ESTD. 2000

INDIAN JOURNAL OF POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

(An International Refereed and Peer-reviewed Biannual Journal Published in June and December)

Vol. 21.2 (December 2021)

ISSN 0974 - 7370

December - 2021



POSTGRADUATE & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
NEWMAN COLLEGE
THODUPUZHA, KERALA, INDIA

Advisory Committee

Mar George Madathikandathil (Patron, Newman College, Thodupuzha)
Thomson Joseph (Principal, Newman College, Thodupuzha, Former Chief Editor)
Mathew Joseph (Research Guide, St. Thomas College, Pala, Kerala)
K. N. Krishnan (Director. School of Letters, M G University, Kottayam)
P. P. Raveendran (Former Director, School of Letters, M G University, Kottayam)
K. V. Dominic (Former Editor, IJPCL)
Vincent Aerathu (Rtd. Professor) Dept. of English, Newman College)
Johnson KM (Principal, Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara)

Editorial Board

Ajomy Maria Joseph (PG Dept. of English, Newman College Thodupuzha)
Sona George (PG Dept. of English, Newman College Thodupuzha)
George Sebastian (PG Dept. of English, Newman College Thodupuzha)
Bindhu Joseph (PG Dept. of English, Newman College Thodupuzha)
Leena P. Kuriakose (PG Dept. of English, Newman College Thodupuzha)
Benson N. Antony (PG Dept. of English, Newman College Thodupuzha)
Meera Mathews (PG Dept. of English, Newman College Thodupuzha)
Teena Tomson (PG Dept. of English, Newman College Thodupuzha)

Editorial Advisory Board

K. Sripad Bhat, Goa
Sanjukta Dasgupta, W. Bengal
G Bhaskaran, T. N.
Rajkamal Shiromani, Bihar
Mahendra Bhatnagar, M. P.
D. C. Cambial, H. P.
S. P. Devel, T. N.
Jayadeep Sarangi, W. Bengal
George Justine, Kerala
Ayo Kehinde, Nigeria
Lakshmisree Banerjee, Jharkand
Sachidananda Mohanty, A. P.
Aju Mukhopadhyay, Pondicherry
Sunil Sharma, Maharashtra

Managing Editor

Bijimol Thomas

Chief Editor

Jerome K. Jose

Associate Editor

Princy Jacob

Vol. 21 No. 2 (December 2021) ISSN 0974-7370

INDIAN JOURNAL OF

POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

(An International Refereed and Peer-reviewed Biannual Journal Published in June and December)

POSTGRADUATE & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

NEWMAN COLLEGE

THODUPUZHA, KERALA, INDIA

CONTENTS

Devi(l) or Deity?: A Critical Eye on the 'Sacred' Women in Bulbbul and Maadathy

Anjana K. S. & Sarbani Banerjee ***3***

Deconstructing the Drape: How Fashion Challenges Gender Norms in Kerala

Keerthana S. ***10***

Changing Gender Roles: A Study of Recent Malayalam Movies

Anu Scaria & Titto Varghese ***18***

Tragedy, Trauma and Realisation of Destinies: A Comparative Study of the characters Marikolanthu and Leela Benare

Fathima Beegum ***24***

The Cyborgs Vs the Humans: A Study of the Vulnerable Bodies in *Harvest* by Manjula Padmanabhan ***Jilu Ani John*** ***32***

Pulling through the Tiring Patriarchy: A Comparative Reading of Kamala Das' *Ghanashyam* and Adrienne Rich's *Aunt Jennifer's Tigers*

Ramesh K. G. ***39***

Jokha Alharthi's Celestial Bodies: The World of Myths and Legends of Marriage and Miseries in Changing Oman

Merine John ***45***

Exploring the Theme of Corruption in Keisham Priyokumar's *The Acacia* and Lamabam Viramani Singh's *Inspection Report*

Donkaolung Malangmei & Elangbam Hemanta Singh ***54***

The Involuntary Movement of an Individual: Revisiting the U. S. A. Trilogy

Sanil T. Sunny ***59***

Designing Chaos: Semiotic Perspectives on Jallikattu's Cinematic Language

Jesna Jose & Ashish Mathai ***64***

Poet's Corner

Lulling Symphonies of My Land

Valsa George ***72***

Devi(l) or Deity?: A Critical Eye on the 'Sacred' Women in *Bulbbul* and *Maadathy*

Anjana K. S. & Sarbani Banerjee

Defining women has always been structured through male consciousness that subverts religious, social, cultural, and political standpoints. Historically, women held the positions of 'boon' or 'curse' concerning the aforementioned phenomena, and these embodiments differed in terms of caste. Women were worshipped as well as treated as outcasts in terms of their gender and caste. The devadasi system is prevalent in southern India, particularly in the interiors of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, where women are celebrated as living goddesses, dancers of God, or servants of God. They make *harake*1and devotees make bodily offerings or materialistic offerings to them to gain prosperity and fertility in their life. Female bodies are passive objects preserved from outside subjects in terms of their sexuality but hold the power to become terrifying superb objects.

The Tamil film *Devadasi* (1948) portrayed the devadasi system; however, the representations provided a comic outlook rather than focusing on the hardships of being servants of God. Female dancers in the court of Royal Kingdoms were addressed derogatorily in society and were treated similarly to prostitutes. Films such as *Vaishali* (1988), directed by Bharathan, are considered among the artistic features of the Malayalam film industry. It focused on the beauty of female dancers' bodies, their dances, and the marginalisation they faced by society. Despite geographical differences, women were worshipped and demeaned through the conventions set out in the context of tradition, rites, and imposed gender constructs. Cinema, an artefact, has the capability to influence societal conscience by portraying diverse cultural milieu and experiences. Elaboration from the film's standpoint puts forward the ideological bias through which the narration occurs. This paper analyses the ideological behaviour and mythical and ecological definitions provided for the characterisation of the selected films, Bulbbul and Maadathy. The paper also attempts to locate the implications of the feudal system that existed in the backdrop of West Bengal in the 1880s and the functioning of the caste system in the innermost village areas of Tamil Nadu in the selected films. How disability inculcates meanings while being in the body of the oppressor is also analysed.

Bulbbul (2020), directed by Anvita Dutt Gupan, featuring Tripti Dimri, Avinash Tiwary, Paoli Dam, Rahul Bose, and Parambrata Chatterjee in the lead roles, narrate the story of

Bulbbul, a child bride married to a feudal landlord in the backdrop of Bengal during the 1880s. The landscape is said to be haunted by chudail. With twisted pair of legs in the forest. Chudails attack men in the village and are the nightmares of the villagers in the dark.

The film sets Bulbbul's voyage through instances of oppression faced by her from early childhood, adulthood, and being the Badi Bahu of the feudal palace. Bulbbul undergoes brutal domestic violence at the hands of her husband, Indranil, as he doubts her illicit relationship with his brother, Sathya. While paralysed with mutilated legs, she is raped by Mahindra, the husband's brother, who is often mentally challenged and treats her as his doll.

In the end, Bulbbul happens to be the chudail who attacked men in the village. *Maadathy*, *An Unfairy Tale,* listed under Dalit cinema, narrates the story of Yosana, who belongs to the Puthirai vannars community, is considered to be the un-seeable of the village in which she lives.

Yosana's mother advises her daughter to be always alarmed while roaming in the forests and villages because of her fear of the upper-caste people, who treat them as slaves. The film showcases the experiences of brutality undergone by Yosana, her mother, and her transformation into Maadathy.

Maadathy states that the Indian subcontinent is a land of million subaltern deities. Behind many of these deities, there is a tale of injustice. The film portrays the implications of the caste system in a region that subjugates the lower castes for the benefit of the upper castes. The supremacy of the upper castes in the region dictates the laws and regulations for the Puthirai vannars. According to them, seeing the Puthirai vannars pollutes them; hence, they become unseeable. The upper castes maintain their supremacy even through the resources available in the region. Commencing from basic needs such as food, shelter, occupation, and education, they impart the traits of marginalisation. In the film, the social fabric existing in the region shows that the lower castes are supposed to live according to the decisions of the upper castes. The huts in which they live, the river, and the region's temple are symbols of marginalisation. They live as a population on the either side of the river.

They are only allowed to cross the river when death occurs in their community. Thus, the river itself became an element of separation between their community and the upper castes. People who belong to the Puthirai vannar community are not even allowed to roam during the day as they are un-seeable. They live in huts made of mud and leaf-laid roofs, mainly in the

interior parts of the village, because they are treated as unwanted or cursed for the mainstream society. They cannot have food in open spaces; instead, they hide behind shrubs or trees. Their wages are always decided by the upper castes, regardless of the hard work. The occupation they do is not chosen by them but is passed on to them as hereditary by the patriarchy and caste hierarchy. They dig grave pits and wash women's blood-stained clothes as they are considered the lowest among the lowest castes. According to the Ambedkarite position, castes were 'enclosed classes,' and in this sense, it was even worse than the class system, as it did not allow for mobility or dynamic social interaction (18). The paintings used in the first scenes are about the experiences of Yosana and her community with the gray colour palette.

In contrast, Bulbbul, being married to the feudal landlord, Indranil Takur, becomes the Takurein5 for the villagers. She breaks the conventions of the boundaries set up by the caste hegemony; she embraces herself as the 'lady' of the house, not as a homemaker doing household chores, but as the one who provides solutions to the violence against women that occurs in the village. Elements such as the palanquin carried by lower-caste men, the peacock-feathered ornamental fan served by lower-caste women in the royal palace where the feudal lady lounges on the settees and people of lower castes sit on the floor, and Ravi Varma paintings showcasing the beauty of upper-caste women become symbols of Brahminical upper-caste hegemony. The act of the lower castes sitting on the floor while complaining about the problems they face to Bulbbul on the wooden swing signifies her supremacy over them in terms of caste. The camera tries to capture the heroine's beauty with long hair, heavy ornaments in a royal silk sari, and servants to do her favour.

Even when forests provide forced shelter for the Puthirai vannars, Yosana identifies it as her place to roam, with wild animals as her companions, and suppresses her feelings of alienation. Leftover food is one of the most distinguishing symbols of oppression in the case of marginalised communities. The film shows that Yosana shares it with wild monkeys and birds, which indirectly implies that the upper-caste villagers have no differentiation between Puthirai vannars and animals. Yosana finds her teenage love in the forest, and the film also casts the female gaze upon the male body rather than following the pattern of objectifying the female body bathing in the river. She steals his shirt and wears it in the pleasure of the bountiful love toward him. She takes care of a donkey named Kuttymaari, which he loses from the drove and hides in the forest. She returns it without making him understand that she took care of it.

When gang-raped by a group of upper-caste men, including her love, near the temple, only Kuttymaari turned up to carry her tortured and tired corpse while her parents crossed the river to inform the community of her death. In the case of Bulbbul, the forest is depicted as her playground during childhood and the site of revenge after she becomes possessed by the goddess Kali. In the initial scenes, Bulbbul plays hide-and-seek with Sathya and climbs trees during her childhood in Bulbbul; she identifies the forest as the site of revenge in the dark for the domestic violence and injustices faced by women on feudal boundaries. The film glorifies Bulbbul's strategy of 'an eye for an eye" as punishment for the perpetrators. The film seems to justify the act through the traumatic circumstances she underwent at the hands of her husband and his brother. The forest finally becomes her graveyard as well. It portrays that the fire swallowed the forest, and her identity as *a chudail* is revealed.

The mythical figure of the chudail, with twisted-pair legs resembling the mutilated legs of Bulbbul, is a sign of the violence faced by women under the shackles of patriarchy. The savior women archetype often brings the patriarchy's experiences of gender discrimination and domestic violence into the forefront. The film attempts to glorify Bulbbul as a savarna saviour capable of protecting the victims belonging to the lower caste. Additionally, the perpetrators are men from the lower castes, which elevates Bulbbul's position as a saviour in terms of caste and the harrowing experiences she faces. One of the victims, a young girl from a lower-caste background, discloses that Goddess Kali saved her after being rescued by Bulbbul. Furthermore, after the aforementioned scene, the film showcases Bulbbul in a posture resembling Goddess Kali sitting on a lion, signifying chivalric victory and dominance. Interrogating Maadathy in this prospect, the act of gang-rape and the lack of empathy for the lower-castes from the people belonging to upper-castes, along with the continuous and constant modes of marginalization faced right from the ancestors of Puthirai vannars to Yosana, attributes to the idea of folklore. However, because of its affiliations with the caste system, this saviour phenomenon is not widely celebrated. Yosana, while alive, could not even stand in front of her abusers; she required reincarnation as Maadathy to set a payback for the abusers and upper-castes in the village. She cursed them to be blind, as they were the ones who imposed the rules upon her as well as on the people belonging to the Puthirai vannars community and termed them un-seeable. She does not hold any symbols of chivalry or courage; the donkey Kuttymaari, in which she lays her tortured body, is also a symbol of casteist marginalisation.

The camera does not have any ideology; instead, one who looks through the camera has a subjective ideology. The audience gets subjected to these ideologies in the dark theatrical screen holds the capability to influence the psyche, states Jean-Louis Baudry and Alan Williams in the article, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus." When Bulbbul attempts to evoke a sense of 'aesthetic Bengali-ness' through recurring images of colonial Bengal through the title character and events, it foregrounds the idea of feudalism and places downtrodden communities as the people to be ruled in order to maintain the harmony and welfare of the people. Viewing through the historical perspective, *in Caste, Culture, and Hegemony: Social Domination in Colonial Bengal* by Sekhar Bandhopadhyay, it is stated that Indian 'caste feudalism' was consolidated through an alliance between Brahmanism and state power.

Colonial rule used, transformed, and to a large extent strengthened this caste structure to its benefit (25). Controlling women and their sexuality to maintain savarna patrilineal culture did not have any limitations; they identified women belonging to lower castes as their property and not as individuals or independent bodies. Bulbbul, even when she vehemently attacks the abusers, seems to be ignorant of the forced widowhood within her community. The men in Bulbbul, namely, Indranil and Sathya, are depicted with a benevolent masculine nature, keen on surveilling the women in their family to ensure the sanity of the tradition and caste system. It rightly explains with the statement by Simon de Beauvoir, 'one is not born a woman, rather becomes one.' The sequences portraying rape and brutal domestic violence undergone by Bulbbul provide voyeuristic pleasure-inducing male gaze, making her the erotic subject.

In contrast, *Maadathy* places its camera in the dark, capturing the painful emotions of Yosana and restricting the inducement of the male gaze during the act of gang rape. S. Thenmozhi, Dalit Activist stated, that women's body is subjected to the onslaught of perverse sexuality, class bashing, and casteist abrasions (304). Behind every subaltern deity, there is a tale of injustice in the name of caste atrocities. When Bulbbul becomes a 'Devi' in the end, Maadathy becomes one among many subaltern deities in Tamil Nadu. Maadathy, exempted from the sacredness attributed to other goddesses, instead becomes a nightmare for the people as fear precedes faith. In Mahasweta Devi's collection of Breast Stories, Draupadi has analogies with Maadathy. Dopdi Mehjen, projecting her tortured body to the ones who have tortured her, represents the pain and oppression she faces and the community's ancestors. Similarly, Yosana transforms into Maadathy as an act of protest against the social dilemma faced by her

and her community. E. V. Ramakrishnan points out that Dalit autobiographies narrate the tale of personal experiences and later develop into the story of their communities; thus, 'I' develops to 'us' or 'we' (63).

In *Why I am not a Hindu* (1995), Kancha Ilaiah narrates his experiences of being born in the community of Kuruman in the interiors of Andhra Pradesh. There are neither fixed temples nor fixed deities among the Dalit-Bahujan community. The community believed in several gods and defined each village event in terms of their behaviour. The prosperity of goats and sheep in the Kurumaa community depends heavily upon the caste-specific god *Bheerappa*, rains arrive late because of the anger of *Polimeramma*, thieves steal crops because *Potaraju* is angry, and so on. He argues that the Dalit-Bahujan spirit, in its essence, is a non-Hindu spirit and the Brahmin family. They address the lower-caste deities not with the same respect as they talk about Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Dalit-Bahujan believed that *Pochamma's* angriness caused small pox in the village whereas Brahmins evoked her name derogatively whenever diseases were on spread. The idea of 'one-day goddesses' mostly align towards lower caste deities, their powers are not considered to be relevant when the Brahminical Gods such as Lakshmi, Parvathy and Saraswati exist. As per Brahminical ideologies, they are considered the ideal wives of ideal husbands, whereas in the case of lower-caste deities, their husbands are anonymous. (23)

Thus, the feministic ideologies conveyed through both films differ in terms of the caste system when the title characters turn into terrifying supernatural objects. Bulbbul Beerayya or Bheerappa is a God of the Kuruma community in India Goddess Poleramma is a goddess, a local form of Sakti in Andhra Pradesh. She is worshipped as the Grama devata (goddess who protects the village).

Potharaju is the brother of the Mother Goddess. In the procession, a well-built, bare-bodied man wearing a small, tightly draped red dhoti. The Mother Goddess protects from all kinds of diseases, maintains patriarchal subjugation within its caste, and neglects the notions of inclusivity by identifying the upper-caste hegemony as essential. Maadathy, instead of being the lowest among the lower castes, becomes a protest against upper-caste domination by suggesting equality at the forefront. As a result, the double-oppressed status of being Dalit and a woman generates one among many subaltern deities or even one-day goddesses, but the mythical woman with a savarna background receives the mass appeal of saviour.

Works Cited

Bandyopadhyay Sekhar. *Caste, Culture and Hegemony: Social Domination in Colonial Bengal*. Sage Publications, 2004.

Baudry, Jean-Louis, and Alan Williams. "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," *Film Quarterly*, vol. 28, no.2, 1974, pp. 39-47. Beauvoir, Simon de. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

Bulbbul. Directed by Anvita Dutt Guptan, Performances by Tripti Dimri and Rahul Bose, Netflix, 2020.

Devadasi. Directed by Manik Lal Tandon and T.V. Sundaram, Performances by N.S. Krishnan, T.A. Madhuram, Sukumar Pictures, 1948.

Devi, Mahasweta. *Breast Stories*. Seagull Books, 1997.

Maadathy. Directed by Leena Manimekalai, Performances by Ajmina Kassim and Semmalar Annam, Neestream, 2019.

Ramakrishnan, E.V. *Locating Indian Literature*. Orient Black Swan, 2011.

Ravikumar and R. Azhagarasan. *The Oxford India Anthology of Tamil Dalit Writing*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

Sarkar, Tanika. *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism*. London, Hurst, 2001.

Singh, Meheli, and Anustup Basu. *Figurations in Indian Films*. Springer, 2013

Sundar Ranjan, Rajeswari. *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Post-colonialism*.

London and New York, Routledge, 1993, pp. 153–155.

Vaishali. Directed by Bharathan, Performances by Sanjay Mitra and Suparna Anand.

Deconstructing the Drape: How Fashion Challenges Gender Norms in Kerala

Keerthana S.

Kerala, a state traditionally rooted in its customs, has undergone a cultural shift in recent decades. This is especially evident in the fashion choices of the younger generation, who are increasingly embracing gender-bending styles. This trend has ignited a widespread debate on established gender norms, prompting a deeper look into the underlying dynamics. This study delves into the intricate relationship between fashion and gender in Kerala by utilising deconstruction, the literary theory pioneered by Jacques Derrida, as a framework to understand how fashion disrupts and redefines traditional notions of gender identity. By examining fashion trends and incorporating personal narratives, this study aims to illuminate the evolving attitudes toward gender in Kerala and its impact on shaping the cultural landscape. This exploration of fashion offers insights into the diverse and ever-changing expressions of gender identity, ultimately challenging the entrenched ideas of masculinity and femininity in this region.

This study begins by examining traditional gender norms in Kerala as reflected in clothing choices. This will be followed by an exploration of how the younger generation's embrace of gender-bending outfits disrupts these established boundaries. Deconstruction will be used to reveal how fashion acts as a tool for challenging the binary system of masculine and feminine attire. This exploration aims to demonstrate how fashion transcends mere aesthetics and becomes a powerful platform for social transformation. It will also show how young people in Kerala are using clothing to express their individuality, challenge societal expectations, and rewrite the script of what it means to be Keralite. Ultimately, this paper contributes to the broader conversation about gender fluidity happening across the globe and highlights the unique role that fashion plays in dismantling traditional gender norms and fostering a more inclusive society.

In recent years, there has been a shift toward breaking down the binary of traditional gender roles in clothing. The rise of gender-fluid fashion has challenged the strict divisions between men 'sand women's apparel and has opened up a new world of creative and non-conformist dressing. In Kerala, this has manifested in the form of designers creating fusion garments that combine elements from both men's and women's traditional wear. From saree-

inspired dresses for men to kurtas with bold prints and cuts for women, these designers are pushing boundaries and creating a new narrative of inclusivity and individualism.

Moreover, there has been a rise in the acceptance and visibility of the LGBTQ+ community in Kerala, which has further paved the way for gender-non-conforming fashion. With the increasing demand for non-binary and gender-neutral clothing, designers are experimenting with styles and silhouettes that cater to a wider spectrum of identities. The result is a refreshing and vibrant mix of traditional and contemporary elements, with a focus on comfort and self-expression rather than conforming to societal norms. This deconstruction of the binary in clothing is not just a fashion statement but also a reflection of society's changing attitudes and values toward gender roles and identities.

As society becomes more accepting and inclusive, traditional labels and gender norms are being challenged and dismantled. One example of this can be seen in men's fashion, with young men increasingly experimenting with kurtas in bold colours and unconventional patterns. In the past, kurtas were seen as strictly traditional and reserved for special occasions; however, they are now worn as everyday attire. This not only breaks down societal expectations of how men should dress but also showcases a willingness to embrace different cultures and styles.

In addition to bold colours and patterns, men are accessorising their kurtas with traditionally feminine items such as statement necklaces or nail polish. These small additions may seem insignificant; however, they send a powerful message of inclusivity and the acceptance of fluid gender expression. Certain accessories or styles are no longer deemed exclusively for one gender but are instead being embraced by all, regardless of societal expectations.

In contrast, women are also challenging gender norms through their fashion choices. Pantsuits, traditionally seen as masculine attire, are now being worn by women as a symbol of power and authority. This shift not only challenges the idea that women should only wear dresses or skirts but also reinforces the belief that fashion does not have to conform to traditional gender roles. Women are demonstrating that they can be just as strong, if not stronger, in a pantsuit than in a dress.

In addition to breaking down gender norms in their clothing choices, women are also pushing boundaries with their hairstyles. Long hair has often been seen as ideal for women; however, an increasing number of women are opting for cropped haircuts that challenge this

expectation. These bold and daring haircuts not only showcase confidence and individuality but also dismantle the idea that women's femininity is tied to hair length. Overall, these examples of deconstruction in fashion demonstrate that there is no one way to express gender or adhere to societal expectations, and individuals should feel free to express themselves however they choose, regardless of gender norms and labels.

The concept of fusion has taken root in the fashion and lifestyle choices of young Keralites, pushing the boundaries of traditional fashion and showcasing a new wave of creativity and individualism. It is a reflection of the evolving mindset of the youth, who are no longer content with following conventional norms and are instead drawn toward merging different cultures and traditions to create something truly unique and impactful. This trend has gained immense popularity in recent years, and it is not just about creating a style statement. It is a way for the youth to express their personal identity and embrace their roots while also being a part of the global community.

From traditional festivals to everyday wear, fusion has become a part of every aspect of fashion in Kerala. Young Keralites are fearlessly experimenting with their wardrobes, blurring the lines between traditional and modern styles. This shift in fashion is not limited to clothing but extends to jewellery, accessories, and even hairstyles. Elements from different cultures, such as bohemian, tribal, and Western fashion, are being incorporated into traditional attire, creating a fusion that is visually appealing and culturally significant. This fusion of fashion is not just about making a fashion statement; it is also a way for the youth to connect with their heritage and showcase their individuality.

One of the most iconic examples of fusion fashion is the pairing of a classic mundu with a statement jacket. Traditionally, the mundu was considered menswear, but it has since become a fashion statement for women. The mundu's simplicity and elegance are elevated with the addition of a modern jacket, creating a perfect blend of tradition and modernity. Similarly, young Keralites are draping sarees in unconventional ways, inspired by the global fashion scene. This not only breathes new life into traditional sarees but also gives young people the chance to incorporate their personal style into their cultural attire.

The beauty of fusion fashion lies in its ability to transcend cultural and geographical boundaries. It allows young people to embrace their heritage while also being part of a larger global community. This is especially important in a world where cultural diversity is celebrated,

and people are encouraged to embrace and respect different cultures. Fusion fashion acts as a medium to bridge the gap between cultural differences, promoting inclusivity and acceptance. It is not just about creating a unique style but also about creating a sense of harmony and understanding among different cultures.

The power of fusion fashion goes beyond creating a visual statement. For the youth of Kerala, it is a way to express their individuality, embrace their heritage, and foster a sense of global citizenship. By blending elements of their culture with global influences, they are breaking boundaries and creating a new form of fashion that is uniquely their own. This fusion not only adds vibrancy and creativity to the fashion scene in Kerala but also represents the changing attitudes and perspectives of the youth toward tradition and cultural identity.

The traditional attire of Kerala has long been characterised by its simplicity and modesty: a white dhoti for men and a saree for women. However, in recent years, the fashion scene in the state has undergone major transformation, with young people revamping these traditional garments to suit their unique tastes and personalities. This shift in sartorial choices reflects a larger societal change–the breaking down of strict gender boundaries and the acceptance of self-expression.

The days when the dhoti and saree were the only acceptable attire for men and women, respectively, are long gone. Currently, young people are boldly mixing up their wardrobes, with men donning floral-printed lungis and women experimenting with sarees in unconventional colours and patterns. This is a clear indication of how fashion is being used as a medium to challenge gender stereotypes and break free from the rigid expectations imposed on individuals based on their gender.

It is not just a fashion statement, but a powerful tool for self-expression. By choosing to wear clothing traditionally associated with the opposite sex, young people are redefining the concept of gender and challenging societal norms. They are stepping out of the boxes that have been created for them and rejecting the idea that their clothing must define their identity. This is a positive step toward a more inclusive and accepting society.

Moreover, the empowerment and confidence that come with wearing what one truly desires is evident in the way young people carry themselves. They exude a sense of pride and ownership of their choices, and this confidence radiates in their interactions with others. This

is a way for them to assert their individuality and break away from the homogeneity that society often expects from them.

This transformation in clothing choices reflects a shift in the mindset of younger generations. They are no longer bound by traditional and conservative beliefs but are open to embracing change and welcoming diversity. This is reflected not only in their fashion choices but also in their attitudes toward issues such as gender equality and LGBTQ + rights. Through their clothing, they are boldly showing their support for a more progressive and inclusive society.

Furthermore, this trend is not limited to urban youth but is also spreading to smaller towns and villages in Kerala. This indicates that the impact of this fashion revolution is spreading to all corners of the state, breaking down barriers and unifying people in their celebration of individuality. This is a refreshing change in a society where social norms often dictate people's choices and is a testament to the power of fashion to bring about social transformation.

The shift in fashion choices in Kerala is not merely a superficial change but a reflection of a larger societal transformation. This change in clothing is providing young people with a platform to express their identities and break away from traditional gender roles. It is a celebration of diversity, individuality, and progress and bodes well for the future of Kerala and beyond.

One factor that has played a crucial role in this global conversation about gender fluidity is the increasing visibility and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community. With the legalisation of same-sex marriage in many countries and the representation of LGBTQ+ individuals in the media, society has become more open to exploring and embracing different forms of gender expression. This has also led to a growing demand for fashion that is not limited by gender norms and allows individuals to freely express themselves.

Moreover, the rise of social media has also played a significant role in amplifying this conversation. Through platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, individuals can share their personal style and creativity with a global audience, breaking traditional notions of gendered fashion and inspiring others to do the same. Brands and designers have also taken notice, with many partnering with influential LGBTQ+ individuals to create inclusive and diverse campaigns.

In addition, celebrities and public figures have played a significant role in normalising and promoting gender fluidity in fashion. From Harry Styles wearing dresses on magazine

covers to Jaden Smith fronting a gender-neutral fashion campaign, these high-profile individuals have used their platforms to challenge traditional gender norms and pave the way for more diverse fashion options. This has not only sparked important conversations about gender fluidity but has also encouraged fashion brands to be more inclusive in their designs.

Another notable aspect of this global conversation about gender fluidity is its intersection with cultural and traditional aspects of dress. In many cultures around the world, there have always been traditional garments that were worn by both men and women. However, with the rise of colonialism and Western ideals, these gender-fluid clothing traditions were often suppressed or deemed unacceptable. Currently, there is a resurgence of interest in reclaiming and celebrating these cultural garments, breaking away from Western standards of fashion, and embracing diverse and inclusive forms of dress.

Furthermore, the development of technology has also played a role in promoting gender fluidity in fashion. Innovations in fabric and textile production have enabled designers to create clothing that is not limited by traditional gender divisions. This has also led to the rise of sustainable and gender-neutral fashion brands that prioritise inclusivity and ethical production practices. As consumers become more conscious and demand diversity and inclusivity in fashion, these brands are gaining popularity and driving the conversation toward a more inclusive future.

Additionally, conversations about gender fluidity in fashion have extended beyond clothing to include beauty and grooming products. With the rise of gender-neutral skin and hair care brands, individuals can choose products that align with their personal preferences rather than being limited by gender labels. Similarly, makeup brands are becoming more inclusive, with an increasing number of gender-fluid and male beauty influencers challenging traditional gender norms in the beauty industry.

The conversation about gender fluidity in fashion is a global one, with influences from social, cultural, technological, and political aspects. It has created space for individuals to freely express themselves and has pushed the fashion industry toward a more inclusive and diverse future. As this conversation continues, it is important for all of us to embrace and celebrate different forms of gender expression and promote inclusivity in all aspects of the fashion world.

The sartorial rebellion in Kerala has demonstrated the power of fashion to transcend its superficial label as mere clothing. It has become a powerful tool for young people to break free from societal norms and express themselves authentically. The rise of this rebellion in a traditionally conservative and patriarchal society like Kerala is truly remarkable and serves as a strong testament to the changing times and the evolving mindset of the youth.

One of the most intriguing aspects of this rebellion is its allowance of individuals to challenge gender norms and redefine their identities. The idea of a strict binary divide between masculinity and femininity is now being challenged, and fashion has become a medium for this challenge to be actively expressed. The fluidity and versatility of fashion have enabled individuals to experiment with their clothing and present themselves in a manner that best reflects their true selves, regardless of societal expectations.

Furthermore, this sartorial rebellion has given rise to a community of like-minded individuals, providing a sense of belonging and support to those who have long felt ostracised by society for their unconventional choices. Through fashion, they have found a way to connect with others who share similar values and beliefs, creating a sense of unity and acceptance. This community has also been instrumental in promoting the messages of inclusivity and diversity, breaking down barriers, and fostering a more tolerant and inclusive society.

Moreover, sartorial rebellion in Kerala has not only challenged traditional gender roles but also defied conventional notions of beauty. The use of androgynous styles, bold colours, and unconventional silhouettes has shattered narrow-minded beauty standards set by the fashion industry. This has opened up a world of possibilities and given a voice to those who have long been overlooked or excluded from the fashion world. This has sparked a much-needed conversation about representation in the media and has paved the way for a more inclusive and diverse fashion landscape.

However, none of this would have been possible without the courage and resilience of the individuals who have embraced this rebellion. In a society that still largely upholds traditional values and norms, it takes immense courage to challenge those norms and stand up for one's beliefs. The fashion choices made by these individuals reflect not only their personal style but also serve as a form of activism, challenging the status quo and paving the way for a more inclusive and accepting society.

In conclusion, the sartorial rebellion in Kerala has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the world of fashion and beyond. It has opened doors for new conversations, challenged existing beliefs, and empowered individuals to embrace their true selves. Through fashion, the youth in Kerala have shown us that self-expression knows no boundaries and that fashion can be a catalyst for social change. This rebellion serves as an inspiration for all of us to break free from societal expectations and embrace our individuality and uniqueness.

Works Cited

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.

P V, Sreebitha. "Dress Reform in Kerala: Question of Caste, Community and Women." Academia.edu.

https://www.academia.edu/40158991/Dress_Reform_In_Kerala_Question_Of_Caste_Community_And_Women (Article published - 2018, Shodh Sarita: An International Bilingual Peer Reviewed Refereed Research Journal).

Mehrotra, Reya. "Gender bender: Androgynous & gender-fluid fashion is making its presence felt globally now more than ever." Financial Express, 27 Nov. 2022.

https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/gender-bender-androgynous-amp-gender-fluid-fashion-is-making-its-presence-felt-globally-now-more-than-ever/2892968/

Zayara, Vajra. "The Changing Perceptions on Fashion in Kerala." Medium, 8 Jun 2022.

https://vajrazayara.medium.com/the-changing-perceptions-on-fashion-in-kerala-aa5864f038e1

Ians. "Fashion blurring gender norms fast catching up in India." 20 March 2020.

https://www.onmanorama.com/lifestyle/beauty-and-fashion/2020/03/20/fashion-blurring-gender-norms-fast-catching-up.html

Adlakha, Nidhi. "Designer Parul Gupta is taking Kerala's Chendamangalam yarn for a spin with her gender-neutral label, Yûga." The Hindu. 28 March 2023.

https://www.thehindu.com/life-and-style/fashion/chendmangalam-fashion-parul-gupta-y%C5%ABga-gender-neutral/article66503341.ece

Changing Gender Roles: A Study of Recent Malayalam Movies

Anu Scaria & Titto Varghese

The representation of gender in Malayalam cinema is a topic that initiates numerous discussions. We live in an age in which stereotypical portrayals of gender roles are constantly under scrutiny and receive fierce criticism. Most mainstream Malayalam films assign gender roles to the characters, with the intention of satisfying the whims and fancies of patriarchal society. In the past, popular Malayalam films featured macho heroes. Mainstream actors have played superhuman heroes capable of defeating even the mightiest of enemies. In such films, female characters are sidelined, either as weak and dependent women or as articulate yet arrogant women. Confident and articulate women are often insulted by the heroes and shown their 'real place'," which is a step or two beneath the level of the hero. One such instance can be found in *The King* (1995), directed by Shaji Kailas, "where Mammootty, as the all-powerful district collector shows with utter contempt what the woman superintendent of police is really worth" (Harris 62).

Another stereotypical way of portraying a female character is the representation of a woman, as someone born to suffer, that too with perseverance, dignity, and grace. Men, on the other hand, are expected to stay strong, rough, and tough. They are not supposed to cry because crying is perceived as a symbol of weakness. There are many movies where men also take up roles as caretakers of female characters. They take important decisions in the lives of women. The brother-sister equation highlighted in many films is worthy of attention. The seemingly caring and loving brothers controlled the lives of the sisters. They even interfere with the love lives of their respective sisters. In *Vatsalyam* (1993), the brother makes his sister drop her studies and decide to marry her off to a man chosen by him. In another scene, the same man brutally slaps his wife in an attempt to release his anger, which was originally directed towards another character. In *Vakkalathu Narayanan Kutty* (2001), the brother slaps his sister to wear modern clothes. This trend can also be found in numerous other movies. Recently, there has been a remarkable shift in the representation of gender roles in Malaysian films. An analysis of gender roles in three critically acclaimed movies- *Sara's*, *The Great Indian Kitchen*, and *Kumbalangi Nights*–would help to examine the new trend in detail.

Sara is a 2021 film directed by Jude Anthany Joseph. The film offers scathing criticism of the stereotypical notion that reproduction is the ultimate aim of a woman's life. The story is told from the perspective of Sara, the central character in the film. The title itself points at the fact that the movie is essentially Sara's story. The characterisation of the female protagonist breaks away from the usual pattern popularised by mainstream cinema. Sara is different from a typical heroine seen in old, celebrated patriarchal movies. She is not someone who seeks the protection of the hero, nor is she someone who sacrifices her career for the sake of an 'ideal' family life.

Sara is an independent woman with a clear idea of how to live her life. She is an assistant director who aspires to become a successful film director. This career choice is noteworthy. Her profession is different from the usual career choices made by typical Indian women. Working women in India are often forced to take up comfortable nine-to-five jobs that would enable them to take care of domestic chores. Any other profession that would take up more of their time is considered inappropriate by society. Sara's job requires her to work day and night, and to stay outdoors. She may not get to spend time with her family. Despite many rejections, Sara continues to work hard and finally gets a chance to direct her first film. The genre of the film that she chooses to direct is a thriller, which is not a genre of film expected to be directed by female directors.

Sara's most important choice, which becomes the focus of the entire narrative, is her decision not to become a mother. She decides not to have children. This decision, which is supposed to be a personal choice, brings a whole array of problems into her life.

Male characters are also presented in a new light in the film. In a patriarchal society, men make most decisions regarding women's lives. Men act as protectors of women, as the latter are considered weak and fragile. The characterisation of male characters in *Sara* breaks away from this usual trend. Sara's father is a person who respects his daughter's individuality, her dreams and decisions. He remains a strong pillar of support at all stages of her life. Sara's husband Jeevan is an equal partner in all ways. The couple decides not to have children because both are not ready to take up the tough responsibility of raising children. Their marriage is based on mutual respect and an equal sharing of responsibilities.

When Sara accidentally becomes pregnant, she decides to abort her pregnancy. This decision places her in a difficult situation as she is pressured to keep the baby. Even her

husband falls for societal pressure and persuades Sara to change her decision. Sara overcomes all the struggles and stands strong. She convinces Jeevan of her decision and its importance in her life. In spite of all the pressure and struggles, Sara remains an independent decision maker. The character of Sara questions traditional gender roles in a poignant manner. She rejects motherhood, which is considered the epitome of womanhood. A woman has the right to choose whether to become a mother or not, which is highlighted in the film. Sara represents a modern woman who is well aware of her rights. She chooses her own path in life and defines her own happiness. She also chooses not to follow the oppressive conventions of a patriarchal society.

The Great Indian Kitchen is a 2021 film directed by Jeo Baby that discusses the topic of systemic gender subjugation. Patriarchy has been deeply rooted in Indian society for ages. This has not been achieved by the exertion of physical force, but through the agency of ideological conditioning. Male and female characters in the film represent men and women in a patriarchal society. The characters are unnamed, as they represent everyman and everywoman. The characters of the father and son remind us of many men we see around us. Men take on the role of breadwinners and decision-makers in their families. Women are expected to take care of the house, children, and their husbands. This has been normalised in such a way that women consider it their duty to abide by these conventions.

The female lead played by Nimisha Sajayan, is introduced in the story as a passionate young woman, dancing her soul out, with an infectious smile on her face. This image slowly transforms into that of a weary, lifeless 'housewife' as the film progresses. She is literally confined within the four walls of her husband's household. She is not 'permitted' to work as a dance teacher. The woman is expected to stay at home and perform all sorts of chores, including cooking numerous dishes and washing her father-in-law's inner wear.

> *"Initially, the images of idlis popping out of the moulds, dosa being rolled on a non-stick pan, sambar boiling on the stove, and idiyappams being plated are sumptuously presented; however, the film quickly drives home the thankless drudgery that Nimisha has to go through. What remains with you is the leaking sink, the overflowing waste basket, the dining table smeared with leftovers that the men walk away from coolly after a meal, expecting the women to clean up after them"* (Roy 2).

The father demands that his daughter-in-law hand over his toothbrush and sandals in his wife's absence. The husband is seen practising yoga in the courtyard while the woman toils hard in the kitchen to cook numerous dishes. At night, the woman is forced to succumb to her husband's sexual fantasies, even when she is not ready for them. Her opinions on sex are neglected as irrelevant by her husband. He treats his wife as an outcast during menstruation.

The men in the film are not physically abusive toward the women in their lives. They are not violent in any way. Violent and abusive behaviour from men often receives criticism; however, many men in a patriarchal setup behave in deceptively normal ways. The father and son in the film do not exert violence to control the women. They are never seen getting angry. Instead, they try to keep women under control through their deceptive smiles and seemingly caring behaviour. The father-in-law showers praise on the dish prepared by his daughter-in-law immediately after rejecting her plan to work as a dance teacher. He indirectly tries to inform her of the fact that, she is supposed to cook food, rather than pursue the career of her choice.

What makes *The Great Indian Kitchen* different from many other films dealing with the same theme, such as *Veruthe Alla Bharya* (2008), is the manner in which the film ends. The female character in *The Great Indian Kitchen* breaks free from the shackles of patriarchy and liberates herself at the end of the film. The scene in which she throws a bucket of waste water on her husband's face is a direct slap to the face of all those who have been safeguarding oppressive patriarchal conventions over the years. The woman goes back to being independent once again, evolving to be much stronger and more confident than before. The men on the other hand, remain unchanged. The son remarries without a second thought. The cup with leftover tea, kept in the kitchen to be washed by his new wife, is indicative of the fact that nothing has changed in the family. The cycle continues.

Kumbalangi Nights is a 2019 film, directed by Madhu C. Narayanan. The discussion on gender roles in the film can be done by focusing on the two families, which act as the centres where most of the actions unleash. The first family is that of the four brothers, Saji, Boney, Bobby and Frankie. The mother had suffered a great deal in the past but later decided to leave her house to follow her heart's desire. The mother had suffered a lot in the past, but then she decided to leave her house to follow her heart's desire. This act would be viewed as selfish, based on the patriarchal benchmarks on motherhood. According to the patriarchal norms embedded in the Indian culture, a mother is supposed to take care of her children till her death, unlike the western culture where, children leave their parents to discover themselves.

The relationship among the four brothers was not smooth. Saji and Bobby are confused about life. Boney stayed away from home because of his rift with Saji and Bobby. Frankie, the youngest brother is the one who tries to keep the brothers together. He kept looking at the image of Mother Mary on the table. This is indicative of the strong sense of longing in Frankie's mind.

The second family in the film is Baby's family. Baby is the breadwinner of her family. She is an independent, intelligent, and confident girl. The absence of a male figure in Baby's family is filled by the arrival of her sister's husband, Shammi. Shammi is an alpha male who reveres his masculinity. He looks at the mirror, caresses his moustache, and takes pride in his appearance. He considers himself a complete man. He assumes the role of the head of the family and seeks the authority to control the women in the house.

There is a scene in which Shammi insists that all three women sit with him for dinner. He then moves his chair to the chief position, indicating his desire for power. Shammi cannot accept progressive and independent women. When he learns about Baby's love affair with Bobby, he blatantly opposes it. His fight with the Western woman also indicates Shammi's insecurity regarding progressive women. He disagrees with the idea of having sex before marriage. He even persuaded Bobby to drop the business of staying at home. His curiosity to learn about the private conversation between the two sisters sheds light on Shammi's tendency to interfere in everything. Later, Shammi attempts to insult and verbally abuse Baby when she stands adamant in her decision to marry Bobby. When both the sisters oppose him, his male ego gets hurt, and he inflicts physical torture on the mother and the two daughters. Baby becomes helpless at this point and later gets rescued by Bobby and his brothers.

In the second half of the film, the four brothers undergo transformation. Bobby discovers his true potential in fishing through his courtship with Baby. Saji holds himself as responsible for the accidental death of his friend Vijay. Unable to bear the grief, Saji seeks the aid of a counsellor and pours out his heart. Saji's emotional outburst contradicts the patriarchal notion that men are not supposed to cry, even during the hardest times. After therapy, Saji feels relieved and takes on the responsibility of Vijay's wife and the newborn infant. Boney comes back to stay with his family along with the foreigner woman. Frankie is overjoyed with happiness, as his longing has now come to an end.

Malayalam cinema is going through a phase of positive transformation in all ways. The representation of gender in terms of patriarchal ideology has shifted to more rational and progressive modes of representation. Films such as *Sara's The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Kumbalangi Nights* have paved the way for more such films.

Works Cited

Gangadharan, Thara. "Subversion of the Masculine Gender Roles in the Malayalam Film *Kumbalangi Nights*." Smart Moves Journal IJELLH, vol. 9, no.10, 2021, pp. 92-100, www. Ijellh.com/OJS/. Accessed on 08. 01. 2022.

Harris, V C. "Engendering Popular Cinema in Malayalam". *Women in Malayalam Cinema: Naturalising Gender Hierarchies,* edited by Meena T Pillai, Orient Blackswan, 2010, pp. 57- 66.

Roy, Priyanka. "The Story of Most Indian Women." *The Telegraph,* 10 February 2021, www.telegraphindia. com/amp/ent/. Accessed on 07.01. 2022.

Shruthi, Sravya. "Film Review: *Sara's*- A Refreshing Take on the Deification of Motherhood". *Feminism in India,* 13 July 2021, www.feminisminindia.com/ 2021/07/13/. Accessed on 07.01.2021.

Tragedy, Trauma and Realisation of Destinies: A Comparative Study of the Characters Marikolanthu and Leela Benare

Fathima Begum

Ladies Coupé, Anita Nair's compelling novel published in 2001, introduces readers to the multifaceted journey of Akhila, a middle-aged Indian, unmarried woman seeking independence. As Akhila embarks on her voyage to Kanyakumari, she finds herself sharing the train's lady's coupe with five diverse women, each carrying their own burdens and stories. Among these travellers is Marikolanthu, whose innocence is shattered by a single night of lust, as described in the narrative. Through her story, we are confronted with the harsh realities of sexual violence and the lasting impact it leaves on its victims and offers a window into the complexities of a woman's journey towards healing and self-discovery, enriching the narrative with themes of trauma, resilience, and the quest for redemption

An analysis of Marikolanthu's life reveals that it is a tapestry woven with threads of tragedy, resilience, and ultimately, redemption. Her story, though deeply personal, resonates with universal themes of struggle, survival, and the quest for self-worth. Born into circumstances fraught with adversity, she navigated a journey marked by loss, betrayal, and societal expectations; yet, she emerged as a symbol of strength and determination.

From a young age, Marikolanthu faced hardships that shaped her destiny. Raised in a humble household, her childhood was marred by responsibilities far beyond her years. The untimely demise of her father left her shouldering familial burdens, while societal norms constrained her aspirations for education and independence. Despite her tender age, she assumed the role of caretaker, sacrificing her own dreams for the sake of her family. Mari was fascinated by the heroines of black-and-white films who always listened to their mothers and followed suit. 'As you wish Amma. It's my duty to do everything for you and my brothers,'

Her encounter with Sujatha Akka was a turning point in her life. Under Akka's guidance, Marikolanthu found solace and purpose, serving as a caregiver to Akka's son and receiving rare moments of compassion and understanding. She was the only one who saw her as a person, neither a girl nor a woman. She always wished her well and sent her off to Vellore to free her from the prying eyes of her husband and younger brother-in-law.

At the age of 18, Mari was called home when her mother fractured her leg. As Prabhu Pappa had already left for boarding school, she had to work at the Chettiar household. When

Amma returned to the Chettiar home, Mari returned to be Sujata Akka's handmaiden. It was then that Rani Akka's brother, Murugesan, spotted her. However, tragedy struck when she became a victim of sexual assault, a harrowing experience that shattered her sense of security and self-worth.

In the aftermath of the assault, Marikolanthu grappled with profound trauma and uncertainty. She did not complain to anyone. She did not even tell her mother. She became gloomy and withdrawn, and her mother noticed this change. However, after two weeks, she began feeling nauseous and felt like throwing up at the smell of food. Her mother suspected it to be jaundice and brewed a concoction. But when there still was no improvement, she asked her about her last periods.

Amma then realised that Mari was pregnant and called her shameless without even hearing her side of the story. Mari then narrated the entire incident, including every shriek and scream, to her mother, who was aghast.

'You were raped and kept quiet about it. A man steals your virginity and you think nothing is going to change…You expect me to believe that?'

Despite the support of a few empathetic individuals, including Sujatha Akka, justice remained elusive, overshadowed by familial ties and societal hierarchies. Her decision to remain silent about the incident reflected not only the societal stigma surrounding sexual violence but also her own internalised shame and fear of disbelief. Sujata Akka acknowledged Mari's stance of not complaining. She said,

'Besides, he knew very well that no one would believe her, and it happened just as he thought it would. Not even you believe her!

The arrival of her son, Muthu, further complicates Marikolanthu's tumultuous journey. Struggling with feelings of resentment and inadequacy, she grappled with the complexities of motherhood and torn between love and repulsion for her own child.

"As the baby grew inside her and she felt its first kicks, Mari would shout, "Go away, leave me. I don't want you… Die, die, I prayed."

Her conflicted emotions mirrored the turmoil within her as she sought to reconcile her past traumas with her present reality.

…yet when my son was born, all I felt was revulsion for the child…a tremendous loathing would fill me. I would thrust him away screaming, "Take him away. I do not want him near me.

Yet amidst chaos and despair, Marikolanthu found moments of clarity and resolution.

"I have been trained in despair…Sometimes I think I was so used to despair that even if it shied away from me, I beckoned it back…I welcomed it with arms flung wide…"

After the Chettiar's death, Marikolanthu returns as Vadivu, the household caretaker, and can no longer manage Chettiar Amma. Despite her reluctance, Marikolanthu accepts responsibility, partly driven by her desire to avoid seeing her son. However, her decision incurs Amma's fury.

Following Chettiar Amma's passing, Sujatha akka, now a lonely widow, appoints Mari as her assistant, relying on her as her "eyes and ears." Mari, devoid of shame or guilt, acknowledges her actions as necessary. A complex dynamic unfolds between Mari and Sujatha akka, characterised by a mixture of revulsion, desire, and mutual dependence. Mari's willingness to engage in physical intimacy with Sujatha akka's husband Sridhar anna reflects her acceptance of her role in preserving Sujatha akka's happiness and social standing.

Despite the absence of love, both Mari and Sujatha Akka acknowledge their mutual need for each other, grappling with the harsh reality that sometimes need must suffice where love cannot. Their relationship is fraught with tension and accusation, with Sujatha Akka branding Mari a "wicked creature" for her role in the alternative arrangement with Sridhar Anna. Despite this, Mari's declaration of love and loyalty underscores the complexity of their bond, even as Sujatha Akka threatens to cast her out.

Through perseverance and introspection, she reclaimed agency over her life, confronting her abuser and seeking retribution for injustices inflicted on her. Her decision to mortgage her son's labour for financial independence symbolised both her resilience and willingness to sacrifice for a better future.

"With the rent money raised from the boys sweat and blood I would destroy the house and the bond that wove our lives together."

The sudden demise of her abuser, Murugesan, marked a pivotal moment of reckoning for Marikolanthu.

'As the flames leapt, my hurt burnt with them'

Confronted with the consequences of her actions, she grappled with feelings of guilt and remorse, yet also found a new sense of purpose and determination. In her son Muthu, she saw both a reminder of past pain and a beacon of hope for redemption, prompting her to embrace motherhood wholeheartedly.

'I felt a great sadness wash over me. I reduced the boy to…A Chandala. A Keeper of Graves, the overseer of the dead…. Once again, I felt a quickening in my phantom womb… I wrested control of my destiny. I was not going to wage wars or rule kingdoms. All I wanted was a measure of my happiness. All I wanted to be was Muthu's mother.'

As Marikolanthu's journey unfolded, she underwent a profound transformation, transcending the confines of societal expectations and familial obligations. Her evolution from a victim of circumstance to a resilient survivor epitomised the indomitable human spirit, capable of overcoming even the darkest of adversities. Through her story, she embodied the resilience of the human spirit, reminding us that, even in the face of unimaginable hardship, there is the potential for healing, redemption, and renewal.

'For so long, I had been content to remain a sister to the real thing. Surrogate housewife. Surrogate mother. Surrogate lover. But now I wanted more. I wanted to be the real thing.'

Marikolanthu's legacy endures as a testament to the power of resilience, compassion, and self-discovery. Her journey serves as an inspiration to all who have experienced hardship and adversity, reminding us that within the depths of despair lies the potential for growth, transformation, and ultimately, redemption. By embracing her truth and reclaiming her agency, Marikolanthu found not only her own salvation but also the courage to forge a path toward a brighter future.

After all these years, she realises her worth and position. She realised that the troubles she experienced in life strengthened her. She learnt to forget. She learnt to forgive. To accept truth and reality. To push away the unreal and unimportant. To let go of the unnecessary and unnerving. She evolved. Her tragedy and trauma moulded her. This gave her the impetus to move forward in life. She recovered from all the hassles she experienced and emerged as an independent woman, strong in her decisions. She accepted her fate, rebounded rather than succumbed, and spent the rest of her life as the real mother of the once-detested Muthu.

Vijay Tendulkar, the eminent Indian playwright, screen and television writer, literary essayist, political journalist, and social commentator, stands as one of the most influential dramatists and theatre personalities in Marathi. His iconic play, "Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe," written in 1967, is a timeless exploration of societal hypocrisy and individual struggle. Actively involved in the new theatre movement in Maharashtra, he co-founded groups such as Rangayan and Awishkar, contributing significantly to the cultural landscape.

His play "Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe' (1967), written for Rangayan at the urging of his peers, brought him widespread acclaim on a national scale. Against the backdrop of a mock trial, the play delves into the complexities of middle-class life in a judgmental society, unravelling the inner turmoil and resilience of its central character Benare.

The play opens with an amateur dramatic troupe's decision to stage a mock trial, with Benare, a 34-year-old unmarried schoolteacher, as the accused. What begins as a playful exercise quickly escalates into a serious examination of Benare's personal life as the troupe passes judgment on her alleged transgressions.

Central to the play's thematic resonance is the glaring hypocrisy inherent in the court's judgment. The verdict, delivered with self-righteous fervour, condemns Benare to societal ostracization and professional ruin, demanding the destruction of her illegitimate child and her dismissal from her job.

'Neither you nor anyone else should ever do anything like this. No memento of your sin should remain for future generations. Therefore, this court hereby sentences that you shall live but the child in your womb shall be destroyed.'

While Benare faces harsh consequences for her actions, Professor Damle, her co-conspirator in the supposed scandal, emerges unscathed, exposing the glaring gender bias and moral duplicity prevalent in society.

That's all ! Again the body! This body is a traitor! Only one thing in life is important: the body!

Benare's response to the unjust verdict epitomizes her resilience and inner strength.

Despite grappling with past mistakes and personal demons, including a doomed love affair and a suicide attempt, she finds courage to confront her accusers and assert her humanity.

Again, I fell in love…It isn't love at all; it's worship! …But it was the same mistake. I offered up my body on the altar…And my intellectual God took the offering and went his way…. He wasn't a God. He was a man.

Her decision to raise her child, despite societal stigma and the lack of support from Professor Damle, underscores her unwavering commitment to personal integrity and maternal duty.

I despise this body, and I love it!And now it carries within it…a tender little bud…my son__ my whole existence! I want my body now for him…alone.

Throughout the play, Benare emerges as a defiant yet compassionate figure, challenging societal norms while embracing her individual agency. Her refusal to conform to narrow gender roles and expectations resonates with audiences, inviting reflection on the constraints of societal conformity and the importance of personal autonomy.

He must have a mother…a father to call his own…a house…to be looked after…he must have a good name!

Benare is a free woman who believes in her independence. She realises her mistakes and learns from them. She is brave enough to face her problems and approaches Ponkshe, Rokde, and Samant for a solution. She even has a bottle of Tik-20 in her purse to end her life if needed. She decides to bring up her child even without the support of the intellectual but cowardly Professor Damle. However, the court gives the verdict that she may live on, but her child may not. Although Benare says that society has no right to interfere with her private rights and liberties, she cannot completely disown her responsibility to society. Society believes that the sly new fashion of women taking up careers and earning money and simply wanting comfort without the attendant responsibility is what makes everything go wrong.

The play's critique of societal hypocrisy extends beyond Benare's personal plight to encompass the broader themes of gender inequality and moral judgment. Tendulkar skilfully exposes the inherent contradictions and injustices embedded in social norms, inviting audiences to interrogate their own complicity in perpetuating such systems of oppression.

Moreover, "Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe' serves as a poignant testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Despite the weight of societal condemnation, Benare refuses to relinquish her dignity or compromise her principles, embodying the enduring

powers of individual agency and self-determination. She decided to keep her child and move forward.

When comparing the two works, Marikolanthu's life is characterised by tragedy, resilience, and redemption, unfolding alongside Benare's story, a tale of societal judgment and personal strength. Despite their differing circumstances, both women navigate adversity, challenge societal norms, and ultimately find redemption through resilience and self-discovery.

Marikolanthu's journey begins with the weight of familial responsibilities thrust on her at a young age. Raised in modest circumstances, she sacrifices her dreams to care for her family after her father's untimely demise. Despite her struggles, she finds solace under the guidance of Sujatha Akka until tragedy strikes in the form of sexual assault. Marikolanthu's decision to remain silent about her ordeal reflects the societal stigma surrounding sexual violence, compounding her internalised shame and fear.

Similarly, Benare faces societal condemnation and judgment in "Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe." Accused of transgressions against societal norms, she confronts a mock trial that exposes the hypocrisy and gender bias prevalent in society. Despite the unjust verdict condemning her child to destruction and herself to ostracization, Benare refuses to relinquish her dignity or abandon her principles.

As both women grapple with their past traumas and societal expectations, they find moments of clarity and resolution. Marikolanthu's acceptance of responsibility in caring for Muthu reflects her journey toward self-discovery. Meanwhile, Benare's unwavering commitment to raising her child despite societal scorn demonstrates her resilience and defiance in the face of adversity.

Through perseverance and introspection, both Marikolanthu and Benare reclaimed their agency over their lives. Marikolanthu seeks retribution for her injustices, whereas Benare asserts her humanity and maternal duty. Their journeys embody the resilience of the human spirit, inspiring audiences to confront societal hypocrisy and embrace personal courage and integrity.

In conclusion, the intertwined stories of Marikolanthu and Benare underscore the transformative power of resilience and redemption. Through their struggles and triumphs, they challenge societal norms and inspire us to confront injustice with courage and integrity.

Works Cited

Nair, Anita. 'Ladies Coupé'. Penguin Books, 2001.

Tendulkar, Vijay. 'Silence! The Court Is In Session'. Oxford University Press, 2016.

The Cyborgs Vs the Humans: A Study of the Vulnerable Bodies in *Harvest* by Manjula Padmanabhan

Jilu Ani John

Despite the progress and tremendous developments ushered in by the legacies of imperial colonialism, Third World countries continue to grapple with basic problems, such as poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. The spread of technology, which is supposedly meant to alleviate poverty, improve health conditions, and standards of living, often brings trouble for developing countries of the Third World, rendering them vulnerable in numerous ways. Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* spots these vulnerabilities as intensely intimate and maiming through a scary drama that hinges around the twin areas of biomedical technology and digital technology that engender new vulnerabilities and accentuate the existing ones. These two trajectories of modern technology seem to have been specifically chosen to expose the corporeal, social, and cognitive vulnerabilities that globalisation imposes on the Third World.

Harvest (1997), written for the first International Onassis Competition and later made into a film called *Deham* in 2001 by Govind Nehlani, is an exploration of the commodification of humans by the biomedical and capitalist discourses, evidenced through illegal organ trade. The play is set against an Indian metropolis, presumably Mumbai, a microcosm that typifies the worst aspects of the Third World context. The characters are grouped into three sociopolitical classes: donors, receivers, and guards and agents. The donors are a family of four Indians who live in the tensed apartment: twenty-year old Om Prakash, who was the only breadwinner in the family and has run out of job for the dearth of computer skills; his stay-at-home wife Jaya, his brother Jeetu who works as a gigolo and Om and Jeetu's mother, Ma. The receivers are the Americans Ginni/Virgil, who are initially presented as two individuals and gradually revealed to be one person with only a virtual presence in the play.

The entire family experiences severe financial constraints as Om loses his clerical job because of his lack of computer skills. Penniless and poverty-stricken, Om decides to donate his organs by contractual promise through an Inter-Planta Corporation to a first-world character, Ginni. Jaya is apprehensive about the deal from the very beginning. Enchanted by the technological and material comforts, the family overlooks the discomforts of social isolation, loss of individual freedom, and submission to the corporation and becomes blissfully oblivious of the fateful harvest day. When the guards come to gather the harvest, they take Jeetu instead

of Om, seemingly by mistake. Jeetu is returned, blind, after the first phase of harvest wearing an optical device through which he sees nothing but the seducing virtual self of Ginni, which enchants him to the extent that he willingly donates the entire body to her. MA, who is addicted to television, is locked inside the video couch, which becomes an electronic coffin for her. Jaya is shocked to realise that Ginni is just a computer-generated image and that the real recipient is the old man, Virgil. Virgil with the new organs craves females and attempts to seduce Jaya, who denounces the idea of conceiving a computer and plays along with this virtual make-believe. She threatens to kill herself if Virgil does not appear in person to impregnate her. The play closes with Jaya, who asserts herself and the corporeality of her being. Classification of vulnerability propounded by Catriona Mackenzie, Wendy Rogers, and Susan Dodds (2014) marks different dimensions in which human lives are rendered vulnerable: inherent vulnerability addresses those vulnerable occurrences "intrinsic to the human condition," namely "our corporeality, our neediness, our dependence on others, and our affective and social natures" (7) first, because of our embodied nature, human beings have bodily needs and are subject to "physical illness, injury, disability, and death and depend on the care of others for extended periods during our lives" (1); second, because of our social and affective dimension, humans are "emotionally and psychologically" exposed to situations of loss, grief, neglect, abuse, rejection, etc.:

> Situational vulnerability pertains to its context-bound manifestations, such as being "caused or exacerbated by the personal, social, political, economic, or environmental situations of individuals or social groups" (7). The sociopolitical associations render humans prone to suffering from instances of persecution, tyranny, exploitation, denial of rights and abuses; Mackenzie, Rogers, and Dodds refer to pathogenic vulnerability i.e. ethically complex forms of situational vulnerability, predominantly those occurring "when a response intended to ameliorate vulnerability has the paradoxical effect of exacerbating existing vulnerabilities or generating new ones"

The present study focuses on the display of both intrinsic and situational vulnerabilities experienced by donor characters, with a particular focus on vulnerable bodies and technology-triggered vulnerabilities. Feminist theorists and Foucault have contributed significantly to scholarship on the bodily vulnerabilities and consequent denial of agency of the subject. Many convergences are visible between feminist representations of the body and related power and Foucault's. Both consider the body as a site of power labelled with various cultural and

historical markings and practices and are often subject to political and economic power. The notion of 'body-people' by Rosemary Radford Ruether indicates the various sets of discursive markings on the female body perpetuated by Western discourses of rationality and animality and consequent upon the denial of agency and the resulting devaluing of these bodies (79). Susan Bordo remarks: "The human body is itself a politically inscribed entity, its physiology and morphology shaped by histories and practices of containment and control" (21).

Michael Foucault considers the body as a site of power labelled with various cultural and historical markings and practices and often subject to political and economic power. Power, according to Foucault, produces and normalises bodies to serve prevailing relations of dominance and subordination. In "Discipline and Punish," he remarks that systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain "political economy" of the body. "Power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (25). He describes docile bodies and their vulnerability to coercion. The bodies are compelled to comply with the demands enforced upon them. Foucault also remarks that »The body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body."

Harvest engages with the established facts concerning contemporary organ trade along with the myths that surround that. The very title is suggestive of the violence inflicted on third-world human bodies and the literal harvesting they are subjected to. The iniquitous commoditisation of healthy third-world bodies is bolstered by alarming advances in transplant medicine and digital technology. The deprived financial condition renders the poor in the third world so vulnerable that they are easily carried away by alluring offers from the west. The Om household is cajoled into horrible trade, oppressed by joblessness and abject poverty. However, vexed Om cannot contain his happiness in the prospect of an affluent life. "Om: We'll have more money than you and I have names for!' He proudly says to Ma. 'Who'd believe there's so much money in the world?" (21).

The vulnerable third world is thus turned into a repository of healthy human bodies, functioning as spare parts for the ailing bodies in the first world. These third-world bodies are viable products that can be traded easily. Jaya's initial response to the news of Om's newly found job underscores the crisis and conflict that will mark their lives as they wait for the fateful doomsday of dismemberment:

He has sold the rights to his organs! His skin. His eyes. His arse. . . (To OM) How can I hold your hand, touch your face, knowing that at any moment it might be snatched away from me and you across the globe! If you were dead, I could shave my head and break my bangles – but this? To mourn you piece by piece? Should I shave half my head? Break my bangles one at a time. Break my bangles one at a time. (14)

In the play, a virtual first-world body controls and conditions third-world bodies, which are willingly exploited. Ginny presides over the world of donors. Establishing a permanent module of surveillance at the donor's place, Ginny tracks the movements of each resident. Only Jaya senses the danger of monitoring, and we find an infuriated Jaya in the scene when the guards come to their apartment to fix the contact module and asks them not to change the order of her house. "Don't you understand what I am saying? Are you a machine? Answer me" (14-15). While both Om and Jeetu are seduced by Ginni's sensuous image, the MA remarks that she cannot fathom how the human body can emerge from a small box. "I can't understand a word of what that thing is saying' Is it a man or a woman?" (27).

Gradually, the donor bodies are forced to embrace a machine-like existence. Ginni's control over family members forces Ann and Life to exist. Jaya says "It's not really a life anymore. We are just spare parts in someone else's garage" (34). The constantly monitored new life turns Om and MA into insensitive and mechanical beings, and their obedience to Ginni is blind and complete. Om remarked, "Ginni says–the curse of the donor world is sentimentality" (49). Even the body, whose organs will be given one by one or all at once whenever the need arises, at the whim of the receiver, is reduced to a set of parts. The sum total of man is now the parts that he gives up to let another live in/through his body.

The agents of the corporation deal with donors as lifeless machines. Guards refer to the pellet-like food provided to donors and their families as "fuel" for the "maintenance of … personal resources" (196). "GUARD: (nods and ticks) Right. All implementation of personal fuel preparation will be supplied exclusively by Inter-Planta services. Hence forward you and your domestic unit will consume only those fuels which will be made available to you by Inter Planta."

Susan Bordo remarks that digital modification means that we are conditioned to shift our perception of what a normal woman's body look like, so that we see our bodies as insufficient as we do not match the polished, slimmed ideal, like the blemishless image of Ginni

created by Virgil. Ironically, the flawless body of the enchantress turns out to be a computer-generated image forged for seductive purposes. The demands of the job make Om hide his marital status, which is consequent upon the complete rupturing of the relationship between Om and Jaya. Jeetu is disgusted with their changed home and calls it a "fancy prison" (59). His loss of eyesight is suggestive of a totally vulnerable Jeetu who has lost personal perceptions and can only see the images projected into his eyes by Ginni, thus preparing the grounds for the blind submission of the once defiant, independent Jeetu. Sujata Moni opines that the plucking of Jeetu's eyes stands for the removal of indigenous gaze, substituting it with the unfamiliar images of Virgil. The two male donors are presented as either vulnerable or easily made vulnerable by the author. However, Jaya refuses to be cast as a body in parts, a cyborg, an artiûcially inseminated baby machine, or a willing partner in virtual-reality simulated sex, and threatens to challenge the virtual world through real death if not real life.

Despite the loss of freedom and constant surveillance, the Om household relishes the fruits of the deal. The body trade enables the Prakash family to experience the opulence and luxury they had never dreamed of. Their single-room apartment undergoes astonishing and admirable changes. From a barely furnished room, it becomes filled with furniture and gadgets, objects of comfort, entertainment, and health. Ginni, who is shocked to learn that the family shares the toilet with forty other people, insists on a bathroom being installed in their apartment, something that should be a basic amenity but is a luxury given the family's circumstances. The fear of losing organs and of death is often overshadowed by the fear of losing this material comfort.

Harvest presents a frightening vision of a futuristic world controlled and contrived by advanced technologies, especially biomedical and digital technologies. Arjun Appadurai's concept of the technoscape connects well with the world of technology in *Harvest*. He uses the term to describe global configurations that involve the high-speed movement of technology, 'both mechanical and informational', across 'previously impervious boundaries' (34). These technoscapes vary according to the situations and perspectives of those involved in or affected by technology flows, such as nation-states, multinational corporations, sub-national groupings, and local communities.

The description of the selection procedure for Om's new job bears witness to how technology has been used to deceive poor people by multinational organ buyers. "Om**:** I

don't know for how long we moved. Then there was a door. Inside it was dark like being in heaven! So cool so fresh! I too fainted then with pleasure, I don't know" (21).

Once Om enters into the deal, the apartment is transformed beyond recognition, and is decked with all sorts of electronic gadgets. The whole family, especially Om and Ma, are now so accustomed to the life of material comforts that they overlook the apprehensions of the fatal harvest day. Ginni enters into their home without entering into the geographical and physical spaces of the third world. Through the 'white faceted globe', the contact module, Ginni monitors their routine activity to ensure that the organs remain in good condition for the harvest.

Despite his not-so-decent job, Jeetu has always been aware of the autonomy of the body until the first level of harvest, after which he turns out to be a cyborg entity with no vision of his own. Ma is seduced to the extent of total subjugation by the technology, and she eagerly embraces it. As she is literally buried into her Super Deluxe Video Couch fitted with full body-processing functions, she enters into the electronic coffin and becomes a vulnerable cyborg figure with none of the potentialities fictionally attributed to such figures. Just like her sons, she too plunges, though unwittingly, into the dark webs of organ trade.

Virgil informs Jaya that Ginni is not real only after successfully completing the body transplant. Virgil chooses to become Ginni for Om and Jeetu and changes into Jeetu's body and enters his skin through the Contact Module to persuade Jaya, although he fails in Jaya's case. Ginni/Virgil is a virtual figure in the subject position, a gendered figure that assumes context-bound gender identities. In contrast with the potentially liberational cyborg figures suggested by theorists such as Donna Haraway, the cyborg figure in the person of Ginni/Virgil/Jeetu portends the extreme horrors of dehumanisation, a reminder of the price to be paid for embracing technology without the power to control it.

Among the host of vulnerable third-world individuals, Jaya emerges as a metaphor for resistance and hope. She endeavours to resist all forms of exploitation that target the healthy young bodies of the underprivileged and dares to assert her corporeality against the inhuman virtual world. Although the play leaves a few questions regarding her fate, Jaya emerges as the central character committed to resisting the advent of neo-colonial border crossings.

Works Cited

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. University of California Press, 1993.

Mackenzie, Catriona, Wendy Rogers, and Susan Dodds, editors. *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed., Vintage, 1995.

Padmanabhan, Manjula. *Harvest*. Kali for Women, 1997.

Reuther, Rosemary Radford. *New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*. Beacon Press, 1975.

Pulling through the Tiring Patriarchy: A Comparative Reading of Kamala Das' "*Ghanashyam" and Adrienne Rich's "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers"*

Ramesh K.G.

In patriarchal societies, gender relations are often stained and strained by the oppressive power of male domination. In such societies, men and their interests occupy the centre, and women are ignored, repressed, and marginalised. Women writers have always tried to articulate the silent sufferings and discontentment of women in male-dominated societies. Indian writer Kamala Das and American writer Adrienne Rich are well known for their poems that counter patriarchal ideologies. In Kamala Das's "Ghanashyam," the speaker is a frustrated wife who is unhappy with her marital relationship. Her selfish husband constantly fails to establish a rapport with her soul. To survive, she dreams of and prepares herself for her ideal lover, Ghanashyam/Lord Krishna. The central figure of Adrienne Rich's poem, Aunt Jennifer, is also a disappointed wife. A tiring wedding weighed her down. To escape from her unhappy and submissive state, Aunt Jennifer resorts to needlework. Sewing becomes a means of self-expression for her. This study compares these two poems, which portray the plight of women in male-dominated cultures and their desperate attempts to survive.

In her epoch-making essay "The Laugh of the Medusa", Hélène Cixous says to women', Write yourself. Your body must be heard' (338). In patriarchal societies, women have minimal freedom of expression. Most women living in such societies have always kept their feminine sensibilities hidden. Cixous wants this situation to change. She says: To write. An act that will not only "realise" the decensored relation of women to their sexuality, to their womanly being, giving them access to their native strength; it will give them back their goods, their pleasures, their organs, their immense bodily territories that have been kept under seal; it will tear them away from the super egoized structure in which they have always occupied the place reserved for the guilty (guilty of everything, guilty at every turn: for having desires, for not having any; for being frigid, for being "too hot"; for not being both at once; for being too motherly and not enough; for having children and for not having any; for nursing and for not nursing . . .)—tear them away by means of this research, this job of analysis and illumination, this emancipation of the marvellous text of their self that they must urgently learn to speak. (338) Indian writer Kamala Das has always shown enough courage to articulate her body and desires through her writings. Subverting conventional patriarchal norms, she expresses her feminine sensibilities in

her poems. Her well-known poem "Ghanashyam" is not an exception. The poem delineates the quest of a frustrated married Indian woman for an ideal lover.

With astounding frankness, the protagonist of the poem speaks of her sexual frustration. Her aged, self-seeking husband never fulfils her physical and metaphysical needs. He fails to attain the stature of the ideal lover in her dreams. She says:

We played once a husk-game, my love and I

His body needing mine,

His ageing body in its pride needing the need for mine

And each time his lust was quietened

And he turned his back on me

In panic I asked Dont you want me any longer dont you want me

Dont you dont you (20-26)

These lines are explicitly autobiographical and confessional. Kamala Das' husband Madhav Das was much older than her. However, the question of the protagonist is not aimed at a single man. The question is directed to the male-dominated Indian social system that neglects the feelings and desires of women. Diana Gittins says: "It is in sexual relation that the essence of patriarchy . . . becomes manifest" (52). The husband of the speaker seeks only his gratification. The frigidity in their marital relations drives the protagonist to seek contentment in extramarital relations. She states, "In love when the snow slowly began to fall/Like a bird I migrated to warmer climes/That was my only method of survival" (27–29). But she finds it too hard to find out her ideal lover. Her ideal lover should be capable of being one with her. Her concept of the ideal lover is both physical and metaphysical, both profane and divine, both sensual and spiritual. Holy men in saffron robes tell her about such a lover, and that lover is Ghanashyam or Lord Krishna. The patriarchal myth of Lord Krishna becomes a consolation and a means of survival for the protagonist.

Her hopeless life with her husband has turned her into a "sleeping jungle" (3); however, Ghanashyam's flute brings back the music of love and optimism into her life. Her mythical lover offers the hope of all the pleasures that she has always wished for. He thrills and excites her. However, whenever she tries to become one with him, he vanishes abruptly. Addressing

Ghanashyam, she says, "But at each turn when I near you/Like a spectral flame you vanish" (5-6). She then realises that death is the only means of escaping from the ignominies of living in a male-dominated world. She says, "Death is the hot sauna leading to cool rest-rooms" (13). Ghanashyam also demands from her total surrender, and finally, she yields herself to him. She says: "Shyam O Ghanashyam/You have like a fisherman cast your net in the narrows/ Of my mind/And towards you my thought today/Must race like enchanted fish." (67-71). Thus, at the end of the poem, Ghanashyam falls from the exalted state of the ideal lover to the devious level of a tempting trap. The protagonist realises that the mythical Ghanashyam is an unattainable mirage, but succumbs to its spell to survive.

The protagonist of Adrienne Rich's "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" is a victim of the patriarchal institution called marriage. The oppression that she suffers is more severe than that of the protagonist of "Ghanashyam." She is silenced by the system and therefore has no voice to recount her sufferings and discontentment. Thus, the poem is a third-person narrative. The speaker, in just three stanzas, explains Aunt Jennifer's muted status as a desperate member of the "second sex." Even though Aunt Jennifer is deprived of a voice, she articulates her dissatisfaction and resentment through art. In patriarchal societies, stitching is a gender role usually assigned to women. In the poem, Jennifer's skill in needlework becomes a means of countering and surviving patriarchy. The images that she sews into the panel are those of proud and unafraid tigers. They have been stitched as if they are in motion and are well aware of their power. The tigers prancing through her stitching panel are least bothered about the men beneath the tree. The "art" that patriarchy offers her becomes her language. Needlework is a powerful metaphor in the poem and can stand for any creative work, including writing.

In male-dominated societies, it is often difficult for women to find enough space and time to nourish their artistic skills. Accomplishing creative endeavours is a daring task for Aunt Jennifer. Her "inferior" stature and enervating gender roles steal her energy and time. In the second stanza, the speaker contrasts the freedom and self-esteem enjoyed by the tigers with the restrictions and humiliations that Aunt Jennifer faces in her married life. "Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool/Find even the ivory needle hard to pull. The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band/Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand" (Rich 5-8). These lines vividly depict Aunt Jennifer as a frustrated wife. The massive wedding band is a powerful metonymy for oppressive weddings. However, Jennifer pulls through the hardships of her oppressive married life to express herself through her needlework. The stitching panel becomes

a mirror that reflects her suppressed anger. Oppression versus self-expression is a major theme of the poem. The words *ivory* and *pull* in the second line of the second stanza can generate a vivid image—an elephant pulling timber—that could illustrate the magnitude of difficulty faced by female artists to accomplish their creative pursuits in a male-dominated world. The ivory needle is a vivacious image that adds multiple dimensions of meaning to the subservient and uneasy existence of Aunt Jennifer. She is affluent enough to have an ivory needle. This means her misery is not born out of destitution or financial instability. Moreover, the image reminds readers of both colonialism and hunting. Thus, the ivory needle in Jennifer's shivering hand is powerful enough to depict her as a victim by pointing to the image of the man as hunter. The wedding band does not belong to Aunt Jennifer. It is "Uncle's wedding band." Uncle is the owner of everything. He possesses both the wedding band and Jennifer. The massive wedding band suggests Uncle's domination in the relationship and Aunt's emotional detachment.

In the poem, the situation and character of Aunt Jennifer contrast finely with that of her imaginatively and aesthetically constructed tigers. Jennifer's life is at a standstill, whereas her bright topazine tigers are prancing through a colourful world. Her vibrant and powerful tigers do not fear men, but the passive and submissive Jennifer is afraid of her husband. While her tigers enjoy boundless freedom, Jennifer is trapped and constrained by a conventional marriage. This sharp contrast clearly conveys the disparity between Jennifer's aspirations and her real situation.

For the protagonist of "Ghanashyam," death offers some hope because, for her, death is an escape from the burning humiliations of male domination to the cool rest rooms of liberation. However, even death will not free poor Jennifer from the tiresome ordeals of her marriage. The narrator says, "When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie/Still ringed with the ordeals she was mastered by" (9-10). The words *ringed* and *mastered* bring to mind images of a circus and slavery to indicate the subhuman status given to Aunt Jennifer by her husband. She is devoid of freedom and power. The words also echo Simone de Beauvoir's well-known observation in *The Second Sex*: "One is not born a woman, but, rather becomes one" (301). Jennifer has undergone training similar to that of circus animals to adapt to patriarchy. Her debilitating gender roles and crippling conditioning have silenced her, but she conveys her anger metaphorically through needlework. Through her art, she attains immortality. Her proud and unafraid tigers will continue to move elegantly through the panel, articulating the resentment

of Aunt Jennifer. Moreover, the undaunted tigers can also attain symbolic significance. They can symbolise the innate creative power of women.

Adrienne Rich's "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" was published in 1951 in her very first collection of poems *A Change of World*. The poem was published before the women's movements and consciousness-raising campaigns of the 1960s and, of course, before the poet's difficult marriage. Thus, the condition of women in America was worse, and Rich shares her concern through this poem. Adrienne Rich portrays a disempowered and muted woman who bears the burdens of marriage and debilitating conventional gender roles. Aunt Jennifer in the poem is not a single woman, but a representative of all the suppressed women of the period. Kamala Das' "Ghanashyam" was first published in 1979 in the collection *Tonight This Savage Rite*. Although the protagonist of the poem is a victim of patriarchal social order, she is much more liberated than Aunt Jennifer. The second wave of feminism has exerted an influence upon her, and she is courageous enough to explicitly narrate her body and desires. She even attempts to find consolation in extra-marital affairs. She speaks out the silent sufferings of women and thereby becomes a mouthpiece for them.

In his Nobel lecture, "My Father's Suitcase," Orhan Pamuk states:

When a writer shuts himself up in a room for years on end to hone his craft–to create a world–if he uses his secret wounds as his starting point, he is, whether he knows it or not, placing great faith in humanity. My confidence comes from the belief that all human beings resemble one another, that others carry wounds like mine–that they will therefore understand. All true literature rises from this childish, hopeful certainty that all people resemble one another. (11)

Most of the literary works of women writers, especially those with feminist undercurrents, spring from some secret wounds that women share across cultures and time, justifying such works' universal appeal. The protagonists of "Ghanashyam" and "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" seem different, but they share common wounds that constantly torment them. Both of them lack love in their marital relation. Their husbands are indifferent to their feelings and desires. The patriarchal system stifles them, and they are quite discontent. To survive, one holds fast to the patriarchal myth of Lord Krishna, while the other adopts a conventional gender role—needlework—and vents her pent-up anger into the stitching panel. They have access only to

the limited resources that patriarchy offers them and use the resources both to survive and to protest.

Works Cited

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Translated by E. M. Parshley, Vintage, 1973.

Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, Rutgers UP, 1991, pp. 334–349.

Das, Kamala. "Ghanashyam." *Literature and Contemporary Issues*, edited by T. Y. Aravindakshan and C. R. Murukan Babu, Orient Blackswan, 2013, pp. 74–81.

Gittins, Diana. *Family in Question: Changing Households and Familiar Ideologies*. Macmillan, 1985.

Pamuk, Orhan. "My Father's Suitcase: Excerpts from the 2006 Nobel Prize Lecture." *World Literature Today*, May–June 2007, pp. 10–11.

Rich, Adrienne. "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers." *Gender in Blossom*, edited by Anila Joseph, Ane Books, 2013, pp. 59–61.

Jokha Alharthi's Celestial Bodies: *The World of Myths and Legends of Marriage and Miseries in Changing Oman*

Merine John

Jokha Alharthi's *Celestial Bodies*, a novel that broke ground as the first Omani novel translated into English by Marilyn Booth and the first Arabic translation to win the International Booker Prize. Alharthi explores the weight of tradition, the constraints of marriage, and the yearning for personal fulfilment against the backdrop of a rapidly modernising Oman through the interwoven narratives of three sisters - Mayya, Asma, and Khawla–the daughters of Salima and Azzan. This paper delves into the world of myths and legends that colour characters' experiences, highlighting how these fantastical elements illuminate the realities of marriage and societal miseries.

Mayya is married to Abdallah, whose grandfather is Merchant Hilal, who became affluent by selling weapons. His father, the eldest son of Hilal, is Merchant Sulayman, who made immense profits through the illegal slave trade. His father's only sister was married twice to different cousins; however, both marriages ended in divorce. Abdallah's life is overshadowed by the mysterious death of his mother. His daughter, London, became suspicious of the death due to poisoning after she became a doctor. So, he is raised by his father's sex slave Zarifa. She is the only maternal figure in his life. He remembers that she used to taste his food before it was fed to him during his childhood. Whenever his mother's death is mentioned, Zarifa remains quiet. Abdallah had a very sad and sorrowful childhood. However, he remembers the story told by Zarifa about the Mamma goat rescuing her lambs, Zayd and Rabat, who were eaten by a wolf. This story is the only good thing that he remembers of his childhood.

Abdallah's father was very strict and has never shown love and concern towards him. He was patriarchal who leashed terror. On many occasions, Abdallah was mistreated and forced to have sex with the daughters of slave families. Even Zarifa's daughter –in –law tried her luck on him. But these incidents wounded his young adolescence. Habib, Zarifa's husband, whenever he sees Abdallah with Zarifa used to torture him and she never defended him and the boy wouldn't complain to his father, it ended only after Habib's disappearance. He disappeared when his son Sanjar was only six. Sanjar was sent to school by Merchant Sulayman. He also found a wife for him, Masoud's daughter, another of his slaves, Shanna. Sanjar always wanted to migrate from Oman. Once he grew up, he migrated to Kuwait with

his family. Zarifa was unhappy with her daughter-in-law. She waited for eight years and, after Sulayman the merchant died, she joined her son and died there.

Zarifa considers Merchant Sulayman to be her saviour and protector. He has given her freedom and protection from her former slave owner's sons. He kept her very close to him. Unlike her mother Ankabuta, who was punished by her owner for her reluctance to sleep with her chosen husband Nasib by imprisoning her for months and feeding only once, then at night her husband arrived to get his husbandly rights. She was released only after she became pregnant. She was left alone during her pregnancy, which provoked her to become a midwife.

Myths begin as tales told around the fire by successive generations orally. Myths reinforce the cultural identity of the people who tell them. They arise from an intimate relationship between people and their natural and spiritual worlds. They operate on the borders between reality and fantasy, celebrate oddity and uncertainty, and describe terrifying cosmic forces. They ignite great excitement and inspiration. Myths explore love and jealousy, war and peace, good and evil with intriguing plots, vivid characters, memorable scenes, and concepts that touch our deepest emotions to create an eternally fascinating realm.

Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism* proposes a "self – contained literary universe" which has been created over the ages by human imagination so as to incorporate the alien and indifferent world of nature into persisting archetypal forms that serve to satisfy enduring human desires and needs. Myths are narratives about supernatural beings that express the beliefs of a particular cultural group. However, in psychoanalysis, myths are treated as expressions of universal psychic conflicts, such as the Oedipus complex. In cultural anthropology, myths are explained in terms of the needs they fulfil in the reproduction and stabilisation of society.

Levi-Strauss stressed that myths have no authors. A myth is a traditional anonymous story, both religious and supernatural in nature, whereas legends are details of the adventures of a human cultural hero and tend to be less supernatural. Myths are embedded in culture and are interpreted in their relations to the social structure of a specific period; they also undergo transformation. Claude Levi- Strauss insists that Myth is language, because myth has to be told in order to exist. He introduced "mythemes"–a set of relations; a bundle of relations. Each mytheme is usually one event or position in the story or narrative of the myth. They can

be read both diachronically and synchronically i.e., the story or the narrative of the myth can be read from beginning to the end or it can be read chapter wise.

Alharthi establishes a deep connection to Oman's past through references to myths and legends surrounding marriage, in a systematic pattern and structure. Her novel can be read as a whole or as individual chapters. These tales, passed down through generations, dictate societal expectations and limitations. We see this in the character of Mayya, pressured into an arranged marriage despite her yearning for education. This reflects the historical influence of patriarchal structures, in which women's desires were often secondary to family honour and preordained unions.

Abdallah tries to seek emotional contentment with Mayya, but his love for her is never reciprocated. He feels that his wife loves her sewing machine more and always hides it from him. After his son, Muhammed, was born, there was no intimacy between them. He is a selfless lover. …Then how could it be, Maya that your eyes, fixed on your sewing machine, never could see the vast and tortuous expanse of my love, and my imprisoned self? (p 154)

The importance of learning English to improve business and advertisements is all about money and it is a new means of commerce. Abdallah finds the things taught by his father no longer exist. His daughter, who is a doctor, wants a BMW, and his son Salim wants a new PlayStation. When he was a child, he had to beg his father for one riyal. His father had the habit of giving half the amount he asked. Abdallah's wife Mayya dreams of making her daughter London learn English. She also wanted Muhammad to do so. However, the doctor told her that he had autism. This was not an inherited condition, but Mayya stopped conceiving. She felt her father's lover, Qamar, had vanished. Mayya felt her mother had a role in it.

Qamar, the moon is the name given to Najiya the concubine kept by Mayya's father Azzan. Her beauty and pearly white teeth attracted her lover in the desert beneath a full moon. She was a self-made woman who took care of her sick father and brother. His polio was cured by her care. She represents the allure of modern freedom, but it is dangerous in the context of a traditional society. Salima was doubtful when her husband brought her a gold ring. She remembers the silver earring her mother had given her, and wearing it has caused an aversion toward ornaments.

Azzan's marital bliss was lost once he started a relationship with Najiya. Azzan's relationship with Najiya was like a Sufi way of spiritual passion. They would recite poetic

verses and think of themselves as Layla and al-Majnun. He shared all his sorrows and miseries with her. Salima, his wife, is called the bride of the Falaj because of the way her marriage was conducted by her father's brother. Salima's life after her father's death in her paternal uncle's Shaykh Said's house was terrible. Her aunt used to monitor what she was eating; therefore, she was constantly hungry.

When Salima was thirteen years old, she was allowed to go with her mother, after much pleading by her mother, on the condition that her brother, Muaadh, had to stay with his uncle. The time she spent in her maternal house with her maternal uncle and mother was the most joyful time in her life. Her maternal family was not interested in marrying her off soon. However, her uncle sent the marriage procession with her groom to her maternal home on the fixed day and married her off. She had lost her two sons; the eldest had died as an infant, and the second son died due to negligence from her paternal uncle, who did not lend his green Range Rover to take the child to the hospital. Her three daughters were born later.

Salima's second daughter, Asma, was a voracious reader. She and her father shared a special bond and used to recite poems from their hearts. Azzan had married his eldest daughter to Abdallah without her consent. Mayya had stopped talking with him from then, so he asked the consent of his second and third daughter. Asma's collection of books contained *Fruit for the Wayfarer* written by Mustatraf and printed in Egypt, the poetry collection of Arab poet Antara, The S*tories of the Prophets* printed in Calcutta, and *The Unique Necklace* by Imam Shihab. Every time she left the bookshelf, she took the anonymous book and recited the lines from memory:

> "Some of those who fancy themselves philosophers claim that God, the mighty, created every soul in the shape of a ball. And then He split every one of these spheres into two… It is decreed that each body will meet the body that holds the other half of that rent soul." (p 38)

Asma married Khalid, a relative and son of Emigrant Issa. For Asm, marriage was an identity document, "her passport to a world wider than home." When Asma recited the words, she had memorised from an anonymous book after her marriage. Khalid remarked that the book is *The Dove's Necklace*, written by Ibn Hazm. The ancient legend proclaimed that people were all the same, all one sex, male and female both, and all children of the moon. They are like androgynous figures in Greek mythology. Every being had four hands, four feet,

and two heads. The gods were afraid that creatures like this would be very strong, so they split them in two. Only the belly button remained as a reminder of the original wholeness. People became either male or female. Each half had to search for its other half. Asma and Khalid decided that they were identical halves of a perfectly round sphere. Thus, they proved the myth of soul mates.

Khalid encouraged Asma to continue her education, although at night school because the law now prohibited married women from attending regular government day schools. He urged her to develop a sincere love of reading. When she achieved distinction in her teaching course, he encouraged her to get a job. Their union was perfect and special. She became a mother 14 times by the age of 45. During childcare, she persuaded her artist husband, and now her priority is feeding the baby, providing protection, and ensuring the child's security.

Political turmoil was significant in Asma's husband's family. Khalid's father, Issa, was known as "Emigrant" for leaving Oman for Egypt, fearing an English attack after the defeat of Iam Ghalib al Hina in the war of the Jabal al Akhdar. When Oman's new government, the Sultanate of Oman, offered amnesty in the 1970s, asking the fugitives to return and share in constructing a new awakening for a united Oman, Issa refused to come and returned only to bury his daughter Ghaliya, who was born in Egypt, when his wife insisted.

In the 1940s, the rulers were terrified to educate the Omanis: "are you going to educate Omanis like you educated the Indians and so they revolted against you." (p. 161) In 1955, Imam Ghalib al Hina and his warriors were drawn from allied tribes and took refuge in the Green Mountain. Salima's brother, Muaadh, joined the fighters in Jabal. He stayed and fought the British through guerilla warfare until 1959. He died as a martyr accidentally stepping on a mine. His mother died bearing the burden for 10 years. His paternal uncle, Shaykh, said that he washed his hand over his brother's son, Muaadh, the boy had fled his uncle's home before he reached 16 years of age.

The third daughter, Khawla, also received a proposal from Khalid's brother, but she cried and insisted that she wanted to marry Nasir. Her father, Azzan, agreed, and they waited for him. Khwala felt she was Virginie in the tale of Paul and Virginie and Layla as in the legend of her poet-lover's devotion, so obsessive he was nicknamed as Majnun, the mad one, she was the tragic Juliet.

Nasir came to marry Khawla after his mother's death when he was completely out of money, which his mother used to send to Canada. She had entailed a will, so he had to marry Khawla to get his inheritance. He had a girlfriend and was staying at her home in Montreal. Therefore, for the first ten years, he visited Khwala every two years to see his new child in his house and leave Khawala pregnant again. She had a painful and lonely life. Nazir hung a photo of his Canadian girlfriend in his car key. He used to bring fancy clothes from Canada for his children, but they were never the right size as he did not know their age.

Khawla's dream came true when the Canadian girlfriend left Nasir. He returned to Oman and found a good job in a company and began to understand his wife and children. Nasir had settled in Oman after his Canadian girlfriend threw him out of her house. Now, he rarely leaves his house, except to go to work. Their last two children also arrived. Everything in their life is going well; however, the portrait of the Canadian girl grew larger in Khawla's mind day by day on her pillow. She began to remember all the hours she had spent alone in the maternity ward. The clothes her children could never wear. The night was spent on a cold bed and neighbours taking her sick children to the hospital. The money borrowed from her sisters. Her mother's scolding and her neighbour's pity came to her back every day. It was like a wildfire.

Khawla found that Nasir had not done even a simple deed to grow saplings in her fresh mind, which she had kept for him alone. A single letter, a single word, a call, a slow turn of the face, an angry scolding, a sigh of exasperation, or a cheap gift would have been better than the blade he used to plunge into her mind. Thus, she decided to end her marriage with him.

Masouda, a slave in the family of Abdallah, used to talk about her mother's death, relating it to a jinni myth. Abdallah's mother was walking out at night. She flung a pebble that got into her sandal. However, it hit the jinni woman's son in the head. Jinni-Woman was a servant of the Shaykh's of the jinn. She came to Abdallah's mother and asked her to pull up the basil bush, which angered the Shaykh of the Jinn who lived beneath it. He made the poor woman ill, and she died. When Masouda's daughter Shanna tried to tempt Abdallah and when he refused, she told him his mother turned into a ghost and her father had seen her.

The mystery surrounding Abdallah's mother's death remains. Zarifa, his father's slave and concubine, always remained quiet. The Jinn's story remains prominent. Later in the novel, we see Masouda hearing rustling from merchant Sulayman's room. She peered through the

back window and heard the chatter between Sulayman and his sister. His sister accused Abdallah's mother and Saleem, the Shaykh's slave, were seen at the basil bush. His sister told him she will take care and Sulayman went to travel. Once he returned after three months, his wife was dead and Saleem had vanished, and the baby Abdallah was in his paternal aunt's care. It was for his sister that Sulayman married and had the child. He was only interested in the slave woman, Zarifa.

Khalid used to talk about the spirits of his forefathers to Asma. Issa, his father, the emigrant, fought at Jabal al-Akhdar at the side of Iman Ghalib al-Hina. He buried their martyrs with his own hands and carried out secret missions under the cover of darkness. The legend of the mythical warrior Shaykh Mansur bin Nasir, the grandfather of Issa, who fought against the English, is mentioned in the book. In the songs, the women recount how they soaked the fighter's hands in water until they became soft enough for the swords to drop.

Khalid's father used to say that communism was not good for Oman. Every evening, he made Khalid read the passages in the book The Gem of Notable People in the History of the Folk of Oman by Shaykh al-Salmi until he had memorised the text. His father used to collect the works of Abhu Muslim and kept them in his shop. Khalid was enrolled in an engineering college because his father believed that the future of Oman lay in the hands of engineers and lawyers. Khalid would not even glance at an Egyptian girl while he was in Egypt. We may live here but we are not from here. We will not leave any part of ourselves here. When we die, our coffins will be carried to Oman, where we will be buried. (p. 213)

This notion of coffins being laid down brought nightmares for Nazir. When his sister Ghaliya died, they brought her to be buried in Oman. The trip was unacceptable but it bonded them in a profound way. A strong rope was tied, like a dream and a nightmare. It freed them from the idea that returning home was impossible. They thought that they would go back to Egypt, but they did not. Their sister's coffin became the bridge to their new life. *Celestial Bodies*, the title, is evocative; it can be interpreted literally, referencing the changing face of Oman with its modernisation projects. However, it can also symbolise the traditional belief systems and social structures that governed people's lives, akin to constellations dictating one's path. The characters, much like celestial bodies, grapple with the gravitational pull of these traditions, even as the constellations themselves appear to be shifting.

The myth of stars emptying their gems into the water is mentioned in the book. The force of the water splits them into all the gems that exist in creation. The moon is a treasure house. It moves between high and low, between sublime and filthy creations. The moon is closest to the matter of the lower world among the celestial bodies. It is a guide to all things. When the moon moves closer to another celestial body, it exerts greater force. When the moon moves away from another body, its power weakens. When the moon's light intensifies its approach to Mercury, it is the best state of all. However, if it is weak and is closer to Saturn, it is the worst of all worlds. The novel explores the "miseries" that accompany this societal shift. Characters such as Salim and Khoula, who defy tradition and pursue love marriages, face social ostracization and emotional turmoil. Their stories highlight the challenges of forging new paths in a society where love itself has been a concept heavily influenced by myths and legends.

Ahmad, the artist of low birth, put a lot of effort to win London's love, the daughter of Abdallah and Maya. "He told me that our marriage is a victory over the disgusting hidebound class structure of society and a crowning of true love." (p232). London fought her mother's punishments and her grandmother's threat to marry Ahmad. He told her he loved London because it was difficult to win. Once he won, he was sure that she would love him sincerely and defend his love in the face of all that backwardness and ugliness that surrounds the society. Backwardness, ugliness, and abhorrent classism were the words he repeated to London. Once they were engaged, he told her that selfishness was ugly, jealousy was backward, and possessiveness was one of the primitive practices from ancient times of hateful classism. He told her that as a poet, his shoulder was free and it flew. He wanted a woman who understood him. "A woman who knows perfectly well that I am the wind and she is the tree. She sends her roots into the ground; I circle overhead in the sky." (p233). His over possessiveness, insults, and ill-treatment became too much for London, who demanded an annulment and refused to see him.

Abdallah is having an illusion that his sick and unmarried son Mohammed is saying his wife is spying on him. He is remembering his loveless marriage with Maya. Abdallah's life is tortured by his dead father and his wife with a loveless marriage. By portraying Abdallah, the author is showing men too suffer as well. Not least from the absence of affection or approval from stern father figures, but also from their own marriages. Having been bestowed with the

power of choosing their dream wife, they are quickly disillusioned when they realise that they are locked into a loveless marriage.

Alharthi presents a nuanced exploration of marriage and its evolving role in changing Oman by interweaving myths and legends with the experiences of her characters. The weight of tradition creates anxieties and "miseries" for those caught between the past and the present. *Celestial Bodies* serves as a testament to the enduring human desire for love and fulfilment, even in the face of societal pressures and the uncertainties of a transforming social landscape.

Works Cited

Alharathi, Jokha. *Celestial Bodies*. Simon & Schuster, 2019.

Das, Bijay Kumar. *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*. Atlantic Publishers, 2005.

Elligold Series. "The Myth of Soul Mates." *Elligold*, 21 Feb. 2018, elligold.com/the-myth-of-soulmates/. Accessed 15 Jan. 2020.

Wilkinson, Philip. *Myths and Legends*. Dorling Kindersley Ltd., 2019.

Exploring the theme of corruption in Keisham Priyokumar's *The Acacia* and Lamabam Viramani Singh's *Inspection Report*

Donkaolung Malangmei & Elangbam Hemanta Singh

Corruption is one of the most dreadful diseases that society has faced in the modern world. It is universally accepted that corruption prevails in most countries, whether developed or developing. It plagues society in every sphere, including administration, education, and politics. Some use it to advance themselves, while others are hampered and impeded, which causes them to lose faith in the system as it deters them from advancing or progressing in society. It is a major impediment in the process of development in many fields, including education and administration. Corruption charges and allegations have ruined many acclaimed public figures and tarnished the reputation of well-established and respected organisations. Some of the corrupt firms and individuals have been booked according to the laws of the land and have received their fair share of punishment for corruption. However, not all corrupt organisations and individuals are punished; rather, only a few unlucky ones have been caught and have faced the consequences. This study analyzes the theme of corruption in the short stories "The Inspection Report" and "The Acacia." The two short stories are included in the collection of short stories, *The Grasshopper and Other Stories* complies by M Mani Meitei.

Corruption can be defined as the use of a public office for private benefit. Using of public office for their own advantaged, depriving and neglecting their service can be term as corruption. Practices such as bribery, extortion, nepotism, favouritism, fraud, influence peddling, appropriation of public assets and property for private use, and lack of responsibility can be termed as corrupt practices.

Lamabam Viramani Singh the author of the short story, "Inspection Report", begins the story with the lines narrating how the society of Manipur have accepted the unbecoming tradition of tagging a price for the job or promotion as if similar to that of the price of essential commodities. Ojha Tomba, a schoolteacher was very doubtful of his promotion to Assistant Inspector (AI) thought he had seen his name on the promotion order. The reason for doubting was that he had not paid even a single rupee for bribing his promotion. Ojha Tomba had narrowly evaded the bait as a man turn up to ensnared him, "Ojha Tomba, they're going to promote some teachers as assistant inspectors, so why don't Ojha too do the one thing" (238). The man came to Ojha Tomba to extract money as a payment for his promotion.

Tomba did not have the money to do their "done" thing and had not succumbed to the ensnarement. Despite fulfilling the criteria for the promotion, Ojha Tomba had been asked to make some sort of payment. The author gave us the picture of how a well-deserved person was advised to follow the pattern of corruption and pay for his job or promotion. Had Ojha Tomba had the money, he probably would have followed the trend; but luckily, he did not possess the amount needed for the transaction. He is the only person who was not promoted, while "All my friends have forged ahead (238)." The author explored the theme of corruption and showed the reader how an upstanding individual faced trouble and was left behind while all the others advanced themselves. Most of the people followed the system that is practiced in the society and indulged in corruption as everyone wanted to secure a job for a stable life or to forge ahead in one's occupation. Luckily, he had eluded the bait and was promoted to Assistant Inspector (AI). After being promoted, AI Tomba, being a sincere individual who rendered his duty honestly, faced many issues when he took up his new role as an Assistant Inspector. Through his inspection of the Middle District Primary School, AI Tomba witnessed the sorry state of the learning environment in one of the primary schools under his jurisdiction.

I felt like having a look at the class and entered the room. It was a large school with four rooms. However, without proper walls, it looked like one huge room. As we entered, the children immediately stood up. The room soon became filled with dust. There was a litter of paper, pebbles, and pockmarked floors; a stable would be slightly better, I thought (242).

The dilapidated infrastructure of the government school and lack of benches and desks were clear signs of mismanagement in the school. This indicated the lack of care and non-performance of duty by the peon and principal. Instead of upgrading and maintaining the school, the head pundit and other well-to-do families established a private English school and sent their children there. The infrastructure of the Middle District Primary School was not properly maintained. The AI Tomba issued an explanation call for the absentee teacher who had been absent for more than a month. Having a nexus with the local MLA, the absentee teacher threatened the AI Tomba when the latter refused to accept his request. In the words of the absentee teacher, Ojha Jadumani said, "It's no use AI Saheb, better get this matter settled. If we extend it, things will become unpleasant" (246). The corrupt teacher who failed to render his service did not have a single iota to accept his fault and rectify his mistake; instead, he tried to find excuses for his absence and put the blame on others, such as the head pundit. An elderly man came to the house of AI Tomba to solve the issue, requesting him to

cut the matter short without the explanation call letter. From the words of the elderly man, AI can understand some vivid trends of the way of the society:

All very concerned about me, he said, 'AI Saheb, the times are bad. Don't be like them. The times are sick with a disease you and I cannot cure. This society's sick. Keep these two hundred rupees. We cannot change that man. You must have seen the houses that teachers build today and the cars they ride. If we want to live without worries in such difficult times, we have to feign a little blindness, a little deafness. We only have to ensure our salaries' (246).

The words of the elderly man turned out to be true, as AI Tomba could not take action against negligent teacher Ojha Jadumani. The Inspector had previously informed the AI to take up the proper legal action and had intercepted the pay of the absentee teacher; but when payday came, the Inspector requested the AI to join the party being thrown by Ojha Jadumuni: "when the Inspector saw me, he said, 'Please take a seat. Ojha Jadumani says he'll treat us to fruit juice'" (247). Without any trace of hesitation, the Inspector suggested to the AI to pardon Ojha Jadumani. Before the AI Tomba could put up a word, the Inspector continued directing his subordinate officer AI Tomba to file the papers submitted by the Head Pundit, Pradhan, and MLA, which stated that "our" teacher came to school regularly. Perhaps the Inspector might have accepted the bride of two hundred rupees, which was not taken by the AI when it was offered to him. The Inspector recommended filing the latest report and destroying the AI Tomba's inspection report. The change of stance by the Inspector signals to the reader that he is also a part of the corruption process, alienating the only dutiful AI Tomba from their circle. AI Tomba represented the dilemma faced by common people who tried to live truthful lives. It became a Herculean task to rectify the system when corruption prevailed in every system. Assistant Inspector Tomba discovered that his ideal principles were impracticable in the nefarious society. Through the short stories, the author brings home to the reader and society at large the grim picture of the functioning of educational institutions and offices in society.

Keisham Priyokumar's "The Acacia", highlights the frustration of the Sanjenbam Yaima Singh, a superannuated man pursuing his pension file in the Imphal secretariat. The story exposes the deep level of corruption that is practiced in the office. Yaima has been processing his pension file, and it has taken six months for his file to reach from the section to the secretary and is yet to be released. His only companion in the process is the acacia tree on the roadside near the secretariat building. The acacia tree is the only companion for Yaima, who seems to understand the trouble faced by him. The acacia has provided shade for Yaima, and he has

enjoyed the shade during the summer season; however, winter has now arrived, and Yaima seeks to bask in the sunlight a little distance away from the acacia tree. Yaima's appearance shows a clear picture of poverty, as he has not received any pension. The following description by the author highlights the hardships he endured:

Both sides of his worn-out coat were ash grey, the collar and cuffs torn, and the seams almost bursting. The coat was short and too tight to be buttoned up. His pair of trousers were equally tight, faded, and showed signs of shrinkage from frequent washing. His leather sandal was full of sewn patches and hardly polished (230).

After much persuasion, Yaima was able to enter the secretariat, and when he enquired about his pension file, the clerk was rude and scolded Yaima not for remembering his file number, and he was sent around from one desk to another, from the desk of the receipt clerk to that of the dealing clerk. The only hope for Yaima to trace his pension file was when the peon approached him and seemed to be quite cordial toward him. When Yaima narrated his trouble of tracing the pension file, the peon asked him to wait outside while he searched for the file. Through the crack of the door, which acted as a peephole, Yaima surreptitiously observed the peon rummaging through the stack of files and found the seriousness of all the clerks quite impressive. Assuming that visitors were not allowed in, due to the serious nature of their work in the office, Yaima thought highly of them. However, the nonchalant way in which the peon reported the missing file, shrugging his shoulders indifferently, told otherwise. Even though Yaima was a simple retired school teacher, he could easily discern the concoction and fabrication of the peon about his file when he calmly said what was to be done to retrace the missing file. In the words of the peon:

There are some errors in your service book. Oh, don't worry. It can be put to right. But it will take time. Your file has to go round from one desk to another. The clerks and officers have to be approached again. We have to pay them. (236)

Yaima was completely taken aback when the peon, who supposedly appeared to be cordial toward him, turned out to be a cunning person resembling a sly fox, trying to suck the blood out of an innocent old man, who could be his father. Yaima was startled by the peon's announcement, "Uncle, your file is not here. I'm afraid it is missing." The peon had manipulated Yaima's file to extract money from him. Bribery has become the only means to get things done in the office. Yaima had spent all his last drawn salary to make the file progress and he is left

penniless. He was hoping that his pension file would be released; however, he was asked to pay five or six thousand rupees for releasing his file.

The two stories, "The Acacia" and "Inspection Report," portray the evil nature of corruption that is prevalent in society. This paper analyses how dangerous it is for society to allow the educational system and administration to be tainted with corruption. A remedy must be sought to redress the deplorable conditions in the educational sector and administration offices, without which development and progress will be a long way off for such a society where rampant corruption prevails.

Works Cited

Meitei, M. Mani. *The Grasshopper and Other Stories*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Myint, U. "Corruption: Causes, Consequences and Cures." *Asia-Pacific Development Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2, Dec. 2000, pp. 33–58.

The Involuntary Movement of an Individual: Revisiting the *U. S. A.* Trilogy

Sanil T. Sunny

The early 20th century was a period in which American urban spaces experienced extraordinary socioeconomic changes. This process of urbanization had strong ties with two other areas – fast growing industrialization and immigration of people. Factories began to introduce machines, replacing the skills of craftsmen, and thus, needed a large number of unskilled and semiskilled labourers to operate the machines. There was a flow of workers even from abroad and this became a source of social instability and conflict. However, the cityscape could not expand to meet the needs of the surge in industrial workers. New immigrants faced dangerous conditions. There was a struggle to meet the demands of rapid growth regarding water, transportation, housing, and sewage systems. Fenian O'Hara McCreary, one of the major characters in John Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* trilogy, moves to Chicago with a perilous wave over his head about the great and growing city. This essay analyses the hardships and challenges McCreary faced in his search for the Promised Land and whether he could find his idealistic Chicago.

Dos Passos uses Mac to illustrate the pre-war period as a time of great change in Chicago where the industrial city was wide open and the opportunities for social mobility were attracting young labourers abundantly. Mac is an Irish-American from a poor family in Connecticut. His picaresque adventure across the country involved taking on odd jobs and working for the labour movement. It is Uncle Tim who injects the desire for Chicago in Mac's nerves. "But Chicago...Jesus God, man when you get there, you'll thing you've been dead and nailed up in a coffin all these years" (Dos Passos *The 42nd Parallel* 9-10). It is this sort of world that Mac is seeking when he arrives in Chicago. However, it was not easy for him to leave the familiar streets, churches, and residences of his hometown. However, it is not easy for him to leave the familiar streets, churches, and residences of his home town. The novelist contrasts the small towns and the city using several images. As open spaces have disappeared and sights of the towns, frame houses and the factories all started drawing together, humping into warehouses and elevators and the train yards spread out, the cityscape is slowly uncovered. The eruptions of Chicago into a great city coincide with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants. ". . . it is a better market for a workingman's muscle and brains at present than the East is . . . Supply and demand, they need workers in Chicago" (Dos Passos *The 42nd*

Parallel 13). A fourth to a third of the inhabitants in Chicago or New York in the early twentieth century were not born in the cities. Perhaps less than a fourth of the inhabitants of these cities are of families that have been for generations in these cities. All these groups of city dwellers, while altering the cities' environment, begin to adapt the new social and cultural configurations. This kind of mobility, which is continuous, can be found in any of the big cities like Chicago. But rural people are sometimes overwhelmed by the impersonal demeanour of urban life. It happens in Mc's life also as the city is wearing him down. He cannot adjust with the choked streets and cynical culture.

Shifts in market demand and changes in production technology periodically weakened corporations. With Doc Bingham, Mac had to provide Bibles and pornography to the lonely wives of the farmers for his livelihood. He gradually began to understand the wage system, and the hardships he experienced as a labourer made him an opponent of the capitalist stream:

. . . It's the fault of the system that don't give a man the fruit of his labour . . . The only man that gets anything out of capitalism is a crook, an' he gets to be a millionaire is short order . . . But an honest working' man like John or myself we can work a hundred years and not leave enough to bury us decent with . . . And who gets the fruit of our labour, the goddam businessmen, agents, middlemen who never did a productive piece of work in their life. (Dos Passos *The 42nd Parallel* 13)

Mac marries a typical urban girl named Maisie Spencer, but she is unable to understand his radical views. Though she is a girl from a working-class background, she is one who loves to enjoy the extravaganza of the city life – the one who very often visits the theatre and eats in restaurants of high standards. Maisie's brother once came to see Mac and talked a lot about the real estate boom in Los Angeles and tried to convince Mac to give up his job in San Diego and go with him to Ocean View Avenue. He tempts them with the thought of being rich and reminds Mac that it will be too late and he will just be a working man all his life. His promise is all about magnificent mission-style bungalows, refined residential streets, properties, bigger payments, and the road to success. He concludes, "But don't forget advantages offered, better schools for the kids, more refined surroundings, an up-and-coming boom town instead of a dead one, chance to get ahead in the world instead of being a goddam wage slave" (Dos passos *The42nd Parallel* 109). This is how the working class, in patterns of thought and levels of aspiration, is influenced by the impact of urban values. They verbalise white-collar occupational ambitions and express similar educational aspirations for their children to urban

capitalists. Although such goals are often unrealistic status-yielding urban community influences, these people are the prototypes of rurality. A month later, Mac and Maisie move up to Los Angeles, hoping for better living conditions and social status. It is also noticeable that wherever Mac goes, he cannot feel the city as his own soil; rather, his spatial relation with the city is that of a stranger. Although he is not a person who comes today and goes tomorrow, he is a wanderer. He is fixed within a particular space, but his position is determined by the fact that he has not belonged to it. Although he is close to the city, he is far from the city, far too far from the common features of the urban milieu.

After the quarrel that leads to the breakup with Maisie, he walks out into the streets. Mac is constantly walking which classifies him as a walker. As a symbol of the working-class way of life, Mac's walking becomes necessary. He is caged in a world where he has no friends, money, or car. It is the act of walking that soothes him, and perhaps it is the feeling of a genuine movement unlike the vibrations of public transport or a car. Instead of watching the world through the window pane, he is moving in the world on his own feet. Mac's take leave of Chicago is can also be interpreted as a positive rejection of the demands of the city life and a return to the more earthy ways of life. He double dares the rubrics of capitalism.

The struggle enacted in Mac's story is the struggle of Americans left to actualise their ideal vision. He has three strands in his early life: an ordinary working man, a radical, and a wandering epicurean. He is confused and unable to make a final decision. Circumstances uproot him, and his fate is disappointing. The novelist introduces Mac into actual events of the period to show the effect of capitalism on a working man's life and how he is influenced by the wish for money and a socially successful life. It is apparent when Mac ventures beyond the fictional domain of his private life to enter the world of the Industrial Workers of the World and their strike in Nevada, which affirms his political impulses. He is breaking his immediate personal past, and it is an act of affirmation. However, his inability to express his views and integrate private and public lives limits his power and commitment.

Later, he travelled across the continent to California, working at odd jobs and indulging in whoring and drinking. At Nevada he joins the miners' strike and prints inflammatory leaflets for the I. W. W. Mac is a rootless labourer with hopes of restoring power to the worker but does nothing to fulfil his ambition. Mac is an excellent example of involuntary movement because in his quest or journey, the world happens to him, not he to the world. He shares a directionless passivity as he enjoys eating, drinking, making love, doing things with his hands

and body in mindless ways from moment to moment. He is a radical by economic circumstances rather than any personal conviction. As one of the most sympathetic characters in *U. S. A.*, Mac reflects the isolation and frustration of modern workers, who are unable either to accomplish pride in their work or finally to profit significantly by it. Thus, Mac is a defeated. When we see Mac for the last time in the trilogy, he is on the road again.

Works Cited

Alridge, John W. *After the Lost Generation*. McGraw Hill, 1951.

Bertoli, Simone, and Jesús Fernández-Huertas Moraga. "Multilateral Resistance to Migration." *Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit Institute for the Study of Labor*, 2011, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228251826_Multilateral_Resistance_to_Migration. Accessed 6 Oct. 2014.

Butler, Robert James. "The American Quest for Pure Movement in Dos Passos' *U. S. A.*" *Twentieth-Century Literature*, vol. 30, no. 1, Hofstra University, 1984, pp. 80–99. http://www.jstor.org/stable/441191. Accessed 2 June 2014.

Casey, Janet Galligani. "Reviving the Thirties: The Case for Teaching Proletarian Fiction in the Undergraduate American Literature Classroom." *College English*, vol. 70, no. 3, National Council of Teachers of English, 2008, pp. 233–48. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472265. Accessed 3 June 2014.

Cochran, Thomas C. "Industrialization." *A Comparative Approach to American History*, edited by C. Vann Woodward, OUP, 1967, pp. 191–258.

Colley, Iain. *Dos Passos and the Fiction of Despair*. Macmillan, 1978.

Dos Passos, John. *Manhattan Transfer*. Houghton Mifflin (1925)

—. "Nineteen Nineteen." *U. S. A.*, The Modern Library, 1937.

—. "The Big Money." *U. S. A.*, The Modern Library, 1937.

—. "The 42nd Parallel." *U. S. A.*, The Modern Library, 1937.

Goldman, Arnold. "Dos Passos and His U.S.A." *New Literary History*, Vol. 1, no. 3, The Johns Hopkins UP, 1970, pp. 471–83. http://www.jstor.org/stable/468267. Accessed 2 June 2014.

Frohock, W. M. "John Dos Passos: Of Time and Frustration." *The Novel of Violence in America*. Southern Methodist UP, 1957.

Kazin, Alfred. "John Dos Passos and His Invention of America." *The Wilson Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 1, Wilson Quarterly, 1985, pp. 154–66. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40257684. Accessed 3 June 2014.

Yetter, Michael. *John Dos Passos and the Individual*. Thesis, Northern Illinois University, 2016.

Designing Chaos: Semiotic Perspectives on *Jallikattu*'s Cinematic Language

Jesna Jose & Ashish Mathai

A standard or conventional form and technique that literary texts, performed plays, and motion pictures incorporate is an amalgamation or a structured composition of theme, character development, symbolism, style, motif, utilisation of language, aesthetic distance, plot, and so forth. The main contrast lies in that theatre performances and films have 'mise en scene', including lighting, sound, entertainers, props, and setting, which makes it exceptional. Written literature depends altogether on language; motion pictures and theatre add visual components and sound to the language, and these pictures and sounds might be more significant in the motion picture's efficacy than language. However, what can every one of these media do that the other can't in light of the manner in which they impart? For example, novels, short stories, and play scripts depend entirely on language to impart and on the reader's creative mind to make the material and fill in the gaps. Although performed plays and films share an aural or spoken component, stage performances are constrained in reality, a constraint that films defeat with external lighting, composition of the frame, camera techniques, editing, and special effects; thus, even portraying how our society and culture operate.

In this way, literature pieces depend principally on language and the entertainers' capacity to extend the language; films, then again, are essentially an audio-visual medium and rely upon the picture and acoustics. The film director controls completely what the user sees and knows by choosing what shows up or is encircled in each shot. A staged performance, being three-dimensional, has profundity; however, a film execution has only two dimensions; what moviegoers see on the big screen is the same regardless of where they are sitting; however, this is not valid for playgoers, whose perspective on the entertainers and stage is controlled by where they are sitting. Increasingly significant is the fact that a film execution is fixed perpetually or consistently as the same; in a live presentation, in any case, a similar on-screen character's exhibition can fluctuate from night to night, and various actors can give various interpretations.

As Tarkovsky defined cinema, ...as sculpting in time. Just as a sculptor takes a lump of marble and, inwardly conscious of the features of his finished piece, removes everything that is not part of it, so the filmmaker, from a 'lump of time' made up of an enormous, solid cluster of living facts, cuts off and discards whatever he does not need, leaving only what is to be an

element of the finished film, what will prove to be integral to the cinematic image. (Tarkovsky, 1989)

The correlation between design and film can be found in fundamental design elements, such as composition, colour, and forms of visual communication, resulting from the previously stated design principles. These design standards serve as the foundation for any piece of artwork, whether still or moving. The artistic quality of a film depends on the solidity of its design. It is important to understand how a film imparts meaning at both an explicit and literal level, as well as its ability to suggest associated or secondary meanings, highlighting the importance of semantics in films.

The term 'semantics, "with its Greek origin word 'semantikos," refers to "significant" or "having meaning" or the "science of meaning in language" (Abrams and Harpham). Rather than having a 'denotation' or a literal meaning alone, 'words' or 'signs' have within themselves an underlying meaning and 'connotation'. Although such constructs originated initially in linguistic expressions, over the years, they have been related to non-linguistic contexts, such as film and other media. Furthermore, such 'signs' can be seen everywhere in and around the world and have been embedded with meanings and used to communicate ideas and ideologies of individuals or groups of particular race, culture, gender, and many more. Semantics permits us to convey and "read" the world and individuals around us in a wide range of important ways. The capacity of semantics surrounds us, both in our discourse and in our non-verbal communication and the signs we comply with.

Christian Metz, a French film theorist and pioneer of film semiotics, once said, "The study of connotation brings us closer to the notion of the cinema as an art (the 'seventh art')" (Metz). Films, in terms of their experiential qualities, go beyond their mere audiovisual spectrum and communicate meanings and ideologies through the multiple signs embedded in them. Inside meanings, paradigmatic undertones exist, such as a shot that is contrasted to unconscious notions that exist in our worldview. A low-point shot of a rose passing on a feeling that the blossom is, in some way, prevailing or overwhelming in light of the fact that we unwittingly contrast it and an overhead shot of a rose which would lessen its significance. Syntagmatic implication would not contrast the rose shot with other likely shots, but would contrast it with real shots that precede or follow it. The importance sticks to it since its contrasted with different shots which we really observe.

A new voice in the Malayalam film industry, Lijo Jose Pellissery presents a picture of a remote village in his own neighbourhood, where a wild ox escapes and causes chaos of despicable viciousness. The short story *Maoist* by S. Hareesh, on which the film *Jallikkattu* is based, mocks the turmoil unleashed in a high-go town after two buffaloes brought for slaughter go out of control. It is a genuine and fervent allegory of the state's profound entrenchment in leftist groups and semi-primitive social structures, over which a longing for transformation continues to drift. The town's only evident capitalist is the butcher 'Kaalan' Varkey, who keeps the elites – the ministry and the officials – in good humour with meatier cuts, thick chunks of fat, and shorter holding-up time while they gather around his blood-splattered Sunday shop.

Maoist was propelled by individuals and events from Hareesh's surroundings in Kottayam. The film adaptation of *Maois*t is completely action and activity situated, with scarcely any examples of dialogues. *Jallikkattu* totally has a place with Lijo, says Hareesh, who co-wrote the screenplay with his companion Jayakumar. In fact, it can be said that what we see on the screen is Lijo's form of Maoist as an auteur. Hareesh got the story from the existence he saw around him. Lijo has made another understanding of that story and presented his perspective. The film adaptation holds the plot structure; however, it has a pared-down mise-en-scene and characters. On the literal level, the plot does not seem to be much complicated; however, on the connotative level, the film is embedded with mass significations and meanings.

The furious trip of the brute subverts the social order of the town, breaking its economy of cassava and cardamom, 'obliterating' class adversaries, and annihilating a bank. A horde assembles, and even the weakest of the men must participate. The hour-and-a-half story slices near the bone like Dante's descent to damnation, crossing all nine circles – limbo, desire, intemperance, avarice, apostasy, outrage, savagery, deception, and disloyalty – until we arrive at the solidified heart of hell, of our own creation.

The intentional metaphorization disguises the speculation that human animosity is a hereditary attribute, namely, that we are a bound race – Neanderthals with natural creature impulse that no civilizational goal can erase. In fact, buffalo itself is a mere symbol that represents animosity and a connection between the same and cause for it is implemented and thus portrays the destruction of mankind itself. As we move forward, it can be noted that it is hard to distinguish between man and the creature.

Towards the end, we see one of the protagonists, dashing over a hanging bridge, similar to the character in the unending computer game *Temple Run*, who needs to surpass the beast gorillas to abstain from being executed. The more peculiar and exceptional factor is the tone of the dull cynicism and dark imagery that underlies the film. In fact, this even puts forward the question of how people can be hopeful in the present Indian circumstance where individuals and rulers are driven by the franticness of the group. This proves that it is indeed difficult to be optimist.

The film, however loaded with despair, reveals insights into the Malayali mind. The state itself has seen a few horde lynchings connected to moral policing in the ongoing past. Both the film and the story, in a way, points out how our general public can turn to be savage and this can be known once we start to expose what's underneath. In both, a sign of subdued brutality is visible.

The German psychoanalyst Erich Fromm cautioned that the hypothesis of innate aggressiveness could easily transform into a philosophy that mitigates our feelings of trepidation about the future and supports the feeling of barrenness. According to him, the defective hypothesis also fails to explain large-scale violence used by humans since the beginning of written history as an instrument for achieving political ends. As an artist, one cannot contest Lijo's entitlement to hold a deeply sceptical perspective; however, the film raises several issues at a time when humanity is faced with discouraging stories of environmental change and dictatorship.

Starting with the dramatic trailer itself, executive Lijo Jose Pellissery has beaten himself in assembling an outwardly elating film. What's more, for what reason is this film named *Jallikattu*? Pellissery, prior to the screening of this film at the Toronto International Film Festival, clarified that *Jallikattu* is the main game in India that includes a monster and a group. Simply put, the film does not manage the customary bull-subduing rivalries that occur in Tamil Nadu. Here, the movie producers are not managing a bull. A rogue wild ox turns into the wellspring of the express confusion that inundates a town, obscuring the lines between human settlement and backwoods.

The mystery opens with an occupant of the town reviewing the days when that spot was commanded by natural life. Even now, people have invaded the spot, it is still a home for creatures. "In any event, when a few people run on two legs, they are still creatures." (Pellisery,

2019) says the elderly person. The reason appears to have given Pellissery a reason to organise a progression of throbbing scenes and sequences as the mental space between the men and the brute vanishes.

"You recognize what meat tastes the best on the planet?" asks for a character played by Sabumon. Captivated by his enquiry, the other individual asks, "What is it?". "The tissue of a human", comes the answer from the previous with a certainty of a person who is aware of what he's saying. Afterwards, in the last scene, we witness a character trapped in the centre of a stampede, and it seems to be as though he is eaten alive. This is truly insane in reality. (Pellisery, 2019)

In fact, this resembles William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies,* which portrays a similar theme of the innate evil nature in man and how man is his own deadliest enemy. All accounts suggest that J*allikattu* is about a town pursuing a wild ox that has broken free. However, underneath that, it is a close to breakdown of civilisation, as we are probably aware of it. The distinction between man and beast seems to be completely blurred; in fact, the poster of the film itself subverts from the conventional idea of one of the prominent actors and is moreover replaced by a wild buffalo, who indeed seems to be the protagonist of the film.

The film starts with noisy ticking of the clock. It can be deduced that time is passing. Yet, before the finish of the film, the enquiry we are compelled to face is - has time passed by any means? On the other hand, would we say we are as yet unaltered from where we were in the start? The contention in *Jallikattu* is between two men - Kuttachan (Sabumon) and (Antony Varghese), who both work with Varkey (Chemban Vinod Jose), the butcher. The unequivocal purpose behind their contention is Sophie (Santhy Balachandran), Varkey's sister, who is keen on Kuttachan and repels Antony. Alternatively, would she say that she is just a reason for the inner self-conflict between the two men?

Jallikattu intentionally presents to the viewers how comparable people are to creatures, despite long periods of civilisation attempting to recognise the two classes. It takes just a trigger for us to relapse into who we truly are. In this sense, the film helps one to remember, as mentioned earlier, Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, a novel about a gathering of children who end up on a segregated island where, gradually, the young men lose the impact of civilisation and return to create their own simple thoughts of society.

The film captures the basal energy that ascends in our stomach when we witness savagery, inescapable in a battle for endurance, notwithstanding realising that what we are viewing is what civilisation has instructed us to loathe. Despite the fact that we're continually occupied with characterizing what makes us human - workmanship, music, language, fine food - we're additionally continually masking our base urges that part with us.

In *Jallikattu*, Lijo disintegrates these camouflages and reveals what truly drives us: the need to eat and mate, which we share with every other animal. If we analyse the words that are oftentimes utilised to depict every action, they are revealingly comparable; for example, chomp, lick, snatch, suck, taste, stuff, etc.

Similarly to the town chasing after the wild ox, the camera (Gireesh Gangadharan) chases after the trackers. The following shots of individuals are regularly taken from behind as they pursue the wild ox, accentuating how comparable the two are. The director's goal becomes clear when he compares the wild ox's footprint with a man's impression. The scene with the elderly person who sits by a blaze and asks, "How long has it been since you began wearing jeans and shirts?" (Pellisery) suggests the two men in Pellissery's other film *Ee.Ma.Yau*, who are far removed from the prompt story unfolding on screen, and offer their quick editorial.

As in another film of his, *Angamaly Diaries*, food is vital to the narrative in *Jallikattu*. From grisly, red cuts of meat that are conveyed even to the chapel to Kuriachan's (Jaffer Idukki) detailed explanation of the gala he needs for his girl's wedding (even as she is wooing another man via telephone–eating and mating in a similar casing), the film explains the fixation that people have with food. Similar to creatures, but greedier. Lijo scatters the account with shots of different creatures occupied with comparative interests, compelling us to zoom out of the human dramatization and take a view at the bigger canvas. In addition, he keeps people defenceless against nature's caprices, similar to the occupants of the wilderness. At the point when the wild ox is caught, it is the downpour which goes to its guide, balancing the battleground.

Antony does not want Kuttachan to catch the buffalo that escaped. In his mind, getting the wild ox would imply that he is a superior man than Kuttachan, who is the group's top choice to execute the assignment. Kuttachan, in the meantime, has an old score to settle with Antony, and this is what truly takes him back to the town and not the bison. At the point when Antony prevails over, with regards to catching the wild ox, he's not prepared to stop. He should also butcher it to demonstrate that he is the genuine victor.

On the appearance of going to get a rope from Varkey's to pull the bison up from the pit where it has fallen, he tries to woo Sophie, who is at home. When Antony attempts to kiss her powerfully, he makes just throaty, creature clamours, as though language has defeated him. Sophie, who opposes from the outset, at that point discloses to him that she needs the best cuts of meat, as though she also now recognises who the alpha male is. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, the lowlife Iago depicts sex as "making the monster with two backs" - the portrayal is so strict, penetrating the grandiose "acculturated" thoughts of adoration, sentiment, and energy, that its trustworthiness makes the line sound incredibly idyllic.

Subsequently, when Antony and Kuttachan engage in an extreme battle, the two men make creature sounds, thus completing the transformation from man to monster. The film's shocking peak, in which the trackers/men structure a human pyramid and frantically hurl themselves onto it, having failed to remember what they are truly pursuing, closes with a vague note. Did the bison run from the people and reach the place of the sick elderly person? Or is it Antony who turns into the wild ox destroyed by the trackers, who cannot recognise people or creatures anymore? As mentioned earlier, there is a trace of the last understanding when Kuttachan lets one know that the men believe that human meat is the most delicious, shocking the audience.

Eventually, Lijo leaves us with pictures of men in creature skins glorying over the meat that they have in their grasp: is it that of another creature, or have they executed one of their own? Is there an 'other' and an 'own' by any stretch of the imagination?

The brilliant soundscape of the film (Prashant Pillai) establishes a startlingly vivid climate

where the viewers are hauled into the screen to turn into a part of the sloughing of civilisation. *Jallikattu* signifies 'bull-restraining', a game in which a man, a predominant type of life, builds up his masculinity by controlling a creature. However, what the film truly does is to uncover the absence of contrast–a clarification for the moments when there is a slip... a rush, a lynching, an uproar... at the point when we all fail to remember that we have schools, universities, workplaces, shopping centres, eateries, theatres, cell phone pinnacles, and like crabs, we move over one another, tasting the blood because it feels so good to surrender and let go of fake pretentions finally.

Thus, the paper, through the film *Jallikattu*, portrays how principles of design semantics are used in the same and how the film is crafted and embedded with signs, making the film in its own a 'visual-signifier'.

Works Cited

Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 11th ed., Cengage Learning India Private Limited, 2015.

Gopalakrishnan, A. "Jallikattu Is Completely a Lijo Jose Pellissery Film." *Silverscreen*, 2 Oct. 2019, www.silverscreen.in/features/jallikattu-is-completely-a-lijo-jose-pellissery-film-says-writer-s-hareesh/. Accessed 5 Nov. 2020.

Hareesh, S. *Maoist*. Aadam, DC Books, 2018.

Pellissery, L. J. *Jallikattu*. Opus Penta, 2019.

Metz, Christian. *Film Language: A Semiotic of Cinema*. University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Tarkovsky, Andrei. *Sculpting in Time: Tarkovsky, the Great Russian Filmmaker Discusses His Art*. University of Texas Press, 1989.

Poet's Corner

Lulling Symphonies of my Land

Valsa George

Guarded by towering hills on the East,
Flanked by the Arabian Sea on the West,
With its easterly shore of stretching sandy swell
That lulls the restless waves to sleep,
There is a land, my land of green vegetation,
Nestled among palm trees and paddy fields.

Oh! I am in love with this narrow strip of land,
Of rugged hills and meandering rivers
Of placid backwaters and blue skies
Of gibbering monkeys and singing cuckoos

What rich diversity you graciously provide
A land dotted with temples, churches, and mosques,
Where Hindus, Christians, and Muslims cohabit,
Where diversity flows through her arteries,
And unity beats through her throbbing heart.

Here souls dance to the timeless rhythm of music,
Of diverse genres, vocal and instrumental,
Classical and folk, sung either as solo or in groups,
With the accompaniment of veena, tanpura, and violin.
Their varying pitches are beautifully synchronised!

In the serene dawns and dusky evenings
The atmosphere gets abuzz with the soft strains,
Of 'Sopana Sangeetham', the ethnic music of Kerala,
It comes floating from inside the Hindu shrines,
Flooding soul's enchanted shores,
And opening the floodgates of piety.

In healing murmurs and throbbing notes
As the symphony builds up its circuitous round
It descends down as a stream of blessings,
Drenching devotees in its moistening sweetness
Like the drizzle of dew drops from heaven
Making hearts ride in the palanquin of joy!

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Anjana K. S., Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Roorkee

Sarbani Banerjee, Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Roorkee

Keerthana S., Assistant Professor on Contract, Newman College, Thodupuzha

Anu Scaria, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Carmel College, Muhamma

Titto Varghese, Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies, Christ Nagar College, Trivandrum

Fathima Beegum, Assistant Professor on Contract, Newman College, Thodupuzha

Jilu Ani John, Associate Professor of English, St. George's College, Aruvithura

Ramesh K. G., Assistant Professor, Department of English, St. Mary's College, Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad, Kerala

Merine John, Assistant Professor, Department of English, St. Xavier,s College, Vaikom

Donkaolung Malangmei, Research Scholar, Manipur University, Manipur.

Elangbam Hemanta Singh, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Ideal Girls' College, Imphal Manipur

Sanil T. Sunny, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, SSUS Kalady

Jesna Jose, Assistant Professor, St. Stephen's College, Uzhavoor, Kerala

Ashish Mathai, Assistant Professor, Unitedworld Institute of Design, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Valsa George, Rtd. Professor, Dept. of English, Nirmala College, Muvattupuzha

Articles submitted for publication must be typed double space on A4 paper with proper margins, and must follow the latest MLA style. Articles may be sent through email as "Attachment" in the address **ijpcl.journal@gmail.com** with the writer's name, address and phone number below the title and a brief CV at the end of the paper.

Articles published in this journal do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the editorial board. The journal is refereed by a panel of experts.

Annual subscription rates:

India	**Rs. 2000**
All other countries	**US $50 or €35 or £35**

The payment of subscription may be made in favour of **The Managing Editor, IJPCL, payable at SBI Thodupuzha** and sent to the address given below.

Address all Correspondence to

The Editor
IJPCL, PG Department of English,
Newman College, Thodupuzha East P. O.
Idukki Dist., Kerala, India. Pin: 685 585.
Phone: 8547441757, 9961435299
E-mail: ijpcl.journal@gmail.com
jacoprincy@gmail.com
jeromekjose@gmail.com

Printed and published by the HOD. PG Dept. of English,
Newman College, Thodupuzha East P. O.
Printed at Printech Offset Press, TDPA Ph: 227191

Red. No. KERENGO1377/11/1/99 -TC

Indian Journal of Post Colonial Literatures is an official research publication of the Postgraduate and Research Department. of English, Newman College, Thodupuzha. Ever since its inception in the year 2000, it is being published biannually in the months of June and December. It is devoted to the studies on Postcolonial Literatures and publishes original and creative works, articles, notes, reviews, and essays. It is intended to promote and augment research mindset among professionals, scholars, researchers and students. The major objective of this journal is to explore and explicate the theoretical perceptions, cultural implications and contemporary relevance of Postcolonial Literatures.