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UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
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Editor's Note

This issue of *Communication and Journalism Research* (Vol.8, Issue 2) probes multiple dimensions and inter-relationships between fantasy films and gender constructions, the activism of an actress through social media engagement, power dynamics and female subjugation, dominant themes in post-colonial African literature, quality of life and psychological well-being, and melodramatic shifts in the Malayalam cinemas.

R Vidya and M Anuradha explore the role of films in constructing and reinforcing reality. They argue that films have reinforced gender roles as specified by society. Their paper tries to analyse the physical features and behavioural traits of primary women characters in high fantasy films. Further, it attempts to analyse, interpret, and compare both protagonists' and antagonists' physical features, tone of voice, and behavioural traits. Meanwhile, Mohammed Shareef MP examines Malayalam cinema of the late 1960s and 1970s to explore the emergence of distinct aesthetic and industrial practices in the Malayalam film industry. It explores the films of K.S. Sethumadhavan, which may be called social melodramas. He says that researching the melodramas of the 1960s is essential for understanding the formation of a different identity for the Malayalam cinema industry, which is characterised as lacking melodramatic excesses, leading to a claim of uniqueness in comparison to other south Indian film industries.

S Gayathri and Abdul Muneer V investigate how the online public has received all developments challenging patriarchal norms by analysing their Facebook behaviours. Furthermore, for this, the engagements on posts on the official Facebook page of Parvathy Thiruvothu, a famous Malayalam actress and one of the founding members of WCC (The Women in Cinema Collective) who was subjected to much public ire before and after the formation of WCC, were analysed through a gendered lens. The results showed a shift in the actress's perception before and after the formation of WCC. Jisha M D tries to analyze the power dynamics and female subjugation in the novel *The Grip of Change* by a Dalit woman writer P. Sivakami. She observes that the tyrannous use of power exists at all levels, and women suffer the most. This paper foregrounds the exploitation of Dalit women by upper-caste men and men of their community. They suffer caste discrimination, gender discrimination, and economic oppression. As a result, they face triple marginalization.

Abdul Rasheed P provides a survey of dominant themes in post-colonial African literature. Eight basic themes were discovered to be dominant across arrays of literary studies. The themes of colonialism itself, colonial liberation, nationalism, tradition, political liberation, displacement, gender equality, and greater rootlessness are dominant in the literature. These themes are built across slave narratives, cultural and traditional conflicts, protest against colonialism, open calls for the end of colonialism, protection of the African pride promoted through traditional dominance of women's liberation, expression of hope for Africa, and discussion of womanhood. The study thus concluded that post-colonial African literature is still a reflection of the events of the colonial period and a narrative for a future Africa without the effects of the presence of the colonial representatives.

Agnes Sebastian and Basil P.V. argue that quality of life and psychological well-being can influence elderly farmers' evaluations of their life. They conducted in-depth interviews with 20 rural elderly farmers (aged 60 to 78 years) on key themes generated in thematic analysis. The study indicates that the majority of elderly participants experience low to moderate levels of quality of life and psychological well-being. Further, financial stability and occupational characteristics were found to be two significant elements that affect QOL and the psychological well-being of rural elderly farmers.

Muhammadali Nellyullathil's research objective is to conduct a comprehensive examination of the emerging cultural trends in Turkey. The study focuses specifically on the production and dissemination strategies utilized in the popular television drama "Diriliş: Ertuğrul" (English Title: "Resurrection: Ertugrul"), which was produced by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation in 2014.

Constructing Good and Evil: Analysis of Women Protagonists and Antagonists in High Fantasy Films

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Abstract

The role of films in constructing and reinforcing reality has been in discussion for decades. Films feed information regarding everything, from basic understanding of the world to social institutions. The gender roles as specified by the society has been reinforced by films. Studies also state that films aid in the construction of stereotypes of gender (Steinke, 2005).

One of the most popular genres, fantasy films, have created huge fan base globally. They have driven box office collections to a pinnacle which the movies of other genres have not achieved (Thompson, 2003). Though created in a fantasy world, these films cohere with the existing gender constructions. This paper tries to analyse the physical features and behavioural traits of primary women characters in high fantasy films. The paper attempts to analyse, interpret and compare the physical features, tone of voice and behavioural traits of both protagonists and antagonists.

Keywords: Fantasy Films, BSRI, Gender, Femininity.

From the pre-industrial eras to the contemporary period, the society and culture has prescribed norms for men and women in the form of gender roles which are often preserved and strengthened continually by prevailing institutions and socializing agents. The past two centuries saw paradigms and theories emerge, some to explain the need in maintaining the patriarchal society and some to challenge the existing male dominated order. The division of roles on the basis of gender is increasingly becoming dysfunctional in the twentieth and twenty first centuries when women have become an important part of the paid labour force (Lindsey, 1997; Dunn & Skaggs, 2006). Yet, the current norm is to appreciate the “superwoman” who achieves accolades in career without diminishing her attention in the household work (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006).

The concept of gender is largely associated with the terms, masculinity and femininity. These terms express the expectations a particular culture has in the

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behaviour of men and women (Morawski, 1985; Maccoby, 1998; Basu, 2010; Wharton, 2012). Researchers have tried to formulate characteristics ascribed by the society to define masculinity and femininity through several studies (Bem, 1974; Basu, 2010). Butler (1990) considers gender as a “performance” and not a fact. The society punishes its members who do not adhere to the performance of their gender. Thus gender is constructed and the construction convinces the “necessity” and “naturalness” of gender (Butler, 1990).

Gender and Film

Media images provide young women and adolescent girls the assumption that acceptance, recognition and popularity can be only achieved through “acting feminine” (Brown & Gilligan, 1993). This makes them choose the gender roles which are culturally and traditionally accepted (Steinke, 2005). Researches show that the endorsement of thin and skinny body figure has resulted in unhealthy eating disorders in girls and women since they get discontented with their body (Smith & Cook, 2008).

Movies have a certain set of accepted codes and conventions to narrate a story and to promote ideologies and perspectives of the society. The film makers of genre films employ a formula tried and tested over time without changing the overall pattern of the narrative and characterisations, the genre carried over time (Dutt, 2013).

One of the most popular genre films is fantasy films. In spite of the mixed responses of the researchers regarding the seriousness of the genre, fantasy movies have always attracted audience to the theatres pushing the box office records to a height not much attained by the movies of other genres (Thompson, 2003). The repeated portrayal of femininity and masculinity in the traditional roles and behavioural pattern is present in fantasy genre as in any other genre and is made to look natural.

The “natural” aspects of femininity and masculinity are derived from history when industrialization necessitated women to be at home taking care of the nuclear family which was a spinoff of industrial revolution (Fiske, 2010). Thus, the typical qualities ascribed by the society to women and men became “natural” and media as a socializing agent reinforce this myth through its codes and conventions. The process of naturalization is so subtle and subliminal that the controlling and the controlled groups do not challenge the existing order.

The movie images naturalize the myth of femininity as romantic, emotional and committed, shy, modest and innocent and masculinity in terms of strength, power, intelligence, ambition, assertiveness, and competitiveness (Connell, 2009; Milestone & Meyer, 2012).

Most of the strong-willed women are portrayed as wicked and evil. Creed (1993) called them monstrous feminine and indicated that the possibility of the fear generated by these strong women on the male dominance would have provoked the male dominated society to depict them as wicked villains (Creed, 1993) and creating a need to destruct them (Lopez, 2010; (Fowkes, 2010). An analysis of 25 fantasy films of 1990 to 2010 revealed that many characters portrayed in animus roles are being punished for their roles (Lopez, 2010).

The signs and symbols encompass costume and fashion thereby creating meanings and values for them (Calefato, 2004). The costumes have a huge role in depicting stereotypical men and women (Dam, 2014). The characters reflect their identities through the physical body, dress, cosmetics and hairstyles. The body being a semiotic system, meanings and connotations are assigned to each character through the “signs on the body” (Calefato, 2004)

This paper tries to analyse the physical features and behavioural characteristics of primary women characters in high fantasy films. The paper compares these features of both protagonists and antagonists considering the characteristics specified in Bem’s Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Bem (1974) has identified and indexed characteristics which society considers as masculine, feminine and androgynous.

Methodology

The research utilizes descriptive content analysis to find the depiction of women characters. The high fantasy films released worldwide from 2000 to 2014 were considered for the study. The films which carried rating more than six in IMDB was selected as the sample. Twelve characters were selected for study including seven protagonists and five antagonists. The characters selected were Eowyn, Arwen, Tauriel, Hermione Granger, Ginny Weasley, Bellatrix Lestrange, Lady Galadriel, Yvaine, Lamia, Ditchwater Sal, Empusa and Momo.

Physical traits including the physical structure, height, complexion, colour, length and style of hair, clothing and accessories, colour and texture of the clothes, facial features including the shape of the eyebrow, shape and colour of the eyes, shape of the nose and forehead, makeup were considered in the descriptive content analysis.

Some of the typical masculine and feminine characteristics specified in Bem’s Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) were used as variables to code the personality traits (Bem, 1974; Basu, 2010; Basu, Dasgupta, Chakraborty, & Basu, 2012). Affectionate, cheerful, childlike, gentle, gullible, being loyal, soft spoken, sympathetic, being flatterable, understanding, tender, being shy, warm, yielding and sensitive to others’ needs were considered as qualities associated with femininity while leadership ability, aggressiveness, forcefulness, dominance, independency, being

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individualistic, assertiveness, competitiveness, ability to make decisions easily, willingness to take a stand, willingness to take risks, being a strong personality and athletic were related to masculinity. Androgynous character traits according to Bem like being friendly, helpful, jealous, conscientious, tactful, unsystematic were also taken.

Analysis and Interpretation

The protagonists under study have similar physical features. They are lean, fair and tall. Most of them have narrow eyebrows. Arwen and Galadriel have almond shaped eyes. Arwen, being the lover of the hero, like all heroines of the fantasy film genre, is given an unnatural physical beauty. Her elven ears are not displayed except in the last scene since they are different from normal human ears and could affect her beauty. She has long neck. Her deep red lips draw attention due to the contrast it makes with her fair complexion. All these qualify her as a very beautiful woman.

All protagonists have long flowing hair. This adds to their beauty. Except Tauriel, all protagonists have blonde hair. The red flaming hair of Tauriel resonates with her character traits. The hair is given significant place in all the shots in which Galadriel is depicted. Hair is a mark of beauty and attractiveness. Yvaine is shown with flowing silvery hair which resonates with her silvery dress.

The facial features of the protagonists are stressed in the movies. All of them have red lips and fair skin. These features are enhanced if the protagonists are the love interests of the hero.

Nude makeup is also associated with goodness which contrasts with the heavy makeup worn by evil female characters (Dam, 2014). Evil and ugly characters are often depicted with broad and curved eyebrows.

In contrast with the protagonists, the antagonists are shown as either bald headed or with untidy hairstyle. All of them are shown with large yellow teeth and reddish-brown tongue. They are all shabbily dressed in dark colours, mostly in black.

Bellatrix is tall and has curly black hair. She is thin and apparently beautiful in her early years. She displays quite an immense and latent sexual desire towards Voldemort by staying close to him. She is depicted wearing black gown. She has long sleeves detached from the gown but tied to the top with strings. The strings also attach the two sides of the sleeves together revealing the inside of her arms and armpits. The black colour associated with her connotes the wickedness in her.

Empusa wears a black colour dress with shades of dark red and Mormo wears a black dress with shades of blue. They both are bald headed and cover it with wigs. Empusa's wig is dark red in colour and Mormo's wig is in dark orange colour. Dark

red stands for vigour and anger. It could also be representing the special magic power of Empusa which is generating fire. Dark orange stands for deceit.

Ditchwater Sal also shown as fat, old and ugly. She has yellow teeth and a large forehead. She is mostly shown in a ragged and shabby red long woollen gown. Her hair is also dark orange in colour. She wears three beaded chains resembling a nomad. She looks shabby and ugly with her dishevelled hair and dress.

All antagonists are depicted as old. In the movie, Stardust the whole narrative swirls around the attempts by the antagonists to become young again.

Tone of Voice and Voice Volume

The depiction of women characters also depends on the tone of the voice they use in rendering the dialogues and the voice volume they use. These two variables were coded for each character.

The primary women protagonists and the percentage of shots in which various tones of voice used shown below

| Name of the Character | Eowyn | Arwen | Tauriel | Hermione | Ginny | Galadriel | Yvaine |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| Tone of Voice | | | | | | | |
| Assertive | 5.56 | 5.88 | 24.39 | 8.62 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cold | 0 | 0 | 9.76 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Submissive | 13.89 | 5.89 | 2.44 | 6.9 | 0 | 0 | 1.19 |
| Accusing | 2.78 | 5.89 | 4.88 | 8.62 | 0 | 0 | 23.81 |
| Authoritative | 0 | 0 | 24.39 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Calm | 0 | 0 | 7.32 | 6.9 | 0 | 17.39 | 14.29 |
| Quavering | 16.67 | 0 | 4.88 | 50 | 60 | 17.39 | 3.57 |
| Toneless | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tight | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.35 | 0 |
| Thick | 8.33 | 29.41 | 0 | 8.62 | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| Silvery | 38.89 | 11.76 | 9.76 | 0 | 0 | 30.43 | 52.38 |
| Husky | 2.78 | 35.29 | 12.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Brittle | 11.11 | 5.89 | 0 | 10.35 | 20 | 0 | 4.76 |
| Appealing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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The primary women antagonists and the percentage of shots in which various tones of voice used shown below

| Name of the Character | Bellatrix | Lamia | Ditchwater Sal | Empusa | Mormo |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------|----------------|--------|-------|
| Tone of Voice | | | | | |
| Assertive | 0 | 19.78 | 4054 | 40 | 33.33 |
| Cold | 0 | 12.09 | 5.41 | 30 | 5.56 |
| Submissive | 50 | 0 | 8.11 | 0 | 0 |
| Accusing | 0 | 4.4 | 10.81 | 30 | 16.67 |
| Authoritative | 0 | 63.74 | 24.32 | 0 | 44.44 |
| Calm | 0 | 0 | 5.41 | 0 | 0 |
| Quavering | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Toneless | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tight | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Thick | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Silvery | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Husky | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Brittle | 0 | 0 | 5.41 | 0 | 0 |
| Appealing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The protagonists are seldom portrayed with assertive and authoritative tones of voice. The exception here is Tauriel who is a warrior elf. The love interests of the heroes mostly possess husky or silvery tones. At the same time, antagonists are portrayed with assertive and authoritative tones of voice. The exception here is Bellatrix. But she is shown talking only to Voldemort whom she adores.

The stereotypical ascription of society on the tones of voice of women is reflected in these characters. The protagonists, especially heroines are depicted to have the tones which society adores and expect in women. The tones which society ascribes to men are often found in the antagonists. This again follows many previous studies which states that the characters who deviate from the societal prescription either suffer death or punishment in the end or are monstrous feminine who should be eliminated for the betterment of society.

Voice Volume

The primary women protagonists and the percentage of shots in which voice volume used is shown below

| Name of the | Eowyn | Arwen | Tauriel | Hermione | Ginny | Galadriel | Yvaine |
|-------------|-------|-------|---------|----------|-------|-----------|--------|
|-------------|-------|-------|---------|----------|-------|-----------|--------|

| Character | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|-------|-------|
| Voice Volume | | | | | | | |
| Whispering | 38.89 | 76.47 | 19.51 | 18.64 | 0 | 43.48 | 7.41 |
| Soft | 36.11 | 5.88 | 24.39 | 27.12 | 80 | 39.13 | 55.56 |
| Normal | 11.11 | 17.65 | 51.22 | 35.59 | 0 | 17.39 | 16.67 |
| Loud | 13.89 | 0 | 2.43 | 18.64 | 20 | | 16.67 |
| Shouting | 0 | 0 | 2.43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The primary women antagonists and the percentage of shots in which voice volume used is shown below

| Name of the Character | Bellatrix | Lamia | Ditchwater Sal | Empusa | Mormo |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------|----------------|--------|-------|
| Voice Volume | | | | | |
| Whispering | 50 | 3.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Soft | 50 | 60.44 | 5.88 | 20 | 0 |
| Normal | 0 | 14.29 | 32.35 | 60 | 33.33 |
| Loud | 0 | 21.98 | 47.06 | 20 | 66.67 |
| Shouting | 0 | 0 | 14.71 | 0 | 0 |

The voice volume of the heroines is mostly soft and whispering. The other protagonists show all variations in the voice volume. The volume of the voice of antagonists is similar to the protagonists.

Personality Traits

The personality traits of each character were coded with reference to BSRI. The traits in each shot were noted and number of shots in which these traits appeared were counted. The appearance of these behavioural traits even in a single shot shows that the character possesses the particular trait. So, the regularity or inconsistency in the appearance of the traits was not be considered. The number of shots were noted to find the appearance of the traits in the characters.

The primary women protagonists and the percentage of shots in which behavioural traits are depicted is shown below.

| Name of the Character | Eowyn | Arwen | Tauriel | Hermione | Ginny | Galadriel | Yvaine |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|---------|----------|-------|-----------|--------|
|-----------------------|-------|-------|---------|----------|-------|-----------|--------|

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| Traits | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Affectionate | 17.71 | 28.57 | 10.37 | 21.39 | 27.27 | 14.63 | 28.43 |
| Gentle | 7.43 | 10.71 | 1.83 | 5.20 | 21.82 | 2.44 | 15.31 |
| Loyal | 3.43 | 3.57 | | 4.05 | | | |
| Sensitive to others' needs | 5.14 | 5.36 | 4.88 | 8.09 | 10.91 | 24.39 | 2.39 |
| Soft Spoken | 5.14 | 16.07 | | 10.41 | | 12.20 | 4.58 |
| Sympathetic | 6.29 | | 1.83 | 6.36 | 10.91 | 4.88 | 1.59 |
| Understanding | | | | 9.25 | 9.09 | 2.44 | |
| Tender | 9.14 | 12.5 | | | 7.27 | | 1.99 |
| Warm | 4 | 8.93 | | 5.78 | 3.64 | 7.32 | 3.78 |
| Yielding | 5.14 | 3.57 | 3.05 | 1.16 | 3.64 | 2.44 | 3.18 |
| Acts as a leader | 0 | 0 | 3.05 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Aggressive | 0 | 0 | 29.27 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Assertive | 0 | 0 | 6.71 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Athletic | 0 | 0 | 6.10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dominant | 0 | 0 | 4.88 | 0 | 0 | 4.88 | 0 |
| Independent | 0 | 0 | 4.27 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Self sufficient | 0 | 0 | 1.83 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Strong Personality | 0 | 0 | 4.88 | 3.18 | 0 | 4.88 | 0 |
| Defends own beliefs | 4 | 7.14 | 5.49 | 2.31 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Willing to take a stand | 5.14 | 0 | 5.49 | 2.60 | 0 | 12.20 | 0 |
| Willing to take risks | 8 | 0 | 5.49 | 13.58 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Friendly | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4.046 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Happy | 6.29 | 3.57 | 0 | 1.45 | 0 | 2.44 | 0 |
| Helpful | 9.14 | 0 | 2.44 | 0 | 5.46 | 4.88 | 2.38 |

Eowyn is depicted as an affectionate character. Nine of the feminine traits defined by Bem could be found in the personality of Eowyn. Three masculine traits and three androgynous traits as defined by Bem also find a place in the personality of this character. Thus Eowyn is more or less constructed according to the feminine qualities defined by the society. She is pictured in the movie as lonely and disappointed, the latent meanings indicate her as terrified and dependent. This is also different from her depiction in the book where she is described by Tolkien as courageous.

Arwen is more feminine according to BSRI. She has eight feminine traits as described by Bem, only one masculine trait and one androgynous trait. Thus, most

of her personality is skewed towards the feminine side. Arwen is the love interest of the hero while Eowyn is rejected by him. This also adheres to the previous findings regarding the association between society prescribed femininity and the achievement of one's heart's desire.

The character trait of Tauriel is skewed towards masculinity with six feminine character attributes, eleven masculine attributes and one androgynous attribute within BSRI scale. Tauriel, being a warrior, is shown aggressive during the fights. She is also depicted as strong and does not possess the delicateness attributed usually to women. This character is a deviation from the conventional portrayal of women

The personality of Hermione as portrayed in the film reflect feminine attributes. Ten of the feminine traits listed in BSRI are found in the character features of Hermione. She also has four masculine traits and two androgynous traits as enlisted in BSRI. Hermione is quite different in the film than described in the book. An extremely intelligent and hard-working girl, Hermione is exceptionally brilliant and is highly academically inclined. Yet, the depiction of the character follows the traditional portrayal of women. She is not depicted as fighting at the battle which is in contrast with the book. In the book, she is good at combat and aids Harry in challenging situations. She is often a silent observer in the movie providing help to Harry and Ron. In most of the shots depicted, Hermione is positioned between Harry and Ron. This subliminally suggest that how much ever talented the girls are, society expects them to be protected by men.

Ginny Weasley exhibits feminine personality traits in almost all shots. She does not show any of the masculine traits as suggested in BSRI. One androgynous trait is depicted by her. Being the heroine of Harry, she is depicted as feminine. The absence of any of the masculine traits in her portrayal shows that the heroine is constructed in such a way that she adheres to the feminine traits prescribed by the society.

Lady Galadriel is also portrayed as feminine traits governing her character. She is shown to possess three masculine traits and two androgynous traits. The stress and reinforcement of feminine traits is done through the portrayal of Galadriel.

Yvaine is the most feminine of all women characters under consideration, when coded using BSRI. There are no masculine traits found in this character. There are two androgynous traits as indexed in BSRI. Yvaine is also the only female character who is portrayed as gullible. She is also portrayed with other feminine characteristics indexed in BSRI as childlike, cheerful and shy.

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The primary women antagonists and the percentage of shots in which behavioural traits are depicted is shown below.

| Name of the Character | Bellatrix | Lamia | Ditchwater Sal | Empusa | Mormo |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Traits | | | | | |
| Acts as a leader | 0 | 14.33 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Aggressive | 29.09 | 26.71 | 21.42 | 23.88 | 23.75 |
| Ambitious | 0 | 6.84 | 10.71 | 10.44 | 11.25 |
| Assertive | 5.46 | 5.53 | 10.71 | 7.46 | 5 |
| Competitive | 0 | 0 | 3.57 | 0 | 0 |
| Athletic | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.5 |
| Dominant | 7.27 | 8.46 | 7.14 | 13.43 | 16.25 |
| Forceful | 0 | 5.86 | 13.09 | 23.88 | 18.75 |
| Independent | 7.27 | 9.44 | 4.76 | 0 | 0 |
| Individualistic | 0 | 3.90 | 8.33 | 0 | 0 |
| Make decisions easily | 0 | 2.60 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Self sufficient | 3.64 | | 7.14 | 0 | 0 |
| Strong Personality | 0 | 1.30 | | 0 | 0 |
| Defends own beliefs | 0 | | 3.57 | 1.49 | 0 |
| Willing to take a stand | 0 | 5.86 | 4.76 | 5.97 | 7.5 |
| Willing to take risks | 5.46 | 9.12 | 2.38 | 13.43 | 12.5 |
| Jealous | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.5 |
| Tactful | 0 | 0 | 2.38 | 0 | 0 |

None of the feminine traits suggested by the BSRI is present in the personality of Bellatrix. All traits exhibited by this character corresponds to the masculine attributes in the BSRI scale.

Lamia, the main antagonist in the film Stardust, has only the traits which indicate masculinity in BSRI. She does not show feminine or androgynous traits. Ditchwater Sal also has only masculine traits in her behavioural platter. She is not depicted as exhibiting any of the feminine traits. Like the other women antagonists in the films, she also suffers death in the end. She has one androgynous quality too. Yet, her character is mostly driven by the masculine traits as listed out in the BSRI.

The character Empusa is also constructed with masculine traits. The personality of Empusa does not reflect any of the feminine traits enlisted in BSRI. The femininity accepted and desired by the society is absent in her character. Mormo is stout and has some masculine characteristics in her physique too. She does not have any of the feminine traits in her behaviour. She shows only the traits which define masculinity as prescribed by the society.

This is a subtle method of reinforcing the femininity in good characters. Those who deny the character attributes prescribed by the society are depicted as antagonist. In other words when women antagonists are constructed, they are ascribed masculine qualities so that the spectators unconsciously learn that deviations from the accepted behavioural pattern is not accepted. These 'masculine' antagonists are at the end punished by death. Thus, the movies reinforce that, to be accepted by the society a woman should possess the feminine qualities and limit the masculine traits in her character.

None of the women characters possess the qualities of being analytical or self-reliant. These are two masculine traits indexed in the BSRI. The character traits follow a particular pattern. The woman protagonists show feminine traits and a few masculine attributes, mainly defending one's beliefs and willingness to take risks. Some of them also has a strong personality to their credit. A good mixture of feminine and masculine traits is seen in Tauriel.

The women antagonists possess masculine characteristics and do not own feminine traits. Interestingly, the behavioural characteristics of the heroines of the films skew more towards femininity than any other character. They are constructed as the epitome of female qualities and somehow the masculine traits are absent from their behaviour. This sends a message especially to the girls that to win the heart of the heroes one needs to fit into the character traits as prescribed by the society. The stress given on being gentle, tender, soft spoken, warm, understanding and yielding are to be noted. Thus the society and its institutions ascribe certain characteristic features to women and men which should be obeyed. This is reinforced by these films.

Discussion and Conclusion

The portrayal of femininity in fantasy films still adheres to the usual representation of gender roles. Various aspects are set out in order to emphasise the beauty in the women protagonists. The portrayal of the love interests of the heroes does not account for anything other than projecting the facial beauty. Thus, a deliberate attempt using the various elements of film is made to depict the women characters as desirable to men. Beauty is equated with goodness of character. The female antagonists are shown as ugly and old emphasising the importance of beauty.

Protagonist women are subliminally structured as passive. The women who adhere to the feminine traits defined by the society are portrayed as protagonists and life is shown to be happy for them ever after. The deviance from the desirable feminine characteristics of women antagonists is worth noting. The women who venture out alone and take decisions with their will are projected as antagonists. The women antagonists also have those personality traits which are being projected as masculine

by the society. Thus, it could be construed that women who possess the qualities subscribed for men are treated as antagonists.

Women antagonists are also shown to be threatening to men. The concept of monstrous feminine is stressed through the portrayal of these antagonists. They venture out and is ready to destroy and harm men. These women are shown more powerful than men. In short, the message conveyed by these films is that good women are always with their men. However, bad and wretched women do not adhere to the rules prescribed for women by the society. As a result of this they get punishment and, in these films, mostly in the form of death. The films also warn boys subliminally to be careful about wandering women who are alone. They can bring them harm at any time and any place.

The messages thus disseminated create a lot of impressions in young minds. Girls try to look beautiful and young always. They also try to be thin like the women protagonists of these films. The deviance from the expected behavioural roles can create stress in the minds of girls. The boys are also influenced by the femininity thus exhibited. They consider the deviance from the usual feminine roles and traits as obnoxious in women. They expect all women to possess these traits and behave accordingly.

The naturalisation of femininity through these filmic elements generates unconscious acceptance of it. Femininity should not be considered as a synonym for weakness and dependence. The negative attributes which adhere to the stereotype should also disappear from the films eventually. Though fantasy films have narrative based on fictional characters, the messages they convey are taken into real lives by the audiences. The depiction of femininity is done through the elements and is subliminally transferred to the young generations. It is made so subtle that they accept it as natural and do not question it.

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Actress, Activism and Social Media Engagement: A Content Analysis of the Official Facebook Page of Parvathy Thiruvothu

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Abstract

The formation of the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC) in Kerala is considered a defining moment in the Malayalam film industry. The incident of the abduction and sexual assault of an established actress from the industry, which became the catalyst for the formation of WCC, received much attention and scrutiny from the media and the public. This study investigates how the online public has received all these developments challenging patriarchal norms by analysing their Facebook behaviours. And for this, the engagements on posts on the official Facebook page of Parvathy Thiruvothu, one of the founding members of WCC and who was subjected to much public ire before and after the formation of WCC, were analysed through a gendered lens. The results showed a shift in the actress's perception before and after the formation of WCC. While men were mostly seen responding to her pre-WCC formation posts adulating her beauty and talent, her feministic stands in the later years up until the formation of WCC were met critically, giving her the title of "feminichi." Nevertheless, in the post-WCC formation, more women and men supported her cause and engaged in constructive discussions on gender rights and equality via Facebook.

Keywords

WCC, Qualitative Content Analysis, Facebook Behaviour, Gender Equality, Social Media Engagement

Introduction

The Malayalam film industry is in a transitional phase. The films are becoming more and more socio-political commentary of the current times; they are more gender-sensitive in their content; more women-centric films are being made; but even more remarkably, women actors are demanding equal rights. Though the winds of change have been blowing slowly, all its good intentions were put to the

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test when a female actor was abducted and sexually assaulted in a moving vehicle on February 17, 2017.

The industry became highly divisive when the accused turned out to be a prominent male actor from the same industry. Different organizations within the industry, notably AMMA (Association of Malayalam Movie Artists), wavered in their stance toward the victim. Displeased by these developments, a few women artists, directors, writers, and industry technicians formed another organization named the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC) in solidarity with the victim and as a voice for the women in the Malayalam film industry.

Although all of these developments were subjected to heavy public and media scrutiny, the members of the WCC came at the receiving end of the issue, especially on Facebook. They were attacked in cyberspace, more specifically on their official Facebook pages. One of the prominent actresses who were more vocal and were at the forefront of the movement was Parvathy Thiruvothu. She was made an easy target for much misogyny on Facebook mainly because of her image as a feminist and her opinions on misogyny in Malayalam films. Moreover, this paper intends to analyse the gendered perception qualitatively on the transformation of this actress by analysing the Facebook behaviour of the online public who engage with the actress's official Facebook page.

To meet this objective, the methodology adopted was that of qualitative content analysis. The variable identified for the study was gender. The data about the Facebook behaviour measures, like comments, shares, and reactions to the actor's Facebook posts before and after the formation of WCC, was analysed. The comments section below such posts were subjected to content analysis.

Actress Abduction Case Timeline

The following is a timeline showcasing the major events in the actress abduction and sexual assault case:

Feb 17, 2017: The actress was abducted and sexually assaulted in a moving car. After two hours, she was dropped at the house of Mr. Lal, a noted actor, and director in the Malayalam film industry. The actress approached the police, and an FIR was filed on the same day

Feb 19, 2017: Police arrested three of the seven accused

Feb 23, 2017: Pulser Suni, the prime accused, surrendered before the Additional Chief Magistrate

May 18, 2017: Women in Cinema Collective (WCC) was formed

July 10, 2017: Malayalam film actor Dileep was arrested in connection with the case

Sep 10, 2017: Members of WCC launched a campaign, 'Avalkkoppam,' in solidarity with the actress

Dec 5, 2017: The charge sheet submitted, including more than 50 people from the film industry as witnesses, was accepted

Jan 30, 2020: The trial began after three years

Sep 18, 2020: WCC reinstated their solidarity with the actress after several witnesses, including the popular actors Bhama, Siddique, Bindu Panikker, and Edavela Babu, turned hostile

Facebook Behaviour

Based on the level of cognitive effort required, Facebook behaviours can be ordered as follows: like, comment, and share (Kim & Yang, 2017). That means the least effort goes into liking a post, and sharing a post requires the most level of cognition. This phenomenon is because, compared to writing comments, shared posts make it to the News Feed and enter the user's profile page. Therefore, users will be more careful while sharing a post than liking or commenting.

Objectives

This paper attempts to understand the online public's gendered perception of the transformation of Parvathy Thiruvothu as a representation of the few women who went from being artists to forming an organization and pitting against age-old inequality.

Specific Objectives:

- To examine the Facebook behaviours such as likes, comments, shares, and reactions received on Facebook posts on the official page of Parvathy Thiruvothu from the pre-WCC formation and post-WCC formation phases.
- To analyse the content of the Facebook post comments from the pre-WCC formation and post-WCC formation for themes.
- To understand the gender dynamics in the shift in discourse around gender equality.

Method

A qualitative content analysis of 14 Facebook posts was carried out to meet the study's objectives. Purposive sampling was used since only those Facebook posts were required, which were key to the objectives under study. The variable under consideration was gender. The selected 14 Facebook posts were divided into two sections of 7 posts each, with the formation of WCC as the reference point for the division. The Women in Cinema Collective was registered as a society on 1st November 2017. Therefore, the posts before and after this date were divided into two phases: Pre-WCC formation and Post-WCC formation. Pre-WCC formation phase contains seven posts from the years 2015 and 2016 combined. And Post-WCC formation phase contains seven posts from 2017 through 2020. Each date was coded as Post 1 to Post 14.

The same number of posts was selected from each phase to tackle the disparity of having more years coming under the second phase. Also, the study has carefully selected similar posts from both phases to understand the change in the social media engagement between the actor and the online public and among the people who engaged with the actor's Facebook page. It should also be noted that even though the actor was actively taking part in the social cause before the formation of WCC, the second phase saw a surge in the causes she stood for; in other words, the activist role was on par with her role as an actor. During 2015-2016, more posts were related to films, film promotions, and sharing photos with the public. Therefore, the second phase has more Facebook posts that deal with activism than those related to just films.

Analysis

To meet the objectives, the engagement of the online public on the official Facebook page of Parvathy Thiruvothu was analysed. This was done by examining how the online public used the options available on the Facebook platform- like, comment, and share (Kim & Yang, 2017). Along with the like option, the six reactions that come with it, namely, *love*, *haha*, *wow*, *sad*, *care*, and *angry*, were evaluated. This has helped to understand the response of users to the post better because not every post can be liked (Stinson, 2016). Along with this, the content of comments section was analysed for themes that could be grouped into positive and negative based on the words used.

Pre-WCC Formation Phase:

The following tables, Table 1 and Table 2, describes the coding of the Facebook posts, including the nature and context of the post; and the data about the like and

reactions received to each post, respectively. Table 3 depicts the number of comments and shares received by each post.

Table 1

Code, Nature, and Context of the Facebook Post

| Sl. no | Code | Date | Nature of the Post | Context |
|---------------|-------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1 | Post 1 | 24 th March 2015 | Personal | Shared a photo of a caricature of the character 'RJ Sarah' the actor played in the movie <i>Bangalore Days</i> , released on 30 th May 2014 |
| 2 | Post 2 | 9 th June 2015 | Personal | Shared photo of the actor |
| 3 | Post 3 | 19 th September 2015 | Film Release | Post on the movie <i>Ennu Ninte Moideen</i> on its release, congratulating the entire team and wishing the audience a good time at the movies |
| 4 | Post 4 | 7 th December 2015 | Relief Work | Post with pictures taken amid the relief activities for the 2015 South India Floods as a volunteer of the <i>Anbodu Kochi</i> ('with love Kochi') group that came together to send relief materials to the affected areas. |
| 5 | Post 5 | 24 th December 2015 | Personal | Post clearing the air on her name not having a caste name 'Menon' as a surname in official records |
| 6 | Post 6 | 24 th December 2015 | Film Release | Shared photos and experiences while filming the 2015 Malayalam movie <i>Charlie</i> on the day of its release |
| 7 | Post 7 | 28 th December 2016 | Personal | Shared a half-face photo of the actor wearing her signature frames and hair in a top knot |

Table 2**Likes and Reactions for Each Post**

| | POST 1 | POST 2 | POST 3 | POST 4 | POST 5 | POST 6 | POST 7 |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Like | 9.6k | 7k | 16k | 5k | 12k | 15k | 36k |
| Love | 72 | 130 | 43 | 15 | 98 | 167 | 1.6k |
| Angry | 46 | 59 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 398 |
| Haha | 11 | 5 | - | - | 15 | 3 | 99 |
| Wow | 4 | 5 | - | 1 | 6 | 21 | 202 |
| Care | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | 3 |
| Sad | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 16 |

Table 3**Number of Comments and Shares**

| | POST 1 | POST 2 | POST 3 | POST 4 | POST 5 | POST 6 | POST 7 |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Comments | 122 | 182 | 697 | 158 | 1000 | 882 | 787 |
| Shares | 16 | 18 | 380 | 475 | 302 | 86 | 68 |

The following section contains the analysis of the data presented in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3. The analysis was conducted by recording the significant observations in each aspect of Facebook behaviour.

Like: It is evident from Table 1 that there is a rise in the number of likes received for the posts with each passing year during the Pre-WCC formation phase. Post 7 stands out in this phase, with 36k likes as the most liked post. Posts 5, 6, and 3 have also crossed 10k likes. Men formulate a significant share of the users who liked the posts. Women also showed their presence more by liking the post than by commenting and sharing.

Reactions: The most striking observation of the reactions section was the angry reaction from men. The love reaction was the highest among reactions for all the posts. All the reactions were sharply high for Post 7 compared to the rest of the posts.

Comment: Post 5 received the highest number of comments, with men making the most rounds. Women's comments were higher for Post 5 than for the other posts. The comments in these posts carried very positive content appreciating her stand to clear the speculations regarding her surname. Nevertheless, it was Post 7 which carried the most negative content with derogatory words to belittle and humiliate the actor in the wake of the 'Kasaba row.' Men almost entirely wrote such posts.

Share: Post 4, regarding the relief activities carried out by the actor during the Chennai floods of 2015, was the most shared.

Post-WCC Formation Phase

The following tables, Table 4 and Table 5, describes the coding of the Facebook posts, including the nature and context of the post; and the data about the like and reactions received to each post, respectively. Table 6 depicts the number of comments and shares received by each post.

Table 4
Code, Nature, and Context of the Facebook Post

| Sl. no | Code | Date | Nature of the Post | Context |
|--------|---------|---------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | Post 8 | 13 th December 2017 | Activism | The post was about a special screening of the 2016 Malayalam movie <i>Kasaba</i> following the controversy over a comment the actor made about misogyny in films taking the example of the said film, which starred Mammooty. The post was addressed to the online media that allegedly has created the controversy and the fans who believed such scoops |
| 2 | Post 9 | 24 th December 2017 | Personal | Shared an online article by screenwriter duo Bobby-Sanjay published in The News Minute explaining why some men dislike Parvathy written against the backdrop of the <i>Kasaba</i> row |
| 3 | Post 10 | 9 th March 2018 | Advertisement | Levi's jeans brand's 'I shape my world' series advertisement featured the actor as a voice for change where she briefly narrates her journey as a feminist |
| 4 | Post 11 | 12 th August 2018 | Relief Work | Posted a video from Kochi urging people to donate relief materials to help the affected by the 2018 Kerala floods |
| 5 | Post 12 | 28 th April 2019 | Film Release | Post sharing the photo of the character 'Pallavi' that the actor played in the 2019 Malayalam movie <i>Uyare</i> two days after its release |
| 6 | Post 13 | 19 th September 2020 | Activism | Post lamenting the situation of witnesses turning hostile in the actress abduction case of 2017 and explaining how badly it is affecting the victim |
| 7 | Post 14 | 12 th October 2020 | Activism | Post explaining her decision to resign from the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) after the general secretary made a comparison between the victim and a demised person |

Table 5

Likes and Reactions for Each Post

| | Post 8 | Post 9 | Post 10 | Post 11 | Post 12 | Post 13 | Post 14 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Likes | 3.6k | 9.3k | 5.7k | 10k | 12k | 7.8k | 91k |
| Love | 370 | 779 | 853 | 862 | 2.8k | 909 | 16k |
| Angry | 1.2k | 2.8k | 1.3k | 21 | 5 | 15 | 30 |
| Haha | 62 | 1.1k | 44 | 27 | 46 | 150 | 1.4k |
| Wow | 9 | 52 | 109 | 34 | 34 | 4 | 131 |
| Care | - | - | - | 1 | - | 46 | 611 |
| Sad | 6 | 31 | 9 | 33 | 164 | 14 | 31 |

Table 6**Number of Comments and Shares**

| | POST 8 | POST 9 | POST 10 | POST 11 | POST 12 | POST 13 | POST 14 |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Comments | 7.1k | 1k | 1k | 604 | 788 | 1.1k | 21k |
| Shares | 253 | 150 | 145 | 4.4k | 1k | 225 | 9.1k |

The following section contains the analysis of the data presented in Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6. The analysis was conducted by recording the significant observations in each aspect of Facebook behaviour.

Like: Post 14, with 91k thumps ups, carried the most likes for the post about the news and explanation behind the actor's resignation from AMMA. This phase carried the most likes combined compared to the Pre-WCC formation phase. Women were as visible as men in the likes section.

Reactions: Post 14 garnered the most reactions from the users, except for the angry reaction. In this phase, there was a surge in the use of angry reactions and haha reactions apart from the love. Like the earlier phase, the angry reaction was almost entirely from men.

Comment: There is a significant rise in the number of comments showing the increased engagement of the users with the content on the page. The comments were highest for Post 14. The content of the comments in this phase carried a mix of positive and negative words – derogatory and words of appreciation and admiration. Another feature of this phase was the comments by many women and men defending the actor through fitting replies.

Share: The number of shares was also significantly high, with Post 14 with the most shares, followed by Post 11, which was regarding the Kerala flood relief activities, and Post 12, which dealt with the film's release.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to understand the gendered perception of the transformation of an actor into an activist by analysing the Facebook behaviour of the online public. For this, the official Facebook page of Parvathy Thiruvothu was used to study user engagement with the content of the posts and to conduct a qualitative content analysis of the comment section below the selected Facebook posts. The study also attempted to understand the changing discourse among the users while engaging with content that challenges the status quo.

While comparing the selected posts in the Pre-WCC formation phase and Post-WCC formation phase, it was clear that the latter had more posts labeled as activism, which showed the actor's transformation. The actor's association with feminism was visible from the Pre-WCC phase. However, later her involvement with gender injustice causes and activism considered two pathways to reaching a feminist identity (Frederick & Stewart, 2018), truly made her stand out.

From Table 2 & Table 5, it was evident that the popularity of the actress has increased with each passing year as the number of likes has increased correspondingly. Because clicking like is considered as the lowest form of effort, the tables show that the actor's cause was supported by the online community. The comment section was ruled by men making derogatory references to belittle the achievements of Parvathy Thiruvothu both as an actor and an activist. Constant attempts were visible to dismiss activism by women as not "real" activism or being slacktivism (Craddock & Craddock, 2018).

Nevertheless, in the Post-WCC posts, more men were visible defending the actor against other men who often behaved in a mob-like fashion. Towards Post 14, women were seen engaging more in the comments section, which suggested that they were identifying themselves with the cause and engaging in Facebook behaviour, which required more cognitive effort than just liking a post. Though the comments were filled with whataboutery and misogynist references for a period, they were later found to be in the majority with the content of appreciation and admiration. The comments were seen to discuss gender equality more openly than in the previous posts.

The fact that people started sharing posts of the actor, which requires a high level of cognitive effort, showed the excellent reception of the change and discourse that happened as part of the actress abduction case and the formation of WCC.

Collective cause or action helps one be a part of a broader community outside their identity (Vindhya, 2012). The formation of WCC did just that to the members, starting discourses on not much touched upon issues of gender equality and justice in workplaces. Parvathy Thiruvothu sharing such content on her official Facebook page has helped to engage the online public. Furthermore, the study, with the help of Facebook behaviours, suggests that the online community indeed has perceived the social change of women coming to the fore and demanding their rights well.

Conclusion

Societal norms dictate what to do and what not to do. There are some invisible boundaries that one should not dare cross. Films are nothing but a reflection of the society they belong to. So, a patriarchal society will have a predominantly patriarchal film industry. Moreover, everybody in it will have demarcated positions, and anyone who challenges it will be dealt a heavy hand.

The formation of WCC can be seen as challenging the status quo, as a tipping point for all the inequalities that existed up until then. The film industry is only the extension of the patriarchy that runs deep in society. So if the film industry is reluctant to share power with women, it is only natural that the larger society will also sense the same dilemma. That being said, responding with a ‘why not in the face of resistance to change can also steer society in a new, more inclusive direction. Parvathy Thiruvothu did, through her posts, poke this question to the online public.

The study shows that people have used all forms of Facebook behaviours – like, react, comment, and share- to engage with the content in the posts on the page of Parvathy Thiruvothu and to gain a better perspective on topics of gender equality and justice.

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Power Dynamics and Female Subjugation in P. Sivakami's *The Grip of Change*

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Abstract

This paper tries to analyze the power dynamics and female subjugation in the novel *The Grip of Change* by a Dalit woman writer P. Sivakami. Tyrannous use of power exists at all levels and the women suffer the most. This paper foregrounds the exploitation of Dalit women by upper caste men and men of their own community. They suffer caste discrimination, gender discrimination and economic oppression. As a result they face triple marginalization. The misuse of power by male Dalit leaders is also discussed here. Kathamuthu represents such a leader. Thangam's story depicts how a Dalit woman gets oppressed by caste, class and patriarchy. Gowri, an educated Dalit girl in the novel, is represented as the mouthpiece of the author herself and it is proved that only by changing themselves they can be an instrument of change. The author sees the possibility of the emergence of new movement for the Dalits. So she presents the youth of the community as eager people who are ready to fight for a change. Chandran, the ideal leader, is presented to prove this. Only with commitment and sincerity of action Dalits can be uplifted. Thus the author of this novel gives voice to the voiceless.

Key words: Power, Subjugation, Marginalization, Patriarchy, Change, Uplift.

Introduction

P. Sivakami, Tamil, Dalit writer, is a member of the Indian Administrative Service. She took voluntary retirement from Government service and from then she has been working for the uplift of the Dalits. She is the first Dalit woman to write a novel titled *Pazhaiyana Kazhidalum* in 1989. This novel was translated by the author herself and published in English titled *The Grip of Change*. She has published four novels and four short story collections and she is a regular contributor to a literary magazine.

Gangadhar Panterwne, a Dalit journal editor, says; "Dalit is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of their country." This remark is only about the 'men' of Dalit community. Here the 'women' are ignored. The voice of Dalit women is rarely heard in literary world. In this situation, Sivakami takes up the task of telling stories of her people in her own words. She tries to give voice to the voiceless. As a woman she projects Dalit women in her writings and the

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indifference to the plight of the Dalit women is also explored. As a Dalit woman she could foreground the differences in experience of Dalit men and Dalit women. As a Dalit woman writer she has dual responsibility. She has to write against the atrocities of the caste system and at the same time gender discrimination also should be highlighted. Sivakami writes from her own experiences and all her novels are centred on Dalit and feminist themes. She states in the preface of this novel that it is a process of understanding the dynamics of caste system and the 'woman' who was inextricably involved in the process. It is natural that she writes about Dalits and women as these two factors decided by birth. To write about these factors she places herself within a circle, influencing the politics surrounding those factors. Sivakami says, "I understand that it is the need of the hour and the requirement of the future." So she continues with her efforts both in creative writing and in other spheres.

The violence on lower caste people and the power relation between the Dalit woman and her landlord are the age-old stories. Arrogant attitude towards Dalit community, violence, women and politics are discussed in her writings. The sufferings of untouchables are never ending chain but writers like P. Sivakami tries to give an identity to the people whose existence has been underestimated by the society. Dr. Kleetus Varghese says;

"The power determines the position of social group and the individual depending on the power and position of social groups; they are placed either at the centre or on the fringes- margins- of a given society."

Power and economic background are the main source for hierarchical structures of caste. Those who have power and position have become the dominant groups whereas the poor and powerless are considered marginalized. Through her writings P. Sivakami finds awareness in her people. As a result, her novels prove that it is not a question of experience but also perspective. In her novel she includes the theme of patriarchy also. Dalit women, as the other women, are dominated by the men in their community. They are treated as a slave, as an inferior. She presents characters to change the social structure in her novels.

In *The grip of Change* P. Sivakami foregrounds the sufferings of Dalit community and this voices the plight of an exploited low caste woman. She projects the exploitation of Dalit women by upper caste men and men of their own community. The novel is divide into two parts. The first part is a fictional representation of caste infested rural society. The second part is 'Author's Notes'; the motive behind writing the first part. The novelist presents the character, Thangam, to depict how a Dalit woman gets subjugated by patriarchy, caste and class. Thangam is a victim of the triple marginalization in the form of caste, class and gender. These keep the Dalit women at the bottom most position in the pyramid of power hierarchy. They suffer as they are poor, landless and wage laborers. Thangam symbolizes all Dalit women brutally treated by the upper caste land lords. In this novel, Thangam's life

captures the life of unseen, unedited side of Dalit patriarchy. Meena Kandasamy, in her reading on this novel, says that the significance of the novel lies in the fact that it speaks for the most vulnerable members of the Dalit community- its women. Thangam's body bears the testimonies to the difficulties faced by Dalit women. As Simon de Beauvoir says one is not born woman but rather becomes one. This novel shows the dominance of patriarchy to make a woman an object of second sex. The important women characters in this novel are Thangam and Gowri. Thangam is portrayed as a subaltern Dalit widow and Gowri represents the symptoms of growing awareness among Dalits. The novel is narrated through the eyes of Gowri. Thangam is a Parayar woman and all the incidents in the novel take place around her. The novel begins as Thangam is mercilessly beaten up by her landlord's wife and brothers. After her husband's death she was denied the right to inherit her husband's property by her brothers-in-law. Instead of protecting her they tried to exploit her sexually. This forced her to seek work in the farm of Paramjothi Udayar. But one day she was raped by her master. She says;

“I remained silent, after all, he is my paymaster. He measures my rice.” (Sivakami, 2006,P.7)

Thangam is only a representation of the Dalit women who were brutally raped by upper caste land lords. They had to keep silence and they never tried to raise their voice against them because they financially depend upon men. These women are considered a mere toy in the hands of the upper caste men. In this novel the land lord makes it a habit to keep on exploiting her. But finally only she is blamed for having committed adultery not the land lord. He is saved by the people in the village. Even her brothers in law blamed to have “seduced” the land lord. Paramjothi Udayar thinks;

“Even if she was hurt, she was hurt by the hand adorned with gold! A Parachi could have never dreamt of being touched by a man like me” (Sivakami, 2006, P31).

He feels that his touch is a boon granted for penance performed her earlier births. For him, having committed adultery with a low caste woman is not a problem but the exposure of an affair with a Paraya woman is humiliating; only the caste concerns made him anxious.

In this novel Thangam is exploited both by an upper caste man and by men of her own community. This exposes the patriarchy within Dalit community. Thangam reaches Kathamuthu, a respected Dalit leader, seeking his help. He is a leader who fights for the liberation of Dalit community but his behavior is like an upper caste man. He shows his dominance everywhere. Thangam's story of sexual exploitation is not over with Paramjothy Udayar. She got justice only after sexually exploited by Kathamuthu also. He changed the entire story of Thangam to make it benefit for his political career. He simply made the story as Thangam was beaten by the upper caste when she walked along their street. After the police enquiry the upper caste

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people planned to hire workers from the neighbouring village. Later, some huts were burned down and the Dalits believed it was done by the upper caste people. Before a communal riot the police arrived and people from both sides were called for reconciliation. As a result, the upper caste accepted the demands put forward by Kathumuthu. They were advised to give ten thousand rupees for Thangam as compensation. They also agreed to increase their daily wages.

Later, Kathumuthu goes on to deceive Thangam for giving her shelter and assistance to get the compensation. He even physically abuses her and she is accepted as his third wife. So it is clear from this novel that Dalit women-poor, landless and wage labourers- have to suffer discrimination on the basis of caste, gender and class. This novel also projects that Dalit leaders exclude the interest of women while fighting against the upper caste's domination. Society does not recognize and respect the self identity of a woman. Meena Kandasami states;

“In *The Grip of Change* most of the incidents occur in the body of Thangam. Her body becomes the sight for all kinds of contestations, symbolically making the body of a Dalit woman, a territory on which any one can thread as against that of an upper caste woman whose body is inviolable”.

In the Author's Notes Sivakami says that it wasn't simply the upper caste's exploit the lower caste. A lower caste leader might exploit his own people. It is not only the upper caste men who prey up on lower caste women. The overall picture presented by the novel is that rich or poor, upper caste or lower caste, the seeds of corruption exists at all levels. The author of this novel has criticized the leadership of the Dalits. She presents Kathumuthu as a tyrannically dominating person. The novelist only wanted to portray the deep roots of caste oppression in villages and how violence erupted even within a caste group. She wished for a change in the leadership of the scheduled caste. Her wish was for a revolutionary leadership. That is why Sivakami presents Chandran who is accepted by the Dalits in this novel. They join together in a powerful movement. So we can say the novel presents a logical solution. According to Meena Kandasami it is a unanimous expression of the youth of this oppressed community-eager and waiting for change. The author's vision is a changed society and she believes that it is in the hands of the youth. Only organized, educated Dalit youth who will stand united with commitment and sincerity of action can uplift the Dalits. As the title of the novel indicates a new change is inevitable when the old things are cleaned up and thrown away.

John E. Mary states;

“In present-day-society a Dalit woman is also considered to be an equal to her man. Today, Dalit women, who constitute the major

working force, are thrice alienated and oppressed on the basis of their class and gender.”

The novelist also stated that the women and their role in the society are changing and so the patriarchy and their role must be changing. So she presents the character Gowri as an epitome to such change. Through Gowri she sees the possibility of the emergence of a new movement for all the downtrodden people. Gowri realizes the exploitation of women in a patriarchal set up. She is educated and she studied well only to avoid marriage. She detests her father's two qualities-his polygamy and coarseness. She often challenges the order of the society. By refusing marriage she violates patriarchal code concerning women's role within the family. Through this character Sivakami urges women to come out of both caste and gender injustice. It will be possible only through education, work, ideological conscious, participation in collective, organized socially committed movements.

Conclusion

Thus, this paper projects the power dynamics and female subjugation in Dalit community. The portrayals of the dynamics of caste and sexuality deserve our applause. The novelist takes the roles of the critic and the author. In this novel she presents caste in all its dimensions. The oppression of women had been interwoven with the problems of caste. The lower caste should shatter their particular identities and then they can identify themselves as one class. If the struggle is centred on the Dalits, class and caste equality will be attained. As a Dalit woman writer P. Sivakami depicted the reality encountered by Dalit women who are ignored by the outside world. But Sivakami has undertaken this complex and multi-faceted task very well.

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Dominant Thematic Pre-occupation in the Post-Colonial African Literature: A Reading

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Abstract

The events of colonialism have taken the attention of arrays of African literary writers, discussing the nature of the period of colonialism, the implications to the social, religious, human rights, and other aspects of human functionality during the colonial period. This article provides a survey of dominant themes in post-colonial African literature. The direction is to discuss some post-colonial African writers, the dominant themes they projected about 20-30 years ago, and the implications of this narrative in modern literature. The study was conducted using a qualitative approach, the analysis was conducted using the descriptive analysis method, and data was sourced directly from selected post-colonial African writers. The survey unveiled dominant themes in post-colonial African literature. However, eight basic themes were discovered to be dominant across arrays of literary studies. The themes of colonialism itself, colonial liberation, nationalism, tradition, political liberation, displacement, gender equality, and greater rootlessness are dominant in the literature. These themes are built across slave narratives, cultural and traditional conflicts, protest against colonialism, open calls for the end of colonialism, protection of the African pride promoted through traditional dominance of women liberation, expression of hope for Africa, and discussion of womanhood. The works of Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiongo, among others are quite dominant. The study thus concluded that post-colonial African literature is still a reflection of the events of the colonial period and a narrative for a future Africa without the effects of the presence of the colonial representatives. It is also recommended that analysis may need pay on how the themes of post-colonial African literature shape the contemporary realities of the African political, social, economic, religious, and collective existence.

Key Words

Colonization, African Literature, Themes of Literatures, Struggle, Nationalism, Liberation, Post Colonial African Literature

1. Introduction

Post-colonial African literature analytical studies are abundant in the academic literature. Significantly, postcolonial African literature is prominent in the

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intellectual debates on a variety of issues, the direct re-evaluation of the African society, the re-evaluation of theories in postcolonial African literature, and the redefinition of the concepts of postcolonial African literature, postcolonial Africa literary themes, etc. It is necessary to offer a precise definition of the notion of post-colonial African literature, which will serve as a guide for further debate on studies that should be classified in this field.

The concept of post-colonial African literature is based on certain historical events and periods. Typically, the term African postcolonial literature refers to the writings and publication of literary works produced following the political independence of various African nations that were once dominated by various European administrators. An emphasis is placed on the fact that works classified as postcolonial African literature must originate from an African, and may or may not be written in any African state, but the writer's country must have been liberated from European colonial administration.

Numerous post-colonial African authors exist. It is important to note that African countries achieved independence at different eras. Some African countries achieved independence from colonial administrators as early as the 1950s, while others did so between the early and mid-1990s. The fact that some authors wrote literary works before their countries achieved independence is significant. These literary works are not classified as post-colonial African literature, mostly because the author's country is still under the administrative jurisdiction of colonial administration.

Numerous investigations have uncovered various characteristics of post-colonial African literature. According to Poppen (2012), the majority of post-colonial writings, both those created in Africa and those produced in the Diaspora tend to emphasize their colonial experiences or the decolonization process. The narratives of slavery, the destruction of already established African cultural heritage, the cruelty of administrative processes perpetuated by colonial administration officers, the relegation of women and children, and the process of decolonization tinged with narratives of liberation and resentment are prominent in the literary works of this period. These are major subjects in the post-colonial study of African literature. This study provides a survey of the prevalent topics in post-colonial African literature. The focus is on revealing the prevalent themes in postcolonial African literature's various postcolonial African literature. Post-colonial African literature analysis studies are abundant in the academic literature. Significantly, postcolonial African literature is prominent in the intellectual debates on a variety of issues, the direct reevaluation of the African society, the reevaluation of theories in postcolonial African literature, and the redefinition of the concepts of postcolonial African literature, postcolonial Africa literary themes, etc. It is necessary to offer a

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2. Colonialism and the Revolution of African Literature: A Brief Review

For African communities, the period of colonialism was a crucial time. The time was marked by numerous transformations and dramatic relocations. Colonialism imposed on the African people's tradition, belief systems, cultural standards and behaviors, and the projected standards of the colonial administration. The colonial authorities compelled them to accept the lifestyles of the colonial masters, leaving them with little other option. At this point, African tradition and religion began to be displaced, and their belief system was tossed into the baskets of outmoded components. As a means of engaging the colonized by the colonial administrator,

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the colonized Africans were forced to learn that administrator's language. As a result of this unintentional dominance, the settlers begin to absorb the language of the colonial officials and to mix it with their own tongues. The languages of the colonial administrators were acquired through inadequate education or by "subverting the colonized and compelling him to learn his language so that he could interact with him" (Asma 2015, p. 18).

Not only did the colonized mingle their language with that of the colonial administration, but they also blended their culture, lifestyle, custom, and standard of living. During the colonial administration, the indigenous culture and tradition began to clash with the imported heritage, resulting in a number of revolutions and freedom-seeking demonstrations. The battle for freedom and emancipation at the hands of colonial administrators was supported by a variety of strategies. In an effort to recover their independence, some projected aggressive acts against the colonial authority. There are also some who opted for an academic approach, producing an array of literary studies to expose the colonial authorities' nefarious acts.

During and during Africa's colonial regimes, several literary works were produced. This study focuses on post-colonial African literature, its major themes, and a synopsis of how these themes reflect current events in the African community. The post-independence reality of African life is especially shown in the works of African authors from many backgrounds. In the precise words of a notable postcolonial African author, Ngugi Wa Thiong, the author wrote, "For the vast majority of Africans in the new state, independence did not bring significant improvements, as independence with a question mark" (Ngugi 1993, p.65). This expression implies that African communities encompass more than independence.

3. Methodology

The data collection process utilizes a straightforward survey method and a descriptive-analytic strategy. As a survey study, the research was inductive in that it addressed who, what, where, how much, and what in relation to the development of various themes in post-colonial African literature. Adopting the survey method permits the discussion of opinions, attitudes, expectations, and intentions in order to construct the themes. The approach permits the compilation of diverse submissions and conversations on post-colonial African literature's intended themes. Data was collected from properly cited secondary sources, and descriptive analysis was conducted, focusing on the tenets of the selected novels, the authors, and the manner in which the authors implemented the various approaches to understanding the dominant themes of post-colonial African literature.

4. Discussion

From the survey, a variety of themes were identified in post-colonial African literature. However, from the perspective of domination, around four themes have dominated post-colonial African literature. This section provides a study of these four themes. As such, each theme represents a separate segment, and the analysis is based on several literary works.

4.1. The Theme of Colonialism

The topic of colonialism has dominated post-colonial African literature discussions and literary works. Various African literary studies have reflected the events that transpired throughout the time of colonial rule. The focus of the research is on how the African community functioned during the colonial period. Different literary works depicted various facets of the colonial government in various African regions. Significantly, colonialism is the dominant theme in post-colonial African literature.

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe is one of the post-colonial African literary masterpieces. It was initially published in 1958, two years after the British colonial administration granted Nigeria her independence in 1960. The issue of colonialism is central to the plot of *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. Achebe used his literary skills to demonstrate, through a variety of narrative standards, to western communities who viewed Africa as uncivilized and that they played a significant role in transforming Africa's projected civilization into an alien one. In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe described the pre-colonial African community, focusing on the system of government, social structures, tradition, and belief system, as well as the condition of the African country after the arrival of Europeans.

In the work, the author attempts to show the genuine image of African culture from a different perspective by employing literature, which the colonial masters disparaged as uncivilized and backward in the literature of other languages. After the entrance of Englishmen in the region, the author incorporated the story and the transition of a Nigerian tribe from a traditional society to a colonialist one. Colonialism is one of the key themes in Chinua Achebe's work, as he strives to demonstrate that Nigerian society possessed a distinct culture that the English deemed barbaric. *Things Fall Apart's* depiction of the colonial era may have been an attempt to represent changes in Nigerian society; yet, it emphasizes the reality that white men stripped the natives of their traditional traditions, religion, and political and economic dominance. In his novel, Chinua Achebe portrayed a Nigerian community whose traditional practices had been eradicated by colonialism. In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe tells the narrative of an elderly man who labored his entire life to prove to his community that he was able to make critical judgments

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in defense of their traditions and culture. To demonstrate his masculinity and strength of character to his clan, he murdered his adoptive son; nevertheless, this led to his banishment from his homeland. People in that region believed in a number of gods and goddesses, but when he returned to his homeland, they had forgotten their traditions and were being influenced by the customs of the white men. Achebe portrayed the arrival and impact of the white males on the indigenous people as follows:

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together, and we have fallen apart (Chinua, 73).

He stated how the white men began meddling with the native people's daily lives and preventing them from practicing their traditional beliefs because it was incompatible with their views. It is also one of the primary reasons why they deemed the inhabitants of the African region to be barbaric: they were unable to understand them owing to a language barrier and lack of communication. Due to their unique ideals and beliefs, they attracted the local populace and compelled them to act against their own people by obeying the white people's demands. Colonialism influenced African society's religious practices and caused the people to convert to Christianity. Achebe's story demonstrates that the white civilization looked down on the African people due to their religious differences. As part of their belief, African tribes worshipped multiple gods and made sacrifices to the gods.

Achebe supplied the detail that "new churches and a few schools were erected in the surrounding villages." Since the beginning, religion and education have been intertwined (Chinua, 75). Due to a lack of understanding of the local language, the white men were unable to comprehend the value and significance of the native people, so instead of attempting to understand their religion, they declared it false and began preaching their religion and educating the people from their perspective. Religion, which was a unifying force for the indigenous people, became a divisive force, wreaking devastation on society.

Colonialism also affected the African tribes' political and economic conditions. Instead of supporting the indigenous people's traditions, culture, and customs, the white men attacked them and labeled them as backward. Achebe mentions the following in his writing:

"The white man, had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store, and for the first-time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofia (Chinua, 73).

They transformed the political and economic customs of the indigenous people and gradually seized control of the society by dividing the indigenous people over religious differences. Achebe stated in one of his essays that the white society sought to prove African nations to be barbaric and uncultured in order to seize their land and resources. He stated, "Quite simply, it is the desire, one would perhaps say the need in Western psychology to set up Africa as a counterpoint to Europe, as a region of negations at once distant and faintly familiar, in contrast to which Europe's unique position of spiritual grace shall be shown" (Achebe, 14). The west desired to explore other regions of the planet and assert its dominance over the entire globe. If they had attempted to seize power by force, it would have been a waste of their own resources, therefore they divided the populace through economic and religious conflict to seize power. Although the white men caused conflict, as stated by the author, some natives also backed them. The deterioration and disintegration of Igbo society is not just the result of conquerors' religious and governmental interventions. Many Igbo people join the religion introduced by the conquerors because they believe that many prevalent cultural practises are irrational evils (Purwarno, and Suhendi, 674).

The aboriginal people, who murdered the twins to eliminate evil, began to adopt the Christian doctrine that God controls life and death. The religion that had unified the people had a significant part in dividing them, and colonialism sowed the seeds of strife in African civilizations. Colonialism is an essential issue in the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, in which he demonstrates that western nations, which viewed African communities as barbaric, had a significant role in making them so. African groups were well-organized and had their own religion, beliefs, customs, as well as political and economic structures. The western societies desired to establish their dominance, which they could do through their authority over the indigenous people. As a result, they used religion and traditional rituals as a source of strife among the local populace and seized control of their political and economic system. They depicted African society unfavourably to boost their profit and demonstrate to the world that they were attempting to civilise a barbaric nation. Colonialism caused more harm to African societies because it broke up the indigenous people.

In addition to Achebe's writing, numerous scholars have explored the issue of colonialism. Other authors, like Efua Theodora Sutherland, Buchi Emecheta, Peter Nazareth, Femi Osofisan, and Ama Ata Aidoo, published diverse works on the topic

of colonialism. Following various techniques, these literary works have depicted the condition of the African country prior to colonial rule and described its transformation.

4.2. The Theme of Displacement and Disillusion

The African community became chaotic with the departure of the colonial authority, at least from the mainstream leadership and political organizations. The issue of relocation illustrates how the hopes of the African community's founding fathers were not realized. After the departure of colonial authorities, the essence of the African state was reflected in many literary works. "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" by Ayi Kwei Armah is one of the works that elucidate the characteristics of the post-African state. The novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* by Armah illustrates the confounding harshness of the post-independence Ghanaian society during Nkrumah's administration. The author's dissatisfaction with the unanticipated failure of socialist democratic aspirations inaugurated at independence in 1957 inspired the work in division. (Adeodi, 2006)

The betrayal of Africa by its leaders is likely the most important lesson Armah wishes to convey. Armah was appalled at the new nation's realities. He questions in an unexpected manner how far Africa would be condemned by its despicable leaders. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Born*, the leadership difficulties are highlighted by the man's lack of faith in the new military leaders of 1966. (Hay, 2000)

Surprisingly, the people who battled for independence were betrayed throughout the time that followed independence. The primary cause of Africa's decline is its leaders' inability to deliver effective government. The current government leaders were once on the opposing side. These ruling elites have been focused with retaining power for their own benefit, rather than for the betterment of their own people. After supplanting the colonial rulers, they became identical to them. One can now declare that nothing has changed; only the white faces have been replaced by black faces (Ayintey, 1992).

"A Man of the People" by Chinua Achebe is another literary masterpiece that describes the essence of the post-independence African state. This novel described the political structure and dominant condition of post-independence African states, particularly Nigeria. Both 'A Man of the People' by Chinua Achebe and 'The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born' by Ayi Kwei Arma are vehicles for the authors to voice their displeasure with what Africans typically made of political independence. The political and moral deterioration in independent Ghana and Nigeria is the subject of these novels, which have been deemed to be potent. In *A Man of the People*, Achebe attempts to determine where they went wrong, where the rain

started to pummeled us. (Ngugi, 1972) The displacement in this work is masterfully depicted by the image of the rain and the house, through which the author shows the reality of the country immediately following the independence years.

Achebe attempted to convey disillusionment on the last promises of African freedom. Regarding the sociopolitical contradictions that are being explored, particularly at the level of the expressed concepts, the metaphor of the rain and home in *A Man of the People* can be considered the central idea or topic of the work. Consider a selection from the novel:

“A common saying in the country after independence was that it didn’t matter what you knew but who you knew. And, believe me, it was no idle talk. For a person like me who simply couldn’t stoop to lick any Big Man’s boots it created a big problem. In fact one reason why I took this teaching job in a bush, private school instead of a smart civil service job in the city with car, free housing, etc., was to give myself a certain amount of autonomy. So when I told the Minister that I had applied for a scholarship to do a post-graduate certificate of his help. (Achebe, 1966, p. 17)”

This statement was stated by a character in the novel *A Man of the People*. The statement illustrated what the African community has evolved into since the departure of colonial administrators.

The publication of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, a highly evocative book, propelled Armah to the forefront of the new generation of African writers. In his depiction of a society on the verge of suicide, Armah has painted a deeply disturbing picture of the failings of all decadent political systems of all late bourgeois' worlds, in which morals and values have been lost and even the man of good intentions begins to doubt his sanity and feels guilty for not being corrupt. It is a work that burns with passion and tension, with a fire so intense that one can practically hear or smell the author's body on fire in every word and sentence (Larson, 1971).

In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Armah paints a vivid image of the disillusionment and suffering following freedom. His anger stems from the leaders' failure to keep their commitments. He asks:

How long will Africa be cursed with its leaders? There were men dying from the loss of hope, and others were finding gaudy ways to enjoy power they did not have. We were ready here for big and beautiful things, but what we had was our own black men hugging new paunches scrambling to ask the white man to welcome them onto our backs. These men who were to lead us out of our despair, they came like men already grown fat and cynical with the eating of centuries of power they had never struggled for, old before they had ever been born into power, and ready only for the grave. They were lawyers before, something growing greasy on the troubles of people who worked out the land, but now they were out to be saviours. Their brothers and friends were merchants eating what was left in the teeth of the white men with their companies. (Armah, 1968, pp. 80-81)

This passage is from the book *The Beautiful Ones Have Not Yet Been Born*. As a result of postcolonial Ghana's political activity, it is evident how the issue of displacement was depicted. The post-colonial African state was portrayed as a failure, unable to live up to the expectations of the founding fathers of African nations. The novel was intended to examine the political climate of Ghana following independence.

4.3. The Theme of Gender Equality

Gender equality in Africa has been a topic of discussion since the departure of the colonial overlords. Some scholars contend that the colonial overlords introduced gender equality to Africa. African males have struggled to prevent their wives from exploring the topic of gender equality, according to various accounts. There were other anecdotes depicting how many post-colonial African men treated their wives. "Purple Hibiscus" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one of the most well-known post-colonial African literary works discussing gender equality. There is a need for additional discussion on the nature of gender equality in African society.

Purple Hibiscus is a novel that depicts the ideal post-colonial African woman as one who remains silent in the face of abuse. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie effectively reflects the role of male literary characters through domination, control, and power, and the role of female literary characters through silence and oppression. Eugene Achike's control over his family, businesses, and newspaper

manifests in his family connections as a desire for abusive control. Obiora and Jaja assume the position of authority, as would an elder son who lacked a father figure and was concerned for the family's well-being. Beatrice Achike nourishes and plans for her children despite the torture and tyranny she endures at the hands of her husband.

Beatrice Achike, commonly known as Mama, is a female figure who correctly exemplifies the role of women in society. The majority of mothers are compassionate and desire what is best for their children, however not all married women are shielded, silent, and victims of domestic abuse. This is evident from Kambili's perspective on numerous occasions. Mama's portrayal begins while Kambili is studying in her room and Mama pulls her uniforms inside to protect them from the rain. Mama and Kambili experience a moment, similar to any other mother-daughter relationship, when Mama tells Kambili she is pregnant. Mama is there to comfort Kambili after his father splashes boiling water on his and his brother's feet for stepping into sin after returning from Nsukka. "Tears were streaming down her cheeks. She combined salt with cold water and applied the gritty mixture to my feet with care. She pulled me out of the tub and offered to carry me back to my room, but I declined." (pg. 195) This demonstrates that Mama has assumed the role of a woman and mother, caring for and protecting her children. Mama decides to defend her children by murdering the man who has tormented and abused them since they were young. "I began poisoning his tea before I arrived in Nsukka" (pg. 290) Mama informs her inquisitive children. We can assume that she did this because he was causing her and her children pain.

Throughout the entirety of *Purple Hibiscus*, the gender roles of the characters remain consistent. One is able to observe the inherent conflicts between each character and the problems that each conflict causes. The oppression of Mama and the care she provides for her children correctly portray the social positions of women in today's society. Papa's power struggle is also visible in the manner in which he handles his family members. Obiora's responsibility to care for his family when his father is absent exemplifies a young man's duty in society. Adichie does an excellent job portraying each aspect of each character.

4.4. The Theme of Liberation and Nationalism

The primary theme of *A Grain of Wheat* is the importance of national independence. A corollary is a difficulty of achieving independence because the colonial system prevented colonized subjects from gaining the necessary skills of self-governance. Closely related to these themes is the personal abuse of power among both colonizers and the colonized. Along with this theme goes the harm caused specifically by hypocrisy and, more generally, the selfish misuse of political stance for personal purposes. Although Ngugi wa Thiong'o provides substantial

material on the reasons that Mau Mau arose and the workings of the larger Kenyan independence movement, his novel is not primarily a social and political analysis. Rather, he focuses on the human elements in the late colonial era and the related efforts to free Kenya's diverse peoples from British rule. He shows how the variety of social conditioning in which diverse characters were raised later influenced their attitudes toward independence. Personal decisions based on emotion play central roles, especially among people who sought to distance themselves from political commitments. The author shows that no one is truly immune from the legacy of colonialism. At the same time, he seems not to place full confidence in those who espouse political and altruistic motives for their actions.

The characters of Mugo, who accidentally becomes a hero, and Gikonyo show how ordinary people can get caught up in something larger than themselves; one becomes a traitor, and the other is broken by his experiences. The falsity Karanja displays by betraying his people is paralleled by his personal behavior in his sexual relationship with Mumbi, in which Mumbi betrays her husband. The deep longings of Wambui and Warui to see freedom in their lifetimes are apparently achieved, and their subsequent disappointment at the limits of social change in the new nation encapsulates common frustrations.

5. Summary

This study analysed the prevalent themes in post-colonial African literature. The purpose of the study was to identify major themes in the literature and evaluate their significance for post-colonial African society. The study examined four major themes and used several African novels to illustrate the themes' consequences for African society. From the data, it is obvious that after the colonial period, the African population has produced an abundance of studies. The majority of literary works written after the colonial era focused on the arrival of colonial administrators in Africa, the manner in which they operated, and primarily the imposition of foreign culture, tradition, religion, and education on the African people at the expense of their existing structures. There are additional literary works written after the colonial era that examine the nature of the African state. Ayi Kwei Armah's 'The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born' and Chinua Achebe's 'The Man of the People' are examples of post-colonial African works that describe the post-independence status of African nations. Ngugi Wa Thiong depicted the theme of nationalism and liberation actions, whereas Adichie concentrated on the position of African women after the colonial period. These investigations gave evidence of the continuous growth of African literature beyond the colonial period.

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Perceived Quality of Life and Psychological Well-being: A Predictive of Distress and Suicide among Elderly Farmers in Idukki District, Kerala

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Abstract

An escalation in longevity and a downfall in fertility have contributed to a proportionate increase in the geriatric population in India. This demographic transition is more prevalent in Kerala than in any other state of India and hence around a fifth of the population is above sixty years of age which is the highest in the country. As regards rural and urban areas, a major proportion of the elderly population lives in rural areas. Idukki is one of the least developed areas and the occupation of the majority of its population is agriculture. Farmer suicides are a grave issue in the Idukki district. Quality of life and psychological well-being has the potential to influence elder farmers' evaluations of their life. This qualitative study employed in-depth interviews with 20 rural elderly farmers (aged 60 to 78 years). Thematic analysis generated key themes. Findings indicated the majority of elderly participants experience low to moderate levels of quality of life and psychological wellbeing. Financial stability and occupational characteristics were found to be two significant elements that affect QOL and the psychological well-being of rural elderly farmers.

Keywords

Quality of Life, Psychological Well-being, Farmers, Elderly

Introduction

As the longevity of individuals is increasing due to several transitions in society, greater consideration is given to addressing the geriatric population. Meanwhile, developing countries such as India fail to concentrate on this aspect although it is a matter of inescapable importance, because of differences in priorities and higher population density. A major proportion of the elderly Indians live in rural areas, accelerating the gravity of the crisis. One of the most disadvantaged sections of

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them, which is the aging farmers who form most of the elderly in this developing country do not receive much attention.

Agrarian crisis and farmers' distress is apparent in the reports of farmer suicides from various states of India, particularly Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra since it is small farmers who are more vulnerable to crop failure and the vagaries of the market such as falling prices, and the higher their proportion in the region, the higher are the casualties (Mohankumar & Sharma, 2006). The occurrences are further worse for the farmers who still work in the fields but are aged and experience health issues because Senior farmers suffer a disproportionate number of injuries and the highest fatal injury rate of all age groups who farm. Reduced strength and flexibility, vision problems, hearing loss, the onset of a chronic illness, and depression may limit a senior farmer's physical capabilities to farm safely (Cole and Donovan, 2008).

Idukki is one of the least urbanized districts of Kerala and the majority of its population are small farmers who depend on agriculture to meet their livelihood. Farmer suicides are a grave issue in the Idukki district. Eight farmer suicides were reported in Idukki during the first quarter of 2019 (Press Trust of India, 2019). An interesting observation is that the Majority of farmers who killed themselves were elderly, (Correspondent, 2019) which justifies the information obtained from previous researches that vulnerability to commit suicide increases with age (Shah, 2007). Older people may have less access to opportunities for continued growth and development, which may affect their perceptions about their life. Life can be worse for elder farmers from rural communities, than others as they have lower educational levels, lower retirement pensions in agriculture, (Raju, 2002) geographical isolation with lack of public transportation and limited access to stores and services, and barriers to obtaining health care, with growing desertification of medical and paramedical professionals leading to rudimentary life conditions.

About seventy percentage farmers who committed suicide in Idukki were elderly while three were in their late 50s. This trend may be the result of a recent demographic transition. According to Durkheim, suicide is an effect of individualization, a process of socioeconomic "estrangement" from agrarian communities experienced by rural producers in the context of rapid economic growth. Elderly farmers from rural communities like Idukki have to manage to survive these transitions along with their existing burdens associated with economic, political, social, and environmental factors such as the shift of food grain to commercial cash crops, high cost of cultivation, low productivity, high land cost, and the conversion of paddy fields.

A healthy mind can alleviate the impact of present-day circumstances. However, the recent trends in Idukki associated with farmer suicides have been shown to be an

indication of a different scenario. Well-being, particularly psychological well-being may be affected by physical helplessness, economic insecurity, loneliness, lack of social support, and health complaints which are common sufferings of elder farmers in Idukki. Psychological well-being decreases with increasing age (Yuriko & Masumi,2003). Hence, it is important to identify current well-being aspects of senior farmers in Idukki to take necessary steps to provide needed support for them to prevent further suicides.

The psychological well-being of an individual can be defined as the evaluation of his or her own life (Ryff et al, 1989). It is an important impression of successful adaptation during old age. Psychological well-being refers to the extent to which people feel that they have meaningful control over their life and their activities. It is a eudemonic approach that stresses the role of having a purpose in life. Well-being status of elder farmers rests heavily on evaluations of their own life. The human experience is the basis for learning, which may be expressed in their perceptions of their quality of life.

Quality of life (QOL) is a subjective construct that involves both physical and psychological aspects. It can be defined as an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. This is a very broad concept which is influenced by complex ways and complex issues than the physical health of the individual, his psychological state, level of independence, their social relationships and their relationship with the environment” (World Health Organization, 1996). Aged farmers experience poor quality of life in rural areas (Sammy, 2013) such as Idukki and the evolutionary transitions can be a major cause (Bhawana Singh and U.V. Kiran, 2013).

To encapsulate, Increasing suicides among elderly farmers in Idukki demand special attention. Demographic transitions such as the emergence of nuclear families, migration of youth and middle-aged, and the changes in the lifestyle of women from caregivers to work settings along with accelerating crisis in the agrarian sector such as the shift of food grain to commercial cash crops, high cost of cultivation, low productivity, high land cost, and the conversion of paddy fields create the life of elderly farmers miserable (Jamuna,1989). Chronic stress associated with these factors during old age has the potential to disturb a person's perceptions of oneself, and of his or her environment as it is a period of declined physical and cognitive abilities as a result of the aging process. This may affect their quality of life as well as their current and future well-being. Even though they are the backbone of a developing country like India, few studies have attempted to make the understanding of the quality of life and well-being among elderly farmers, specifically in Idukki, who are the suppliers of spices to the world.

Methodology

The present qualitative study explores the quality of life and psychological well-being among elderly farmers in Idukki district, Kerala. Using the purposive sampling method, 20 elderly farmers, 10 males and 10 females living in a home environment from Idukki district were selected for the present study. Information about elderly farmers in Idukki was collected from ward members and Krishibhavan. Consent was obtained from both participants as well as their children. Semi-structured interview method was used to collect information and interviews continued until the researcher found that no new themes are emerging. Responses for each question were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to evaluate the data and generate themes. Information from Semi-structured interviews was transcribed. Key quotes were highlighted, coded, and sorted into themes. Inductive reasoning was used in which the themes and categories emerged from the data.

Themes Identified

Six themes were identified on quality of life and another six themes were identified on psychological wellbeing. Physical health, social life, sense of safety and security, educational qualification, perceptions about occupation, and perceptions about the quality of life were the themes identified on quality of life. Elf development, satisfaction with life, the meaning of life, spirituality, acceptance and adaptation, and motivation were the themes identified in psychological wellbeing.

| Variable | Themes |
|-------------------------|--|
| Quality of Life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Physical health · Social life · Sense of safety and security · Educational qualification · Perceptions about occupation · Perceptions about quality of life |
| Psychological Wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Self development · Satisfaction with life · Meaning of life · Spirituality · Acceptance and adaptation · Motivation |

- **Physical Health**

All the elderly farmer participants reported weak health conditions. Compared to males, the health state was poor among women though they can manage their day-to-day activities. Male elderly farmers suffered more in terms of memory issues. Memory loss, Back pain, damaged eyesight, diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol are common health problems faced by elderly farmers in the Idukki district. Few researchers observed similar diseases and disabilities that may limit farmers' physical capabilities to farm safely (Cole and Donovan, 2008).

- **Perceptions about Quality of Life**

According to these twenty rural elderly farmer participants, quality of life implies financial stability, a good job that provides a stable income, preferably a government job, and a good house. In terms of financial stability, none of the participants have a sense of security. Hence perceptions about their quality of life are low. Even the occurrence of natural calamities or climate change may affect their sense of security and they have been living in a state of constant uncertainty. Their occupation is the ultimate cause of their sense of the low quality of life. Among 20 participants, 18 strongly believed that their quality of life is low. (Rashmi Kumari et.al, 2018).

- **Perceptions about Occupation.**

As the participants were selected from the same economic and occupational backgrounds, they all shared the same perceptions on this theme. No one was happy with the job they were doing. There was no distinction between males or females. All strongly believed that agriculture is a profession that won't bring any financial security.

- **Educational Opportunities.**

Although the selected participants were literate, high school was the highest level they attended. As Idukki is a rural area, higher education options were limited and expensive. Three of them chose agriculture as a profession by themselves inspired by their fathers. Females gave less importance to education. They shared a strong feeling that their job is to look after their husbands and children.

- **Social Life**

Elderly farmers from rural areas of Idukki have limited social life. Males and females deal with their relationships differently. Most of them do not share their personal concerns and worries with friends and keep them

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within themselves as they have only peripheral friends. Hence, majority of them are family oriented. Yet it is their habit to go to town in the evenings and share general things with others. Besides, they also reported that as the graph of age goes up, the number of close friendships are going down. All ten female participants believe that they should restrict themselves to their families. Hence their social life is limited. Occasional meetings with other women from neighbourhoods are the only external connections they have (Vijaiyalakshimi and Rani, 2016).

- **Sense of Safety and Security**

participants associated their sense of security and safety with financial stability that they lack as their profession is agriculture. The prevailing uncertainty makes their life unpredictable and unstable.

Themes identified on psychological wellbeing are;

- **Self Development**

Participants agreed that they have developed over years as a person in spite of any gender differences. Feeling of self-development is more intense among males than among females. It was observed from in-depth interviews that, male farmers have this feeling that they faced lots of struggles and survived from them that contributed to their development as a person. Females were passive while males were actively involving in the battle with life.

- **Satisfaction with Life**

Besides any gender difference, participants expressed deep regrets about their life even though there were exceptions. This regret came out of their feeling that life didn't turn in the way they want. The basic cause is that they planned many things and they achieved only few things. Even at this stage majority of them have worries about future as they have financial burdens to deal with and low production from agriculture due to climatic variations. The exceptional participant reported that, apart from all the hurdles they learned several things.

- **Meaning of Life**

Participants find meaning in life as they could educate their children well. They have a sense of fulfilment when they talk about their children. Gender difference didn't make any change in this aspect. Participants struggled hard and faced many obstacles. While thinking that it was to

provide their children with a comfortable life, elderly farmers feel a sense of fulfilment. In all other aspects, as a feeling of insecurity persists, as they couldn't reach financial stability, majority face distress and futility.

- **Spirituality**

Spirituality level of participants ranges from moderate to high. For females, faith and trust in God that makes their life move forward. Spirituality of females was observed to be custom and ritual oriented. The more they follow customs, the more they feel gratified. Furthermore, Spirituality rests at an awareness level among elderly males. For them it is a way of life. Doing good deeds and not deceiving others brings happiness for many of them. They gained this morale from their religion. Following a value system that is formed through years is what spirituality meant for elderly farmers.

- **Acceptance and Adaptation**

A significant gender difference was observed on this facet. Among the female participants, eighty percent showed high ability to accept and adapt to novel situations. Though they do not wish to change their existing living style and habits, these ladies are flexible enough to adjust and adapt. It was observed that they are more open to changes. The same was the attitude of other six women. But two of them were rigid like men. They expressed low tolerance level for novel experiences. However, Male participants had the feeling that any change in their current life style would be stressful and they would struggle to adjust with it. Sometimes certain situations strongly demand a change from existing routines and patterns. If there is no other option, each male participant has to follow it.

- **Motivation**

From the in depth interviews it was observed that motivation changes from person to person. Though this aspect was unique for each participant, seven male participants expressed low motivation. They are not ready to work again with optimism to advance further. Financial insecurity is a major issue of elderly farmers from Idukki. Consequently, these seven participants are not ready to look forward and plan again. One of the significant reasons behind this trend is that though these farmers worked, they couldn't reach to the calculated or expected level of success. That demotivated them from keeping further optimistic attitude towards life. On the other hand, as females are not expected to take initiatives in Indian scenario, the situation is not different in Idukki.

Rural elderly farmers are a group of individuals who need special attention. Social life of participants was observed to be very low as majority are hesitant to share personal things with others, even with their family. Many attach their purpose and meaning in life with financial security and hence their sense of safety and security is threatened.

Conclusion

Overall findings from this research of elderly farmers suggest that older farmers in general experience lower to moderate quality of life in Idukki. Farmers attributed occupational characteristics to their lower quality of life. Agriculture is a profession where uncertainty and unpredictability prevail. A mild climatic change or unexpected natural disaster is enough to threaten their calm and peaceful life. Popular stereotypes regarding rural life as it is more peaceful and less stressful than urban life needs to change. Immediate attention has to be given to this population. Despite health issues and other disabilities, elder farmers are forced to work in fields as they have to deal with financial burdens which are accumulated due to various reasons. Each farmer's perceptions about their quality of life depend largely on their financial security. Hence their sense of safety and security is affected. This may be an important reason behind increased farmer suicides in Idukki.

The eudemonic perspective of well-being among elderly farmers was analyzed through the lenses of psychological well-being. Self-development, satisfaction with life, meaning of life, spirituality, acceptance and adaptation and motivation were the themes identified. Each of the participants strongly believed that they have developed over years. On the other hand, majority of them are not receptive to novel situations or events that demand a change in existing lifestyle and habits. Only few of them were motivated to set goals, plan again for a better future and grab opportunities. Rest majority wanted to sit back and watch the flow of life, leaving everything in the hands of fate because they worked hard to achieve their dreams but failed. Spirituality is the route through which elder farmers, especially women deal with uncertainty associated with their profession.

In a nutshell, Elderly farmers in Idukki are a group of individuals who need special attention and support. They range between low to medium in terms of quality of life and psychological wellbeing. Financial struggles due to low-income occupation and unpredictability and the resulting stress may be the reason behind increased farmer suicides in Idukki district, Kerala.

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Melodramatic Shifts in the Malayalam Cinemas of 1960s and 70s: An Exploration of K.S. Sethumadhavan's Directorial Ventures

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Abstract

This paper's attempt is to examine Malayalam cinema of the late 1960s and 1970s in an attempt to explore the emergence of distinct aesthetic and industrial practices in the Malayalam film industry. It explores the films of K.S. Sethumadhavan-- films that may be called social melodramas. Sethumadhavan worked with writers such as P. Kesavadev, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and Parappuram, who were associated with the Progressive Writers' Movement in Malayalam literature. Sethumadhavan has made films based on Kesavadev's *Odayil Ninnu* (From the Gutter 1965), Thakazhi Shivashankara Pillai's *Anubhavangal Paalichakal* (Shattered Experience 1971), Parappuram's *Aranazhika Neram* (Just Half an Hour 1970), etc. Exploration of the melodramas of the 1960s is important for making sense of the consolidation of a distinct identity for the Malayalam film industry, which is characterized as devoid of melodramatic excesses, thus leading to claim of exceptionalism vis-a-vis other south Indian film industries.

Keywords

Malayalam Cinema, Social Melodrama, Literary Adaptation, Communist Movement.

Introduction

Literary-Cinematic Collaborations in 1960s Malayalam Cinema

The 1960s have been described as the golden period in the history of Malayalam cinema for its prolific investment in the production of a large number of films per year which was instrumental in the construction of a distinct identity for Malayalam cinema. In the process, Malayalam cinema was making a departure from the Tamil and Hindi film industries, which had retained their influence in the region till then. A huge investment in rendering the literary texts belonging to the progressive literary movement to the screen was central to the cinematic practices of the 1950s and 1960s. It may be argued that, following the formation and the subsequent consolidation of the state, the emphasis shifted from an integrationist project

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towards one which attempted to translate the aesthetic literary conventions of the region into the cinematic medium. What is foregrounded in these movies, therefore, is not the representation of the region; rather, it portrays a certain sense and sensibility of Malayali aesthetics, which often emerges through the fractious relationship between the feudal traditional and the rational modern. The paper argues that the intervention of filmmakers like K.S. Sethumadhavan, P. Bhaskaran, P. N. Menon, Ramu Kariat and Vincent have played a crucial role in the consolidation of a distinct identity for the Malayalam film industry. Many prominent Left-wing writers and artists, like Thoppil Bhasi, Kesavadev, Thakazhi, Malayattoor Ramakrishnan, K. T. Muhammed, etc., collaborated with these filmmakers, ushering in a new age in the Malayalam film industry.

Despite making about seventy films in various languages such as Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Hindi and Sinhalese, K. S. Sethumadhavan has not received much critical attention. One reason for this could be that K. S. Sethumadhavan is generally associated with melodrama. It is, in fact, this aspect of K. S. Sethumadhavan's cinematic practice that is of interest for this paper. K. S. Sethumadhavan has made significant contributions to the Malayalam film industry through various types of melodramas in which the family is prominently featured. Despite winning national and state awards, Sethumadhavan's contributions to Malayalam cinema in particular and to Indian cinema in general have not been a subject of any serious academic enquiry. Apart from the melodramatic nature of his films, the fact that only "art" films were considered as worthy of any critical attention must have contributed to the absence of any serious academic studies on Sethumadhavan's films. It may be pointed out here that until the 1990s, Malayalam popular cinema was not considered as an object of academic inquiry. It is my contention here that an exploration of the melodramas of the 1960s is important for making sense of the consolidation of a distinct identity for the Malayalam film industry, which is characterized as devoid of melodramatic excesses, thus leading to claim of exceptionalism vis-a-vis other south Indian film industries.

Sethumadhavan has been associated with the Malayalam film industry from its early days. He ventured into the world of cinema by associating with T. R. Sundaram of Modern Studios in Salem, who made the first sound film in Malayalam (*Balan* 1938). After a brief period of training with K. Ramanathan, Sethumadhavan made his directorial debut through the Sinhalese film *Veeravijaya* (1960) which went on to be a commercial success in Sri Lanka. This earned him a reputation by the time he ventured into making films in Malayalam. What is remarkable about Sethumadhavan is that, from the beginning till the end of his career, he maintained a long and fascinating commitment to the Malayalam literary tradition. He is often described as a "writers' director" for his long period of association with the prominent literary figures of the time. As mentioned earlier, he associated with

literary figures like Kesavadev, Muttathu Varkey, Malayattoor Ramakrishnan, M.T Vasudevan Nair, Thakazhy, Thoppil Bhasi, KT Muhammed, Vettoor Raman Nair and Parappurathu have been associating with his oeuvre, which continued for more than four decades.

A prolific filmmaker, K. S. Sethumadhavan has made more than 50 films in Malayalam; during the first two decades of his film tenure, he used to bring out at least five to six films in a year. Though he used to make numerous films in a short span of time, the important thing to note is that he not only made films in large numbers, but also managed to bring out some of the finest and aesthetically superior films in Malayalam on a regular basis. Early films made during the early 1960s Sethumadhavan can all be considered as social melodramas. These include iconic films like *Kannum Karalum* (1962, Heart and Soul) which introduced Kamal Hassan to the film industry, *Anna* (1964), *Manavatty* (1964, The Betrothed) and *Omanakuttan* (1964). During the year 1965, he made two landmark films in Malayalam, *Odayil Ninnu* (From the Gutter) and *Daham* (Thirst), and this year has in retrospect been considered to be the turning point in his cinematic career. The film *Odayil Ninnu* was a filmic adaptation of a popular and acclaimed novel by Kesavadev which essays the life struggles of a rickshaw puller. The film was a commercial success and also bagged critical appreciation for its cinematic vigour and for the impressive performance of Sathyan in the lead. The film *Daham*, was the story of a murderer, who wakes up in a hospital, with a change of mind turning him towards feelings of love and compassion. Three years later, Sethumadhavan ventured into making a paranormal psychological thriller, *Yakshi* (1968), which was based on the eponymous novel of Malayattoor Ramakrishnan. This particular move is also considered as introducing the genre of psychological thriller into the Malayalam cinema. The film *Yakshi* narrates the life of a college professor, who conducts research on supernatural existence. During an experiment in his laboratory, an accident caused severe burns on his face, leaving a permanent scar which creates turmoil in his sexual life as well.

Followed by *Yakshi*, Sethumadhavan made films like *Adimakal* (1969, Slaves), *Mindapennu* (1970, The Meek Girl), *Kadalppalam* (1969, The Sea Bridge) and *Vazhve Mayam* (1970, Let Illusion Rule). In the year of 1970, he made as many as six films including *Aranazhikaneram* which stands out as a prominent film of the year. In an attempt to do justice to the literary work, the film has infused Biblical references to unravel the erosion of Christian moral values within a middle class Christian family. The film essays in its narrative, the helplessness of the protagonist Kunjanachan, throughout his life, who had to witness the moral decay of his family members as they committed various deadly sins.

Anubhavangal Palichakal (1971) was another major work of Sethumadhavan which attracted critical as well as popular appreciation. This film was again based on a popular novel by Thakazhi Sivasankarapillai, a prominent writer in the Malayalam literary field. Starring Sathyan, the film is a reflection of different conflicts the communist movement in Kerala was seemingly undergoing after almost two decades of the state formation. The film portrays the conflicts of a working class labourer, whose committed political activism places him at odds against his family and the larger society. While Chellappan, the protagonist is a “class conscious” labourer who would go to any extent for the rights of workers, the film portrays that he is quite disturbed about his family life. He suspects his wife, who due to his constant absence, enters into an extra-marital affair. The film could be seen as a critique of both the institution of Communist Party and the family wherein the individual is often pushed into deep moral and personal conflicts. These institutions often demand huge emotional investment of the individual to sustain them. The morals of the party often do not take the familial concerns of the individual into account. Extensive uses of night shots are one of the aesthetic additions to many of Sethumadhavan’s films. The use of night shots are prevalent in *Anubhavangal Palichakal* and *Aranazhikaneram*; this could be read as Sethumadhavan’s attempt to show his characters caught up in the dark corridors of the life, and in the films, one could see their struggles, literally and metaphorically groping in the dark, to find a way out. Working within the ambit of commercial filmmaking, Sethumadhavan gave life to films belonging to various genres in several languages, winning several awards and accolades for his films. He belongs to a period when Malayalam cinema was in its attempt to figure a language and a narrative idiom of its own.

Sethumadhavan's oeuvre has historically been posited at the intersection of literature and cinema. Although his cinematic works appear to be shaped by a specific sense of political idealism, his narratives are driven by the social and political contradictions of his time. His cinematic depictions of the fractures in the masculinity and agency of the Malayali man are significant considerations to be taken into account in a study that deals with the ways in which the Malayali subject and his location in the imagined region of Kerala. The important thing to consider here is that the Malayali man and his subjectivity remain the driving force of his film narratives. Sethumadhavan drew much of his raw material from literature. Academic and journalistic discourses consider this linkage between film and literature as one of the primary basis for the "impressive performances" of his actors. Such discourses tend to imply the centrality of literary works and the potential they have for cinematic excellence, not only in terms of narrative but translated into acting performances. It is clearly from literary sources that he draws the Oedipal nature of his characters and which thereby explains the crisis of masculinity at the center of Sethumadhavan's narratives. Whether it is rickshaw driver abandoned by his foster child in *Odayil Ninnu*, the visually challenged father

figure in *Kadalpalam*, the dying patriarch in *Aranazhikaneram*, the illegitimate son in *Oppol*, the insecurity-ridden men in *Yakshi*, *Anubhavangal Palichakal*, *Punarjanmam* and *Vazhe Mayam*, each of these men are tormented by disabilities of their body, their morality, social location or their masculinity.

What makes Sethumadhavan different and distinct as a filmmaker is his association with the progressive writers. The writers associated with him in the making of many of his early landmark films were also associated with Purogamana Sahitya Sanghatana (Forum for Progressive Literature) and its earlier form Jeeval Sahitya Samiti. P. Kesava Dev, who penned the popular novel *Odayil Ninnu* (1941), later associated with Sethumadhavan also wrote the script for the screen adaptation of the book. Kesava Dev had a long presence in the progressive literary movement in Kerala for several decades. In 1944 January, the First Progressive Writers' Conference was held at Shoranur in Kerala, when the Jeeval Sahitya Samiti was renamed as Purogamana Sahitya Sanghatana with the objective of bringing many literary figures into the ambit of the organization. Several prominent literary figures attended the conference and Kesavadev was given the task of formulating a draft manifesto for the Sanghatana. Another prominent literary figure with whom Sethumadhavan collaborated with was Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai. An ardent supporter of the progressive literary movement, Thakazhi was also present at the Shoranur conference, where he stated, "We have to accept the fact that the Communist Party has a good conviction on how to make use of the literature and writers." Thakazhi's popular novel, *Anubhavangal Palichakal* (1966) was later made into a film bearing the same name by Sethumadhavan in 1971. The movie, like the book, was well received by the audience. Thoppil Bhasi, another prominent leftist literary figure who was an active participant of the progressive writers group, was the one who made the script for the cinematic adaptation of the novel.

It is important to note that it was the culmination of the series of ideas propounded and propagated by the Aikya Kerala movement and its complementary networks of progressive literary fora that gave shape to the idea of the united region called Kerala and its socio-political outlook. Started in the 1920s, it gained a coherent form and idea, towards a modern progressive Kerala by the 1930s and 40s. At this juncture, as an influence of these interventions, the Malayali literary public sphere is seen producing enormous numbers of publications by the progressive literary figures. Later when the film making practice in the region gained momentum, during the 1950s and 1960s, the same progressive literary movement was investing itself into the new medium of cinema, as it understood the potential of cinema in reaching out to masses in disseminating their ideas about the new Kerala. In this regard, K. S. Sethumadhavan and his filmmaking venture had a symbiotic relationship with the project chalked out by the Aikya Kerala movement, in carrying forward the idea even after the formation of the state. He made many of the

prominent works of the progressive literary writers into their cinematic adaptations and all of them seemed to have a far-reaching influence than their print versions.

As mentioned earlier, Sethumadhavan was a pioneer filmmaker who brought in a language and narrative idiom of its own into the Malayalam cinema through new aesthetic conventions of melodramatic narrative style in his films. We could see that unlike the 1950s, where films were following a social realist outlook in its narrative style, in the 1960s it was imperative for the Malayalam cinema to bring about changes in the way films were made until then. New innovative narrative techniques had to be introduced to produce new sensibilities which matched those of the viewing public. Thus, the melodramatic narrative style which takes form in Sethumadhavan's films could then be considered as the need of the hour. Another important thing about Sethumadhavan's filmmaking style was that it was attuned to contain prominent literary works into cinematic adaptation. All of his such attempts were successful and widely appreciated; thus, he was a favoured filmmaker with whom prominent literary

figures associated in bringing their literary works into a widely reachable cinematic rendition.

From Realism to Melodrama

At this juncture, it would perhaps be pertinent to ask what precipitated the need to shift from a social realist narrative prevalent in 1950s Malayalam films to the genre of social melodrama which was favoured by Sethumadhavan. Marcia Landy, in her book *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film & Television Melodrama*, has theorized on the various forms and thematic contents which take form in melodramatic film narratives. Landy notes that melodramatic narratives are characterized by "a constant struggle for

gratification and equally constant blockages to its attainment." (1991: 14) She notes that through the emphasis on individual sentiments and emotional trauma, melodrama personalizes and internalizes external social conflicts. Invested in the private and familial realm, these films involve depictions of broken family ties, illness and death, separation and loss, questionable sexual relations, murder, betrayal and seduction. (Landy 1991: 14-18)

Landy further observes that the melodramatic genre has usually been held in low esteem compared to the realist traditions. In fact, melodrama shares a contentious relationship with realism. They are seen as two sides of a coin: realism is commonly related to scientific temper and rationality, while melodrama is more closely associated with its emphasis on emotion, irrationality and sentimentality. Due to its dedication towards the emotional and the affectual, melodramatic movies are

assumed to compromise on their aesthetic aspect. Furthermore, while realism continues to be considered as aesthetically superior, as “high culture”, while melodrama due to its identification with the masses is considered “low culture”.(Landy 1991: 15-16)

Low culture is associated with escapism, vulgarity, sensationalism, excess, and exaggeration, regarded as corrupting by critics who have upheld the values of high seriousness, universality, timelessness and especially realism... The bias against low culture, whether of an ethical or aesthetic cast, has generally been linked to a class and gender bias. The audiences have been characterized in degraded intellectual terms as untutored and indicative of the debased tastes of the masses. (Landy 1991:16)

So to return to the question: Why can we see a shift from social realism to social melodrama in Sethumadhavan’s films from the 1960s onwards? Two aspects, which have been mentioned priorly, are of immense significance in this context: firstly, the act of translating a literary work into the cinematic medium, and secondly, what Landy recognizes as the popular or “mass” appeal of melodramatic films.

As noted earlier, a large corpus of Sethumadhavan’s work draws from existing literary texts which were available in the public sphere. His films, therefore, would eventually be judged on the basis of whether they could do justice to their original texts. So, how can one translate the affective modality of reading a text while transcribing it onto the medium of film? Reading a book is an immensely immersive experience. It is an individual act whereby the reader dedicates his entire attention to the black lines of text printed out on blank paper. The affectual effect in literature - catharsis - is produced through this particular form of engagement, whereby the individual’s attention is restricted to the world of the book, a world he simultaneously reproduces in his mind through the faculties of imagination. Catharsis is produced due to the invested empathic relationship the reader produces with this self-imagined world.

Herein lies the difficulty in translating literature into the cinematic medium. Watching a film is a shared communal experience. The viewer, sitting in the darkened confines of the theatre, engages with the film individually; however, what the viewer consumes is already represented on the screen. The visuality of the film, its essence, is translated by the director, not imagined by the viewer. Catharsis, here, is conveyed through heightened emotions and sensibilities, through the personalization and individualization of societal trauma. Furthermore, these emotions are translated through the acting performances, which increasingly come close to the rhetorical and the histrionic. These very elements are the hallmarks of melodramatic film narrative.

The relationship between literature and cinema needs to be further highlighted in this context. Literature - produced and propagated through print - had a critical role in imagining the region and Malayali subjectivity. The significance of print medium is that it is intimately integrated with questions of modernity and modern subjecthood: literacy, rationality, social justice, questions of gender, masculinity, etc. By associating with literature, this pedagogic authority is transferred to cinema. However, the melodramatic film form of cinema has the affective potential to mobilize a mass that, unlike literature or the novel, does not need to be determined by the requirements of literacy. One may argue that at the core of the melodramatic form is a commercial logic that broadens the scope of the text, which now takes a cinematic form. Moreover, melodrama allows for the depiction of certain socio-political contradictions to coexist along with the textual inability to resolve these contradictions. We may also say something about the relationship between literature and cinema that is established by such cinema. It may be argued that the potential of such cinema is constructed firstly on the already available readership of literature, which means that in the first place such cinema mobilizes a particular kind of audience, one that is literate, middle class, political, educated etc. The commercial core of cinema additionally helps expand its demography to a non-literate audience. In such a context Malayalam cinema of this period draws its legitimacy--both intellectual and commercial--from pre-existing literature. Cinema of this time produces the region of Kerala through a particular kind of Malayali subject, one that coincides with print.

Melodrama and Conflict in K. S. Sethumadhavan's Films

As mentioned earlier, Sethumadhavan's success lay in his ability to transform existing literary works into exemplary cinematic productions.

It is noted that the novel *Odayil Ninnu* was a finest piece of literary work and the Malayalam literary world then had received it with a shudder that such a spotless work could be produced with mundane themes, unusual style of prose and with ordinary people as the prominent characters of the novel. It is also observed that Kesavadev adapted a new trend in the Malayalam literary convention with this new trail of writing and with the appearance of *Odayil Ninnu* in 1942 kindled such attempts to publish such high quality literary works in Malayalam (Menon 352).

In the film *Odayil Ninnu*, the protagonist Pappu is embedded with the qualities of a certain kind of masculinity, one who is invested in social issues of justice and equality from the time he is in school. This is depicted through one sequence where Pappu mobilizes his schoolmates to protest against the discriminatory practices of a school teacher, who practiced preferential treatment towards the landlord's son. The landlord, who owned the school, was angered by the protest, as a result of which Pappu was forced to flee his home and his village. For Pappu, his ideals precede his

sense of pragmatics. Although he is faced with immense difficulties in the life of the city/town where he eventually reaches after he leaves the familiarity and the comforts of his home, he holds forth his ideals with the steadfastness of a morally upright man. He raises his voice against the structural inequalities that he encounters in the odd-jobs that he takes up for his survival. And although it makes his life more and more impossible, he continues to uphold his ideals. Eventually, he starts earning his livelihood as a rickshaw puller. He rescues a fatherless young girl from the gutter, and “adopts” her. Brought up by him and her single mother (with whom he has an ambivalent relationship), the girl somehow turns out to be deviant and arrogant. She appears to be repelled by Pappu’s assumed fatherhood.

Yakshi is a paranormal psychological thriller which follows the story of a college professor, Sreeni (played by Sathyan). Sreeni is represented as a confident and learned man, astute in his spoken English and wearing Western clothes. He is, however, obsessed with the mythical figure of the yakshi, the succubus in popular Indian imagination, the existence of which he wishes to disprove through scientific enquiry. Prof. Sreeni is shown to be a charmer, adored by women around him. However, a freak accident in the laboratory leaves his face burnt and disfigured. This event proves to be life-changing for Sreeni. His friends and admirers begin to avoid him due to his disfigured face.

From a self-assured man, Sreeni becomes increasingly introverted and shifts to a large house (which has a reputation for being haunted) far from the city. Here, by chance, he comes across a beautiful young woman, Ragini (played by Sharada), who is found roaming near his house at night. Sreeni allows Ragini to stay with him when she reveals that she is, in fact, orphaned and homeless. Over the course of time, Ragini falls deeply in love with Sreeni. However, Sreeni remains suspicious as he feels that no one could bear to look at his face any more. They finally get married, but during their honeymoon, Sreeni finds out that he is impotent. Ragini’s continued affection for him convinces Sreeni that she is, in fact, a yakshi. Soon afterwards, Ragini goes missing and Sreeni is delirious. His worried friends take him to a psychiatrist. Following his hypnosis, the psychiatrist reveals to the viewers that Sreeni had actually murdered Ragini, due to his fear and anxiety. Sreeni, now completely insane, is finally arrested by the police for the murder of his wife.

As noted by Sudha K. F., the film destabilizes the modern investment in rationality and scientific temper by invoking the affectual melodramatic power of myth and folklore.

The movie begins with a debate on reason and rationality, and ends validating it. But the film itself turns out to be one that mobilizes pleasures from various ‘unreal’ and ‘irrational’ sources like the possibility of the presence of a supernatural seductress, derived from popular and folk myths-

the yakshi, which is validated by the chiaroscuro cinematography and settings of the house and the sexualized mise-en-scene of Ragini and her passions. Though the psychiatrist arrives at the end with an explanation that explains Sreeni's illness in relation to his impotence and paranoia caused by the scars of the fatal accident, it is like an epilogue. This is because Ragini has already been murdered by Sreeni and there is nothing to be saved with this rational explanation at the end. What the spectator has already experienced and the rhythms of perception that have been mobilized in the films have been melodramatic excessive elements. Thus, through these contradictory channels of perception offered by the film to the spectator, a monolithic and unitary assumption of modernity itself is displaced. It offers many and disaggregate modernity, thus displacing the fixing of the rationalist project as the centre of the text.(83)

Anubhavangal Paalichakal that followed "progressive realist" films like *Odayil Ninnu* and *Aranazhika Neram* had the "sexually deviant female" at the centre of the narrative. The film, based on Thakazhi Shivasankara Pillai's novel of the same title, and scripted by Thoppil Bhasi, known for his melodramas of the 1960s and 1970s, tells the story of Chellappan (Sathyan) who is a respected local communist leader. However, on the domestic front, Chellappan is suspicious of his wife. It is important to point out that Sathyan, who had become a major star in the Malayalam film industry by this period, acted in the role of a communist activist in the film. Incidentally this was Sathyan's last film. It may be argued that the casting of Sathyan in progressive roles in the melodramas of the early 1960s have contributed to his stardom.

In *Anubhavangal Paalichakal*, Chellappan is forced into go "underground" for threatening Chacko Muthalali, the local landlord, who threw Chellappan out of his job for organizing labourers to demand higher wages. The communist party arranges a hiding place for him in a nearby village. Taking the name Prabhakaran, Chellappan lives with an Ezhava family there. We see Chellappan trying to take advantage of the daughter of the local party worker (played by KPAC Lalitha) at whose house he is staying. Chellappan has already received information from party members in his village that his wife Bhavani (played by Sheela) is now living with Gopalan (played by Prem Nazir), a friend of Chellappan. Overcome by guilt for ignoring his family for long, Chellappan returns to the village.

On realizing that his wife is now living with Gopalan, Chellappan leaves for the city. In the city he comes in contact with Hamza, a tea shop owner (played by Bahadur) from whom he gets an idea about the strike at the factory. Chellappan confronts the goons who were attacking the workers on strike. This creates a confusion among the trade union activists in the city. Some think that Chellappan is

an agent of the factory owner whereas others think of him as a revolutionary. What is of interest to our discussion is that at the end of the film Chellappan becomes a martyr as he is hanged for the murder of the factory owner. This trope of the martyr may be noticed in many of Sathyan's films. In *Mudiyana Puthran*, for instance, we see the lead character played by Sathyan going to the jail to save a communist leader. In *Anubhavgal Paalichakal*, it is through martyrdom that Chellappan attains redemption.

Sethumadhavan's films are characterized by various conflicts and ruptures in its narrative. These turbulent disruptions are marked through various thematic and narrative elements. As Landy notes, in melodrama films, larger social, societal and political conflicts are internalized within the personal and familial conflicts, represented through heightened and sensational emotive representations (1991: 15). The characters in Sethumadhavan's films, therefore, are constantly embroiled in moral and ethical turmoil. In *Odayil Ninnu*, the rickshaw puller Pappu fights against adversities throughout his life, only to be disowned by the child he brought up towards the end of his life. The child whom he took from the gutters, leaves him in the same

drain to die a miserable death. Prof. Sreeni, in *Yakshi*, is psychologically troubled following the disfigurement of his face leading him to constantly question the affection of his wife, whom he eventually murders out of his own sense of inferiority. Finally, in *Anubhavgal Paalichakal*, we find Chellappan, a class conscious communist worker, whose private and familial life falls into disarray partly due to his commitment to political activism.

Sudha further notes that the melodramatic excess in *Yakshi* is also produced through the unexpected public presence of the prominent woman-figure in the narrative and visual structure of the film.

Melodrama is always mapped with its stylistic excesses and sentimentalities, often identified as a feminized aesthetic, whereas realism with its claims of being able to appropriately represent anything and everything is seen as a different epistemological project. The film in the first half deploys melodramatic excessive elements of the ghost/horror genre invoking a fear in the audience, springing primarily from the presence of a "modern" woman Ragini. Her passion/love for Sreeni coupled with her own playful and intelligent ways are things that make her existence impossible or either supernatural- in other words an aberration. A woman expressing her sexual desires to a "fallen" man and her singular presence without accompaniment of any elements of a traditional order in films- family, women friends- are the real source of anxiety. At the same time, the film also produces a liking for her straightforward and passionate manners.

The anxieties are proven to be completely wrong, and this utter disbelief in this woman who acts out her passions and love turns out to be the real problem. That this woman had spotted Sreeni as a professor while she was a student at the college can exist only as a supernatural fantasy and that she arrives in the night ascertains these doubts for the spectator. Because can the good woman/heroine be mobile in the night? But the movie plays with these expectations generated by other melodrama socials and exposes Sreeni's as well as the spectator's paranoia and anxiety by the end of the film. (82-83)

But, what forms of social and political conflicts are embedded in and represented through these films? What are the ruptures in society and collective consciousness which precipitate the melodramatic form of these movies? The paper proposes that Sethumadhavan's films visualize a seeming disillusionment with existing modes of communist/socialist imaginations of the region, while further embodying the residual existence of feudal imaginaries which destabilize easy narratives of modernity in Kerala. The narrative and representational forms in these movies reveal the ambivalence to modernity which continues to remain in popular imagination in Kerala even during the early 1960s. Characters who appear to be modern are caught in the difficulty of translating and interpellating their public personality into their private and familial life.

Pappu, in *Odayil Ninnu*, stands out as a proletarian hero, striking out against the class inequalities and caste iniquities throughout his life. His character is invested in a socialist imagination of egalitarianism and his commitment to the cause is reflected through how he brings up the child Lakshmi, educates her in an English medium school and supports her until she becomes a doctor. However, Lakshmi, who has enjoyed all the luxuries and comforts of modern life, abandons him in his old age and ill health. In *Yakshi*, Sreeni is a well-educated Chemistry professor who is merely interested in studying the paranormal. However, a freak accident disfiguring his face causes him to spiral into paranoia and insanity. His very conviction to modern rationality and scientific temper is questioned; he becomes obsessed with the presence of the supernatural. This conflict eventually leads to his misguided murder of Revathi, his own wife. *Anubhavangal Paalichakal* is even more remarkable for the range of social and political contradictions it unravels. Chellappan, who is proclaimed as a "class conscious labourer", constantly strives to create an egalitarian socialist world. He strikes out against unjust practices by landlords and capitalists. However, in his family life, he is portrayed to be highly suspicious and abusive. He threatens his wife and constantly suspects her of cheating on him. He even keeps a distance from his own son as he believes that he was born out of wedlock. He realizes his folly only after he returns home on parole from prison, and learning of the death of his daughter, he is moved to remorse.

When his wife states that his son is indeed his own child, Chellappan embraces him and breaks down, asking him to study well and get ahead in life.

Both *Odayil Ninnu* and *Anubhavangal Paalichakal* represent a proletarian hero with socialist convictions. However, these films also represent the ambivalence, and a certain disillusionment, towards the socialist project in Kerala during the 1960s. This might partly be due to the split in the Communist Party of India in 1963, and partly due to the failure of the popular communist movement in Kerala to empower the marginalized caste communities from whom it drew its widespread support. Furthermore, these movies reflect how dedicated “party workers” with socialist ambitions fail in their private lives and political projects. While Pappu attempts to be an affectionate father-figure to Lakshmi, he is faced with abandonment and destitution towards the end of his life. Chellappan, on the other hand, is suspicious and abusive in his familial role. While he fights against class inequalities in his political and public

life, he appears to be a dominant patriarch in his private life. These movies produce notions (even while being ambivalent) of an idealized masculinity engendered by the presence of proletarian socialist man - the trope of the ‘party worker’ which has been reworked and re-represented in movies over the following decades - whose selfless political commitment leads to the inevitable erosion of his family life. This trope can also be allegorically read to be a metaphorized allusion of the Communist Party in Kerala during the 1960s, which despite its dedicated work towards socialism continually fails to represent the demands of its subjects and is, therefore, constantly questioned and criticized in the Malayali public sphere.

What marks the distinction of Sethumadhavan’s movies from films from the 1950s is its investment towards and location in the present. This temporal aspect is significant in understanding the objectives and aspirations of his films. The films from the 1950s work towards an imagined future of the region even while levelling pointed criticisms of the past. The socialist future of the imagined region is juxtaposed against the caste and communal inequalities of the past. However, by the 1960s, the region had already materialized, and its position consolidated. What Sethumadhavan’s movies explore are the social and political contradictions which contemporaneously and conjuncturally arise during the 60s. Even while movies open with a note of optimism for a socialist future - like *Anubhavangal Paalichakal* which opens with the title song “Workers of the world unite” - this proclaimed socialist project is broken down and dismantled through the narrative rooted in the contemporary. As Landy observes, the fundamental element of the melodrama is the incapability of the characters to attain their personal, social and political aspirations (1991: 14). Sethumadhavan’s films, therefore, do not look towards the future as a new beginning. This characters are rooted in the present, negotiating with the

complex inequalities of the contemporary, as is reflected when Pappu bravely proclaims in *Odayil Ninnu* “I do not have a tomorrow, nor a day after. I just have today.”

Nevertheless, Sethumadhavan’s films, while dwelling on the present, do represent how the pre-modern feudal residues might resurface in the decidedly modern region of Kerala. This particular aspect, it might be argued, constitutes the primary conflict which arises in his films. The proletarian heroes embodied in the roles of Pappu and Chellappan inevitably and utterly fail in their proposed projects of modernizing class and labour relations. However, this conflict comes out most distinctly in *Yakshi*, wherein Prof. Sreeni’s investment towards modernity, rational method and scientific empiricism is progressively threatened through the interpellation of the pre-modern, the superstitious and the paranormal. This eventually leads to his final decline into insanity, towards the schismogenetic splitting of his self. Sreeni’s schizophrenic split personality is not merely a narrative element; it, rather, metaphorizes the duality of the Malayali subject in the 1960s, torn between the dichotomy of modern socialist ambitions and pre-modern feudal nostalgia.

Conclusion

The central concern in this paper has been to explore how different shifts in cinematic practices in the Malayalam film industry contributed to the consolidation of a distinct regional cinematic identity for the Malayalam Cinema, especially during the 1960s and 70s. The inter-relationship between progressive literature and the social melodramas of K.S. Sethumadhavan has been explored in this context. Through a discussion of the emergence of a new wave in Malayalam cinema, the paper has elaborated how regional concerns were central to the new cinema project in Kerala. It may be argued that the negotiations around aesthetic and industrial conventions in the 1960s and have played a major role in the emergence of a “middlebrow cinema” in the 1980s -- films which resists watertight compartmentalizations into the dual categories of “art cinema” and “commercial cinema”. It may be pointed out here that while *Anubhavgal Paalichakal*, was the last film of Sathyan, the dominant star of Malayalam film industry till the 1970s the future star of Malayalam cinema, Mammooty made his appearance in Malayalam cinema for the first time through an uncredited scene in this film. It is through the middlebrow cinema that Mammooty’s stardom was consolidated. It may be argued that it is this middlebrow cinema that has contributed to Malayalam cinema’s claim of exceptionalism. Put differently, the aesthetic shifts in the 1960s and 1970s have led to the emergence of a distinct identity for Malayalam cinema.

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Reviving Ottomanism through Soft Power: The Case of Turkish Television Drama Diriliş: Ertuğrul

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Abstract

Since assuming power in 2002, Recep Tayyip Erdogan's leadership in Turkey has sparked substantial scholarly interest and critical analysis regarding the emergence of a new cultural wave. Scholars have observed a noteworthy departure from the Western cultural trajectory set in motion by Kemal Atatürk, as Erdogan's administration has ushered in a novel cultural paradigm that amalgamates Turkey's national heritage with an Islamic value system. This cultural shift is anticipated to significantly impact Turkey's position vis-à-vis Europe. Scholars argue that a return to traditional Islamic tenets in Turkish politics would seek to rekindle the collective imagination of the bygone Ottoman Empire. Central to this analysis is the recognition that Turkey actively produces and disseminates cultural artifacts with a specific intention in mind. Consequently, this study aims to comprehensively examine the new cultural wave sweeping through Turkey, with particular emphasis on the production and dissemination strategies employed in the popular television drama, *Diriliş: Ertuğrul*, (English Title : Resurrection : Ertugrul) which is produced by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation in 2014.

Keywords: Tele-drama, *Diriliş: Ertuğrul*, Turkish Soft Power, Turkish Culture, Neo-Ottomanism,

Introduction

Through an analysis of the television series *Diriliş: Ertuğrul*, which is produced by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation in 2014 this study endeavors to investigate the production techniques and dissemination approaches employed in Turkish tele-dramas to get a comprehensive understanding of the inner-dynamics of the broader cultural phenomenon taking place in Turkey. Moreover, this research seeks to elucidate the underlying motivations and intentions driving the creation and circulation of such cultural products within the contemporary Turkish context. Any investigation into the intricacies of this cultural transformation, is expected to contribute to the existing body of scholarly knowledge and foster a more nuanced comprehension of the socio-cultural dynamics currently at play in Turkey enable scholars, policymakers, and interested stakeholders to gain valuable insights into the intricate relationship between politics, religion, and culture in Turkey, as well as its potential implications for the broader European landscape.

The television drama series "Diriliş: Ertuğrul" delves into the political history of 13th century Turkey, centering around the remarkable life of Ertuğrul Bey, the father of Sultan Osman, who later emerged as the founding figure of the Ottoman Empire. Since its initial broadcast on TRT in 2014, the series has garnered an extensive global following, captivating millions of viewers worldwide. However, its popularity soared to unprecedented heights when it became available on the over-the-top (OTT) platform Netflix. It has garnered a significant following in Latin America, South Asia, and Africa. The English subtitled version, made available on Netflix in 2017, has captivated English-speaking audiences in the UK and the US (Weatherbee, S. 2018). 'The series' popularity has soared to the extent that it has been dubbed into six languages and broadcasted in 70 countries. Remarkably, on YouTube alone, the show "Ertuğrul" has accumulated over one billion views. This expansion onto a prominent streaming service propelled the show's rapid ascent within a relatively short span of time, solidifying its position as Turkey's preeminent soft power export.

The show's creator, Turkish Radio Television (TRT), characterizes it as a program that can unite global audiences through shared values. Fans of the show frequently express their appreciation for the way it portrays relatable hero characters. Unlike many mainstream productions, "Ertuğrul" offers nuanced narratives and characters that defy conventional stereotypes.

This global attraction of the series is to be seen against the backdrop of booming popularity of Turkish soft power in the few years. The exportation of Turkish television series beyond Turkey's borders commenced in 1981; but the trend remained limited until the 2000s (Öztürkmen, A. (2018), Panjeta, L. (2014).. Nevertheless, three notable series, namely "Magnificent Century" (2011), "Gümüş" (2005), and "1001 Nights" (2006), emerged during this period, ushering Turkish storytelling into the consciousness of a global audience. The reach of Turkish TV series has since extended to over 130 countries, amassing an audience of more than one billion and generating annual revenue of nearly one billion dollars. This expansion has reverberated throughout the global cinematic and television landscape, as evidenced by the recognition of Turkish TV series and actors on the international stage. In 2017, "Endless Love", a mega series garnered the esteemed Best Telenovela Award. Furthermore, the inclusion of Turkish series on platforms like Netflix has not only showcased contemporary Turkish lifestyles but has also disseminated Turkish history, cultural heritage, and even music to a global audience. Thanks to these online streaming services that transcend geographic boundaries, Turkish culture has experienced an unprecedented surge in global popularity in recent years.

The transnational flow of cultural text through Turkish television shows offers a fascinating opportunity to study the complex dynamics of globalization, cultural exchange, and the power of media in shaping cultural perceptions Benhaïm Y. & Öktem K. (2015), Ekşi, Muharrem. (2018), Anaz, N., Özcan, C.C. (2016). Analyzing these shows allows us to delve deeper into the intricate ways in which cultural products are consumed, interpreted, and negotiated across borders, shedding light on the complexities of cultural influence in an interconnected world.

Setting against this background the present study seeks to answer the question how the television series *Resurrection : Ertugrul* is narrated to evoke a collective imagination of history to promote neo-Ottomanism. To meet this single objective, a critical analysis of the series is employed. For this purpose, the researcher used the episodes presented on Netflix, the OTT platform, with English subtitles (Weatherbee, S. 2018).

The Plot

" *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* " tells the story of Ertugrul Bey, the father of Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman Empire. Set in the 13th century, the series follows Ertugrul's journey as he strives to protect his tribe, establish justice, and fight against external threats. The plot begins with Ertugrul Bey, the leader of the Kayi tribe, residing in the town of Sogut, which is under the control of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum. Ertugrul and his loyal warriors are engaged in a constant struggle to defend their lands against enemies, including Mongols, Byzantines, and the Knights Templar. As the series progresses, Ertugrul encounters numerous challenges and obstacles that test his leadership skills and determination. He forms alliances with other tribes and individuals, such as the Dodurga tribe and the wise Ibn Arabi, who assist him in his quest for justice and the preservation of his people's way of life.

Throughout the series, Ertugrul faces various personal and political conflicts. He falls in love with Halime Sultan, the daughter of a Seljuk nobleman, and they eventually marry. Ertugrul also contends with internal struggles within his tribe, as some individuals question his decisions and leadership.

One of the central storylines revolves around Ertugrul's efforts to find the Kayi tribe a new homeland. This pursuit leads him to the region of Sogut, where he establishes a settlement that eventually becomes the foundation of the Ottoman Empire. Ertugrul faces opposition from powerful forces, but his courage, tactical brilliance, and unwavering commitment to his people enable him to overcome these challenges. Throughout the series, "*Resurrection: Ertugrul*" explores themes of loyalty, honor, sacrifice, and the importance of justice. It showcases the rich cultural and historical aspects of the time period, with detailed portrayals of traditional Turkish customs, clothing, weaponry, and social structures. The plot of

"Resurrection: Ertugrul" is filled with intricate political intrigue, epic battles, emotional relationships, and moral dilemmas in the Seljuck Empire during the reign of Sultan Aladdin in the 13th century.

There is a wide criticism that the series presents an imperial project framed as a moral mission, emphasizing the transformation of the nomadic dwelling into a homeland and the emergence of Turkic identity (Yesil, B. (2015). It presents a specific perspective and narrative bias, depicting the Turkic people as righteous defenders against foreign invaders. This portrayal can be seen as a form of nationalistic myth-making. The drama simplifies historical dynamics by reducing conflicts to religious and cultural clashes, which can perpetuate stereotypes and biases. To gain a more accurate understanding of history, consult diverse and reliable historical sources. Equally relevant argument is that it is a fictional TV drama and should be approached as entertainment rather than a historical account. By drawing on collective memory, evoking a sense of shared history, and portraying the protagonist's triumphs against these enemies, the show establishes a strong emotional bond with viewers. It also addresses themes of faith, resilience, and identity, allowing Muslim audiences to find inspiration and affirmation in the representation of their history and culture. Overall, this storytelling approach contributes to the series' success in attracting and engaging Muslim viewers globally.

At the same time, the Turkish TV show receives acclaim from Turkish viewers who appreciate its portrayal of Turkish history. Some even compare it favorably to another TV series called *The Magnificent Century*, which depicts Sultan Suleyman's rule during the prosperous period of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century. However, there are others who view the show differently, perceiving it as capitalizing on the notion of a "glorious history." This idea is embodied in the show's premise, which revolves around a Turkish tribe capable of establishing a powerful empire lasting for six centuries, from 1299 to 1922. This interpretation of history clashes with the narrative that modern Turkey, following Kemal Atatürk's establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, should have broken away from its imperial past. Nevertheless, there are concerns that the currently governing Justice and Development Party, known for its conservative views, may be attempting to revive this imperial past. Scholars such as Josh Carney, who specialize in the study of media in Turkey, interpret the show as a vehicle for promoting neo-Ottomanism. This interpretation aligns with Turkey's current trajectory towards conservatism under the present government (Kraidy, M. M., & Al-Ghazzi, O. (2013).

The show incorporates numerous scenes of intense action that often glorify the heroism of the Kayi men, and occasionally the women, in violent conflicts. It also features Islamic religious characters and their rituals. These elements collectively

suggest that the show caters to a relatively conservative Turkish audience. It is important to note, however, that the appeal of action-packed sequences and religious themes extends beyond political or ideological affiliations. Consequently, assuming that the show exclusively targets a conservative audience oversimplifies the diverse range of viewers and their motivations for watching.

Shaping Collective Imagination

The television series "Ertugrul" strategically resonates with Muslim audiences worldwide by depicting the protagonist's encounters with historical adversaries known to be enemies of the Muslim world, including the Crusaders, Templars, Byzantines, and Mongols. This narrative choice attracts and engages Muslim viewers by tapping into their collective memory, fostering a sense of shared history and connection to ancestral struggles and triumphs. The portrayal of these antagonistic forces reinforces historical narratives and the enduring struggle against external threats faced by Muslims throughout history, promoting identification and solidarity among Muslim viewers. Portrayal of Ertuğrul's victories and military prowess against his formidable enemies serve as a source of inspiration and empowerment for Muslim audiences. By showcasing the protagonist's ability to strategize and overcome historical adversaries, the series highlights the resilience and strength of Muslim communities, reinforcing positive self-perceptions and collective pride of the bygone Ottoman era. Moreover, the inclusion of these historical conflicts allows the show to address themes of faith, honor, and the preservation of Islamic values in the face of adversity. The struggles faced by Ertuğrul and his companions against these hostile forces symbolize the broader challenges encountered by Muslims in contemporary times. It is also observed that narrative approach of this historic drama not only entertains but also engages Muslim viewers intellectually and emotionally, providing a platform for reflection on their heritage and the relevance of their faith in the modern world.

"Resurrection: Ertugrul" has undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping a collective imagination of the Ottoman Empire, particularly among its viewers. Here are some ways in which the television drama has contributed to this collective imagination:

Romanticizing the Ottoman Era: "Ertugrul" presents a romanticized version of the Ottoman Empire, with majestic palaces, elaborate costumes, and epic battles. The visually appealing portrayal of the era helps create a sense of awe and fascination, capturing the imagination of the audience.

Depicting Heroic Figures: The show showcases heroic figures like Ertugrul and other key characters who embody virtues such as bravery, honor, and loyalty. These

characters become symbols of the empire's glory and contribute to a narrative that emphasizes the strength and greatness of the Ottoman Empire.

Showcasing Ottoman Customs and Traditions: "Ertugrul" provides glimpses into Ottoman customs, traditions, and cultural practices. From the way people dressed to the rituals and ceremonies portrayed, the show offers viewers a window into the rich cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire, fostering a sense of pride and nostalgia.

Promoting a Sense of Unity and Identity: By focusing on the origins of the empire and highlighting the unity and resilience of the Turkish tribes, "Ertugrul" fosters a sense of collective identity among its viewers. It reinforces the idea of a shared historical heritage and promotes a sense of unity and pride in Turkish history.

Addressing Contemporary Themes: While "Ertugrul" is set in the past, it often touches upon contemporary themes and issues. This connection between the past and the present helps viewers relate to the Ottoman Empire and see its relevance in today's world, further contributing to the collective imagination surrounding the empire.

Also, "Dirilis: Ertugrul" has garnered global attention for its portrayal of Muslim societies, highlighting their pursuit of social justice and spiritual devotion. The show's meticulous depiction of Islamic rituals, such as ablution, prayer, and funerals, distinguishes it as a unique representation within popular television history.

Normalization of Islamic Values

"Ertugrul" assumes a pivotal role in reinterpreting Muslim history for broader audiences. Its meticulous attention to detail and extensive episode count serve as an educational platform, inviting viewers to explore alternative perspectives and deepen their understanding of Islamic culture. The show's commitment to authentic portrayals of Islam offers a refreshing departure from negative stereotypes, providing an opportunity for viewers to develop a more nuanced appreciation of their faith. Additionally, the captivating empathy among the main characters, particularly Ertugrul and his closest allies Turgut, Bamsi, Dogan, and later Aliyar Bey, captivates audiences. Their unwavering loyalty and camaraderie create a compelling dynamic, resonating with viewers. Notably, Aliyar Bey, characterized as a scholar and fighter carrying a Zulfiqar, emblematic of his connection to Imam Ali, exemplifies personal integrity by defying his power-hungry family to become Ertugrul's trusted confidant. Through such character portrayals, the show delves into themes of moral fortitude and ethical dilemmas.

Beyond entertainment, "Resurrection: Ertugrul" serves as a visual narrative that challenges stereotypes and offers viewers an immersive encounter with Muslim

history and culture. It instills a sense of pride and empowerment, eroding negative depictions through a meticulous reconstruction of Muslim experiences. By engaging audiences frame by frame, the show contributes to a more positive and nuanced representation of Muslims, appealing to those seeking a deeper understanding of Islam. While the show's sword fights and action sequences may not appeal universally, the underlying messages and intricate character relationships in "Ertugrul" underscore its significance and impact. It stands as a testament to the transformative power of storytelling, capable of reshaping historical narratives and presenting an alternative vision of Muslim societies that is both inspiring and thought-provoking.

Media texts that are structured to serve the purpose of promoting Turkish culture and shaping international perceptions are carefully crafted to engage and captivate audiences while conveying specific messages and cultural narratives (Mato, D. (2005), Özalpman, D. (2017).). The structure of these texts incorporates various elements to ensure their effectiveness in achieving their intended objectives. Here are some key aspects of the structure commonly observed in media texts designed for this purpose:

Compelling Storylines: Media texts, such as Turkish dramas, often feature intricate and emotionally engaging storylines. These narratives are crafted to grab the viewers' attention from the outset and maintain their interest throughout the series. The structure of the storyline may incorporate dramatic plot twists, suspenseful moments, and well-developed characters to create a captivating viewing experience.

Cultural Signifiers: The structure of media texts intended to promote Turkish culture prominently includes cultural signifiers that are recognizable and relatable to both domestic and international audiences. These signifiers can manifest in various forms, such as visual aesthetics, traditional customs and rituals, language usage, historical references, and iconic landmarks. By integrating these elements into the structure of the narrative, media texts reinforce the representation of Turkish culture and provide an immersive experience for the viewers.

Emotional Appeal: Media texts designed for this purpose often employ emotional appeal to establish a connection between the viewers and the characters, thus fostering empathy and generating emotional investment. The structure of the narrative may include emotionally charged scenes, heartfelt dialogues, and relatable character arcs that evoke strong emotions in the viewers. This emotional resonance serves to deepen the viewers' engagement and facilitate a more profound understanding and appreciation of Turkish culture.

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Universal Themes: Another aspect of the structure of media texts is the incorporation of universal themes that transcend cultural boundaries. By focusing on themes such as love, friendship, family dynamics, personal growth, and overcoming adversity, these texts create a common ground that resonates with viewers from different cultural backgrounds. This approach allows the texts to bridge cultural divides and facilitate cross-cultural understanding.

Visual Appeal: The visual aspect plays a crucial role in the structure of media texts. Attention is given to cinematography, production design, costume choices, and overall aesthetics to create visually stunning and aesthetically pleasing content. The visual appeal enhances the viewers' immersion in the narrative, making it more engaging and memorable. Additionally, the visuals can effectively showcase the beauty of Turkish landscapes, architecture, and cultural traditions, thereby promoting Turkish tourism and cultural heritage.

Cultural Contextualization: Media texts often employ strategies to contextualize Turkish culture within a broader international framework. This can involve incorporating characters or storylines that feature interactions with individuals from different cultures or addressing contemporary global issues. By situating Turkish culture within a global context, these texts aim to demonstrate its relevance and foster a sense of interconnectedness.

Turkey's strategic investments in media outlets geared towards promoting Turkish culture and perspectives on the international stage have yielded noteworthy results. A prominent component of this media landscape is the surge in popularity of Turkish television series, widely known as "Turkish dramas," which have captivated audiences in numerous countries. These dramas have emerged as a powerful vehicle for the dissemination of Turkish culture, history, and values, actively shaping international perceptions and stimulating a genuine curiosity and interest in Turkish society.

The success of Turkish dramas can be attributed to several factors. First and foremost, these series showcase a compelling blend of captivating storylines, strong character development, and high production values. Their quality rivals that of globally acclaimed television productions, allowing Turkish dramas to resonate with diverse audiences worldwide. By combining elements of romance, drama, and historical narratives, these series offer a unique window into Turkish culture and history, engrossing viewers and fostering a sense of familiarity with the Turkish way of life. Turkish dramas adeptly incorporate cultural references, customs, and traditions, providing viewers with an immersive experience that deepens their understanding of Turkish society. From traditional ceremonies and celebrations to familial dynamics and societal norms, these dramas present a comprehensive

portrayal of Turkish culture, enriching the viewers' knowledge and appreciation of Turkey's cultural heritage.

The influence of Turkish dramas extends beyond mere entertainment value. Through the power of storytelling, these series evoke emotions, empathy, and a sense of shared humanity, transcending cultural barriers. By showcasing universal themes such as love, friendship, family, and personal growth, Turkish dramas foster a sense of connection and relatability among viewers from different cultural backgrounds. This emotional resonance plays a pivotal role in fostering cross-cultural understanding, promoting empathy, and challenging stereotypes or preconceived notions about Turkish society. The international popularity of Turkish dramas has stimulated a ripple effect, sparking an increased interest in other facets of Turkish culture, including music, fashion, cuisine, and tourism. Viewers who are captivated by the narratives and aesthetics portrayed in these series often seek to deepen their engagement with Turkish culture by exploring these other domains. This burgeoning interest not only contributes to the global promotion of Turkish culture but also generates economic benefits through increased tourism and cultural exports.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the influence and reception of Turkish dramas can vary across different cultural contexts. While they have achieved remarkable success in certain regions, they may encounter challenges or cultural barriers in others. Factors such as linguistic differences, cultural sensitivities, and market saturation can influence the degree to which international audiences embrace Turkish dramas.

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