

### Chapter 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



Fig: 4. Sankarankutty in the film *Kodiyettam*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There are scenes in which the doctor asks him only necessary questions. He always does as he is told and never responds. He has internalised his orphanhood, and that contributes to his non-normativity. Actually, the non-normativity is inflicted or enforced on him by the family and society. His

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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