A Critical Analysis of Gender and Sexuality in the Film *Aanum Pennum*

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CONTENTS

Preface

Sexuality is the manifestation and experience of oneself in terms of physical, sensual, spiritual and erotic aspects. The constitution of gender as an identity can be comprehended by giving due consideration to the physical, sensual and erotic aspects of sexuality. *Aanum Pennum* (2021) is one such film which delineates its characters and narrates their experiences within a framework of male/female gender binary. The film therefore reveals spaces to look into construction of identities and practices of life in terms of gender and sexuality.

The dissertation titled "A Critical Analysis of Gender and Sexuality in the Film *Aanum Pennum*", is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which looks into the concepts of gender and sexuality theoretically and also provides a brief summary of the film selected for study. The second chapter analyses gender as a socially constructed identity which regulates the life of the women characters within the labyrinth of life. The third chapter analyses sexuality in terms of its physical, erotic and sensual aspects.

The fourth and final chapter concludes the project with a brief summary of the project and the observations and inferences are reinforced in the concluding chapter.

Chapter One

Introduction

In order to comprehend cinema as a cultural practice that depicts and perpetuates stereotypes about women and femininity, feminist film theory was created in the early 1970s. Theoretical frameworks were constructed to openly address issues of female spectatorship as well as critically debate the sign and image of women in movies. On the one hand, feminist film theory condemned classical cinema for its stereotypical portrayal of women, and on the other, it highlighted the potential for a women's cinema that permitted depictions of female subjectivity and female desire.

In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist film theory had a significant impact on the broader fields of visual culture and cultural studies, particularly with the study of woman-as-image and the feminist movement. Laura Mulvey, Mary Ann Doane, Molly Haskell, Miriam Hansen, Claire Johnston, etc are notable film theorists. Laura Mulvey, a professor of Film and Media Studies at Birkbeck College of the University of London, was born in Oxford in 1941. She led Birkbeck Institute for the Moving Image (BIMI) as its director from 2012 to 2015. She is the author of *Citizen Kane* (1992), *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (2006), *Fetishism and Curiosity* (1996, 1996), *Visual and Other Pleasures* (1989), *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women, and Changing Times* (2007), and *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (2009). (2019). *British Experimental Television* (2007), *Feminisms* (2015), and *Other Cinemas: Politics, Culture, and British Experimental Film in the 1970s* (2017) are among the books she co-edited. In addition to two

films with the artist and director Mark Lewis, Mulvey produced six movies with Peter Wollen, including *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977).

The essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, which Mulvey wrote in 1973 and published in the prestigious British cinema theory journal *Screen* in 1975, is the one for which she is best known. It also appears in various other anthologies, as well as her book of essays titled (*Visual and Other Pleasures*). One of the first significant writings that contributed to changing the direction of film theory, under the influence of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan's theories, was this one. Mulvey was the first to bring together film theory, psychoanalysis, and feminism. Before her, film theorists like Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz tried to include psychoanalytic concepts in their theoretical descriptions of the cinema. In her influential essay titled *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, she put forward the concepts of the male gaze and female spectatorship. She used psychoanalysis as a political tool to subvert the traditional depiction of women in classical Hollywood movies.

In *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Mulvey's fundamental claim is that Hollywood narrative films employ women to provide men with a joyful visual experience. The narrative movie structures its gaze as appealing to man (the male gaze). The reifying gaze is never carried by the woman; rather, the woman is always its object. The association with the male hero and the usage of the camera both contribute to the consistently masculine gaze provided by film. Mulvey distinguishes two ways that Hollywood movie elicits pleasure, each of which is based on a distinct mental mechanism. The first one comprises objectifying the image, whereas the second one includes

identifying with it. The male subject's mental desires are represented by both processes. The first type of pleasure has to do with what Freud called scopophilia, which is the enjoyment one gets from looking at someone. Identification with the displayed figure is the second sort of pleasure that coexists with scopophilia and is prompted by demands from the Freudian Ego.

Sigmund Freud believed that a person's personality is multifaceted and made up of many different elements. According to Freud's well-known psychoanalytic theory, the id, ego, and superego are the three components that makeup personality. These components combine to produce complex human behaviour. Each element contributes something special to personality, and the way the three work together has a significant impact on a person. Every aspect of personality develops at a different time in life.

The id is the aspect of the personality that develops first. The id, which operates only on instinct, desire, and need, is there at birth. It includes the most basic aspects of personality, including instinctive biological desires, and is essentially unconscious. The id gives rise to the ego, the second component of the personality. Its responsibility is to acknowledge and deal with reality, ensuring that the id's urges are restrained and expressed in ways that are acceptable to society. The superego, or phallic stage in Freud's phases of psychosexual development, is the last aspect of the personality and develops between the ages of 3 and 5. The superego upholds a sense of right and wrong and serves as the moral conscience of the psyche. One first picks up these ideals from their parents (*ThoughtCo*).

Laura Mulvey incorporated the idea of the Mirror stage along with Freud's concepts in her essay. Lacan elaborates on the idea of the mirror stage in his article *Mirror Stage* (1949), which he claims happens between the ages of 6 and 18 months in a child's development and in which the kid starts to make crude distinctions between the self and the other as it sees its reflection in a mirror. Prior to this, the infant is in the Real stage from birth, driven by wants, and is living with the mother. The kid reaches the first realisation of their bodily autonomy at the Mirror Stage. The lifelong process of defining oneself in terms of the other; man/woman, West/East, and so on begins at this point (Mambrol *Literariness*).

The practice of treating a person only as a sexual object is known as sexual objectification. In a broader sense, objectification refers to treating someone like a commodity or an item without taking into account their personality or dignity. Objectification, as a form of dehumanisation, was most frequently studied at the level of a community, it can be related to individual behaviour also. Although both men and women can be sexually objectified, the term is most often used to refer to the objectification of women. It is a key notion in many feminist theories and psychological theories that are based on them. Numerous feminists contend that the sexual objectification of girls and women worsens gender inequality, and numerous psychologists link objectification to a variety of risks to women's physical and mental health. According to research, objectification of men has similar psychological impacts on them as it does on women, which can result in men having a bad body image.

The concept of objectification theory, put out by Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts in 1997, provides a framework for comprehending the experiences of women in societies that sexually objectify them. Fredrickson and Roberts derive findings about the experiences of women under this paradigm. According to this hypothesis, women learn to absorb an outside perspective of their bodies as the main view of themselves as a result of sexual objectification. They say that women start to think of their bodies as objects that are distinct from who they are. Self-objectification is the phrase used to describe this internalisation. Sexual objectification is assumed to occur in culture; this theory does not attempt to prove its presence. The objectification theory states that greater daily body monitoring results from this self-objectification. Fredrickson and Roberts propose explanations for effects using this paradigm. In cultures where women are sexually objectified, objectification theory provides a framework for interpreting their experiences. This framework serves as the foundation for Fredrickson and Roberts' analyses of the effects they claim sexual objectification has caused. Higher feelings of guilt, increased feelings of worry, a drop in the peak level of motivation, and a decrease in awareness of one's own internal physical sensations are the suggested repercussions.

The idea that girls and women learn their primary perception of their physical self by observing others has been the foundation for research on sexual objectification. These observations might be made from personal experience or in the media. Women are trained to view their own physical attributes from the perspective of a third party, a process known as self-objectification, through a combination of expected and actual exposure. Based

on observations of others, women and girls form expectations for their physical appearance and are conscious of the fact that other people are likely to do the same. Women's sexual objectification and self-objectification are thought to have an impact on societal gender roles and sex inequalities.

In Martha Nussbaum, an American philosopher's view, there are seven factors in the process of objectification, they are;

Instrumentality- the use of a person as an instrument for the interests of the objectifier;

Denial of autonomy- treating someone as if they lack autonomy and self-determination;

Inertness- the perception of someone as lacking agency and possibly even activity;

Fungibility- the use of an individual as a substitute for other objects;

Violability- the assertion that someone lacks boundary integrity;

Ownership- the handling of an individual as if they were something that could be purchased or sold by another;

Denial of subjectivity- the treatment of an individual as though their experiences and emotions (if any) are irrelevant (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

Along with objectification Laura Mulvey discusses about male gaze and scopophilia in her work, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. The Male Gaze theory claims that women in the media are seen through the heterosexual man's eyes and are portrayed as passive victims of male desire. Even if they are straight men or heterosexual women, audiences are compelled to see women from the perspective of a heterosexual man. In Mulvey's view,

"there are three different looks associated with cinema: that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion" (*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* 25). This theory can be interpreted from a feminist perspective in three different ways: how males regard women, how women view themselves, and ultimately, how women view other women. The male gaze is typically depicted in medium-closeup images of women taken from behind a man's shoulder, in shots which pan and focus on a woman's body, and in sequences where a guy is seen looking intently at a woman who is acting passively.

Scopophilia is a form of aesthetic pleasure that results from admiring something or someone. The term scopophilia in human sexuality refers to the sexual pleasure one gets from viewing obscene images of sex, such as pornography, the naked body, and fetishes, rather than engaging in sex. Scopophilia is a term coined by Sigmund Freud to describe, analyse, and explain the idea of *Schaulust*, the joy of gazing, a curiosity he believed to be a partly instinct fundamental to the process of developing a personality during childhood. According to Lacan's conceptualization of the gaze, the enjoyment of scopophilia is connected to one's perception of another individual (person) who does not represent oneself.

Sexual consent is the approval given by an individual for sexual behaviour. In other words, it is an agreement to engage in sex. Setting personal boundaries, respecting those of the partner, and checking in when necessary are all important components of agreeing and asking for consent. To be consensual, sex must always be agreed upon by both parties. Sexual activity

without consent, involving oral sex, genital contact, and anal or vaginal penetration, is considered sexual assault or rape.

Sex and gender are used interchangeably without realising that they are not similar. Sex is a binary classification into male and female, based on chromosomes or genitals of an individual. It is purely based on the anatomical and physiological features. Sex is biological in nature. Whereas, gender is a social construct of man and woman. Sexuality on the other hand is the total expression and manifestation of an individual with regards to sexual term. It includes social, physical, erotic, spiritual, emotional, psychological and biological behaviours, feelings and expressions. Sexuality is not only the short term used for of sexual intercourse. It includes various aspects in it other than erotic or physical relation. Biological sex, social sex roles, sexual orientation and gender identity are included in the broad definition of sexuality, sensuality, identity, reproduction, intimacy and behaviour are considered as the five components of sexuality.

The socially constructed qualities of men, women, girls, and boys are referred to as gender. This covers interpersonal connections as well as the standards, mannerisms, and roles that come with being a woman, man, girl, or boy. Gender is a social concept that differs from culture to culture and can evolve over time (*Gender and Health*, WHO). Sexuality on the other hand is the total expression and manifestation of an individual with regards to sexual term. It includes social, physical, erotic, spiritual, emotional, psychological and biological behaviours, feelings and expressions. Normal biological distinctions between the sexes do not change unless a medical procedure is performed. However, there are differences in how men and women view their

own traits, duties, and tasks that are not based on sexual orientation. It is a social construction that is ascribed to them based on the perceived distinctions. These responsibilities vary from society to society depending on the dominant cultural system, such as patriarchy. Activities that are given to men and women must be based on these varied perceptions in accordance with gender norms. Similar to how job disparities influence career choice.

For Judith Butler, gender is not a natural process but a performance or enactment. According to them, if an act is performed repeatedly and results in a string of outcomes, it is performative. Butler emphasises that the gendered behaviours' repetition is the crucial. This method of building gender leads us to Butler's contention that because gendered activities and gender identity both exist at the same time, gender identity never exist before gendered activities. We shouldn't think of gender as a stable identity because it is always being formed by gendered behaviours. Their arguments on gender were addressed in her influential works titled *Gender Trouble* (1990), *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* (1988), *Imitation and Gender Insubordination* (1991), *Bodies That Matter* (1993), *Undoing Gender* (2004) etc.

The adjectives masculinity and femininity describe a person's gender in terms of their being male or female, respectively. They are the gender roles assigned to the biological male and female respectively. A set of qualities, actions, and roles referred to as masculinity are those that are typical of males and boys. There is disagreement over how much of masculinity is impacted by biology or society. It differs from the biological definition of the male sex

since masculine characteristics can be displayed by anyone. Distinct cultures and traditions have different expectations of what constitutes a man.

Women and girls are typically connected with a group of traits, behaviours, and roles known as femininity (also known as womanliness). It is debatable to what degree femininity is impacted by biology or society. Given that all people, regardless of sex or gender, can display feminine and masculine qualities, It's indeed clearly distinguishable between the female biological gender and from womanhood.

Evolutionary theory, Object- relations Theory, Gender Schema theory and Social role Theory are the famous theories related to the concept of gender roles. Genetic bases for distinctions between men and women are the foundation of evolutionary theories of gender development. David M. Buss and Shields were the advocates of this type of theory. The effect of socialization on gender development is the prime focus of Carol Gilligan's Object- Relations theory (1982). Sandra Bem, an American psychologist postulated the Gender schema Theory in the year 1981. The function of conceptual framework in addition to socialisation is emphasised by gender schema theory. The foundation of this theory is that young individuals take in on how their cultures and/or civilizations define the positions of men and women, internalise this information as a gender schema, or unquestionable basic belief. Then, subsequent events are organised using the gender schema. Thus, the interaction between children's gender schemas and experiences shapes how they view men and women. The gender schema that children develop throughout time will eventually include their own self-concepts, and they will adopt the characteristics and actions that they believe to be

appropriate for their gender. According to Alice Eagly, gender development is founded on socialisation. According to Eagly's Social Role Theory (1987), gender roles are created by the sexual division of labour and societal expectations that are based on stereotypes.

Assertiveness, independence, leadership, courage and strength are the traditional masculine traits whereas warmth, passivity, sweetness, nurturance, sensitivity, expressiveness and cooperativeness are the traits associated with femininity.

The term patriarchy refers to a hypothetical social structure in which the father or another male senior possesses total control over the family unit; as a result, one or more males (as in a council) also possess total authority over the community. Many 19th-century researchers worked to construct a theory of self - reinforcing cultural evolution, building on the notions of biological evolution proposed by Charles Darwin. This now disproved theory proposed that human social structure developed in phases, starting with animalistic sexual infidelity and ending with matriarchy and patriarchy.

The movie selected for the analysis of the positioning of women based on gender and sexuality is the Malayalam anthology film *Aanum Pennum*, a 2021 film by Rajeev Ravi. *Aanum Pennum* includes three short films *Savithri*, *Rachiyamma*, and *Rani* directed by Jay.K, Venu and Aashiq Abu respectively. The three short films are adaptations from three different short stories. *Savithri* is written by Santhosh Echikkanam, *Rachiyamma,* a novella by Uroob (1969) and *Rani* by Unni. R. *Rani* was adapted from the short story titled *Pennum Cherukkanum* (2020). Three short films represent three women from three different times. *Aanum Pennum* was released on March 26, 2021.

Anthologies are collections of films that share a common theme. They are typically a mix of stories, some of which are successful while others are not. All of the stories in *Aanum Pennum* fall somewhere in the middle. The binary narrative, of man and woman, is the main motif in this story. In the stories of *Savithri*, *Rachiyamma*, and *Rani* in *Aanum Pennum*, the female protagonists are determined, bold, and well-ordered, and their male counterparts are correspondingly insecure, indecisive, and occasionally violent. *Savithri*'s opening tale is the most incisive and politically charged of the three. It contrasts caste, politics, mythology, and gender in a gripping story relevant to the times we live in. The second, *Rachiyamma*, is a straightforward retelling of an old story. It brings to mind a time when a woman's virtue lay in her selflessness and her devoted love for a man was praised. *Rani* is the anthology's most light heartedly simple and yet thoughtful story. *Rani* demonstrates a complete reversal of roles with its biblical allusions and humorous circumstances. The final story, *Rani*, genuinely wraps up the collection with a lovely, tidy tie.

The entirety of *Aanum Pennum* falls into the stereotype of an F-rated movie. In the face of a crisis, most frequently brought on by a physically or socially controlling abusive guy, there is the empowered strong and brave woman.

The short film *Savithri* is set in mid twentieth century Kerala, where communist ideologies and activities were sprouting. Communist's and communist activities were considered as a threat at that time. The central character of the short film is Savithri, played by Samyuktha Menon. She is a communist and was brave enough to go forward with her communist activities

amidst of a lot of life-threatening incidence and experiences. Police at that time was arresting communists and those who were caught by them, never returned. Police got information about Savithri having relation with communists and that she had helped them in passing messages. Her house was attacked by the policemen and her family members were beaten. Savithri was also beaten by them. As per the family's request Savithri decides to flee from the place, otherwise she will be taken away by the policemen and will be killed.

Savithri ran away from the place and she found shelter in a wealthy land lord family, disguised as a servant named Kochupaaru. It was a joint family and followed matrilineal system. Everything was fine until the arrival of Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai, the role played by Joju George. He has married from the family and lives there. He was an Ayurvedic therapist. He was the representative of the society that considered woman only as an object for sexual pleasure. Not only his actions, even his words and looks were assaulting Kochupaaru.

In the first part Kochupaaru is depicted as an obedient and loyal servant, who is non-resistant. she never raised her voice against Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai's assault in the first part. She rather than protesting, only pleaded to him or tried to avoid every attempt made by him to grab her. Whenever he gets a chance, he tried to use her. The next important character of the short film is Vasu, a young boy studying in Madras. He returns home for vacation and to participate in the local temple festival. Vasu was not a character that fits into the traditional depiction of man as bold and strong. He was interested in Kochupaaru and he expresses and his interest

which is evident from his looks and smile towards her. Kochupaaru was also aware of the fact that Vasu was interested in her. One day as a means to silence Vasu, she gives him her body when he witnessed her secret meeting with comrade Madhavan. Vasu without refusing, enjoyed it.

In between, the mythological story of Panchali being assaulted by Keechaka is incorporated in the short film, in the form of a story narrated to the children of the family by an elderly woman. Kochupaaru and Raghava Pillai are the human representations of these mythological characters. Panchali was saved from Keechaka by her mighty husband Bheema. In the same way Comrade Madhavan saves Savithri from Raghava Pillai by defeating him.

The short film ends when Kochupaaru leaves the place accompanying Comrade Madhan and his group. Before leaving she reveals her identity to Vasu that she is not Kochupaaru but, Comrade Savithri.

Rachiyamma is the adaptation of a short story written by Uroob under the same title. It is adapted into film by director Venu. Parvathy Thiruvoth, and Asif Ali appears in major roles in the film. Like *Savithri*, *Rachiyamma* is also set in the mid twentieth century Kerala. As the title suggests it is the story of Rachiyamma, a young, unmarried woman who lives by selling milk in her locality. She is very hard working, brave and bold. She is born to a half Malayali mother and a Tamil father. She has lost everyone including her only brother. This made her live a life alone. She was capable enough to live alone and never thought that it is necessary to have the protection of a man. Her bold and authoritative attitude made her safe from the assaults of the male dominated society. It was a time when people thought that a woman cannot

live alone without the protection of a man. If any woman lives alone, she was considered as everyone's possession as there is no man with her to protect her.

Asif Ali plays the character Kuttikrishnan in the short film. He got a job as an officer in a tea factory. The tea factory and estate are located in the same village where Rachiyamma lives. Kuttikrishnan lives in a quarters arranged for him and it is Rachiyamma who gives milk to him. Gradually, Kuttikrishnan was attached to the bold and strong character of Rachiyamma. Until the end of the short film, the kind of relationship between Kuttikrishnan and Rachiyamma was not revealed. Rachiyamma was not a person who easily gets attached to others. But Kuttikrishnan succeeded in maintaining a good and healthy relation with her.

In between Kuttikrishnan got affected with chickenpox and there was no one to help him. On knowing about his illness, Rachiyamma helps and cares him and gradually he recovers his health. After getting well, when they both were spending an evening together at a hilltop, Kuttikrishnan reveals his interest in her. Whether he is interested in marrying her or is he interested only in physical intimacy is not made clear. At this point Rachiyamma informs him about a vow that she had made to her mother before her death, that she won't make any mistake. Mistake here represents any sort of sexual activity outside the institution of marriage. Kuttikrishnan became speechless and he failed to give her a reply. Unable to face her or understand what is the feeling that she shares with him, he resigns his job and leaves the place. After many years, Kuttikrishnan returns to the place on knowing about the death of the estate owner Augustine. Augustine's wife informs him that Rachiyamma still enquires about him. He decides to make a visit to Rachiyamma's house.

Seeing him, Rachiyamma became elated. Kuttikrishnan became shocked to see his photo being framed in her house and also it was Kuttikrishnan's daughter Vijayalakshmi whom Rachiyamma considered as the heir to her wealth. She considers Kuttikrishnan's daughter as her own daughter. This makes Kuttikrishnan realise that Rachiyamma loved him in the same way he loved her. But they failed in communicating it or understanding each other. When she asks why didn't you make a visit all these years, and whether he forgot her, he says that it was all because of her vow. Kuttikrishnan misunderstood the vow as her decision to don't have a married life. Hearing this Rachiyamma says that it is natural for human beings to make mistake and it was okay if they had any physical relation. What she wanted was only a promise from him that he will not cheat her. Towards the end when they hug and consoles each other, the yellow sandal that Rachiyamma wears as a symbol of her vow got erased by Kuttikrishnan's face. Kuttikrishnan was married to another woman and thus both cannot make claim for each other. So Kuttikrishnan goes back to his home. But this time it was not a separation due to misunderstanding but a separation caused by mutual understanding and sacrifice.

The third short film titled *Rani* belongs to the contemporary Kerala society. The story of the short film revolves around two unnamed college students who are lovers. Roshan Mathew plays the role of the boyfriend and Darshana Rajendran as his girlfriend. Basil Joseph's character is the boyfriend's friend and he says to the boyfriend that having sex in the confinements of room and A/C is a boring experience, room for him, seems like jail and he keeps on insisting his friend to break the jail. He describes

about the possibility of having sex in open nature, which in turn is a different experience. It calls it as organic sex. Hearing about the new possibility of organic sex the boyfriend gets excited but he was concerned about its safety and privacy. After ensuring about the safety and privacy he explains about it to his girlfriend. She rejects his plan. He was insisting to have sex in nature only because the chosen place was far away and hence no one will get to know about his affair. He was afraid to revel to others his relation and that he had sex with a girl before marriage. His girlfriend was much more forward than him and she was of the opinion that if he wants to hug or kiss her, he can have it anywhere and before anyone. She was not concerned about what if others see and what they think. If he has the courage to engage in such activities then he should be equally courageous to admit it. The boyfriend convinced her to go forward with the plan and the next day they went to the place where he had chosen.

The girlfriend was impressed by the enchanting beauty of the place. He insisted her to get into a bush as it gives more privacy to them. He was always concerned about what if anyone see them there in such a situation. While they were being romantic inside the bush the girlfriend asks him whether he love her or only her body. She wanted to make sure that he was genuine in his relation to her and he had no intention to cheat her. He convinces her by quoting from the Bible according to which even if he is naked, he will clothe her and even if he is hungry, he will feed her.

While they were having sex, their clothes and mobile phones were stolen by someone and when they realised it, they got panicked and had no idea what to do as they both were naked and couldn't leave the place naked.

Their clothes and gadgets were taken away by an aged man, whose character is played by Nedumudi Venu. It was his usual practice to steal the gadgets of those having sex in the privacy of nature. After returning home with the mobile phones and clothes, he narrates the entire events to his wife. It is Kaviyoor Ponnamma who appears in the role of his wife. She is aged and is bed-ridden. She listens enthusiastically to her husband's narration of what was going on between the young couple. They made profit by selling the gadgets they get in this way; it was like a side business for them. But what was his intention behind stealing their clothes was not understood to his wife also. At the end of the short film the boy is seen crying, unable to do anything, while his girlfriend being fed up with his cowardly behaviour leaves the place and him.

This project attempts to give a critical analysis of the depiction of gender and sexuality in the film. The two core chapters discusses about the positioning of women in the narrative in terms of gender and sexuality. The depiction of gender is analysed by focussing on the concept of gender put forward by Judith Butler. Sexuality is discussed by focussing on the sexual objectification theory of Fredrickson and Roberts and the gaze theory proposed by Laura Mulvey. The concluding chapter sums up the findings of the study and the critical perspectives the film offers.

Chapter Two

Gender

> Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated
>
> acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over
>
> time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of
>
> being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is
>
> successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of
>
> gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those
>
> acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that
>
> police the social appearance of gender. (*Gender Trouble* 43)

Butler has blurred the line between sex and gender to support

their claim that sex is always already gender. From the beginning of social

existence itself everyone has a gender, therefore, there is no "natural body"

(159). This precedes the cultural inscription it bears. This all indications point

to the conclusion that gender is something one does, not something one

performs, or, more accurately, a series of actions, a verb rather than a noun, a

"doing" (33) of activities instead of a "being" (33). In the first chapter of

Gender Trouble, Butler put forward their concept of performativity, "Gender

proves to be performance-that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be.

In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who

might be said to pre-exist the deed" (33). Then they cite a statement made by

Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, "There is no being" (33), "The

Doer" (33) is the person or thing who does something, nothing more than an

illusion imposed on the doing, the "Everything is doing itself" (33). They then

add their own gendered corollary to his argument, "There is no gender identity

behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" (33).

Gender roles are the set of roles and norms prescribed for each gender by the society. Masculinity and Femininity are the gender roles attributed to men and women respectively by the society. Men are said to be more masculine than women and women are said to be more feminine than men. These distinctive gender roles are characterized with certain feature in which masculinity is attributed with braveness, courage, authoritative, instrumentality, leadership and femininity with submissiveness, emotional, sensitivity etc.

> 'Femininity' is a familiar term. Conversations about being feminine are common in everyday life and many people use the word 'feminine' to describe themselves and others. They may equate femininity with being a woman who embodies characteristics like being nurturing, sensitive, demure, or sweet. (Windsor 1)

According to Elroi J. Windsor, nurturance, sensitivity and sweetness are the features attributed to femininity. In the opening scene of the film, *Aanum Pennum*, Savithri was chased by a group of policemen. When she looked back, she found her house set to fire. Savithri got shocked, but she didn't stop. She ran as fast as she can. She was an ardent supporter of communist ideologies. Engaging in communist activities were considered a crime since the then contemporary society was hostile to communists. Being a communist is a life-threatening decision. Amidst of these adversities Savithri

dared to continue her communist activities. This makes her an insensitive person.

Nurturing is a feature often associated with motherhood. In the first short film it is only the mother and not father who is concerned about the child's nurturing and care. Vasu's sister has a child and she is always found running behind the child and feeding him. In *Rachiyamma,* when Kuttikrishnan got affected by chickenpox, it is Rachiyamma who cares and nurses him and with the help of Rachiyamma, Kuttikrishnan recovers. She cooked food for him, nursed him, gave him medicines and even performed some traditional rituals for the disease to get cured. Here the feminine nature as caring, sympathetic, nurturing, etc are seen in Rachiyamma. Her kind and caring attitude made Kuttikrishnan get more attached to her. He found great relief in her presence. It is the expression of motherhood in Rachiyamma that made her to consider Kuttikrishnan's daughter Vijayalakshmi as her own daughter even if Vijayalakshmi was born to another lady.

"Feminine traits and attributes include passivity, submissiveness, gentleness, warmth, helpfulness, compassion, understanding, dependency, emotional expressiveness, and the presence of maternal instinct" (Mehta and Henry *Femininity*). It is sexual passiveness and objectification that makes a woman feminine than masculine. The character Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai, in *Savithri*, the very moment he steps into the house, gazes at Kochupaaru, only because of his sexual assertiveness and her sexual passiveness. He often demands and orders Kochupaaru's body, at times he dares to grab her without her consent. In *Rachiyamma*, it is the sexual authority that men hold make them believe that Rachiyamma can be used for their sexual satisfaction since

her being an unmarried independent woman. In *Rani* it is evident from the old man's conversation with his wife that the girlfriend asked her boyfriend not to have sex on that day since she was on the last day of her periods. But he never gave attention to her words and they engaged in sex. She has no say in this matter because woman is only the sexual receiver and not the provider. In all these cases, it is the sexual assertiveness of men and sexual passiveness of woman that is being represented.

> Historically, women's submission, unlike men's, has not been thought of as being contrary to human nature. Quite the opposite, submission is prescribed as the normal, moral, and natural behavior of women. This valorization of submission goes hand in hand with the idea of an essential and natural inferiority of women compared to men: it is because women are viewed as incapable of being free in the way that men are, or that such a freedom is seen as a potential danger, that their submission is good. (Garcia 3)

Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai often passes dirty comments on Kochupaaru, but she doesn't raise her voice. A woman was always considered submissive to a man and so she was never expected to raise her voice against him. Almost all the men in the family looked upon Savithri as only an object of attractiveness and an instrument to get sexual satisfaction. They dared to gaze at her even before their wives. Their wives in turn never raises even a slight mark of objection against their husbands' bad behaviour towards another woman. This indicates the authoritative nature of man and the submissive nature of woman.

The next time when Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai met Kochupaaru, he took the oil pot from her hand and poured it over her. His eyes roved through her body along with the oil. This time Kochupaaru rather than evading his looks, dared to look sharply into his eyes as a mark of protest and resistance. Here Kochupaaru tries to break the traditional notion of woman as non-resistant. Later when he got Kochupaaru alone in store room he gets hold of her and demands her body. A woman's body was considered as the possession of man and she has no say in it. The only thing she can do is to obey him. Here also it is the authoritative nature of man that is revealed

In *Rachiyamma*, Rachiyamma is depicted as a bold woman, who rather than being obedient and soft spoken, orders to men. This character breaks the traditional depiction of woman. Later there occurred an encounter between the overseer of the estate and Kuttikrishnan related to Rachiyamma. When Rachiyamma saw the encounter, she intervened in it and took Kuttikrishnan away from the scene, she also asked the men gathered around them to get back to their work. When the group of men stood around watching the fight, Rachiyamma was able to console them. This shows that woman can also be authoritative.

Traditionally, it is a woman who is assigned with the role to maintain the relationships at any cost, she has to suffer, forgive, tolerate and even beg to maintain it. In *Rani*, it is the boyfriend who begs to her. He is not only begging to maintain their relation, but his prime focus is to have sex with her. Whatever the reason is, a man is not expected to beg before a woman. This makes him submissive to the woman. The socially constructed roles have given man the authority to take whatever he wants from the woman. He can

give orders to her. The boyfriend is expressing feminine characters rather than masculine.

The lovers decided to go forward with their plan and the next day they reached the place according to the plan. He found the safest place to be with her where no one will see them. When he asked her to move to that place, she insisted to continue where she was standing. He became disturbed and said, "You don't value me at all" (*Aanum Pennum* 1:22:15), "when I said that we'll sit inside there, you snubbed me" (1:22:23). Here the male ego of having upper hand in every decision is brought to the light. Masculinity is often characterized by the authority in decision making and femininity on the other hand is characterized by obedience towards this decision, without questioning. The girlfriend being assertive is disapproved by the boyfriend.

> Women have been described as unstable, irrational, incapable of logical thinking, connected with the world of matter because of their female physique and reproductive functions; and they are seen as temptresses, connected with the destructive and evil, satanic and dark sides of the human experience. Woman are, furthermore, regarded as emotional beings, and uncontrollable when not protected by male authorities, whether these are male family members or religious authorities. (Kloppenborg et. al)

In *Savithri*, there is an embedded narrative of Panchali from the Hindu mythology. Keechaka was enchanted by Panchali's beauty and he proposed her. When she rejected his proposal, he tried to assault her physically and sexually. Panchali informed about Keechaka's evil intentions to Bharatha, her

husband. It is considered the sole responsibility of a man to save his woman. Whenever a woman is in trouble, there arrives a man to save her. Majority of works, whether film or texts, depict man as the saviour and woman as the one saved. This conventional depiction of woman as one who lacks mental and physical strength reinforces man as superior, thereby making woman subordinate to him.

Similar incident happened in the short film also. When Raghava Pillai demanded Kochupaaru her body, she informed about it to Madhavan, a friend of her. The next time when Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai tried to assault her Madhavan and his friends were there to save her. As Laura Mulvey in her work *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* had rightly pointed out, woman in cinema is depicted as someone to be saved or either punished by the male hero (23). This representation in the film narrative occurs due to the fear of castration. Not all women are physically and mentally weak, there are woman who can save herself. But films fail to depict such kind of women.

A woman, in every phase of her life is expected by the patriarchal society to be under the protection and dependence of a man. This man can be her father, brother, husband or son. Whoever comes to the role of protector she should live her entire life attached to them and under their care and protection. Here Rachiyamma, through her life has proved that she can live a life of her own without having a man to protect her. She is known by her own name and not under the label of anyone's daughter, sister, wife or mother. Her longing for Kuttikrishnan cannot be considered as her need for a man's protection and care but it was solely her love towards him. What she found in him was a companion

The next day, as Rachiyamma said to him, the helper boy at Kuttikrishnan's quarters, went to her house to buy milk. If he finds it difficult to find the way to her house, he was instructed by Rachiyamma to ask the way to her house to anyone in Ammanthara. He found no one in Ammanthara, and returned without milk. Realising this, Kuttikrishnan sang, "fearing her, no one walks near the temple" (*Aanum Pennum* 44:42). Kuttikrishnan realised how bold she is from their first meeting itself and he, through his spot composed song was trying to mock her. Kuttikrishnan was not intended to abuse her through the song but it was only for the sake of fun. She is being mocked by Kuttikrishnan only because boldness is not an expected feature in woman. It is considered as a masculine character and not feminine

After knowing about the possibility of organic sex, the boyfriend in the short film *Rani* discusses about it with his girlfriend. The girlfriend was of the opinion that if they can have sex then why hide it and whom should they fear. Here instead of the boyfriend it is his girlfriend who is bold. Boldness is attributed to masculinity than femininity

Towards the end of the short film, when the lovers were engaged in sex, their dress and gadgets were stolen by someone. At first, they both got panicked as they are naked and cannot do anything. The boy started crying without doing anything. But his girlfriend got angry with him who is nothing more than a coward and makes a bold move; she leaves the place and also him. She here expresses the trait of masculinity as she makes bold decision in such a crucial situation.

According to Mary Vetterling Braggin's work titled *Femininity, Masculinity and Androgyny*, a person is classified as masculine if the theorists

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found the person to have the features like strength of will, ambition, courage, independence, assertiveness, aggressiveness, hardiness, rationality or the ability to think logically, and the ability to control emotions (6).

In *Savithri*, when the younger son of the family, Vasu went for his bath in the ancestral pool at night, it was Kochupaaru who was sent with him for his safety. It is only man, who was considered as courageous and not woman. Kochupaaru accompanying Vasu was a stark contrast to this gender stereotype. When Vasu mistakes a frog as snake and screamed, Kochupaaru is not frightened and it is she who takes the lamp and identifies that it is a frog and not snake. Savithri is a lady who is courageous to work for the communist ideologies at a time when Kerala society considered it as a threat and crime.

Kuttikrishnan, when he got leisure time, went to the hill top and relaxed there. In between he fell asleep. On his way back to home he was shocked to see a wild elephant. He got panicked and began to scream. Rachiyamma arrived for his help. She drove him from the place and saved him. It is said that woman being mentally weak cannot cope up with dangerous situations and she cannot make judicious decisions at crucial points. Rachiyamma proves all these assumptions and judgments null and void.

In *Rani* when their dress was stolen by someone and they are left with no option but to leave the place naked, the girlfriend dared to show courage to walk out naked but the boyfriend stayed there crying. She is equally courageous to reveal their relationship to anyone and she is never bothered about what others think. She was of the opinion that if he has the courage to have sex with her before marriage then he should be courageous to accept it before anyone.

At the local market when the overseer made an offer to set up Rachiyamma for Kuttikrishnan, he burst out in anger and it led to an encounter between Kuttikrishnan and the overseer. Since the short film having a traditional and conventional background, this should be the reaction of Kuttikrishnan on hearing such an offer about the woman he is attached to. To show the masculinity in him he has to show these features and responses. In the last scene both the characters express their love toward each other and they even cry. Expressing emotions like grief is not regarded as a masculine trait. But Kuttikrishnan's character just like Rachiyamma breaks the traditional definitions of femininity and masculinity

> Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. (Hooks 1)

A definition introduced by Lerner claims that "patriarchy refers to the system historically derived from Greek and Roman law, in which the male head of household had absolute legal and economic power over his dependent female and male family members" (*The Creation of Patriarchy* 217).

The idea of patriarchy, refers to authority and control between an object and a subject, it includes, among other things, the relationship between a father and a son; therefore, the ruler-subject dichotomy. Additionally, a hegemonic state and a developing nation could be said to have this kind of connection. It can be practised against a person who identifies as LGBT as

well as observed between two ladies. The creation of selfhood may be one of the purposes for which patriarchal ties are established and maintained. Patriarchy is witnessed through interpersonal relationships, and it is reasonable to suppose that one goal of these relationships is to rule over others.

Patriarchy is a psychological process. Even if it is defined as the rule of men, woman also engage in this process of patriarchy. They internalise the rules and norms of patriarchal system and unknowingly uses this internalized knowledge to make themselves and others into the system. Not only woman but men also suffer a lot under patriarchal system.

According to Kandiyoti's article *Bargaining with Patriarchy*, in both the public and private arenas, women employ patriarchal standards to carve out spaces for themselves in the system. Kandiyoti presents an example of a lady who is subject to her husband and her husband's family in order to be more explicit. She is granted special advantages whenever she gives birth to a boy. By exerting power over her daughter-in-law when her son marries, she is able to escape her own tyranny and turn into an oppressor. This could be prevented if society as a whole believed in combating patriarchy. Through this scenario, we can see how patriarchal oppression may be used by women to negotiate a position for themselves as well as how it spreads through romantic relationships (278). It is through the system of patriarchy, the gender roles and stereotypes are performed and regulated. Generally, patriarchy makes man dominant and woman subordinate to him. Burden of household chores, men's control over woman, man's control over woman's body and sexuality, sexual harassment, violence, insult etc are the harmful effects of patriarchy on women.

In *Savithri*, when Savithri hides herself from the policemen in the storehouse of an ancestral house, we are introduced to a lady of the house who was complaining about the burden of her household chores and there is no one to help her. She has to do it all alone. This woman is a perfect example for the toiling woman in patriarchy and its gender roles. It is the responsibility of the woman in the house to look after the children and also the household chores. The male members of the house are the bread earners and they are not expected to help the woman in these jobs. This same woman was prohibited from raising voice against her husband's bad attitude toward Kochupaaru only because of the feminine attribute of submissiveness attributed to her by the patriarchal system.

In *Rachiyamma*, Rachiyamma was made to give a promise to her mother that she won't make any mistake. It was the responsibility entrusted to a mother or elder woman to morally condition their children. If the children fail to perform these institutionalised roles, the blame fall only on mother and not on father. Here also Rachiyamma's mother had to ensure that her daughter will not make any mistake, specifically with regard to sexual matters outside the institution of marriage. Rachiyamma's life was not acceptable to others in the society since she was an unmarried woman. A woman living a life of her own was not at all acceptable in the society. A woman should not be independent, she should always be dependent on man and should surrender to him in all possible means.

> Patriarchy is real, and it is the way that the world is organized
> around gender – to benefit men. It is the way things are-beliefs,
> behaviours, practices, ideas that are embedded in institutions

and social practices. It is the reality we created, the very air that we breathe. This power imbalance is what causes the symptoms like sexual harassment, rape, prostitution, femicide etc. (*On Sexual Harassment, Patriarchy and Roles we play*)

Sexual harassment and violence are the means by which the authority and dominant nature of man is expressed in patriarchy. More than sexual gratification, every rape or sexual assault is an exertion of power and authority. In *Savithri*, all the abuses and assaults Savithri had to face from Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai, verbally, physically, emotionally and sexually are due to this. In *Rachiyamma*, the jokes passed on her with regard to her independent life is the inability of the male dominated society to accept Rachiyamma living a life of her own without the help of man. In *Rani*, the unnamed young girl breaks the traditional concepts and she was not at all submissive to the man she is associated with. The old couples are more likely to be friends rather than a authoritative husband and a submissive wife. They engage in friendly talk and shares jokes.

Gender roles are the social norms and attributes given to the binaries male and female which makes them man and woman with the features of masculinity and femininity. Analysing the three female characters in the film, it is evident that gender is only a performance and not a natural thing. Fluidity is its defining feature; it cannot be restricted within one category.

Chapter Three

Sexuality

> Men look at women. Women watch themselves being
> looked at. This determines not only most relations between men
> and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The
> surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female.
> Thus, she turns herself into an object--and most particularly an
> object of vision: a sight (Berger 47).

Objectification theory was first proposed by Tomi- Ann Roberts and
Barbara Friedrickson. What they proposed was a synthesis and systematic
definition for sexual objectification. Objectification theory aims at explaining
the ultimate and prevalent tendency to equate woman with their bodies. They
also analyse how this connection of women with their body have negative
consequences. It is the "the socially sanctioned right of all males to sexualize
all females, regardless of age or status" (Westkott 95). This was the concept
prevalent in a heterosexual patriarchal society. Objectification theory put
forward the possible ways in which sexual manifestation can be seen in our
everyday life and activities. Generally, it is through gaze, staring at women's
bodies and passing sexual comments about a female body that constitutes
sexual objectification.

According to Friedrickson and Roberts, sexual objectification affects
woman in two ways. The first one is direct and plain and involves sexual
objectification experience whereas the second one is indirect and elusive
which is internalized by woman and thus can be self-objectification (8).
Woman to a varying degree, develop the tendency to objectify herself by

treating herself as an object to be looked and thus gives more attention to her appearance and beauty, knowingly or unknowingly she becomes a part of the process of objectification. Billboards, mobile phone applications, advertisements, cartoons, newspapers and magazines are examples for sexual objectification in media.

Visual media and Cinema have a significant role in depicting women as objects. Laura Mulvey through her seminal work titled, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, proposes and formulates her theory of male gaze by analysing how woman is objectified in visual media, especially Hollywood Cinema. According to her:

> Woman's desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound, she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it. she turns her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis (the condition, she imagines, of entry into the symbolic). Either she must gracefully give way to the word, the Name of the Father and the Law, or else struggle to keep her child down with her in the half-light of the imaginary. Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, and not maker of meaning (Mulvey 14-15).

Which suggests that woman don't have any role where they can take control over the scene, instead they are in position to be observed from the

objectified point of view. The Anthology film titled *Aanum Pennum*, by Rajeev Ravi, discusses in detail how woman is being reduced to the level of sexual objects by depicting three women, Savithri, Rachiyamma and the unnamed character in *Rani*. In the first short film, as the title suggests Savithri is the central character, she is objectified by her master Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai and other male members of the family. Savithri lives in the house disguised as a servant named Kochupaaru. Whenever they get a chance, they stare at her as if assaulting her using their eyes. A bed ridden member of the family also never fails to abuse her.

As Friedrickson and Roberts proposed in their *Objectification Theory*, when a women's body or body parts are focussed, especially, when depicted them as the target for non-reciprocated male gaze (10), it is considered as sexual objectification in media. Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai poured oil over Kochupaaru's head and his eyes flowed along with the oil through her body. Kochupaaru gave her body to Vasu, a young man of the family to silence him when he accidently witnessed her secret meeting with comrade Madhavan. The story of Panchali from Hindu Mythology is being depicted in the form of a story narrated by an aged woman to the children in the family and also as the theme for the Kathakali performance held at the family. The evil character Keechaka was "smitten by Panchali" (*Aanum Pennum* 29:33). Panchali is depicted here as an object that sexually attracts men towards her.

In the second short film, *Rachiyamma* being a single unmarried woman is looked upon as everyone's opportunity. This makes the overseer of the estate make offer to Kuttikrishnan to provide her for him. Rachiyamma is an adaptation from a short story written by Uroob. In Uroob's version

Rachiyamma is a woman of dark skin tone, but in movie she is depicted as fair in colour. As Friedrickson and Roberts suggests it is only with the intention to depict woman as an object of sexual attraction that makes her to be represented as fair in colour. In *Rani*, the unnamed character played by Darshana Rajendran is regarded only as an object for sexual satisfaction by her boyfriend. But when compared to other two characters in the film she holds some authority over her male counterpart thereby slightly deviating from the position of a mere object.

"For him she is sex- absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute- she is the Other" (Beauvoir 14). The concept of woman being the other made the patriarchal society to construct the meaning in which she is only an object.

Applying Freud's Psychosexual developmental stage, scopophilia and Jacques Lacan's The Mirror Stage with the concept of objectification, Laura Mulvey in her work *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, theorized the concept of gaze, especially Male gaze. It refers to how are women, using the camera lens in Hollywood movies, gets objectified. The Classical Hollywood films considered its audience as male, and looked through the point of view of male protagonist. Thus, gave them an active role in analysing the female subject and deriving pleasure from looking. The audience including women are forced to consider this narrow depiction. This look from the audience is what Laura Mulvey identifies as the look or the gaze. The theoretical explanation of the male gaze involves complex mechanisms of voyeurism and

narcissism. Male Gaze can be described more accurately as heterosexual masculine gaze.

Majority of the script writers in film industry are men and the narrative in these films usually depicts women as saved or rescued by the male protagonist. The directors, producers, technicians and cinematographers are also men. This entire team, dominated by men discusses on how to stage each scene and where to place and focus the camera, thereby deciding on how women should be encoded at each stage of the film production. This representation denies realistic depiction of women and they are transformed into passive objects of erotic and visual pleasure. A woman's body is depicted in a way, making the audience to see only the curves of the body rather than the character they portray. This theory can be seen from a feminist perspective in three different ways: how males regard women, how women view themselves, and finally, how women view other women. The male gaze is typically depicted in medium close-ups of women taken from behind a man's shoulder, in shots that pan and dwell on a woman's body, and in sequences where a man is seen looking intently at a woman who is acting passively.

Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai's comment on Kochupaaru, "you are good one" (*Aanum Pennum* 10:27) emphasizes this point. Here she gets the remark good, not based on the job she does or on her character, but it is about her appearance and physical feature. He himself decides that she will be good for him, a good sexual companion. In *Rachiyamma* her depiction as a fair woman on contrary to the black coloured woman in the short story of Uroob, her introduction scene, where she appears in a traditional south Indian dress, Kuttikrishnan looking at Rachiyamma while she nurses him, and when they

spent the evening at a hilltop etc pave way for male gaze. The old man enjoying the sexual act between the lovers in *Rani,* can also be considered as the depiction leading to gaze and thereby objectification.

Audience is caught in patriarchal order and cinema, through their depiction of woman as show girls creates false consciousness about how woman should think, behave and how she should be looked. Objectification caused by male gaze leads younger generation, especially young girls to internalise these gender roles. They analyse themselves as an object of beauty and attraction. Thereby concentrating more on the physical appearance and beauty and moulding themselves as fitting to the concept of beauty to attract man.

Martha Nussbaum put forward seven features in the objectification process. They are; instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership, and denial of subjectivity. The theorist Rae Langton included features like reduction to body, reduction to appearance and silencing into it (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). Raghava Pillai ordered to Kochupaaru, "I want it" (*Aanum Pennum* 21:48), here she is reduced to an instrument for sexual satisfaction or even a sex toy. It is his authority in asking for her body that made her an instrument. He himself decides the time and place for the act, "There is a Kathakali performance day after, no one will be here. You should come to the boat house" (22:13). He repeats, "You should come" (22:36). She is left with no option to express even her rejection. Here it is not only instrumentality, but, denial of autonomy, inertness, ownership, denial of subjectivity, reduction to body, reduction to appearance, silencing etc can be seen. Silencing not only happens to Kochupaaru but Vasu is also

silenced in the movie by Kochupaaru when he witnesses her secret meeting with the comrades.

In *Rachiyamma*, when the overseer offers Rachiyamma for Kuttikrishnan, she is instrumentalized because she is considered as an object that is easily available and can be offered and exchanged between men. She is denied autonomy since the overseer himself decides on offering her, it is fungibility that made him to consider her as an object of exchange, he considered her as his property and hence the feature ownership is seen here, her feelings and experiences are not taken into account so her subjectivity is denied. She is reduced to an appearance and body here.

On contrary to her being objectified she holds authority, subjectivity and ownership when she reveals about the vow that she had made to her mother that she would not make mistake and towards the end of the story when she says that it is natural for human beings to make mistake, thereby giving consent to Kuttikrishnan. It was only with her consent Kuttikrishnan hugged her. In these situations, she has authority and ownership over her body that makes her to deny and also to give permission when it is required.

The unnamed character in *Rani* is quite different from Kochupaaru and Rachiyamma. She has authority, ownership, and is functional. It is she who decides on whether to have sex with her boyfriend, the place for having it, how to go to the place etc. What her boyfriend can do is to plead and convince her. But she is also silenced when her boyfriend emotionally manipulates her each time. Kochupaaru and Rachiyamma fit into the features of objectification, while the character in *Rani* deviates from these features to a great extent.

Scopophilia is a term primarily associated with Jacquez Lacan's notion of the gaze, but it was Sigmund Freud who originally popularised the idea in 1905 in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Both the joy of gazing and the pleasure of being gazed at are referred to as scopophilia. Therefore, it has voyeuristic, exhibitionistic, and narcissistic implications. According to Freud, a child's fascination with prohibited body parts and functions serves as the basis for fantasies about phallic desire.

In reference to the predominance of the male gaze in classic Hollywood movies, Mulvey uses the term scopophilia to describe the sexual pleasure associated with viewing other people's bodies as (especially, erotic) objects while remaining hidden from those on screen or from other audience members. Freud used the term to refer to the pleasure of looking at others but Mulvey defined it as the sexual pleasure. Mulvey contends that the environment of movie theatre viewing encourages both the voyeuristic process of objectifying female characters and the narcissistic process of identifying with an ideal ego shown on the screen.

In the short film *Savithri*, Raghava Pillai, at the very moment he steps into the house after Kochupaaru's arrival, he stares at her, as if abusing her through his eyes. Here he is deriving sexual pleasure through looking at her. The same thing happens after pouring oil over her head and his eyes flowing along with the oil through her body. Raghava Pillai looking at Kochupaaru returning after her bath in a wet dress is also an instance of scopophilia. The lovers looking at each other and the old man secretly watching the lowers engaging in sexual act could be considered as scopophilia. The old man gets sexual pleasure looking at the naked body of the lovers.

In his analysis of *Rear Window*, Douchet takes the film as a

metaphor for the cinema. Jeffries is the audience, the events in

the apartment block opposite correspond to the screen. As he

watches, an erotic dimension is added to his look, a central

image to the drama. His girlfriend Lisa had been of little sexual

interest to him, more or less a drag, so long as she remained on

the spectator side. When she crosses the barrier between his

room and the block opposite, their relationship is reborn

erotically. He does not merely watch her through his lens, as

a distant meaningful image, he also sees her as a guilty intruder

exposed by a dangerous man threatening her with punishment,

and thus, finally saves her. (Mulvey 23)

In classical narrative films, women are depicted as either saved or

punished by the male protagonist. It is his duty and responsibility to correct,

guide, punish, and finally save a woman. In the short film Savithri, when

Raghava Pillai made attempts to assault Kochupaaru, she informed her friend,

Comrade Madhavan, about it. Towards the end of the film, when Kochupaaru

was instructed by Raghava Pillai to have sex with him in the boat house while

everyone in the house was watching the Kathakali performance, Madhavan

and his companions were there to save Savithri from the hands of Raghava

Pillai. Instead of Kochupaaru, Madhavan dressed like her and waited for

Raghava Pillai in the boat house. Raghava Pillai approaches Madhavan,

thinking that he is Kochupaaru, and gets caught. Raghava Pillai was severely

injured in the encounter and he died. The same happens in the mythological

story of Panchali, which is narrated in the story. When Keechaka approaches

Panchali with his evil intentions, Panchali informs her husband, the mighty Bheema. The next time Keechaka tried to grab Panchali, Bheema was there to save her, and in the encounter, Keechaka was killed by Bheema.

In *Rachiyamma*, when the overseer offers Rachiyamma for Kuttikrishnan, he gets provoked and it ended up in a fight between the overseer and Kuttikrishnan. Kuttikrishnan, being a man, who is rested with the responsibility to save woman, was expected to react so. Kuttikrishnan loved Rachiyamma and so she is his property, this thought made him to take the role of a saviour.

In *Rani,* towards the end, when the young couples were engaged in sexual act, their dress and gadgets were taken away by an aged man. When they came to realise that they lost their dress, they became shocked. The boy started crying, unable to go back home naked, the girl stood firm and decided to go back naked. Before having sex, when the lovers were engaged in a romantic conversation, he gave her a promise, that is inscribed in the Holy Bible, "Though you may be hungry, you must feed her. Though you may be naked, you must clothe her. Though you may be sleepless, you must lull her to sleep" (*Aanum Pennum* 1:26:30). But he himself contradicted what he had said. He didn't do anything but sat crying. Here the traditional depiction of man saving woman is disrupted. He didn't cloth her and most importantly he made her leave the place naked. This scene is a stark contrast to the Biblical reference.

"Sexual consent represents some form of agreement to engage in sexual activity." (Beres 97). In literature, consent is sometimes described as a psychological state, other times as a behaviour, and sometimes as a

combination of the two. Sexual consent is a poorly conceived and contentious idea, as Melaine Beres points out in her examination of the literature on the subject. She notes that a common understanding of what it means to consent is taken for granted in most of the literature on sexual consent. Beres argues "recognizing that the physical behaviours and cues that may take place during sexual activity are not consent in and of themselves, but may reflect the inner intentions of the individual" makes it possible to "disentangle the complexities of consent" (101).

Sexual consent is the consent given by an individual to engage in sexual activity, it can verbal or non-verbal. But in most sexual acts the consent of the woman engaged in it is taken for granted. Her lack of authority and subjectivity makes the male partner impart less importance to her consent. Any act of sex without the consent of the partners is regarded as rape or sexual assault in many countries, including India. In India, it is considered an offence whether or not the man intended to outrage the modesty of the woman and the culprit will be imprisoned for 3 to 7 years. It is not only woman but sometimes man's consent is also taken for granted.

When Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai tried to grab and assault Kochupaaru, when he ordered her body, "I want It" (*Aanum Pennum* 21:48), and when he himself decided the time and place where Kochupaaru should give him her body, Kochupaaru's consent was not at all taken into consideration. So, this can only be considered as sexual assault, abuse or rape. The same Kochupaaru, in order to silence Vasu, drags him into her and then engages in sex. Here she never asked for his consent. But it was understood because he does not reject it. Vasu was interested in her, this was evident from

his looks and attitude towards her. The difference between Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai and Vasu lies in their consideration of Kochupaaru's consent. Raghava Pillai tried to approach her by force while Vasu approached her with kind and loving attitude.

When Kuttikrishnan expressed his interest in Rachiyamma, she revealed to him about a promise that she had to her mother that she would never make a mistake. Realising this, Kuttikrishnan withdraws from Rachiyamma. Kuttikrishnan and Rachiyamma loved each other. Then also Kuttikrishnan gave importance to Rachiyamma's consent. The only matter that bothered him was the consent of Rachiyamma. In *Rani*, the boyfriend was eagerly waiting for a chance to have sex with his girlfriend. But he also like Kuttikrishnan waited for her consent. In both the cases, the male partners waited for the consent of the female partner. In Rani, the boyfriend gave importance to her consent and what he did was, he begged and emotionally convinced her to give consent. But Kuttikrishnan at the very moment Rachiyamma expressed her disapproval, he gave up the plan.

Objectification works through the concept of male gaze and any act of physical or emotional relation without consent of both partners engaging in it is objectification since it is caused by instrumentality and lack of authority.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Marginalization is the act of pushing a specific group or groups of people to the border of the society by not permitting them to raise an active voice, place or identity within it. Through both direct and indirect process of marginalization, marginalized group may be downgraded to the secondary position or made them feel as they are less important than those who are more privileged or powerful in the society. It is about for the preservation of control and power. It is viewed as a barrier to the fulfilment of the goals of peace, development, and equality. Discrimination is regarded as a type of inequality and a problem for women everywhere. It has harmful psychological effects since it limits women's ability to engage freely and fully in society. Women accept discrimination as a cultural tradition, and men use it as a social norm. Discrimination based on gender takes many different forms and persists across the life cycle. Boys and girls should exhibit diverse types of behaviours. Such prejudice has contributed to restrictive gender norms that limit women's possibilities and stunt their advancement in the domestic and public spheres as well as the authoritarian relationship amoung men and women in society.

Women have always been oppressed, tortured, and treated like nothing. She has been nothing more than a puppet in human hands. The women that we see in the world today don't seem to be the ones that the all-powerful God made. In the creation it makes, nature never discriminates. In fact, the soiled human mind is to blame for the gender prejudice that exists in our culture. For centuries, women have been degraded. Additionally, because man is born from woman, man cannot remain natural when woman is corrupted. It is really

challenging for men and women to comprehend one another since they come from completely different worlds. Worldwide, women have been denied access to social, economic, and political rights. In this male-dominated society, they have been treated poorly and exploited since they were viewed as a lesser group. Women have been abused socially, economically, sexually, and mentally in Indian society under the pretext of religion, social tradition, and conventions, as well as occasionally as a result of superstitions.

Films are regarded as the drug of the Indian populace since they are used as a means of escape into fantastical realms. The values of the people in this nation's culture, society, and politics have been influenced by cinema in a highly overt manner. Feminists' interest in movies is a result of their concern over the distortion of women in the film industry. It takes a critical stance towards gender bias in motion pictures. The feminist initiative to film, poses some important questions, including how women are portrayed on screen, how women's issues are handled in film, what feminism means to filmmakers, how women are portrayed, and what role women writers and filmmakers play in portraying women's issues through the medium of film.

Over time, women's roles in Indian cinema have changed. For a very long time, women in Indian cinema have primarily been used as props. Even in movies where ladies play significant roles, they are frequently presented as martyrs and victims, or they even participate in the abuse of other women. Rarely have movies shown strong female characters who can speak out against injustice, rebel in their own manner, and make political statements. Aanum Pennum is such a movie that shows the evolution of the depiction of women as lacking voice to those who raise voice and even protests against the abuses

that they have to face from the male dominated society. Even if in the title of the film, first position is occupied by man (aanu), it is woman who gains importance when it comes to screen presence and characterisation.

   Three different women from different times and circumstances are portrayed by Savithri, Rachiyamma, and the unnamed character in *Rani*. Like every woman in a traditional, patriarchal society like Kerala, women are vulnerable to discrimination, inequities, gender stereotyping, and even abuse. The film's purpose was to show how these three characters dealt with those challenges. In contrast to the unnamed character in *Rani*, who shows the women in the current or present era, Savithri and Rachiyamma depicts women in the middle of the 20th century.

   The first chapter analyses how these women are sexually objectified in the movie. Savithri is objectified through the character Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai and other male members of the family in which she lived, disguised as a servant named Kochupaaru. Rachiyamma is objectified by the society in which she lived, and the unnamed character in Rani by her boyfriend and even the old man, Nedumudi Venu.

   Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai's, Vasu's, and the aged man's look at Savithri reduce her to a sexual object. They are not only objectifying her through their looks but also verbally and physically. Rachiyamma is objectified by the denial of autonomy, authority, and subjectivity and through the concept of autonomy. The unnamed character in Rani is different from Savithri and Rachiyamma since she has authority over her boyfriend. But she is emotionally manipulated by her boyfriend and submits to him. Objectification is not only an external process; it can be from the inside also.

Kochupaaru internalized the objectification process and regarded herself as a mere sexual instrument when she used her body to silence Vasu.

Objectification works through gaze, especially male gaze. Through the application of gaze, along with the male characters, the spectators are also forced to objectify the female characters. The oil flowing through Savithri's body, Savithri's body hugging wet dress when she returns after her bath, Rachiyamma being looked at by Kuttikrishnan and other men, especially the overseer of the estate, and the unnamed character in Rani being looked upon by her boyfriend are instances of male gaze.

Objectification works through gaze, and the intended outcome of this process is the attainment of sexual or erotic pleasure or scopophilia. In each instance where the female characters are gazed upon, the one who gazed at them gets some sort of visual, erotic, or sexual pleasure. Denial of autonomy or authority is a feature of objectification, and it in turn leads to the denial of sexual consent. Kochupaaru didn't give consent to engage in sexual acts with Kurumbakkara Raghava Pillai, which led to his sexual abuse. But the same person gave consent when it came to Vasu. In *Rachiyamma* and *Rani*, the female characters had the opportunity to give consent or even reject it. The male characters waited for their consent. Savithri and Rachiyamma belonged to the same period, but the value given to their consent differed. Since objectification not only happens inside the film and the characters are equally objectified by themselves and the audience, these female characters cannot completely resist being objectified.

Women's discrimination was mostly a result of gender stereotypes and the imposition of gender roles. The reversal of gender roles is the topic of

discussion in the second chapter. Gender is a performance that is based on the roles and stereotypes that society has created. Men are said to possess masculinity, whereas women are said to possess femininity. They are given these roles as a part of the patriarchal society. Traditionally men are regarded as more masculine than women and women as more feminine than men.

Masculinity is associated with traits such as boldness, leadership, and an authoritative nature, while femininity is associated with sensitivity, sexual receptivity, and nurturing. Savithri, Rachiyamma, and the unnamed character are all expected to be feminine. But these three characters depict masculine traits along with feminine ones. The male characters like Vasu, Kuttikrishnan, and the boyfriend in Rani depict feminine characteristics along with masculine traits.

In *Savithri*, Kochupaaru is bold and Vasu is fragile. In *Rachiyamma*, Kuttikrishnan is being saved by Rachiyamma, instead of Kuttikrishnan saving her. In *Rani* too, it is the girlfriend who makes the bold move in a crucial situation and not the boyfriend. These instances are highly indicative of the reversal of traditionally constructed gender roles and their fluidity.

The last film in the anthology was adapted from the short story titled *Pennum Cherukkanum*. It was based on this title that the film was named, but when it came to the film, the title was reversed. This reversal can be interpreted as indicative of the reversal of gender roles in the film. The reversal of gender roles indicates that gender and the traits associated with gender cannot be fixed and restricted to a certain category. It cannot be contained within certain parameters. It is fluid in nature. Masculinity is not restricted to men and femininity to women. Gender is a socially constructed

phenomenon; it is not biological or an inherent feature. So, it cannot be

defined, measured, or fixed to only one gender.

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