

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The study consolidates the representations of power in the domains of state, caste, and gender. Culture also becomes a dominant factor in the construction of power signifiers. Because the study focuses on films, the aspects of *mise en scène* are also considered. The text of the film is studied for its representation of power through the plot, dialogues and characterisation. The plot is obviously built on the cultural milieu of Kerala in the selected films of study. It elucidates how signifiers such as state, gender, normativity, and class are turned into sites of power. It does not only attempt to establish power in terms of the repressive apparatus. Rather, it examines how power operates in ideological forms and also hints at the productive aspects of power.

The study explores the varied perspectives of power. It broadens the definition of power beyond merely repressive. Rather, a subject allows the master to act upon himself or herself. It identifies the ideological apparatuses rooted in the culture. The study used the trajectories of Foucault and Althusser to analyse the direct and indirect power orientations in the selected films. It attempts to read the non-repressive apparatuses of power.

The study tries to sketch out the representations of sovereign power and disciplinary power in the selected films. In the selected films, biopower also serves as a source of power mechanism. The research examines how these forms of power operate primarily through state in the films *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam*, and *Kathapurushan*. In relation to the aspects of disciplinary power primarily explored

in the films *Kodiyettam* and *Kathapurushan*, the normative representation of masculinity also becomes problematic. The other operative channels of power, caste and gender, are analysed in the films *Vidheyan* and *Naalu Pennungal*.

The study tried to emphasise the Foucauldian perception that “power is exercised, not owned by anyone, and it does not manifest itself in different ways but rather as an ephemeral entity that manages its way into our imaginations and acts to discipline our actions”(Ali 4). The study examines how power is exercised and the role of society in reproducing practices and discourses. In the study of the selected films, power is not viewed as a synonym for coercion or imposition. Rather, the object willingly accepts the servitude. Adoor's characters shape or tune themselves to bring out the exercise of power. They must be shaped or they will become dictators over themselves.

The second chapter titled “State as Norm: A Study of *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam* and *Kathapurushan* addresses power excision at the state level. It becomes problematic and complicated when it is both repressive and productive at the same time. State functions an important role in the exercise of power. The state acts as an entity of power, and it reinforces or modifies the nature of the outlook of the protagonist and other characters. Through the reading of the select films *Elepathayam*, *Mukhamukam*, and *Kathapurushan*, the study locates the indirect orientations of power.

Unnikunju, Sreedharan, and Kunjunni, the protagonists of the films, are prototypical of the time. They also represent the predicament of masculinity in the post-twentieth century. The study of the film *Elepathayam* is based on how the

state envisions its policies affecting society. Unnikunju is a post-feudal and post-matrilineal Kerala prototype. Through the characterisation of his family as class-specific, Adoor has tried to capture the dominant ideology of the time. Adoor prioritises and problematises the predicament of the upper caste. He also demonstrates how power relations operate in reverse within the hierarchy. Adoor's representation of history is political in the film *Elepathayam* in terms of a new historicist reading. He incorporates significant government policies as well as social practices of the people at the time.

The chapter also examines the film in terms of new historicist reading. The anxieties and chaos produced in the Nair families as a result of the decline of the matrilineal system are a true representation of the age. The study attempts to read it as an embodiment of the decline of the dominant ideology of that time and how that decline produced power repercussions in the social and familial lives of the protagonist, Unnikunju. The perspectives or the reading of a particular age are represented through the lens of Adoor. The characteristics of the age are intertwined with the plot and narration of events in that age. The context and the narrative of the events are read as a product of Adoor's personal life, and they also trace his perceptions of society in general and class and culture in specific. As a result, it calls into question the objectivity of history.

The chapter also validates arguments on power relations as the study exposes the ideological constructs in family, gender, class, and state. The abolition of the matrilineal system and the inclusion of the land reform bill have dismantled the predominant constructs, and they question and problematise the centrality of power owned by the constructs of wealth and hierarchy of class. Though the study

looks at the representation of Unnikunju as a signifier of power in terms of new historicism, it also questions the fixity of the signified.

Adoor pictures him as feeble and weak. The research investigates how new power structures emerged as a result of state policy revisions. These power consolidations become a parallel study in the plot and narrative of *Elepathayam*. The very name of the film suggests that the state functions as a repository of power. The title of the film alludes to power in both productive and later repressive terms. The caste family and *taravadu* are the dominant signifiers of power. Male identity is also a source of contention.

The film *Kathapurushan* can also be read as part of a new historicist inquiry into how sovereign power came to dominate in that era. The parallel reading of the life of Kunjunni is how Adoor tries to deliver his personal ideologies and political implications. It deeply probes into a parallel reading of the particular period depicted in the film. The political beliefs, class, and gender hierarchies of an age are represented through the story of Kunjunni.

The study delves into how Adoor perceives the power structures of the time. It demonstrates how the marginalised voice is also included. The study postulates the argument that history is not objective. The term 'marginalised' itself is contradictory as it purports different viewpoints in the delineation of history. To read the plurality of voices, the conflicts of rigid class biases and the impact of the revival of state policies on the character Kunjunni and his family are specifically analysed.

The resistance is active in the case of Kunjunni. The study identifies how he has learned to question and "battle with the systems and ideologies" (Ganguly, "The Narratives of Dislocation: The Theme of Outsider in the Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan"). The impact of repressive power systems on the protagonist, Kunjunni's, life is investigated using speculative analysis. The modalities of sovereign power are analysed through the direct and indirect involvement of Kunjunni in the social upheavals and turmoil of the age. So, the study eventually made the new historicist inquiry through the parallel reading of the reference to the policies of the government and its interference in the life of Kunjunni. It also emphasises how meta narratives and mini narratives are represented in Kerala.

Adoor represents how the dominant policies institutionalise power. It also consolidates the new historicists' way of looking at the age in terms of mini narratives. The resistance becomes active in the case of Kunjunni. He learns to question and react against the sovereign power. The study attempted to read the heard resistance and unheard voices. It also discusses how the structured disciplinarian mechanisms regulate society.

The film *Mukhamukam* studies and analyses the narrative of the cinema in terms of sovereign power. It also problematises the critical perception of the film as a documentation of anti-marxist politics. The narrative of the film is studied as a confrontation between the real and the imaginary. The very character of the protagonist, Sreedharan, is represented and developed through building blocks. . They merge to build the character. He is a creation that arose from memories. The film dismantles the clichéd development of a character, and Adoor even questions the appearance of the character in a certain phase of the narrative. It depicts a clash

between the real and the imagined. The study looks into the conflict and confrontation between an activist and rebel, or, to be specific, an activist turned rebel. It also points out the disparities in the existence of political systems and ideologies. The characterisation of Damodaran and his narration about the changes in the second phase of the film validate the argument. The study documents the split of the communist party under Dante. It is not a criticism against the communist party or the anti-communist strategy. Adoor raises the question about the promises assured by a political system. The study delves into the changes and upheavals that occurred during Sreedharan's absence.

The study also employs film motifs such as memories, newspaper reports, photographs, and montage scenes. Adoor effectively employs these props, which are then analysed to study the falsity and hollowness of the truth established through marxist ideology. He teaches the people about capital exploitation and the need for resistance. The study elucidates the clichés and anti-cliches of the slogans raised by Sreedharan and the timid and shy Sreedharan of the second phase. The juxtaposition and montage techniques dismantle the credibility of the systems.

The study explains the falsity by examining people's apathy toward ideology. Here, sovereign power is used as a representation of repressive dominance. The props used are also investigated to determine how they produce meaning. The brutality of the police is a representation of the repressive state apparatus (RSA). The failure of the political party to fulfil the promises also questions the validity of the truth. It also emphasises the discord and contradictions in the poststructuralist study: the relations of power, to be specific, sovereign

power or state power, which are exercised at the top-bottom level. The legitimacy of poststructuralist perception is called into question.

The third chapter titled “Normativity as a Construct: A Study of *Kodiyettam* and *Anantaram* consolidates the disciplinary power operations in society. The study focuses on the paradoxical relationship between normative norms of masculinity and power. The portrayal of the protagonists in the films *Kodiyettam* and *Anantaram* are discussed. It speaks about the representation of excluded male characters in a society. Certain gender and caste-specific norms are established by society. Those who deviate from the general norms are considered non-normative. It also discusses Foucault’s *psychiatric power* and attempts to theorise the relationships between norms, disciplinary power, and resistance. The chapter examines Foucault’s *Abnormal* and sees how the norm becomes legitimised.

The chapter focuses on non-normative masculinity, and certain characteristics of the characters are considered to be outside the norms of their gender. As the norm and power have an indexical relationship, the disciplinary power acts as a variant of domination. The analysis foregrounds how Adoor perceives the degree to which an individual meets the norms—to be specific, the perception of masculinity. The study mentions resistance that coexists with these norms when they are analysed in terms of dominance.

The characters Sankarankutty and Ajayan are studied as representations of non normativity. Sankaran Kutty’s character is examined in relation to society. His actions and observations are closely studied to discuss how the notions of hegemonic masculinity are subverted. He does not uphold any particular ideology

and is represented as a light-hearted man. The relationship between the male characters, who possess hegemonic traits, attains a dominant position in comparison with Sankaran Kutty, who bears complicit traits. Sankarankutty's character shift can also be interpreted as submissiveness to society's normative masculinity. The operation of power is sometimes productive in his transformation. He also uses resistance to transform himself.

Adoor uses the metaphors of a bullock cart and a truck to show the transition of his character. Sankaran Kutty never adopts the form of resistance against others in the film. Adoor presents the conflict between the individual and society through the universalisation of hegemonic masculinity in the characterisation of a truck driver.

Sankarankutty is a man who never adopts a serious approach towards life. He has an easy-going attitude and depends on his sister. Adoor also tries to dismantle and subvert the identities associated with hegemonic masculinity. The image of the schoolmaster who fears the social disgrace of the illegal relationship with Kamamma also demonstrates how disciplinary power works to enforce moral codes. The suicide of Kamamma is also analysed to understand the unstable nature of power. Resistance becomes insignificant in the characters. Adoor uses metaphors to imply meaning. Sankarankutty's transformation towards sense of self-hood is sometimes an indirect domination of disciplinary power to equip individuals in the normative paradigms of society. Adoor's innovative use of music also connotes the transformation of the character.

The film *Anantaram* is studied as a narrative of resistance against the power relations embedded in the constraints of normative masculinity. The study intends to look at how the character Ajayan is perceived in society. The development of the particular character shows how factors such as unknown parentage, illegitimacy, etc. are perceived as conditions of deviation from the predefined norms of culture. C. S. Venkiteswar rightly describes the character as an outsider who does not make the distinction between fantasy and fiction. The voiceover of Ajayan specifically singles out certain events as an 'internalisation of power'. It analyses how the events have infiltrated and undermined his identity.

The study also demonstrates how sexual repression and societal moral codes dictate norms for man-woman relationships. The infatuation that Ajayan feels towards his sister-in-law is a representation of the perversion of sexuality. It can also be considered a repression of sexual desires. The film's complex narrative parallels Ajayan's characterisation. The distinction between psychologically sane and insane is a result of society's power structure. The otherness instilled in the characterisation of Ajayan becomes analogous to a sort of 'institutional confinement' as mentioned in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. The study explores whether the dichotomy between Ajayan and his elder brother reflects a conceptual distinction. It also demonstrates how the identity of being non-normative constructs otherness, which leads to seclusion. The study also foregrounds the metaphorical props to establish the otherness.

The resistance becomes expressive, and Adoor portrays it in the narrative style of metafiction to intensify its authenticity. Ajayan's attempt to deviate from

the norms and his own way of representing himself can also be read as a form of passive protest.

The fourth chapter titled “Home, Class and Gender as Apparatuses: A Study of *Vidheyam* and *Naalu Pennungal*” reads about multifarious power operations in the forms of home class and gender. The study of power in the film *Vidheyam* is obviously an oppressor-oppressed relationship at the literal level. Home and class serve as the sites of power, and the absence of both creates the dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed. The power operations can become toxic at times. The analysis also looks at the oppression of the subaltern groups and their limited chances of resistance. But as power is coexistent with resistance, the study attempts to read Thommie’s indirect protest. In the paradoxical power relations, Thommie's gradual development of admiration for Pattelar becomes problematic. It further studies the collective consciousness of Dalits. The study tries to bring out the vestiges of the class system.

The resistance of the slave or the oppressor is read as passive. It is ineffective when compared to the other films chosen for study. Thommie never misses the opportunities presented by resistance. The reading looks at how he joins with the enemies of Pattelar. The acts of submissiveness can only be read as a sort of adaptation to his existence in the alien land. The aspect of acting, one of the dominant contents of *mise en scène*, is effectively brought to life to visualise the resistance of Thommie towards Pattelar. His actions keenly reflect the suppressed protest.

The study of the film *Vidheyan* reveals the oppression of women. The dominance of Pattelar over other women can be analysed as an assertion of toxic masculinity. The resistance is negligible on the part of the female characters, and they are mere objects to satisfy the lust of Pattelar. The only woman who is bold enough to express her opinion is his wife, Saroja. The men took revenge on the women. In Vidheyan's portrayal of women, power is merely viewed as an act of possession.

The four women in *Naalu Pennungal* belong to four different strata of life, separated from each other by time and class. They are outsiders in the sense that they do not fit within society's conceptual boundaries. The text of the film examines the way the women attempt to shackle their displaced positions in society and define their identity. The man-woman relationship in our society is questioned in the realms of law, class, gender, and culture. This study examines the multifunctional ways in which power is manifested in the film's four parts. The discussion of power becomes a crucial factor in the social construct of familial relationships rendered by Adoor in the film. This becomes more important as his films are more concerned with the post-matrilineal period, where women and men acquire ambivalent positions in the power system.

The figuration of power in terms of gender, culture, and state becomes paradoxical in these segments of the film. Foucault argued that some sections of the population could be classified as sick, criminal, or insane so that they could be placed under surveillance and observed by particular authorities. The filmic text investigates the hidden power structures and the way that they are internalised by the characters. The concern with the materiality of power relations both spatially

and connotatively in the text forms the core reading of this part. The crux of the text is the problematisation of the repressive sex and the unidentifiable voice in the paradoxical justifications of power. She, as the “other”, is unable to read her own mind and allows ideological taboos and practices to overpower them with her.

The women in the film are strong enough to express their opinions. They display resistance. However, their resistance is limited in that they shape themselves according to preconceived notions of sexuality. They internalised their servitude, and the power structures of society made them think that they should bear the subjugation.

To conclude, the study makes an attempt to read the existence of power in varied forms in the society. The reading of films of Adoor in the perspective of relations of power moves beyond from the assumption of plain oppression of the oppressed. The methodology of Michael Foucault on the relations of power elucidates the view that oppressive mechanisms are not always repressive. Rather it is productive, at times, causes new adaptations to emerge. Foucault concentrates more on the resistance on the power. This study also looks at the different forms of resistance which is produced from the contestation of power.

The resistance emerged from the power structure is not showcased here as a rebellion. The reading looks at the resistance of characters at different levels. Except, in the film *Mukhamukam* Adoor presents individual passive resistance. The resistance in the films is not in the form of mass protests or rebellions. The resistance is passive and silent. The non conformity to the ideological and repressive apparatuses of power can be understood as acts of resistance. The study

foregrounds subtle acts of resistance rooted from the operations of power. The study attempted to bring out both direct and indirect manifestations of power. As the hidden forces of power are brought out by the dominant structures of the society the victims or the subjects also employ strategies of resistance. This research tried to bring out those acts of resistance in the select films. These forms of power and resistance are implicit in other films of Adoor.

The study critically examines how caste, politics and gender construct their interference in modern Kerala through discursive practices. The exploratory research aims to identify power as coextensive with resistance. It can reflect the positive sides such as individual's self making and revise the statements of administrative mechanisms and judiciary system of the society. The film being a cultural artifact, the study of power in terms of oppressor-victim and productive relations may enlighten the decision makers to form opinion and change perceptions. This may lead to the questioning of the stereotyped subversions. The reading does not offer a didactic solution; rather it aims at self realisation and a better understanding of the society.