

## Chapter 4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Get lost.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She's unlike girls her age.

She will not squander any money.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

“Why are you so resistant?”

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

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

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

(“Chinnuamma”, 1:00:11 - 1:01:19)

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chinnuamma has a deep regret in her mind about living a life without the fulfilment of passion and with the annihilation of bodily desires. Her resistance becomes symbolic of the suppression of her own mind. "Chinnuamma" ends with a voiceover of the narration of Chinnuamma. Adoor brings a shot of women in colourful sarees (perhaps to represent the new generation) and bright faces. Ganguly interprets the shot. "The juxtaposition of past and present, of old age and youth, suggests that the new generation of women in their colourful *saris* and bright faces will not falter when it is time for them to decide" (101). But her last words, which prioritise the virtue and honour of women, were a necessary prerequisite. It implies once more that women cannot break the virtues.

Kamakshi, like Chinnuamma, resists the temptation. She attempts to show that a woman can live without a man. The film again underlines how marriage is conceptualised as a body of power. It implies that a physical relationship between a man and a woman that is not labelled as marriage is considered a denial of virtue. However, the culture expects women to act wisely as the keepers of virtue. Kamakshi decides to preserve her virginity and denies herself.

The four different stories describe the conditions that shape the life of each woman grappled in the cultural strata of Kerala which had a strong matrilineal history. When a woman remains single without the label of marriage she is considered as the one who longs for lust and victimised as the other in the patriarchal world. The meaning and the significance of the marriage as an institution becomes paradoxical in the regimes of oppression and resistance. The

four women characters who represent different hierarchal classes of Hindu caste inhabit their space and identity in the society as abstract concepts. Even though they strive to come out from and “herald liberty” (Ganguly, *The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* 96) they submit themselves in front of the societal norms and governmental laws.

Foucault argues about construct of sexuality and it is the result of many lineages of knowledge production that shape the psyche of human subjects in particular ways. The repressive apparatus functions predominantly by means of oppression and violence in the first part and ideological apparatuses in the other three. The problematisation of the repressive sex and the unidentifiable voice form the crux of the text in the paradoxical justifications of power system.

Women as the 'other' are unable to read their own minds, allowing ideological taboos and practices to overcome them with consent. The film is about two unmarried and two ‘legally’ married women in a society where the social signification of marriage had been steadily changing, bringing in different dilemmas in the lives of the four women. Being married becomes a problem for the married ones while being not married becomes the problem for the unmarried ones.