommie. Thommie thinks that he has no right to resist that, even though he wants to. He suppresses his anger at the times when Pattelar sexually exploits her. There is a shot where both of them speak about their limitations in the alien land, which is not their own. They have nothing to own in their native land. So,

the memory of one's own land is not a happy one here. They consider their lives at the mercy of Pattelar.

Adoor takes every shot of Thommie, which clearly demonstrates the limitations of a migrant settler. Being a migrant, as in the case of Thommie, it is too hard to succumb to the authority of Pattelar. Pattelar's toxic masculinity is being acted out on Thommie because of his migrant status. Thommie finds it difficult to do the work. He submits himself as a slave in front of him.

Omana, the wife of Thommie, is also helpless, and both of them ponder their pathetic situation of helplessness. Pattelar presents new clothes for Thommie and his wife. In two of the shots where Thommie feels ashamed to stand with the tear in *mundu* (dhoti), Adoor depicts Thommie's extreme poverty. He has no dress to change. Pattelar offers him and his wife new clothes. It is not because of an inclination toward him. Pattelar needs his wife Omana to satisfy his sexual urge. He is forced to remain silent in the face of Pattelar's attitude. He provides him with a job as an attendant in the toddy shop. Pattelar's motivation is self-centered and exploitation, as he is both a coloniser and a colonised person.

Cesaire in the *Discourse of Colonialism* labels colonisers as barbaric in their treatment. He says that colonisation is a form of dehumanisation that has its origins in Europe's racism against the black population. Cesaire denies the humanist perspective about colonisation because it pays no attention to the value and agency of human beings. In the film, *Vidheyan* Pattelar employs the mechanism of the protector to persecute those under his toxic authority.

There are also other migrants who live at the mercy of Pattelar. There is a scene in which another immigrant from Kerala begs for the mercy of Pattelar for the non-issuance of a land title. They can continue to live there without a land title unless Pattelar is diplomatic. The laws of that village are centred around the authority of Pattelar. In the shot, a buffalo head mounted on the wall of his verandah appears as if it were on the head of Pattelar (see fig: 6, 191). The prop is aesthetically used in this shot to convey the animalistic nature, strength and violence of Pattelar. He is represented as the local authority, and upon him the power rests. The rifle, which is used to demonstrate his brutality, is also displayed with him.

The shot clearly depicts the conflict between outsiders and insiders. Thommie's total submission of his identity in front of Pattelar is only due to the fact that he has to live in that land as a migrant. Pattelar always tries to emphasise his position as an outsider to use his power against him. As the colonisers use the strategies for the benefit of their livelihood, Pattelar uses Thommie for his personal pleasures. The fear of being expelled from the migrant land makes Thommie bear the brutality of Pattelar and also accompany him for his cruel pleasures.

The homelessness becomes problematic in the narratives of Kunjipennu and Pappukutty. Though homelessness or 'home' can be defined as an ideological construct, the repressive system of law considers it a notion of power. On the surface, the film addresses the issue of a man and woman from a lower caste living together. Because Kunjipennu was a prostitute, she was denied the rights and privileges of a normal woman in a society. She stopped that job and planned

to live with a man named Pappukutty when he suggested that they could live together.

They are economically disadvantaged, so they sleep on shop verandahs and the pavement. They have no fixed shelter or a home. So, they are not able to access the protection and stability of a home. Being a homeless woman, she is considered vulnerable to men. Men approach her for their sexual urges. It is clear that she sells her body or does so for a living rather than out of a personal desire. But she is forced to do it for their livelihood. When Pappukutty approached Kunjipennu with a desire to live together, she thought that it might offer her the protection of a family. However, the film addresses a central question about the absence of home and how it creates gaps in a society's hierarchical circle. It investigates how society gives meaning to the aspect of home as an ideological construct. The lack of a fixed space propels the narrative into a series of complex entanglements in the court room. The institution of marriage is also problematic, and that will be discussed in the later session.

Gurney defines 'home' as an ideological construct that stems from the emotionally charged experiences of the place where they happen to live (Gurney 26-29). Somerville agrees with the notion and says that the home cannot be considered a socio-spatial construct (115). It can be defined as emotional and physical well-being, loving and caring social relationships, or a suitable living and sleeping environment, among other things (93-97). The lack of these aspects can contribute to a state of homelessness. Bramley gives a definition for 'homeless' as the lack of a right to or access to their own secure and minimally adequate

housing space . In this aspect, Gurney's definition of 'home' as an ideological construct is neglected.

The state of homelessness, or to be more specific, 'rooflessness' becomes crucial, and it is not ideological. It becomes problematic when the Weberian and Marxian approaches take the term 'home' as a signifier of poverty, propertylessness, and powerlessness. Despite the fact that the characters Kunjipennu and Pappukutty are summoned to court for their illegal relationship, the questions raised against them highlight the objectivity of home.

Peter Somerville in his study traces even different connotations of home, namely shelter, hearth, heart, privacy, roots, abode, and paradise (532). These meanings acquire significance in different cultural contexts. In this context, the signified of home, 'shelter,' becomes a synonym for home, serving as protection or a roof over one's head. Ryan says that home gains power when it becomes a signifier to "control one's own boundaries" (Ryan 3-17) and Somerville says that privacy is required when it conceptualises the form of a territory or possession and becomes a certain territory with the power to exclude other persons from that place and to prohibit surveillance. When Kunjipennu and Papukutty sleep on the pavement, they lack shelter, a hearth, privacy, roots, and an abode. Here, shelter, privacy, and roots emphasise the aspect of power. The absence of these equations at home has created a parallel void of power. That has led to the vulnerability of Kunjipennu as a prostitute.

When Kunjipennu and Pappukutty decided to live together, they did not have a home of their own as a shelter. They share a little space to sleep in front of

a closed shop. The sound of a scooter is used to express the constant threat of exploitation that a woman had to face, and it fades away at the sight of Pappukutty. The trial scene in court raises a slew of issues that call into question the concept of home and family as sites of power in society. The questions are significant signifiers, as they emphasise the signified realms of the judge's questions. The questions about the identities of Pappukutty and Kunjipennu obviously reflect the 'political' judgements of the judiciary and legal system. According to Peter Somerville's study, apart from the ideological meaning of 'home', homeless people are distinguished by a lack of social status. Though class contributes to powerlessness, the absence of a home casts people as outcasts and rejects those at the bottom of the social scale as downtrodden and niche-less.

The lawyer asks them questions that force them to reveal their address and identity. Both of them are unable to answer the names of their fathers. Here, the ignorance and uncertainty about the father figure further lead to questions about the home. The lawyer asked both Kunjipennu and Pappukutty about their home, taluk village, etc., which often represents the rationality of the place where they live. It also emphasises the legitimacy of 'home' as a signifier of identity in the legal system. The absence of the home also becomes significant as it underlines their downtrodden position in society. Their marginality also becomes an important criterion in the representation of their subjectivity. Both are forced to consider themselves subjects and victims in this situation. The arguments levelled against Kunjipennu and Pappukutty here are a clear reflection of the legal system's repressive position in the society.

Though the central argument points to the legitimacy of the relationship of Kunjipennu and Pappukutty within the institution of marriage, this throbs into the complexities of oppression in the general contexts of caste and gender. The fact that homelessness is not a marginal factor demonstrates how the power structure compartmentalises and silences society's marginalised population.

Caste and class hold one of the most prominent positions in power hierarchies. Caste and class have strong ideological constraints that manifest as natural at times, but also as alienation and dehumanisation. Caste plays an important role in social stratification and hierarchical arrangements, and it can be based on purity or occupation. Caste and class are often related to power.

In pre-independence India, Kerala had a highly structured and complex caste system. Kerala's culture has a strong Hindu bias, and so the caste system is based on different strata of the same. Brahmins occupy the top position and hold a command in the ritual. Nayar, the warriors, formed the second layer beneath the Brahmins. Nairs own land and are often considered an economically privileged class. Ezhavas, considered to be the traditional service caste, occupy the third position in the hierarchical ladder of the caste system. The schedule caste comes after the Ezhavas. Each of these castes is further subdivided, and power is wielded over them based on their position in the hierarchy as the 'underprivileged'. According to the Varna system that existed in Kerala, those who belong to one of the four varnas (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudaras) are called 'savarnas' and those who do not belong to any of these varnas are called 'avarnas'. Despite the fact that the constitution provides reservations and privileges for the lower caste, certain films attempt to read the impact of the

ideological power apparatus on the caste-biased society. Though caste and class are intertwined, caste has more rigidity and class is more fluid in nature. The alignment of Brahmins and Nairs resulted in a kind of stratification of society into savarnas and avarnas. The savarnas took great hold of the land, and that left the 'avarnas' landless. In Kerala, atrocities related to caste discrimination are common. Though they discuss the legend of Parasurama, the historical documents *Kerala Mahatmyam* and *Keralolpathi* glorify the privileged status. Those books also emphasise the servitude of lower castes.

The dominant status occupied by Brahmins extended to all levels of social life. Because Brahmins have dominance in temples through ritual rites, they can also acquire land through Devasvam and Brahmasvam. The upper caste is also linked to economic flexibility. The British also needed their support during colonial rule to sustain their authority. The lower caste had to face inhuman treatment, which forced them to always be servile to the upper caste for their livelihood. The miserable conditions prompted people of lower castes to convert themselves to Christianity or Islam. But there was a reawakening, and subversive forces started to question the disparity in social practices.

Dalit consciousness is a reaction to dominant forces rooted in a yearning for relief from human conditions of existence and a sense of utter powerlessness in the depths of oppression. George Oomen in the paper "Dalit Conversion and Social Protest in Travancore" says:

Caste consciousness of middle and upper lower castes is another kettle of fish. It is response to material deprivation, that is, denial

of material goods. While disadvantages or deprivations of a materialist nature, the delicate lines of difference are of a mental category. The degree of response and its intensity has a relation to the variations of humiliation and despair felt by the oppressed. Let me just say the "collective psychology" of the respondent groups makes a difference (69).

George Oomen talks about their conditions of life. They had to use self degrading language like 'adiyan'. They remain servile to the landlords to achieve some basic rights for the livelihood in the exploitative and oppressive system. The obsessive servitude of Thommie in the film *Vidheyana* has an influence of collective psychology of the converted dalits. The servitude is rooted in the collective psyche of lower caste or avarnas. Adoor's portrayal of Thommie indicates that he is a converted dalit Christian. And as explained earlier he was forced to leave his roots in Malabar and migrate to Dakshina Kannada.

The caste system prevails in Dakshina Kannada also. It belonged to the Malabar region before the formation of Kerala. In Dakshina Kannada, various forms of exploitation are used to extend an old oppressive power system. The main plot of the film is a site of power operation in terms of an oppressor-oppressed relationship. The study attempts to deconstruct the roots of the power system, especially the role of the oppressor, through the characterisation of Bhaskara Pattelar. His portrayal in the film points to more than just an oppressor as a person. Rather, it problematises the chain of power exerted on them during colonial rule.

The exploitation exerted by the British was cruel and subjugating. Malabar was one of the earlier acquisitions of the British in South India. The colonial power tried to exert its dominance over the acquisition of land and the land revenue. The native place of Bhaskara Pattelar is South Canara. As Adoor has historicised the plot, and his reading of the history reveals the chain of power relations in the plot and narrative. In the 16th century, European traders began their invasion. The Bednore dynasty ruled South Canara, which the British dubbed the Kannada dynasty because the natives spoke Kannada. The Europeans pronounce the letter 'd' as 'r', and so the district was named Kanara (or Kannada). The indigenous population of this place is called 'Tuluva'. The Brahmins belonged to subdivisions such as Shivali, Havik, and Kotaha. They follow patrilineal tradition and are immersed in religious and ritual activities. Among the non-Brahmin castes, the Bants are influential in Canara. They were the wealthiest cultivating and landowning class. They cultivated land with the help of peasants and slaves. The Bant land lords have full control over the feudal estates. When Tippu Sultan of Mysore persecuted and deported Christians, the Bantas took hold of that land. There were *mogeyar* (fishermen), *billavas* (toddy tappers), artisan castes, untouchables like *holeyas* and *mahars*, the hill tribes, and others (Silva and Fuchs, 1-4).

The authority seen in the character of Bhaskara Pattelar is inherited through the lineage. As he belongs to an upper caste in his region, his dominance and power relations becomes natural, and he plays his authority over the others. When Tippu Sultan signed the Treaty of Srirangapattana, the Malabar came under the rule of the British. The colonial government found it relatively simple to

implement their policies. They gained official rights over the property of the landlords. They levied a tax on landlords and imposed their authority over them. These landlords levied a tax on the tenant peasants, known as kudiyan. Adoor portrays that authority through the representation of toxic power relations exerted by Patelar upon his local peasants.

Despite the fact that India is no longer under colonial administration, the Pattelar system continues to wield sovereign control over the local population of the village. The Malabar Kudiyan Act of 1929 provided little protection for kudiyan against ideological oppression. Bhaskara Pattelar is a representative of the hierarchical caste system invested with power. His exertion of power is imposed not only on the protagonist, victim Thommie, but on other powerless representatives of victimhood. Adoor says that he has dealt with the theme of power and also the psychology and structure. He historicises the context to add authenticity to the narrative. He brought historical references and it makes Zacharia's story to move beyond the story line. Adoor says about the historical background:

[Patelars] were like local chieftains who were responsible to collect taxes. But along with it came other auxiliary powers—judicial and social, which they abrogated. That is how Patelars became authorities. Interestingly, this system continued even after independence, until up to the sixties when regular revenue officials took over. All the same, by sheer force of convention the head of a Patelar family enjoyed respect and evoked fear in the village

fiefdoms. Not all, but some abused these powers to a great extent (93).

Here the study attempts to discover the power relations between colonial powers and Bhaskara Pattelar, Patelar and the lower caste of his village in South Kannada, and Pattelar and the migrant Christian farmer Thommie. The exploitation of power is at its peak in the oppressor-oppressed relationship with Thommie.

The master-slave dialectic in these relationships is founded on caste. The collective psychology of oppressors made them behave as viable subjects at the disposal of power. The exposition of caste in the study analyses the characters to read those who are subjected to a system, administration, or person as the 'other'. Here the reading explores the representation of the 'other' and how that 'otherness' has been inherited, passed on, naturalized, and invested with ramifications of power.

Bhaskara Pattelar is the representative of the upper caste and the master/oppressor in the power-bonded relationships in the film. But he is also a vestige of the power system in which the colonial administration has control over the feudal system of Malabar. Here, the colonial race as a system assumes power, and Patelar is a mere subject. Likewise, he has dominance only in his territory, and he pathetically seeks help from others after the murder of his wife.

The relationship between Thommie and Patelar represents the various stages of the master-slave bond. The *mise en scène* in the very first medium-close shot is set to show the decadence of the hierarchical power system. The title *Vidheyan* gives a hint about a 'system to which it is subjected'. Though Thommie

represents victimhood, Pattelar is an indirect subject of the British administration. Thommie comes in front of Pattelar with servitude. The reading of the location, costumes and make up of Thommie and even the colour choices looks at the malicious caste system. Adoor meticulously chooses costumes and characters for the role. He says about the role of each character:

It is Thommie who makes him possible, for you need a slave to create a master. So you needed an imposing figure in the role of Patelar. And Mammooty perfectly suited it. Body and appearance are very important-physiognomy in general. Here the propensity to violence is a major factor (Joshi 92).

Thommie covers his mouth with one hand in front of Patelar. The willing submissiveness of Thommie and his timid nature provokes Patelar to have a sadistic pleasure. He uses abusive words 'come here, son of a bitch'. Thommie never reacts back and bears the insult and torment. The caste system shaped the lower caste as weak and passive and Thommie representative of the caste assimilates the verbal degradation. He has inherited the servitude which in turn is a product of the hegemonic ideology of the caste system. Suranjan Ganguly says about the shot in which Thommie and Patelar first meet. Thommie moves to the other side at the command of Patelar and that act that will transform his life utterly (49) is a prelude of his submission devoid of identity. It is a continuation of the public shaming and harassment that the lower castes have suffered at the hands of upper caste Hindus. Thommie addresses the tormentor as his master and calls him *Yajamamanar* (master). He confirms his "servile status".

The gradual growth of his submissiveness leads to a state of enslavement. As the upper caste is privileged to exploit the women, Patelar uses Omana for his sexual pleasure. Thommie is not strong enough to resist him. Adoor vividly captures Thommie tagging Pattelar in his walk. There is a psychological transformation in Thommie from a state of sadness to a state of masochistic pleasure. As Thommie belongs to a class of ancestors who have suffered the humiliation and degradation he surrenders identity. The verbal abuse is ruthless, but Thommie's aloof nature made him to continue the oppression on him without any hesitation. Ganguly says:

Serving the most powerful man in the village makes him feel strong and defines him in a way he had never experienced before. And although the unrelenting Patelar continues to abuse him verbally and physically, he no longer seems to mind. He accepts oppression as a fact of life. Eventually, such servility becomes a state of being without which Thommie seems unable to function (52).

There are lackeys of Pattelar who always act according to his commands. They all use the term *Yajamanar* to address him. They act and work in the manner of Pattelar. The migrant farmers from Travancore and Wayanad and the local villagers of Pattelar's region live in constant fear of him. Though he is devoid of sovereign power, he utilises the old monarchial power invested in him through the caste system. The villagers (both local and migrant) regard him as the authority to judge and make decisions in disputes.

The visual representation of a scene where the local residents of a village approach Pattelar is an obvious reflection of their submissiveness. A native of the village brings his eloped wife and her partner in front of Pattelar for their illegal relationship. It is a powerful shot in which the objects are standing in a verandah for Pattelar's judgment. The long shot and the camera angle from the above represent a paradox of real powerlessness and, at the same time, the constructed power shown by Pattelar. They are the natives of that village, as they speak the native tongue. Pattelar mercilessly stamps the husband who brings the complaint about his inability to discipline his wife. The shot of the helpless man and woman with two sobbing children standing for mercy and judgement is an obvious representation of the enactment of power. The props used in the shot are also significant in the sense that they are visual signifiers of power. The *mise en scène* used in that shot appropriates the meaning of power. Adoor aesthetically captures the shot, which shows three people who were subjected to Pattelar's tyranny leave the gate.

Kuttapara, a villager, is also subjected to oppression at the hands of Patellar. Though Kuttapara is not a direct victim, his daughter-in-law becomes a victim of the sexual assault of Patellar. His cruelty cannot be questioned, and he considers it one of the privileges of his caste supremacy. The upper-caste men can use the women for their sexual pleasures.

Yusef, a merchant and likely Muslim immigrant from Kerala, is also a victim of Pattelar's aggressive nature. Pattelar accepts servitude and submissiveness from other castes. Here, Yusef is not a man who serves Pattelar. Pattelar dislikes his cold and detached nature. Thommie has respect for him and

addresses him as *Dhani* (a rich person). Pattelar does not like Thommie's respect for him and mercilessly beats Yusef. The pugnacious nature of Patelar is meticulously captured in medium close shots. The dim street light used in the shot emphasises the egotism and, at the same time, decadence of Pattelar's belief in himself. He tries to assert his power through tyrannical behaviour. Pattelar refuses to acknowledge him, despite the fact that Thommie informs him that he is a wealthy merchant in Arshinamakki. The economic status of the migrants has improved, and they are not willing to bow down before the tyrannical caste system. Yusef represents the new order.

Adoor depicts superstitions and rituals, which are by products of the caste system. Thommie meets a Hindu from a village near the temple pond. Thommie feeds the fish according to the advice of the native. He warns that if anyone from another caste tries to catch the fish, the head will burst. Thommie begs mercy from the goddess for his thoughts and practices repentance. The sounds of the bell and prayer chants from the temple add intensity to the text of the film. It also emphasises the supremacy of the caste, particularly the Hindu caste.

The Christian religion does not have much power in that village. There is hardly any mention of native Christians in the film. Silva and Fuchs, in their study, do not ignore the possibility of the settlement of Syrian Christians in South Canada. The records of their early existence were lost during the deportation of Christians from Kanada by Tippu Sultan in 1729. When Kanada came under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Goa, the missionaries gained converts to Christianity. There was a gradual increase in the number of converts (Silvs and Fuchs 3, 4).

In the film, there are migrant Christians and dalit migrant Christians. During the turmoil and famine after the second world war Christians also migrated from Travancore to the Malabar regions. The picture of the parish priest and his insistence on the faith and rituals emphasises the attempt to reinforce Catholicism. The priest reminds him of the need for confession and a visit to the church. Silvs and Fuchs have mentioned the *gurkar* (*men* of good moral character as headmen) system in Kanada (Canara). They should report the scandals in the village to the priest and ensure religious prayers in Christian families. Adoor blends the traces of history with the narrative of the story (Silva, Severine, and Stephen Fuchs 24)

Adoor also includes a scene in which Thommie brings *Patakaran's* (the tenant's) *kandukazcha* (a share of the harvest produced from the land taken on lease) to Pattelar's house. It was a practice that prevailed in the feudal system. In this shot, Thommie mentions the names of people, which clearly indicates their race and caste. The feudal practices reinforce the rigidities of the caste system. Saroja Pattelar, Pattelar's wife, explains that people gave this to him out of fear of him. Though tenants or peasants have no legal obligation, they present it as a way to reduce the toxic exertion of power.

Resistance is not in the form of verbal abuse or physical encounters. Adoor employs a form of resistance coexistent with the toxic objectification of Thommie. It is passive. Thommie succumbs to the authority of Patelar for his survival in the alien land. Though his servitude exceeds the limits, there is resistance embedded in his submission.

Thommie forms a defiant identity after the first act of physical and verbal abuse. He expresses his frustration in furious words, saying that he would

certainly take revenge on Pattelar. His expressions are truculent, and Adoor captures their intensity through a lengthy shot.

It becomes clear when one of the lackeys arrives to call Thommie in accordance with Pattelar's orders. He has a combative attitude and questions the authority of Pattelar over him. Later, Pattelar ensures his servitude through the exploitation of Thommie's helpless condition. Though Thommie is a lackey of Pattelar, he never supports his actions. Even so, he has no physical strength to act against him. Later, Pattelar becomes his provider, and Thommie becomes dependent on him. Thommie never misses an opportunity to stand up to Pattelar. Adoor frames such shots through the obstinate and taciturn expressions of Thommie. Thommie's pointing of the gun towards Pattelar when the latter rapes a woman is a spontaneous action of resistance suppressed in the mind. Thommie's massage (fig: 6) may be understood to be intentionally throbbing in order to hurt Pattelar.



Fig: 6 Pattelar and Thommie in the film *Vidheyam*

The rhythm of the massage is audible as it reflects the intensity of his hatred. Thommie's actions are both intentional and represent passive retaliation. But he is not strong enough to directly express his resentment.

Thommie joins with Yusef and others when they plan to murder Pattelar. Thommie helps them prepare the plot. Thommie hesitated a little when Pattelar was shot and about to fall into the well, waiting for the turn for his death. He wants him to die, but Thommie's devotion to the master compels him to give his hand. His resistances and protests are momentary aberrations in these scenes. He speaks for Yusef and Saroja and deters him when he goes to hatch fish from the temple pond.

There is a scene in which Patelar is making arrangements to shoot Saroja. Thommie knows the deliberate and preplanned attempt. But he is not powerful enough in dissuading his master from it. As a result of the inner conflict he tells Saroja not to put salt in the rice gruel which is taken by her for him. Tommie could not resolve his own desperate condition as he considers it as a dishonest act to cheat nurturer.

The resistance of Thommie becomes apparent in the depiction of Thommie's reaction after the death of Pattelar. Pattelar's surrender to death in the form of a gun raise emphasises the betrayal of authority. Initially, he is unable to free himself from the master's bonds of submission. The two subsequent close shots capture the transformation of expressions on the face of Thommie. It implies the gradual achievement of identity detached from the discord of Pattelar. Thommie takes the gun up and throws it into the river. Adoor speaks about the

attitudes of Thommie and Pattelar after the murder of Saroja as a “total reversal of roles” (Joshi 92). Adoor points out the transformations in both Pattelar and Thommie:

In the beginning, we find Thommi squatting in front of the toddy shop; in the end, we find patelar in the same position near the water falls. He is squatting meekly, watching over the rice boiling in the pot while Thommie is bathing in the river naked and in pure abandon. He has grown dependant on Thommi. He has found a comrade in him and manages with him a certain degree of exchange as well (92).

The synchronisation of the music and tolling of the church bell set the context of the lengthy shot. The background music sets the mood of Thommie’s redemption with a loud cry: “The master is dead”. It also becomes an allusion to Thommie’s resistance to the abusive and meek power under which he is enslaved. Adoor uses symbols to signify its vivacity with images from nature. Ganguly’s observation of the sound of a church bell is significant:

It is not the tolling of funeral bell as at the start of the film this time, but a call to the congregation. It rings for Thommie as a vindication of his new birth and his reintegration into the community he had shunned (Ganguly 60).

The classifications of caste prevalent in the Hindu system are obvious in the four segments of *Naalu Pennungal*. There is a gradation of caste in these four stories. The visual representation and the narration are subtly framed to signify the

caste. Women are the protagonists of these four stories. Adoor foregrounds the contradictory and ambivalent nature of caste through the stories of four women: Kunjipennu, Kumari, Chinnuamma, and Kamakshi. Caste serves as an inhibitory factor in the identity of these women. Sexuality also becomes a site of conflict in the relations of power. This will probe into social stratification and inequality and discuss the role of caste in the characters of these films.

Kunjipennu and Pappukutty, the characters, represent dalit identity. The previous section discussed the lack of a home and the conflicts generate as they are outsiders. However, the caste to which they belong is the primary signifier to which the aforementioned factors are related: "The caste system provides a hierarchy of social roles that hold inherent characteristics and remain stable throughout life" (Dirks 59-77). In the first story, Kunjipennu and Pappukutty are assigned social identities based on their caste. They are "avarnas," and they belong to the untouchables. The costume and make-up of these characters emphasise their caste identity. They have internalised the suppression, and their submissiveness in court supports the statement.

Kunjipennu's caste identity is problematic in her characterisation of herself as a prostitute. Morality is frequently associated with upper-caste women, while women from lower castes are viewed as vulnerable. Kunjipennu's motive to live with a man shows her attempt to stop the constructed disparities associated with the caste system.

The trial scene in court shows the helplessness of Pappukutty and Kunjipennu as culprits. Their poor economic status and inferior caste denied them

even the availability of an advocate to talk for them. Adoor actually questions the relevance of the legal system. The judge is sarcastic and has a sort of contempt for these Dalit culprits. The make-up and costumes of judges and advocates are carefully crafted to create the contrast between the varnas and avarnas. In those days, access to education and white-collar jobs was dependent upon caste. White collar jobs were secured by Brahmins and other upper caste members. The prejudice and discrimination reflected in the judge and lawyers are exemplified through their sarcastic smile. Adoor clearly depicts the marginalisation, creating a schism as the legal system itself draws a line between upper and lower class. Of course, socioeconomic forces are inextricably linked to it. The picture of Maharaja Chithira Thirunna Balarama Varma (1912–1991) at the back of the judge in a medium shot shows the sovereign power of the reign during the time of the narration of the events in the 1940s. He occupied the throne from 1931 to 1949, and the picture functions as a contextual prop in this shot. Balarama Varma enacted the Temple Entry Proclamation Act in 1936, which brought an end to the evil practice of untouchability. But the concept of justice becomes highly problematic on the basis of caste and occupation for Pappukutty and Kunjipennu. The contextual metaphor and the setting (court) become a paradox, and Adoor intellectually narrates it as a question against society.

The court needs the documents and proof to ensure the validity of Kunjipennu's claim about themselves as husband and wife. More than that, they are considered marginalised in society. Studies of marriage and sexuality in India have emphasised its moral codes according to caste and class. The state and community have preconceived notions about conduct and moral behavior, and that

is evident in the attitudes of the court and police. Ouseph is another character who takes his resentment against Pappukutty and Kunjipennu in the court on purpose.

Though marriage and gender become the primary concerns raised during the reading, caste is also a significant factor. The *mise en scène* is powerful enough to portray the caste in the film. The costumes make a sharp distinction between the different castes. Kunjipennu wears kallimundu (a type of dhoti) to represent the Dalit caste. Kumari and the other female characters in “Kanyaka” wear white mundu and blouse. Ezhava women often use this costume. Different styles of dressing distinguished various groups linked together in a common network. Dress and ornamentation also marked hierarchical distinction-groups located lower in established order were prohibited from finer clothing, umbrellas and gold jewellery (Devika 466).

There are shots of paddy fields in the film. Kumari is a farmhand who works and earns for the family. Kumari does not belong to an economically privileged family. Women from upper caste families never work in farms or in menial jobs. But she supports the family with her earnings and saves the same through chits. She could be a subtenant working in the land of Nairs. Meera Velayudhen in “Social Reform, Law, Gendered Identity among an Oppressed Caste, and the Ezhavas in Travancore” describes the social reform movements that arose among the non-dominant classes from various social classes. She also mentions the Report of the Ezhava Law Committee for the Sree Mulam Popular Assembly of Travancore from 1919. The report speaks about the Ezhavas as sharecropping tenants in the fields of nairs or nambudhiris (Velayudhan 34).

The setting of Kumari's marriage also shows the peculiarities of the caste. Meera Velayudhan speaks about the shift from *Marumakathayam* to *Makathayam*, the decision of the Ezhava Law Committee. According to her, it led to a decline in family disputes and litigation. The social reform movements stressed the importance of the common law of inheritance (Velayudhan 35). The father bears the burden and responsibility for his daughter's marriage. This is encapsulated in a shot where Kumari's father shares his concern about the unmarried daughter with the neighbour. The Ezhava Law Committee rules out the validity of *sambhandham*.

“Chinuamma” tells the narrative of an upper-caste woman named Chinuamma. The names of the characters in the story, such as Nara Pillai and Raman Pillai, are also suggestive of Nair surnames. The financial conditions of the protagonist characters are much more privileged than the previous ones (*Veshya* and *Nithya Kanyaka*).

The delineation of caste is apparently presented through the *mise en scène* in the story. The setting constitutes the home of Chinuamma, reminiscent of structural magnificence. The cultural props, brass vessels and the wooden cot are the used here symbolically to represent the hierarchical implications of caste. It also shows their material prosperity. The wall pictures of Hindu lords used in the background serve as metaphorical props.

There is a scene in which Nara Pillai visits Chinuamma and tells her a tale. The framed pictures of young Krishna, Little Krishna, and Lord Ayyappa in the background of these characters are suggestive of metaphorical meaning in the

gradual development of their dialogues. Adoor says that every minute prop in a shot is intentionally employed with a specific intention, and it constitutes meaning. Lord Ayyappa is associated with the myth of celibacy, and at the same time, it recalls the legend related to his birth from the union between Lord Shiva and the avatar of Lord Vishnu, Mohini. The tale narrates about a landlord's wife in Rajapalayam. As the woman of the tale is not conceived from her husband she engages in a physical relationship with the horse-cart driver. She became pregnant and gave birth to baby. It has a metaphorical relationship with the picture. Adoor frames three metaphorical props in a shot. Lord Krishna's picture is suggestive of conjugal love. The facial expressions in Chinnumamma are suggestive of vacillation in her relationship with Nara Pillai. But she resists her own temptation and adheres to codes of morality of married woman.

Upper caste women are frequently associated with societal moral codes. Researchers have studied the influence of caste on social identity. She asserts moral righteousness and gained an identity. The abolition of *Sambandam* might have influenced in the affirmation of puritan righteousness.

The final story, "Nithyakanyaka", is the story about an unmarried woman in Kerala in the post-independent era. The costumes of women are also suggestive of their age and caste. The marriage customs of the two daughters associate them with the Nair caste. This period of the story also hints at the *makathayam* system, where the children of a family have equal claim to their inheritance of property. The lengthy shots about the customary practices that prevailed in the marriage suggest the importance given to the rituals in each caste. The marriage rituals of Subadra portrays minute local and social practices of nair caste in Kerala, but at

the same time it is linked to hierarchical organization of power in the caste system and the changes reflected in Kerala modernity. Melinda A. Moore in the paper “Symbol and Meaning in Nayar Marriage Ritual” says that in theory it focuses on psychoanalysis and “on the correlation of ritual form with social structure across caste and regional groups” (255).

The relations of power are concisely defined in the relationship between male and female in the films *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal*. The society intentionally or unintentionally participates in the building up of power structures. The domains of caste and class are involved in the constitution of dichotomies.

Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* describes the conditions of women at four levels- social, cultural, historical and economic, that define the very existence. Beauvoir speaks about the normalisation of the conception about woman as the ‘other’. The masculine ideology of woman is always defined in reference to man but man never in reference to her. She is inessential and incidental whereas he is essential, subject and absolute. She says that the concept of otherness is primordial as consciousness itself. She gives the examples from mythologies and history how this thought is encapsulated in the psyche of human nature. Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought. She says that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman”. Man’s identity is understood as the absolute human type and subject. But woman is always defined in feminine perspective.

Beauvoir says that women herself are responsible to bring about the transition from ‘inessential’ to ‘essential’. She says that women lack concrete means for organising themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with a

correlative unit. The absence of this correlation leads to the taken for granted subordination of women by themselves. It is reflected in every culture, religion nation irrespective of caste and class. Adoor takes exceptionally lengthy shots to make the viewers understand and emphasise the subordination. The women characters in his films with a few exceptions unknowingly internalise their inferiority.

Iris Maron Young in the essay “Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Spatiality and Motility” speaks about the reasons for the restraints imposed on women. The culture and society in which a woman lives characterise her as the ‘other’, the inessential counterpart to a man, a mere immanence, and an object. The subjectivity, autonomy, and creativity that are essential to being human and that are valued high in patriarchal society for men deny woman on both cultural and social level. Sreedevi of *Elepathayam*, Kamalamma of *Oranum Randu Pennum*, and Sarojini of *Mukhamukam* are characterised as the women who possess a will to break the defined shackles. The plots of the selected films reflect a patriarchal plot, which goes well with the analysis of the women by Iris Marion Young in the essay.

In a sexist society, women are considered mere objects and bodies. All the female characters in the films *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal* are mere objects for the sexual satisfaction of men. A woman's objectifying gaze may be interpreted as a sign of openness or consent from her part to the sex.

This section of the study focuses on how power is exercised in the marital relationship between men and women, as well as how the state and society participate in its implications for class, caste, the economy, and, of course, gender, all of which contribute to the factor of how power is exercised. The film *Naalu*

Pennungal is a reflection of power, which opens up ambiguities and paradoxes in the understanding of power.

Iris Manon Young is against the distributive model of power. Rather, like Foucault's theory of power, power is conceived as an ongoing process. The distributive model defines power as a notion of dominance that is concentrated in the hands of a few. This power is widely diffused in the industrial sector. So, it is hard to make the argument that social relations are defined by oppression and dominance. Domination cannot escape the phase of power. Though resistance acts at a certain point, culture plays an important role in emphasising the intensity of domination. Patriarchy, authority, and subordination embody the analysis of power as a fair means of domination. Resistance takes place when the oppression becomes irresistible.

Catharine Mackinnon discovers in her research that domination and gender difference are inextricably linked. She says: "Difference is the velvet glove in the iron fist of dominance. The problem is that the differences are not valued, but the differences are valued by power". She further says in the work *Feminism Unmodified* that "women/men are a distinction not just of difference but of power and powerlessness. Power/powerlessness is the sex difference" (MacKinnon 123). This again makes clear the insight put forward by feminist theorists that gender is a social construction, whereas sex is biological. Carole Pateman in *The Sexual Contract* speaks about gender difference as domination itself. She says that "the patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection" (Pateman 207). She

considers male dominance to be completely pervasive, and in the master-slave model, men are women's masters.

Mary Daly says in *Beyond God the Father* that women occupied power during the time of matriarchy that existed before patriarchy. She prefers matriarchy, but not in the sense that it favours women. Rather, she describes it as “being equalitarian rather than hierarchical and authoritarian” (Daly 93–94). This also encapsulates women's denial of subjectivity, which is reflected in the screenplay, dialogue, costumes, and so on. Adoor introduces and investigates intellectual debates in the construction of dichotomies. The female characters in the selected films are depicted as having learned to absorb the subordination or otherness as part of their surveillance.

In *Vidheyan*, the man-woman bond is called into question in the context of husband and wife, as well as the association of sexual exploitation of women by men. The assault and the trauma are common factors in both cases. In the case of *Vidheyan's* female characters, there is little resistance. But resistance takes an active form in the four female characters of *Naalu Pennungal*.

Gender discrimination in Kerala is embodied by the plot of subjugated women. Class and gender are mutually exclusive sources of power. Adoor frames the toxic and brutal exploitation of women at the hands of men. Bhaskara Pattelar wields unrivalled power as a result of his social and economic standing. Stuart Mill, in his essay “The Subjugation of Women” points out the legal subordination of one sex to the other (Mill 472). He raises the voice for equality, and he knows well that subordination is deeply rooted in the psyche of women and is accepted

without any rational grounds. The passivity of women and the supremacy of men became quite natural and a part of the ideological apparatus of the state. It is apolitical.

Marriage and rape are the exponents of power in the film *Vidheyam*. The marital relationship exists between Saroja and Bhaskara Pattelar, and Omana and Thommie. Women place men in a superior position to themselves. Saroja feels obligated to and terrified of Bhaskara Pattelar. It is evident that there is little sustained love in their relationship. She is afraid to express her resentment through the actions of her husband. She makes an indirect attempt to criticise the husband when he molested Kuttapara's daughter-in-law. But he dislikes his wife's advice to correct him. She becomes the victim of his toxic and aggressive power as a husband. He makes an attempt to shoot her, and in the second attempt, he succeeds in killing her. Saroja lacks the physical strength to repel Pattelar's attack. She has strong resentment against the cruel and sadistic pleasures of her husband. Her opposition only leads to her decision to send her son to a boarding school. Even so, she never openly expresses her rage or opinion in response to his actions or deeds.

Thommie and his wife Omana share love and understanding. Thommie never expresses his authority or power to his wife, Omana. But she maintains a submissive nature towards Thommie. She openly admits her family's financial difficulties, and she respects Thommie's decision to marry her without a dowry. She never resists or protests, even when Bhaskara Pattelar exploits her body for sexual pleasure. She herself assigns an inferior position, being a dependent woman in a poor financial condition, and so she does not find any fault in

submitting her body to Bhaskara Pattelar. She serves her husband, Thommie, with the utmost service and care.

The toxic and chauvinistic power of Pattelar forces his wife Saroja and Thommie's wife Omana to subjugate themselves as subjects. The conversation between Pattelar and his wife is meager. Adoor frames the voice in such a way that it emphasises her limits of freedom. The creative use of space and the verbal language reflect the subjectification of women.

There are very few shots in which Saroja and Pattelar come together. But there is no face-to-face conversation between them. Most of the time, Saroja occupies her space in the inner space of the home. She rarely comes to the porch of the house. She appears first there when Pattelar informs her about the arrival of their son. Thommie calls Saroja, according to the preplanned command of his master, to murder with an accidental shot. Here, Saroja serves her husband with food even before the attempt to murder her. She never raises her voice other than to sob.

Adoor uses two consecutive shots in which Saroja climbs up the staircase and comes back. There is a lengthy shot in which Saroja goes to the room on the first floor with a coffee pot to serve her husband. The staircase shows the visual representation of the seat of power in Pattelar. Saroja's dissent and protest are reflected in her actions. She has not directly hinted at the issue, but she opens up her protest at his attitude towards women. Pattelar dislikes when he is questioned, and he scolded her. When she climbed the steps down, she cried. Pattelar was not willing to listen to her, and she was unable to make him understand. His rude and

offensive nature of power turned into an abstract signifier, and she became absolutely helpless.

The descent of the steps in the staircase shows the decline of power. The close-up shot of Pattelar sleeping with the gold chain around his neck is also a signifier of power. Saroja is merely a victim of the remnants of power. There is hardly any mutual love or respect between them. Saroja obeys him only out of fear. The king is considered the supreme power and provides economic protection. Beauvoir speaks about the basis for the abjectness of women.

Man-the-sovereign will provide woman-the-liege with material protection and will undertake the moral justification of her existence; thus she can evade at once both economic risk and the metaphysical risk of a liberty in which ends and aims must be contrived without assistance (Beauvoir 2).

Adoor shows the brutal and offensive attitude of Pattelar towards women. There is sexual exploitation of women when there is feudal exploitation of men in the land. Pattelar considers women as mere objects for sexual gratification. Pattelar asks Thommie whether Thommie's wife is beautiful or not. It has a sexual undertone, which Adoor emphasises when he shows a scene in which Pattelar and his lackeys cross the river again.

Adoor never shows the shot of the raped woman. Her sobbing serves as a contextual signifier of the woman's helplessness. The picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the candle in a close-up shot accentuates the forbearance. Pattelar and his lackeys persisted in their forced consensual sex. There is a shot in which Thommie and Omana dwell on their pathetic situation. Omana has no other way

out other than to submit her body as an object to survive in the alien land. Gradually, she internalises the helplessness and servitude, and she starts to find pleasure in it. It becomes an act of consensual sex rather than a rape or forced sex.

The servitude reaches a climax in a scene in which Thommie remarks that his wife's body has the smell of Pattelar's perfume. Thommie adds that he likes it. Susan Brownmiller refers to "a wife as the husband's property" (21). But here, Thommie's condition is so grave that he should not express any kind of displeasure with Pattelar's actions. Like Thommie, Omana also accepts Pattelar as her master, and he has power over her body. It is unquestioned. Here, the enslavement of Saroja is doubled when she and her husband are economically dependent upon Pattelar. The argument developed here combines Beauvoir's insights.

Master and slave, also, are united by a reciprocal need, in this case economic, which does not liberate the slave. In the relation of master to slave, the master does not make a point of the need that he has for the other; he has in his grasp the power of satisfying this need through his own action; whereas the slave, in his dependent condition, his hope and fear, is quite conscious of the need he has for his master. Even if the need is at bottom equally urgent for both, it always works in favour of the oppressor and against the oppressed (Beauvoir 17).

They consider it an acceptance from their master and protector. Omana and Thommie gradually develop respect for their master after being recognised by him. Though it is exploitation and enslavement, the victims gradually develop a bond with the oppression and begin to idolise their condition. Pattelar sees women only as an object to gratify the sexual desire of men. He asks Thommie whether

Kuttaparai also has a relationship with Thommie's wife when he (Pattelar) is given the pickle from Kuttaparai's home. Thommie simply laughs instead of reacting against it. He too considers it a statement of recognition.

Pattelar's brutal nature towards women is reflected in his encounter with a woman. He rapes the woman, and the brutality is brought in through the medium of sound. Pattelar was impatient when Thommie followed him on the hunt because he has not found any prey. And in the very next shot, Pattelar instead finds a woman, whom he forcibly rapes. Adoor gives a metaphorical allusion to the context of the shot. For victims or prey, hunting is an inescapable process of imprisonment. Pattelar first complains that, as he was drunk, he was unable to aim properly. He finds a woman coming with firewood, and he rapes her. He even asks Thommie whether he requires the same. The woman's situation is analogous to that of a hunted prey in the hands of a hunter. The woman's howl and attempt to free herself become futile under the brutal physical power of Pattelar.

The women survive in the village with awe and fear of being raped. In a shot, Saroja makes it clear to Thommie that the villagers offer many things not because they love him. Instead, they did it out of fear. He attempts to rape every woman he sees. Young also speaks on the threat of the body. "Her personal space is under attack. She says that the most extreme form of spatial and bodily invasion is the threat of rape" (154). Rape is the most heinous form of sexual exploitation, and women are reduced to mere objects devoid of self for men. All the female characters in the film except Saroja are portrayed as victims of bodily invasion. Brown Miller defines rape as "a conscious process of intimidation by which all

men keep all women in a state of fear" (Brown Miller 45). She further says that it is a problem of "distorted masculine philosophy of aggression"(450).

Pattelar lacks mental power, and he uses his power to defeat the physicality of women. Saroja is a woman who has more emotional strength than Pattelar. So, he tries to overpower and murder her. Pattelar spots almost every woman to satisfy his sexual urge. He considers women his property, whether they are married or not. He never needs consent and tries to overpower them with his strength. He exploits Kuttaparai's newly wed daughter-in-law, and Saroja asks about the same later. He thinks it is his sole right and never wants to be questioned about his interests.

Women's movements, such as Omana and Saroja's, are particularly restricted around domestic chores such as serving food. Saroja serves food to Pattelar with awe and respect, in spite of his harsh treatment towards her. There are shots, which Omana also serve him food, in spite of the sexual exploitation. The study intends to delve into the complexities of how a woman as a human being is restricted by the exclusion of her movements. It is primarily concentrated inside the home.

Iris Marion Young provides an explanation for the immobility. She made the observation that women utilise only part of the body while the rest of the body remains immobile. According to her, the mobile part of the body is destined to perform a task, and the other part is "rooted in immanence" (Young 146). She further says that women in a sexist society are physically handicapped. Women in society are compelled to live their lives in accordance with the patriarchal culture's

definition. According to her, women are "physically inhibited, confined, positioned, and objectified" (152). Adoor's women characters in the film *Vidheyan* are imprisoned in the constructs of fragility. Young further observes:

As lived bodies we are not open and unambiguous transcendences which move out to master a world that belongs to us, a world constituted by our own intentions and projections. To be sure, there are actual women in contemporary society to whom all or part of the above description does not apply. Where these modalities are not manifest in or determinative of the existence of a particular women, however, they are definitive in a negative mode--as that which she has escaped, through accident or good fortune, or more often, as that which she has had to overcome (152).

In a sexist society, women are considered mere objects and bodies. A woman is gazed upon as a mere body, "as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subject's intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention" (154). All the female characters in the films *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal* are mere objects for the sexual satisfaction of men. A woman's objectifying gaze may be interpreted as a sign of openness or consent on her part to the sex.

The discrepancies in the dichotomies of gender are severely reflected in the marginalisation of women. Men achieve dominance and power in the institution of marriage. Iris Maron Young says that power is "a kind of stuff that can be possessed by individuals in greater or lesser amounts" (Young 31). The

study attempts to look at how marriage assigns the states of being subjects and objects to women and men, respectively. The family structure in Kerala is purely gender-structured, irrespective of caste and class. Susan Moller Okin, in *Justice, Gender, and Family*, says that a cycle of power relations exists in family and the workplace, which reinforces the inequalities between the sexes (4). Power is unequally and unjustly distributed among the sexes.

Okin claims that the traditional concept of sex-differentiated marital responsibility, with its provider-husband and domestic-wife, has a strong influence on men's and women's attitudes and perspectives. She also argues that the belief in the male provider strongly reinforces the domination of men within marriage (141). Okin talks about women's vulnerability with the anticipation of marriage and how that has a greater impact on their lives and choices (142). The marriage accentuates the segregation of priorities between the sexes.

Adoor in the films talks about "the subject of marriage and its centrality in shaping the lives and identities of women" (Ganguly 102). Marriage continues the cycle of inequality set in motion by the anticipation of marriage and the related sex segregation of the workplace. Partly because of society's assumptions about gender, but also because women, on entering marriage, tend already to be disadvantaged members of the work force, married women are likely to start out with less leverage in the relationship than their husbands(146).

Okin explains further how women are made vulnerable in the society through the responsibility of child rearing and female subordination and dependence. They are interconnected through the tradition of marriage. Harris

Mirkin in “The passive female: the theory of patriarchy” identifies law, family and religion as the three potential methods in which men have dominated women. He says that women are taught to become willing, co operative and passive victims (39-57). The marriage as an institution raises problematic questions in the relationship between Kunjipennu and Pappukutty.

The difference between living together and marriage is questioned in the power relations of the society. Marriage can be described as a legally constructed social relationship, traditionally based on a sexual relationship and implying a permanence of union. When a man and woman decide to live together without the label of the religious or legal sanction it is considered as illegitimate relationship.

Marriage becomes a crucial in the thought of Kunjipennu when her body is considered as an object. She is known as a prostitute and her understanding about the objectification of her body made her to think about a life with Pappukutty. Though she makes such a decision, being marginalised woman and prostitute deny her the status of subject.

A prostitute is devoid of identity. She is a sex object who exists for the sexual pleasure of men. She stops selling her body and settles in a fixed relationship. Here Pappukutty gives priority to take the decision to Kunjipennu. Both of them are kind and affectionate towards each other. Here Kunjipennu never decided to solely depend on her husband. Adoor erases the notion of the powerful breadwinner of the family. She starts speaking for herself. Though she did the job of prostitution she worked to support the livelihood. She has the right to make her choices. The very first shot shows a scene of encounter with Pappukutty and Kunjipennu. She is bold and strong in her attitude.

“Get lost.

He's been bothering me for a while" (*Naalu Pennungal* 1:06-10).

Kunjipennu never adopts a feminine shyness or permissiveness in her dialogue. She preserves an identity of her own. She becomes the subject of her own body later. There is a lengthy scene in which women and men partake in the construction job together. When a man at the work site approaches her with a sexual implication, she boldly rejects his invitation. She denies the invitation and strongly says that she lives with a man. She refuses to sell her body in spite of his offer of money. There is another character named Georgekutty who also approaches Kunjupennu with a sexual connotation. When she rejects him, he disapproves of such a reply from a woman who was a prostitute earlier. In all these cases, she echoes the voice of a strong woman.

As Pappukutty and Kunjupennu belong to the marginalised and lower class sections of society, "women" are the most exploited. When both of them are questioned about their address and other details, they do not know the name of their father. It is understood that their mothers were also sexually exploited as they lacked a secure home and were considered vulnerable. The absence of a father figure to name is essential for the well-being of sustenance in a civil society.

When a woman has a permanent or temporary partner without the acknowledgement of the institution of marriage, it is regarded as immoral. They are excluded from the mainstream of society. They constituted the only section of women who had to be their own breadwinners and guardians. She further says that these women could reasonably think about independent livelihoods, and they are supposed to be viable to men (33), but this has a caste bias too. The relationships or the choice of the woman to choose the partner exist in Nair families called

sambandham, which was explained in the second chapter. But they are never separated from the main stream or expect seclusion.

Other men could not approach Kunjupennu while she belonged to Pappukutty without infringing on her owner's rights. There are men who attempt to approach her with sexual implication, but they leave when they understand that she belongs to a partner. When she is a marginalised prostitute, men tend to think that she is a vulnerable property for conjugal pleasure.

The need is also emphasised by the society's ideological norms. Civil and state societies create and construct their perceptions based on pre-conditioned norms. The moral codes of society make distinctions and divide practices. The prostitutes belong to each other. But the 'otherness' evolved from these facts is internalised and becomes an acquired or conditioned identity for them. They have self-awareness, and they never feel ashamed of their position. She is rarely addressed by her name. Her identity as Kunjipennu is erased, and she is known as a street prostitute.

They are unable to comprehend the significance of the legal sanction of marriage. But she claims many times in the film that they are 'husband' and 'wife'. She thinks that the status or identity of being a wife would elevate her position. They think that the tag of 'husband and wife' give them power and the right to live together in society. "I am the wife, and you are the husband" she always emphasises. She herself does not want to recall the past. She regards that as a condition of objectification.

Adoor frames a marginalised woman's bravery and individuality in the choice of decisions in life. She is not a mere object in their relationship, either. There is equilibrium of power in the relationship between them. The colour of Kunjupennu's jacket symbolises her youth, spirit of revolt, freedom of choice, and resistance. Her uniqueness can be identified in a shot where workers sit together for the tea. The co workers in white costumes with dark skin are distinguished from Kunjupennu in a red jacket with lighter skin. She appears to be the youngest member of the group. Kunjupennu replies to the concern of a co worker that her job at the road work site may tan the skin. She gives priority to earn for the livelihood.

She dismisses the importance of physical beauty as a determining factor in a woman's attractiveness. Adoor attempts to emphasise equality through the importance she places on her work. There is a shot in which metals are put together and taken as a load on the head. The rigidity of the job is crafted into the lengthy shot. It rules out the myth that jobs that require physical labour are intended only for men. Nadine M. Simon says in "The Female Worker and Physically Demanding Work" that historical evidence proves the strenuous work of women. But the notion of weakness attributed to women remains pervasive in our culture. The male-dominated society continued to play a significant role in women's limitations (237). Female bodily existence, according to Young, is an inhibited intentionality with a projected head 'I can' and a withheld body commitment "I cannot" (Young 146). Her costumes' colours, particularly red, represent the power of choice, revolt, and being full of energy. Adoor chooses the same colour for Sreedevi in *Elepathayam*.

Resistance is seen in the characterisation of Kunjipennu. She has the voice of resistance against exploitation. Her resistance becomes hard in the sense that she is ‘marginalized woman’. As power centers, the domination operate on these two levels. Here, Adoor obviously differentiates how her resistance acts on society in general and on the state in specific. The court scene represents the ruling ideology. The court and police represent the repressive state apparatus.

In this shot, Kunjipennu strongly reacts even against the Repressive State Apparatus, the police. There is a shot in which police catch Kunjipennu and Pappukutty as they sleep on the pavement. She bits at the hand of a police when he attempted to take Pappukutty. She refuses to hand him over to the cops. She is more powerful and says that Pappukutty is her husband.



Fig: 7 Trial scene in “Veshya”(Naalu Pennungal).

The court represents the array of power relations embedded in caste and gender. They do not have the evidence to support the marriage. The character George Kutty identifies Kunjupennu as a street prostitute in front of the court and

degrades her identity. She has no proof to claim the address and none to take bail for them, but she is bold to face the court and repeats the statement that they are husband and wife. She occasionally remains silent after speaking what she knows. Her way of resisting is quite different. The court needs the support of documents for marriage. The character kunjipennu says that they have not done anything wrong and claims that they are husband and wife. But court denies their right to live together. Here the power of court becomes a mode of subjugation as a set of rules, or a system of domination, acquires the mask of RSA.

The character of Kumari is used to represent the working-class woman in the twentieth century. It is the story of a woman who is solely responsible for caring for her family. This is also a deviation from the traditional core ideology that the responsibility of a family rests with the man. The second part starts with the concern of the character's father, who has no financial stability to look after the home.

"To be honest, today it is she who runs the home".

When I became ill, she took over and began working as a young girl.

Mother and daughter look after me too, buying all my medicines.

She's unlike girls her age.

She will not squander any money.

She even manages to save from her meagre earnings (*Naalu Pennungal* 22:01-11).

Here Adoor intensifies the pronoun 'she' in each piece of dialogue and speaks about the daughter's worth. At the same time, it echoes the unmarried daughter's concern. The three women discuss with Kumari whether she likes the boy. Kumari remains silent, and her passivity reflects a woman's lack of choice in arranged marriages. But the perceptions of three different women show how women have defined a woman's choice in her marriage. She remains silent on the question of whether she likes the proposed man. Instead of Kumari, her mother says that she liked the man. Her silence and passivity open up a myriad of questions.

Priya Bhakat, in her article "Involvement of Youth in Marriage Related Decision Making in India", says that the traditional normative pattern of Indian marriage does not provide much opportunity for the prospective man or woman to participate in the decision-making process of their own marriage. She adds that "they are bound by the social norms and acquiesce to the social disciplines of traditional life" (179). In "Kanyaka", both Kumari and her husband do not directly interfere in the marriage decision. They are not given an opportunity to speak up. Especially when a woman speaks about her opinion, it is often regarded as uncommon. The interference of Kumari's mother is an attempt to avoid an individual opinion about likes or dislikes is inextricably linked to societal gender relations.

The apathetic nature of Nandu towards Kumari anticipates and confirms a low libido in him. He avoids Kumari most of the time, and understands this from the very first conjugal night. Suranjan Ganguly says that the obsessive eating is an "orgiastic sublimation of his repressed sexual desire" (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 98). He comments about the

possibility of an Oedipal scenario due to the close bond between mother and son. He does not rule out the chance of extreme self-absorption as the cause for sexual apathy (98). The timid and passive husband becomes alive only at times when he is served food. The lengthy shots, which reflect Nandu's gluttony, make him non-normative.

His egoistic attitude prevents him from accepting his own apathy in marital life. He did not take Kumari back from her home when he returned after the first visit. The consecutive shots that show the paradoxical expressions of Kumari's father and Kumari reflect a state of bewilderment, apathy, and despair.

When Kumari returns home, society begins to question her. Kumari is blamed for the incongruities that occurred in the married life of Kumari. Her mother also expresses her anxiety over the questions posed by the villagers about their married daughter. The women spread scandals about Kumari, saying that she is a woman of loose morals. But Kumari is very bold, and her silence, at times, is a strong resentment against society. She has to face the questions, especially from women.

The questions reflect our society's patriarchal attitude towards women. The dialogues are written to highlight the society's paradoxical nature, which is taken for granted and blames women for the problems. The village women who speak out on the issue support Kumari. Their dialogues are typical of the attitudes of a male-dominated society. She does not weep, instead involving herself in her work as a farm hand. Her active participation in the labour is both a form of resistance and a survival strategy.

The lengthy shot shows female workers, including Kumari, engaged as labourers in the paddy field. It shows the Kerala of the 1950s, a period in which women started performing agricultural labour together with household chores. It depicts the topography of farm labour performed by women. Female workers who are expected to travel between the workplace and their homes must also perform household duties. The plot is a village called Travancore, and this shows the popularisation of agricultural jobs among women. Agriculture also played an important role in economic and social development.

Adoor attempts to emphasise the importance of women's earnings through the characterisation of Kumari. Her earnings are the primary source of income for the family, and her father comments her efforts. She gave money to the mother for her father's medicine when she started to live again in her own home after the marriage. Her inability to speak and act stems from her struggle to support herself and her family on a meagre income. When Kumari's father and her neighbour discuss the issue of marriage, she comes to the front and makes the statement.



Fig: 8 Kumari in "Kanyaka" (*Naalu Pennungal*)

Kumari: "There has been no marriage. Then why quarrel over a divorce"

Father: "Nonsense. No marriage. So, what was the point of the ceremony?"

Kumari: "No, father. The marriage has not taken place yet" (*Naalu Pennungal* 48:04-16).

Though her parents' and neighbour's expressions are set in such a way that it is incomprehensible to them, Adoor poses questions to society. Ganguly says: "She, who has barely spoken in the film and kept her eyes lowered for most of the part, now asserts herself and proves that the whole experience has made her stronger." Visually, her sudden emergence from her room and doorway, from invisibility to visibility, defines her as a woman who will not play the victim anymore (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 99). Kumari expresses her viewpoint about the meaning of marriage, and she is strong enough to mean that they have not lived as husband and wife.

"Chinnuamma" unfolds the stigma associated with a woman who has no children. It also refers to the moral dictums that a woman must follow while married. Chinnuamma lives in a better financial condition compared to the other two women in the stories. The first shot of Chinnuamma from inside the window is a trope of ideologies being internalised. She is also trapped.

On the one hand, the story explores how patriarchal society manipulates the dogma of motherhood and childless women. Through the character of Chinnuamma, Adoor also introduces the sexual desire of women. But women are supposed to express passivity towards such feelings. There exists the

preconditioned notion that a woman who shows active interest in her sexual desire has to curtail her feelings. The power structures of the disciplinary society makes the implication that the men are privileged to express their sexual desires. But the women are responsible for maintaining morality, and this becomes emphatic in the case of married women. Adrienne Rich sees the womb and maternal power as symbols that trap women in a state of powerlessness (Rich 52). Her observations are significant in the light of gender biased norms.

Childless women have been turned into witches, persecuted as lesbians, and refused to adopt children because they were unmarried. They have been seen as embodiments of a great threat to male hegemony: the woman who is not tied to the family, who is disloyal to the law of heterosexual pairing and bearing (Rich 253).

Adoor here portrayed how a married woman bears the disillusionment of being 'childless' in society. She uses the term 'fault' to describe the cause of their infertility. When she talks to Nara Pillai, she briefly describes their medical history. Her conversation demonstrates that society blames women for failing to produce an heir. She makes an attempt to justify her part and also details the medical reports, both about the husband and herself. Suranjan Ganguly talks about the patriarchal signification of motherhood:

“Chinnuamma” critiques the social construction of motherhood and how it defines the status of a woman within a society deeply invested in family values. The stigma of childlessness can be crippling in such a culture. Almost invariably, it is the woman who

gets the blame. In fact, Chinnuamma frequently uses the word "fault" to describe her situation—another example of how women internalise the judgement of others. She knows deep down that this term does not really apply to her, but she has been taught to embrace it in deference to her spouse (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 100).

There is another scene in which the male ego of her husband refuses to confront it as his fault. Chinnuamma shows a bold move when she speaks to her husband about Narapillai's comment that the cause for childlessness is not her fault. In a later scene, the husband appears to be angry for being hurt, and Chinnuamma resolves it by accepting her own fault.

Adoor uses the term 'fault' in the paradoxical sense that it applies to the cultural ideology of gender. Because society is judgmental, the absence of a child in the family becomes a problem. It is invested with power relations embedded in the husband-wife relationship and their effort to survive in society. Narapillai attempts to exploit the context through his pretence of knowledge. He uses the example of a childless woman seducing a horse carter and having a child.

Narapillai's goal is to gain Chinnuamma's trust and exploit her weakness of desire for a child. He wants to achieve what he has wanted to establish a physical relationship with by making her pregnant. She too has an infatuation with Narapillai. But she fears her own beliefs and convictions about the traits of a married woman. A married woman should not have sex with anyone other than her husband. Narapillai provokes her to have a physical relationship with him.

Adoor makes it implicit that Chinnuamma suppresses her desire for a conjugal relationship with him.

Adoor brings power delineations that are deeply rooted in the culture's collective psyche. Narapillai recalls how she rejected his temptation before her marriage. She refuses to have sex with him as she fears it will make her pregnant. She has to wait until she gets married. As a result, he believes that now is the appropriate time to meet his need. Women's desire to have sex or their discussions on the subtle feelings of sex are considered taboo in the cultural milieu of Kerala. They are supposed not to express such feelings and are taught to control their desires, especially sexual ones. Adoor emphasises the prejudices against women's sexual preferences and morality. Adoor precisely shows how Chinnuamma controls her temptation. Adoor juxtaposes the suppressed feelings and emotions of Chinnuamma in the dialogue of the last encounter scene between them. The open door frame in the background of Nara Pillai signifies the freedom of choice for men in society. Instead, Chinnuamma is shot against a closed window. Adoor uses daylight and darkness, respectively, to signify Narapillai and Chinnuamma.



Fig: 9 Nara Pillai and Chinnuamma in “Chinnuamma” (*Naalu Pennungal*).

The dialogues between Narapillai and Chinnuamma are significant in the representation of ideological dictums which draws structured norms for women.

“Why are you so resistant?”

“Please leave me now. Don’t torment me. I’m distressed”.

“Earlier you were scared about getting pregnant and asked me to wait until you get married. Now you have your husband”

“Which is why I say that a married woman must not commit such a wrong”

(“Chinnuamma”, 1:00:11 - 1:01:19)

The woman herself emphasises her submissiveness. It is embedded in power relations; the subject object status is required for a patriarchal society to exist. When a woman expresses her sexual desires, she sheds the label of object or docile. Religious or moral codes are part of the society's ideological values. This emphasises how the body, desire, and reproduction are incorporated into the dogma of power relations.

The fourth part “Nithyakanyaka” echoes how women’s identities are marginalised, and it is filmed through the central trope of marriage. Marriage acts as a form of invisible power code. The very first shot of the film is centred on a discussion of marriage. The spatial segregation is evident in that shot; the women are not able to get directly involved in such a serious decision. Ganguly observes this differentiation:

The men occupy the living room and daughters their segregated space inside the house, while the mother stands framed in the doorway between the two groups. Such a division of space in relation to gender eloquently expresses power hierarchy. The

women wait expectantly for the negotiations to produce a positive result, but they have virtually no say in the matter. Their silence sets them apart from the men, who are defined as the arbiters of women's fates (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 103).

There is no room for a woman's opinion in her marriage decision. Like Kumari in "Kanyaka", Kamakshi also has no particular opinion in the case of her marriage. The women simply accept their servile status. The unmarried daughters cause distress in the mind of the mother. "Women are to get married off. " This is an accepted dictum of patriarchal society.

The life of Kamakshi, the protagonist of the story, is intertwined with the power structures in familial relationships and society. Kamakshi is cast aside in the marriage proposal, and instead the proposed man chooses her sister Subadra. Here women are objectified as commodities, and it offers a critique of how men's choices can be extensive. Kamakshi's marginalisation within the home is shown and perpetuated with the lighting and costumes.



Fig: 10. Kamakshi and her sister Subadra in “Nithyakanyaka” (*Naalu Pennungal*)

Adoor frames the shot in such a way that light falls on Subadra, and she is dressed up in red costumes with a lighter skin in contrast to her sister Kamakshi. There are many shots in which the prop of a closed window appears in the background of Kamakshi. It can be symbolic of her repressed sexuality and limited choices. Over the course of two minutes, there is a shot that shows Kamakshi's grief. This close shot of Kamakshi in the bed shows the intensity of her sorrow, and gradually the sound of her cry comes out of the silence. The shot is reflective of the power structures within which she is "chained". She tries to cover her mouth to prevent the sound.

Kamakshi adopts silence as an act of resistance and submissiveness. She shows apathy toward her mother's justification for the preference of marriage for younger siblings. Adoor attempts to demonstrate how marriage is a dominant symbol in the lives of women, particularly in families. The family is also a unit of hierarchy. John Rawl says in *A Theory of Justice* that a family is a small

association, normally characterised by a definite hierarchy, in which each member has certain rights and duties" (467). Families are rife with power dynamics. It is not the domination of men against men. Rather, this is how society perceives a spinster. The women also view society from a male point of view. This posits challenges to the conceptual notion of the codes constructed in a family. Kamakshi's status as a spinster in society encompasses a plurality of negotiations and ascribed social norms.

Subadra complains about the gossips of the people that there is an illegal relationship between Kamakshi and Parameswaran Pillai. The sexuality of a spinster is pertinent in the gender relations. There is a scene in which Subadra and mother suddenly stops conversation when Kamakshi intervenes. She is marginalized even in the intrafamilial relations. J. Campbell in *Honour, Family and Patronage* says that women who live outside the normative codes of marriage are 'culpable'.

Okin Moller addresses the inequalities that women have to face in familial and social relationships. Subadra warns Kamakshi not to come to talk to guests who come to her home and tell her to be aware of where she lives. When Subadra brings Kamakshi to her home, she is involved as a caretaker of children. Caring is often regarded as a feminine trait, and Kamakshi remains preoccupied with her phantom motherhood.

In a patriarchal society, a woman's status as a spinster or single is problematic. The film begins with a shot of a man knocking on the door in the night. The film ends with the same knock, and the compulsive male voice tempts

her to open the door. This scene pertains to the complexity of the man-woman relationship, marriage, and the freedom of women in a patriarchal society.

Kamakshi's response opens up to multitude of power relations assigned in the society. It also how a woman's sexuality is perceived in the society. The patriarchal society represented in the film, which consists of both men and women, construct a dichotomy, in the delineation of women's sexuality. The freedom, a woman has on her body, is relative to moral codes of society.

Women's marital or single status creates ambiguities and contradictions in terms of their sexuality. The mother believes that Kamakshi is insecure without marriage. She invariably needs a man to live. The sister, Subadra, sees Kamakshi as an opponent in the marital relationship. She suspects that there might be an illegal relationship between Kamakshi and Parameswaran Pillai. The youngest of the siblings, Sarojam, says that it is difficult for a woman to live without a man. Both Sarojam and Kuttan consider that the survival of Kamakshi alone in the home will never ensure her safety as she is a woman. Here, the term "safety" is used deliberately to point to the identity of a single woman and society's perception of the same. In the other shot, a young man tries to tease Kamashi because she is a sexually vulnerable woman. An old man then intervenes, telling him that she is not the type of woman he imagines.

Erinn Cunniff Gilson says in "Vulnerability and Victimization: Rethinking Key Concepts in Feminist Discourses on Sexual Violence" that vulnerability is a problematic concept. Vulnerability here is interrelated with 'femininity and femaleness' and with 'dependence, weakness, suspicion of harm, and violability'. Gilson's perspective on vulnerability goes well with Kamakshi's victimisation.

Gilson says that vulnerability is thought to connote an inherent weakness and an unavoidable openness to sexual victimisation of women. The weakness is not inherent, but rather a social construct imposed on women.

Shelley Budgeon in “The ‘problem’ with single women: Choice, accountability, and social change” says that the ideology of marriage and heterosexual relationships forms the ubiquitous marker of normative social conditions. The women who do not belong to these norms are "marginalized" and subject to harmful stereotyping, discrimination, economic disadvantage, interpersonal rejection, and stigmatization. (404). Adoor attempts to establish conditioned norms about single women, which implies A. Sandfield and C. Percy's study that "cultural images of the unmarried woman as desperate and flawed" (476).

Kamakshi is forced to suppress her sexual desires to position herself within the dominant ideology. She responds to the man who knocks at the door. She admits that she has wavered. But she has decided not to open the door. Ganguly posits the question of whether the passivity of Kamakshi is a mere suppression or the emancipation of a new woman:

She thus proves to herself that she can transcend her sexual yearnings and free herself from this last vestige of dependence on men. Her last words in the film, addressed to him but more to her, are, “It should not be impossible that a woman can make her life without a man”. Is Kamakshi merely repressing her desires to make a larger political statement about her newfound freedom as a woman? Or is she articulating a deep-felt need to truly assert her

independence? (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 105).

Adoor uses the camera to focus only on the back side of the male who knocks at the door. His face is not shown as it is set without lights. Kamakshi is focused in the medium shot, and her facial expressions are meticulously portrayed. It can be interpreted as a man having more sexual freedom than a woman.

Resistance is a complicated term in relation to the story plot and characterization of four women. It is not a tragedy of failure or an assertion of women's freedom. Each woman is a product of different circumstances, and there is a gradation of caste in the four stories. But they are caught up in a network of power relations. Resistance is not impossible. On a passive level, they try to resist and shackle the boundaries. They raise their voice for equality and sexual freedom. But women's freedom to explore and experience their own sexuality is denied according to the paradigms of society. Resistance works in relation to the caste of women. The institution of marriage is a unifying thread that explains the oppression and resistance of these four women.

Kunjupennu's resistance and the exploration of individuality and sexual freedom are reflected in the very characterisation. Her dialogue and actions merge with her defense. She expresses her unwillingness to live with Pappukutty in a strong way. She openly rejects men who approach her with the knowledge that she is a vulnerable woman. She bites the police officer when he attempts to take hold of Pappukutty. Her actions become submissive only in the court scene. She does not make any political statements in response to the lawyer's questions. She says that they have not committed anything wrong and that they are husband and wife.

Her statement is bold and strong, as she does not know about the significance of marriage as an institution. She never adopts a posture of servitude. She attempts to affirm her consciousness in a space that is often regarded as a weapon of state power.

Kumari in "The Virgin" is an exponent of her individual freedom. Her financial independence provides her with the space and freedom to speak for herself. However, the culture to which she belongs frequently becomes resistant to the society's constrained array of power relations. Abu-Lughod talks about the shift in the form of resistance. They are subversions or local resistances. It does not aim at the overthrow of political ideologies or sovereign power (41). Hollander and Einwohner tell us that actions and behaviours can form acts of resistance. They agree that action and opposition are core elements of resistance (534). Resistance is not a quality of an actor or a state of being, but involves some active behaviour, whether verbal, cognitive, or psychical, and another component common to almost all uses is a sense of opposition (537).

Kumari's refusal to give up her individuality is an act of defiance. When she is subjected to gossip despite her innocence, she chooses to remain silent. Her silence is not passive submission. When a co worker taunts the character of Kumari, she reacts with another question. As a result, the act of reaping implies her mode of dissent. She talks for herself in the last shot of the film. Though she has not told in the literal sense, she makes the statement that consummation has not taken place in their marital relationship. Ganguly's observation of Kumari's attitude is sharp in this context and it is as follows:

She will not hide from society and shed tears of shame, nor will she merely stand in the doorway and let others debate her future. She confronts the reality of her situation and makes it public. In the process, she breaks free from all attempts to judge her. She will only be judged by herself and on her terms (*The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 99).

Kumari redefines Foucault's perspective that power is coexistent with resistance, and her attitude redefines the attainment of selfhood. Chinnuamma and Kamakshi occupy a position of higher caste in the social hierarchy. They also have to confront the disparities in gender relations. Chinnuamma and Kamakshi are women with their own sexual desires and freedom. But they are caught up in a web of cultural constraints and stigma. J. Devika, in her study, talks about the female body as a source of pleasure for men and its purported capacity to incite lascivious feelings (463). Adoor also points to the reformations in the latter half of the twentieth century. But women's sexuality is bound by inhibitions. She is supposed to maintain the feminine virtue and the identity of motherhood. Those who attempt to think beyond these accepted notions are marginalised.

When Chinnuamma declines to have a relationship, it can be read as a resistance against the objectification of the male gaze. But it becomes a question whether she forcibly suppresses her desires to obtain the image of family values. Devika says that the intersection of Victorian ideas about motherhood filtered through colonialism and locally present Brahminical ideologies of feminine chastity and procreative duty that the prototype, which would later yield the

imagination of the labouring rational housewife, was produced (Ganguly, *The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 81).

Chinnuamma has a deep regret in her mind about living a life without the fulfilment of passion and with the annihilation of bodily desires. Her resistance becomes symbolic of the suppression of her own mind. "Chinnuamma" ends with a voiceover of the narration of Chinnuamma. Adoor brings a shot of women in colourful sarees (perhaps to represent the new generation) and bright faces. Ganguly interprets the shot. "The juxtaposition of past and present, of old age and youth, suggests that the new generation of women in their colourful *saris* and bright faces will not falter when it is time for them to decide" (101). But her last words, which prioritise the virtue and honour of women, were a necessary prerequisite. It implies once more that women cannot break the virtues.

Kamakshi, like Chinnuamma, resists the temptation. She attempts to show that a woman can live without a man. The film again underlines how marriage is conceptualised as a body of power. It implies that a physical relationship between a man and a woman that is not labelled as marriage is considered a denial of virtue. However, the culture expects women to act wisely as the keepers of virtue. Kamakshi decides to preserve her virginity and denies herself.

The four different stories describe the conditions that shape the life of each woman grappled in the cultural strata of Kerala which had a strong matrilineal history. When a woman remains single without the label of marriage she is considered as the one who longs for lust and victimised as the other in the patriarchal world. The meaning and the significance of the marriage as an institution becomes paradoxical in the regimes of oppression and resistance. The

four women characters who represent different hierarchal classes of Hindu caste inhabit their space and identity in the society as abstract concepts. Even though they strive to come out from and “herald liberty” (Ganguly, *The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 96) they submit themselves in front of the societal norms and governmental laws.

Foucault argues about construct of sexuality and it is the result of many lineages of knowledge production that shape the psyche of human subjects in particular ways. The repressive apparatus functions predominantly by means of oppression and violence in the first part and ideological apparatuses in the other three. The problematisation of the repressive sex and the unidentifiable voice form the crux of the text in the paradoxical justifications of power system.

Women as the 'other' are unable to read their own minds, allowing ideological taboos and practices to overcome them with consent. The film is about two unmarried and two ‘legally’ married women in a society where the social signification of marriage had been steadily changing, bringing in different dilemmas in the lives of the four women. Being married becomes a problem for the married ones while being not married becomes the problem for the unmarried ones.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The study consolidates the representations of power in the domains of state, caste, and gender. Culture also becomes a dominant factor in the construction of power signifiers. Because the study focuses on films, the aspects of *mise en scène* are also considered. The text of the film is studied for its representation of power through the plot, dialogues and characterisation. The plot is obviously built on the cultural milieu of Kerala in the selected films of study. It elucidates how signifiers such as state, gender, normativity, and class are turned into sites of power. It does not only attempt to establish power in terms of the repressive apparatus. Rather, it examines how power operates in ideological forms and also hints at the productive aspects of power.

The study explores the varied perspectives of power. It broadens the definition of power beyond merely repressive. Rather, a subject allows the master to act upon himself or herself. It identifies the ideological apparatuses rooted in the culture. The study used the trajectories of Foucault and Althusser to analyse the direct and indirect power orientations in the selected films. It attempts to read the non-repressive apparatuses of power.

The study tries to sketch out the representations of sovereign power and disciplinary power in the selected films. In the selected films, biopower also serves as a source of power mechanism. The research examines how these forms of power operate primarily through state in the films *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam*, and *Kathapurushan*. In relation to the aspects of disciplinary power primarily explored

in the films *Kodiyettam* and *Kathapurushan*, the normative representation of masculinity also becomes problematic. The other operative channels of power, caste and gender, are analysed in the films *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal*.

The study tried to emphasise the Foucauldian perception that “power is exercised, not owned by anyone, and it does not manifest itself in different ways but rather as an ephemeral entity that manages its way into our imaginations and acts to discipline our actions”(Ali 4). The study examines how power is exercised and the role of society in reproducing practices and discourses. In the study of the selected films, power is not viewed as a synonym for coercion or imposition. Rather, the object willingly accepts the servitude. Adoor's characters shape or tune themselves to bring out the exercise of power. They must be shaped or they will become dictators over themselves.

The second chapter titled “State as Norm: A Study of *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam* and *Kathapurushan* addresses power excision at the state level. It becomes problematic and complicated when it is both repressive and productive at the same time. State functions an important role in the exercise of power. The state acts as an entity of power, and it reinforces or modifies the nature of the outlook of the protagonist and other characters. Through the reading of the select films *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam*, and *Kathapurushan*, the study locates the indirect orientations of power.

Unnikunju, Sreedharan, and Kunjunni, the protagonists of the films, are prototypical of the time. They also represent the predicament of masculinity in the post-twentieth century. The study of the film *Elepathayam* is based on how the

state envisions its policies affecting society. Unnikunju is a post-feudal and post-matrilineal Kerala prototype. Through the characterisation of his family as class-specific, Adoor has tried to capture the dominant ideology of the time. Adoor prioritises and problematises the predicament of the upper caste. He also demonstrates how power relations operate in reverse within the hierarchy. Adoor's representation of history is political in the film *Elepathayam* in terms of a new historicist reading. He incorporates significant government policies as well as social practices of the people at the time.

The chapter also examines the film in terms of new historicist reading. The anxieties and chaos produced in the Nair families as a result of the decline of the matrilineal system are a true representation of the age. The study attempts to read it as an embodiment of the decline of the dominant ideology of that time and how that decline produced power repercussions in the social and familial lives of the protagonist, Unnikunju. The perspectives or the reading of a particular age are represented through the lens of Adoor. The characteristics of the age are intertwined with the plot and narration of events in that age. The context and the narrative of the events are read as a product of Adoor's personal life, and they also trace his perceptions of society in general and class and culture in specific. As a result, it calls into question the objectivity of history.

The chapter also validates arguments on power relations as the study exposes the ideological constructs in family, gender, class, and state. The abolition of the matrilineal system and the inclusion of the land reform bill have dismantled the predominant constructs, and they question and problematise the centrality of power owned by the constructs of wealth and hierarchy of class. Though the study

looks at the representation of Unnikunju as a signifier of power in terms of new historicism, it also questions the fixity of the signified.

Adoor pictures him as feeble and weak. The research investigates how new power structures emerged as a result of state policy revisions. These power consolidations become a parallel study in the plot and narrative of *Elepathayam*. The very name of the film suggests that the state functions as a repository of power. The title of the film alludes to power in both productive and later repressive terms. The caste family and *taravadu* are the dominant signifiers of power. Male identity is also a source of contention.

The film *Kathapurushan* can also be read as part of a new historicist inquiry into how sovereign power came to dominate in that era. The parallel reading of the life of Kunjunni is how Adoor tries to deliver his personal ideologies and political implications. It deeply probes into a parallel reading of the particular period depicted in the film. The political beliefs, class, and gender hierarchies of an age are represented through the story of Kunjunni.

The study delves into how Adoor perceives the power structures of the time. It demonstrates how the marginalised voice is also included. The study postulates the argument that history is not objective. The term 'marginalised' itself is contradictory as it purports different viewpoints in the delineation of history. To read the plurality of voices, the conflicts of rigid class biases and the impact of the revival of state policies on the character Kunjunni and his family are specifically analysed.

The resistance is active in the case of Kunjunni. The study identifies how he has learned to question and "battle with the systems and ideologies" (Ganguly, "The Narratives of Dislocation: The Theme of Outsider in the Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan"). The impact of repressive power systems on the protagonist, Kunjunni's, life is investigated using speculative analysis. The modalities of sovereign power are analysed through the direct and indirect involvement of Kunjunni in the social upheavals and turmoil of the age. So, the study eventually made the new historicist inquiry through the parallel reading of the reference to the policies of the government and its interference in the life of Kunjunni. It also emphasises how meta narratives and mini narratives are represented in Kerala.

Adoor represents how the dominant policies institutionalise power. It also consolidates the new historicists' way of looking at the age in terms of mini narratives. The resistance becomes active in the case of Kunjunni. He learns to question and react against the sovereign power. The study attempted to read the heard resistance and unheard voices. It also discusses how the structured disciplinarian mechanisms regulate society.

The film *Mukhamukam* studies and analyses the narrative of the cinema in terms of sovereign power. It also problematises the critical perception of the film as a documentation of anti-marxist politics. The narrative of the film is studied as a confrontation between the real and the imaginary. The very character of the protagonist, Sreedharan, is represented and developed through building blocks. . They merge to build the character. He is a creation that arose from memories. The film dismantles the clichéd development of a character, and Adoor even questions the appearance of the character in a certain phase of the narrative. It depicts a clash

between the real and the imagined. The study looks into the conflict and confrontation between an activist and rebel, or, to be specific, an activist turned rebel. It also points out the disparities in the existence of political systems and ideologies. The characterisation of Damodaran and his narration about the changes in the second phase of the film validate the argument. The study documents the split of the communist party under Dante. It is not a criticism against the communist party or the anti-communist strategy. Adoor raises the question about the promises assured by a political system. The study delves into the changes and upheavals that occurred during Sreedharan's absence.

The study also employs film motifs such as memories, newspaper reports, photographs, and montage scenes. Adoor effectively employs these props, which are then analysed to study the falsity and hollowness of the truth established through marxist ideology. He teaches the people about capital exploitation and the need for resistance. The study elucidates the clichés and anti-cliches of the slogans raised by Sreedharan and the timid and shy Sreedharan of the second phase. The juxtaposition and montage techniques dismantle the credibility of the systems.

The study explains the falsity by examining people's apathy toward ideology. Here, sovereign power is used as a representation of repressive dominance. The props used are also investigated to determine how they produce meaning. The brutality of the police is a representation of the repressive state apparatus (RSA). The failure of the political party to fulfil the promises also questions the validity of the truth. It also emphasises the discord and contradictions in the poststructuralist study: the relations of power, to be specific, sovereign

power or state power, which are exercised at the top-bottom level. The legitimacy of poststructuralist perception is called into question.

The third chapter titled “Normativity as a Construct: A Study of *Kodiyettam* and *Anantaram* consolidates the disciplinary power operations in society. The study focuses on the paradoxical relationship between normative norms of masculinity and power. The portrayal of the protagonists in the films *Kodiyettam* and *Anantaram* are discussed. It speaks about the representation of excluded male characters in a society. Certain gender and caste-specific norms are established by society. Those who deviate from the general norms are considered non-normative. It also discusses Foucault’s *psychiatric power* and attempts to theorise the relationships between norms, disciplinary power, and resistance. The chapter examines Foucault’s *Abnormal* and sees how the norm becomes legitimised.

The chapter focuses on non-normative masculinity, and certain characteristics of the characters are considered to be outside the norms of their gender. As the norm and power have an indexical relationship, the disciplinary power acts as a variant of domination. The analysis foregrounds how Adoor perceives the degree to which an individual meets the norms—to be specific, the perception of masculinity. The study mentions resistance that coexists with these norms when they are analysed in terms of dominance.

The characters Sankarankutty and Ajayan are studied as representations of non normativity. Sankaran Kutty’s character is examined in relation to society. His actions and observations are closely studied to discuss how the notions of hegemonic masculinity are subverted. He does not uphold any particular ideology

and is represented as a light-hearted man. The relationship between the male characters, who possess hegemonic traits, attains a dominant position in comparison with Sankaran Kutty, who bears complicit traits. Sankarankutty's character shift can also be interpreted as submissiveness to society's normative masculinity. The operation of power is sometimes productive in his transformation. He also uses resistance to transform himself.

Adoor uses the metaphors of a bullock cart and a truck to show the transition of his character. Sankaran Kutty never adopts the form of resistance against others in the film. Adoor presents the conflict between the individual and society through the universalisation of hegemonic masculinity in the characterisation of a truck driver.

Sankarankutty is a man who never adopts a serious approach towards life. He has an easy-going attitude and depends on his sister. Adoor also tries to dismantle and subvert the identities associated with hegemonic masculinity. The image of the schoolmaster who fears the social disgrace of the illegal relationship with Kamamma also demonstrates how disciplinary power works to enforce moral codes. The suicide of Kamamma is also analysed to understand the unstable nature of power. Resistance becomes insignificant in the characters. Adoor uses metaphors to imply meaning. Sankarankutty's transformation towards sense of self-hood is sometimes an indirect domination of disciplinary power to equip individuals in the normative paradigms of society. Adoor's innovative use of music also connotes the transformation of the character.

The film *Anantaram* is studied as a narrative of resistance against the power relations embedded in the constraints of normative masculinity. The study intends to look at how the character Ajayan is perceived in society. The development of the particular character shows how factors such as unknown parentage, illegitimacy, etc. are perceived as conditions of deviation from the predefined norms of culture. C. S. Venkiteswar rightly describes the character as an outsider who does not make the distinction between fantasy and fiction. The voiceover of Ajayan specifically singles out certain events as an 'internalisation of power'. It analyses how the events have infiltrated and undermined his identity.

The study also demonstrates how sexual repression and societal moral codes dictate norms for man-woman relationships. The infatuation that Ajayan feels towards his sister-in-law is a representation of the perversion of sexuality. It can also be considered a repression of sexual desires. The film's complex narrative parallels Ajayan's characterisation. The distinction between psychologically sane and insane is a result of society's power structure. The otherness instilled in the characterisation of Ajayan becomes analogous to a sort of 'institutional confinement' as mentioned in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. The study explores whether the dichotomy between Ajayan and his elder brother reflects a conceptual distinction. It also demonstrates how the identity of being non-normative constructs otherness, which leads to seclusion. The study also foregrounds the metaphorical props to establish the otherness.

The resistance becomes expressive, and Adoor portrays it in the narrative style of metafiction to intensify its authenticity. Ajayan's attempt to deviate from

the norms and his own way of representing himself can also be read as a form of passive protest.

The fourth chapter titled “Home, Class and Gender as Apparatuses: A Study of *Vidheyam* and *Naalu Pennungal*” reads about multifarious power operations in the forms of home class and gender. The study of power in the film *Vidheyam* is obviously an oppressor-oppressed relationship at the literal level. Home and class serve as the sites of power, and the absence of both creates the dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed. The power operations can become toxic at times. The analysis also looks at the oppression of the subaltern groups and their limited chances of resistance. But as power is coexistent with resistance, the study attempts to read Thommie’s indirect protest. In the paradoxical power relations, Thommie's gradual development of admiration for Pattelar becomes problematic. It further studies the collective consciousness of Dalits. The study tries to bring out the vestiges of the class system.

The resistance of the slave or the oppressor is read as passive. It is ineffective when compared to the other films chosen for study. Thommie never misses the opportunities presented by resistance. The reading looks at how he joins with the enemies of Pattelar. The acts of submissiveness can only be read as a sort of adaptation to his existence in the alien land. The aspect of acting, one of the dominant contents of *mise en scène*, is effectively brought to life to visualise the resistance of Thommie towards Pattelar. His actions keenly reflect the suppressed protest.

The study of the film *Vidheyan* reveals the oppression of women. The dominance of Pattelar over other women can be analysed as an assertion of toxic masculinity. The resistance is negligible on the part of the female characters, and they are mere objects to satisfy the lust of Pattelar. The only woman who is bold enough to express her opinion is his wife, Saroja. The men took revenge on the women. In Vidheyan's portrayal of women, power is merely viewed as an act of possession.

The four women in *Naalu Pennungal* belong to four different strata of life, separated from each other by time and class. They are outsiders in the sense that they do not fit within society's conceptual boundaries. The text of the film examines the way the women attempt to shackle their displaced positions in society and define their identity. The man-woman relationship in our society is questioned in the realms of law, class, gender, and culture. This study examines the multifunctional ways in which power is manifested in the film's four parts. The discussion of power becomes a crucial factor in the social construct of familial relationships rendered by Adoor in the film. This becomes more important as his films are more concerned with the post-matrilineal period, where women and men acquire ambivalent positions in the power system.

The figuration of power in terms of gender, culture, and state becomes paradoxical in these segments of the film. Foucault argued that some sections of the population could be classified as sick, criminal, or insane so that they could be placed under surveillance and observed by particular authorities. The filmic text investigates the hidden power structures and the way that they are internalised by the characters. The concern with the materiality of power relations both spatially

and connotatively in the text forms the core reading of this part. The crux of the text is the problematisation of the repressive sex and the unidentifiable voice in the paradoxical justifications of power. She, as the “other”, is unable to read her own mind and allows ideological taboos and practices to overpower them with her.

The women in the film are strong enough to express their opinions. They display resistance. However, their resistance is limited in that they shape themselves according to preconceived notions of sexuality. They internalised their servitude, and the power structures of society made them think that they should bear the subjugation.

To conclude, the study makes an attempt to read the existence of power in varied forms in the society. The reading of films of Adoor in the perspective of relations of power moves beyond from the assumption of plain oppression of the oppressed. The methodology of Michael Foucault on the relations of power elucidates the view that oppressive mechanisms are not always repressive. Rather it is productive, at times, causes new adaptations to emerge. Foucault concentrates more on the resistance on the power. This study also looks at the different forms of resistance which is produced from the contestation of power.

The resistance emerged from the power structure is not showcased here as a rebellion. The reading looks at the resistance of characters at different levels. Except, in the film *Mukhamukam* Adoor presents individual passive resistance. The resistance in the films is not in the form of mass protests or rebellions. The resistance is passive and silent. The non conformity to the ideological and repressive apparatuses of power can be understood as acts of resistance. The study

foregrounds subtle acts of resistance rooted from the operations of power. The study attempted to bring out both direct and indirect manifestations of power. As the hidden forces of power are brought out by the dominant structures of the society the victims or the subjects also employ strategies of resistance. This research tried to bring out those acts of resistance in the select films. These forms of power and resistance are implicit in other films of Aloor.

The study critically examines how caste, politics and gender construct their interference in modern Kerala through discursive practices. The exploratory research aims to identify power as coextensive with resistance. It can reflect the positive sides such as individual's self making and revise the statements of administrative mechanisms and judiciary system of the society. The film being a cultural artifact, the study of power in terms of oppressor-victim and productive relations may enlighten the decision makers to form opinion and change perceptions. This may lead to the questioning of the stereotyped subversions. The reading does not offer a didactic solution; rather it aims at self realisation and a better understanding of the society.

Chapter 6

Recommendations

Sound can be studied as a non literary signifier in films. Each and every sound used in the shots have a deliberate meaning. Music enhances the mood of a shot. It is also used to give a clue about the scene. Adoor never uses lyrical music in his films. And also, he rarely uses the back ground music. Rather he uses specific sounds which have a metaphorical implication with the shot. Adoor has pioneered the use of sounds in Malayalam with the innovative use in his debut film *Swayamvaram*. He made the innovative use of sync sound in *Swayamvaram*. He recorded the natural sounds using his own recorder and used that in the films.

The sounds used in the shot in which the character Viswam is dead highlights the sound from a saw mill. Though it has no denotative relationship with the shot it connotes the harsh realities that Viswam has faced and ultimately ends with the death. The sounds of fire crackers and the music in the climax of the film *Kodiyettam* propounds to the transformation in the characterisation of Sankarankutty. The music of kathakali in the climax of the film intensifies the affirmation of a set of values and reconfiguration of identities. The sounds in the film *Elepathayam* reflect the disorientation in the life of characters in UnniKunju's family. The female voice in the film *Mathilukal* is a sign and it may represent ambivalent power operations. There are subtle sounds like this in the films of Adoor which has its own aesthetics and deep layers of meaning. The sound of waterfalls in the film *Vidheyan* also acts a metaphor of resistance.

There is yet to be studied on the use of sounds and silence in the films of Adoor. It has complex intricate relationship with the power relations between the individual and the society. This research opens space for the studies on the synchronisation of sounds and narrative.

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Appendix

Excerpts from the personal Interview with Adoor Gopalakrishnan on

8 January 2022

Q.1. What do you prioritise in your films, realistic representation or symbolic representation?

A. I have not used symbols in my films. I show inner reality of man. Without showing surface reality it is impossible to represent the psyche. I used metaphors to represent the self of man.

Q.2. When you portray the conflicts of human psyche it moves beyond from personal to political and cultural, how is it possible?

A. Man is always the centre of my stories. For me man is the most important constituent. I represent man versus his surroundings, community, political atmosphere and society. Speaking about *Elepathayam* context of the story revolves around an age where the feudal system hardly exists. But the traces still exist. It is problematic and man holds the vestiges of power. I place man to occupy the centre and narrate his relationship with family, society and state. Culture, of course influences the man.

Q.3. Regarding the history itself there can be seen community history, social history and cultural history. What do you give preference?

A. They all are given equal importance. First it speaks about the family, and through it, we often come to think about the community, social and cultural back ground. So through man I narrate the history of his family, community, culture and state. And I never distort the truth.

Q.4. How do you see the influence of Italian neo realism and French new wave for the growth of art cinema?

A. It was not an influence. It is a sort of exercise which provides a newer feeling. You will be accelerated. It takes you to newer things. The narrative style in *Anantaram* is an example of this. I often took films which stick on to chronological narrative and also the ones which adhere to a linear mode. The characterisation of Ajayan both as an extrovert and introvert shows his very true nature. As an introvert he keeps on creating and as an extrovert he keeps on exhibiting. His way of hallucinations is narrated through this technique.

Q.5. One of the factors that I have noticed is the delineation of power structure in your films. In the film *Vidheyan* there is, of course, direct representation of power. But in all other films there are indirect power representations. What do you say about this?

A. Yes, Power is there. *Elepathayam*, for instance, narrates a structure of power. Unni is both a proponent and victim of power. He exerts a sort of power over his sisters. He is not willing to share. He exercises power more on Rajamma on whom he is more dependant. He asks her everything as a matter of right. She makes protest through illness. But that is a passive protest. The younger sister escapes and the elder one questions his possession of power. The three sisters react to the system of power, that is , resistance in different ways.

Q.6. Through the representation of class structure also the films represent power operations and the resistance. How do you look at the statement that power travels not only from top to bottom, but also vice versa?

A. Yes there are characters like Mathaikutty. He is employed and occupies a good position. And also there is the character of Mukesh in the film *Kathapurushan*. They reject the position of being considered as 'other'. In *Mukhamukam* also there is the demonstration of strike organised against the factory owners. There is an obvious representation of resistance in *Anantaram*.

Q.7. How do you look at the transformation in the characterisation of Sankarankutty in *Kodiyettam*? Have you portrayed to represent him as one who gains the normative traits of masculinity?

A. With the company of lorry driver he learned many things. He feels a sense of belonging. He learns to have a concern for others. His voice becomes strong and he escapes a child before it falls into the river. He becomes a family man and that is conceptualised through the reunion with wife and child.

Q.8 Regarding the use of props in your films, when do you decide it?

A. I think and fix the props together with the work of screen play itself. Each and every prop in shot carries a significant meaning. It has a definite intention and purpose to serve in that shot.

Q.9. How do you universalise the experience of viewers through the trope of Kerala in your films?

A. I always narrate the realistic account. The second thing is medium or the way of representation. It is not enough that you have good ideas. Certain elements are present in every human being where ever you live. So the typical way of presenting the core of the self of the humans using the metaphors may make it universal.