COSTUME AS A CHARACTER: COMMUNICATING THROUGH COSTUME IN IYOBINTE PUSTHAKAM

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ABSTRACT

Costumes which are the distinctive style of dressing is one of the many tools the film director has to tell the story in films. Costumes can communicate the details of a character's personality to the audience and facilitate actors transform into new and believable personalities on the screen Brownie & Graydon (2016). Costumes give a visual impact on the film audience and more than just dressing an actor, costume design extends the main themes of the film in a subtly effective way, it can progress the character in a story without dialogue, costumes may not be memorable as dance sequences or banter but it can recreate time and space. While looking deeper into the costumes of the character it might be a surprise to explore a person’s politics, education, personality, social status, hierarchy, politics, and many more about the particular role played by the character. The need for communication is for the designers to effectively design the costumes. This article explores a Semiotic Analysis of how the costumes communicate the character development progresses in the Malayalam film “IYOBINTE PUSTHAKAM” the characters “IYOB” and “COMMUNIST MAN”. Semiotic Analysis is used to analyze the costume of the characters and gives an explanation of how costume designers design costumes in films that effectively communicate the character in films.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Costumes play an integral part in cinema as costumes play a significant role in presenting character’s personality education and history. Although Costumes are a necessary part of scenic design and visual of the films very few papers have explored the costume design in Malayalam Cinema. Costumes are one of many tools the director has to tell a story Deborah (2012), Zhao (2017) Costumes help portrayal of the character's personality in film to the audience and transform actors into credible people on the screen Ashita. (2022) Costumes differentiate the identities of the individuals wearing them and provide them with a certain social functionality Brownie & Graydon (2016).
While telling a story, the costume of the character too has something to reveal to the audience and that differs from character to character. While costume for a character presents the educational qualification of the character, Costumes can give a visual impact to its audience. The status of the actor in a Film also influences the design process and its workload. The type of storytelling through costumes may not be memorable as dance sequences or banter. Costumes can recreate ages. More than just dressing an actor, costume design extends the main themes of the film in a subtly effective way.

Costumes and make up could therefore become effective tools for cultural promotion and development if well manipulated Abuku & Odi (2010). Social status of a character can be seen through his/her costume in a movie Güngör (2015). Shukla (2015) mentions in her work "our quest is to understand the actor on stage and the identities he enacts in costume" which means that the Costumes have politics which can clearly present a particular role. The Film being the medium for the director and the spectators view precisely what the director intended to see. The costume designer works with the director in researching and analyzing historical and modern visual references for the character of the movie. Clothing has been linked in sociological studies to creating social identities, including both individual and group identities, and presenting the self Feinberg et al. (1992).

Friedland (2011) As per the Collection of Motion Picture Costume Design which is a dedicated website to the acquisition, restoration and exhibition of Motion Picture Costumes the Film clothes were considered "work product" and had little significance when the filming was over. They were not regarded as historical objects and were frequently used to advertise the movie, distributed, reused, and recut in any way that might help a new production. The acquisition of accurate costume design information can be challenging due to the absence of screen credits during the silent-film era and the disposal of numerous records by studios in the 1950s. Even before a single line of dialogue is uttered, a character's costume already provides information about that person at a specific time in his or her life. Nur Tajuddin (2018) clothing as a cultural and social identity which is understood to be a part of symbol that can explain a person's identity. A costume with bright colors or a striking design may convey cheerfulness, and such a costume might even boost the mood of the audience watching the movie. Costumes transmit an actor's mood. A costume is created to suit the actor’s requirements. Period movies are any movies that are set in the past. The costumes instantly establish the time period of the movie, regardless of whether it is a historical epic movie, a futuristic fantasy, or include flashbacks to a previous era. Throughout history, a period’s attire has helped to define it. Any video film production requires actors to wear costumes that are appropriate for the type of work they must perform. Therefore, if used well, costume design could become a tool for character portrayal and cultural promotion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jung & Kim (2015) examine the role of costumes and makeup in the film "Anna Karenina" as a means of expressing the emotional changes of the characters and illustrating their relationships in various scenes. It explores how the costumes and makeup in the film serve as a reflection of the mental states of the main characters. By analyzing the relationship between the costumes and makeup in "Anna Karenina" and comparing them to 19th century Russian costumes, this study aims to elucidate the ways in which these elements contribute to the overall portrayal of the characters. The clothing in the film not only plays a crucial role in conveying the
personalities and connections between the characters, but also foreshadows their hidden depths and hints at the future development of the plot.

Nostalgia (2019) focuses on the art of costume design for theatrical productions. Specifically, it explores the collaborative efforts between costume designers, directors, cinematographers, and production designers in conveying the narrative of a film. Moreover, it delves into the meticulous research conducted by costume designers to ensure the authenticity and suitability of costumes in films.

Wilkinson-Weber (2006) discuss in the Dressman's Line: Transforming the Work of Costumers in Popular Hindi Film looks at how the role of dressmen, who are responsible for costumes in Hindi cinema, has changed over time. This paper examines the erosion of dressmen’s skills, knowledge, and male privilege within the male-dominated Hindi filmmaking industry, as it undergoes aesthetic and organizational transformations in response to global influences. The study delves into the evolving role of dressmen in Hindi cinema, highlighting its reflection of broader industry changes. Specifically, the paper explores the historical evolution of dressmen’s responsibilities on set, elucidating the shifts that have occurred over time.

Bruzzi (1997) explores into the intricate role of clothing as pivotal components in the formation of cinematic identities. The author puts forth innovative and dynamic connections between cinema, fashion, costume history, gender, queer theory, and psychoanalysis.

Musthafa & Haneef (2020) paper examine the representation of dress and Gulf imagery in two Malayalam films, namely Pathemari (2015) and Marubhoomiyile Aana (2016). Specifically, it explores the performativity and materiality of dress in Marubhoomiyile Aana, which generates imageries of the Gulf that enable the predominantly male wearers to accumulate social and symbolic capital. Drawing on a semiotic analysis of the two films, the paper investigates how Malayalam cinema has depicted the history of Gulf migration from Kerala since the 1970s, with a particular focus on the role of dress in this representation. The analysis reveals that the Gulf is associated with power and control in the cultural discourse of Kerala, and that dress serves as a key signifier of this association.

Wilkinson (2021) in Power dressing: The sari in Sujoy Ghosh’s Kahaani. In Film, Fashion & Consumption explores the symbolic significance of the sari in the film Kahaani, positing it as a representation of the protagonist's empowerment. It delves into the contrasting portrayal of powerful women in Western cinematic tradition, highlighting the sari’s departure from conventional modes of dress. Furthermore, it investigates how this departure reflects the dichotomy between ordinary individuals and heroic figures. Employing a meticulous analysis of the film Kahaani, this paper argues that the utilization of the sari serves as a stark departure from the customary attire of powerful women in Western cinema.

Chatterjee (2019) discusses how masks and costumes are made for Purulia chhau, a type of dance, and how the dancers and mask makers try to reach new audiences. The idea of the research is to study how masks and costumes are conceived and created for Purulia chhau, and how dancers and mask makers attempt to reach new and wider audiences. Ethnographic research technique is used here.

Rentz (2014). discusses the New Criticism, a "revolutionary approach to the interpretation of literature" that advocates for the analysis of literature without considering cultural or historical context. The paper discusses the historical and cultural relevance of Gone with the Wind in relation to President Roosevelt’s New Deal.
Kim & Lee (2010) aims to identify the conceptual and aesthetic attributes of fantasy portrayed through characters and costumes in movies. Findings show that fantasy characters and costumes depict reality, allegory, horror, desire, deconstruction, metamorphosis, otherness, and counter cultural sentiments. Aesthetic characteristics include typicality, symbolism, grotesqueness, sensuality, hybridization, and otherness, which are interconnected.

3. COSTUME DESIGN AND FASHION DESIGN IN MOVIES

The terms "costume design" and "fashion design" are sometimes confused, yet these two fields and their goals differ greatly. Haroon et al. (2023) Costume designers are concerned with specifically creating true-to-life characters in a story. It is about creating garments for characters within a narrative or performance. When necessary, by the narrative, costume designers produce both stunning costumes for a dazzling entrance and daily clothing. Before they design the characters' wardrobe of clothes and accessories, they must first know "who" the characters "are." while fashion designers focus on creating clothing and accessories and have labels and market their clothing. Costume design and fashion design distinction lies in their respective purposes and contexts they are interrelated as in when the demand for costume designing arises the fashion design of the period is studied and then the costumes are planned, so both are very much interrelated.

Netzel (2018) Depending on the story and scene, a costume designer may visit those places and do a lot of research work to make a costume for the character, this will be done after a detailed discussion with the director. The costume designer has the opportunity to conduct extensive research through various sources such as the Internet, archives, museums, and libraries. This research may involve reviewing periodicals, examining family albums, and analyzing both historical and contemporary visual references.

A cinema costume designer must read and comprehend the script of a film before making any judgments, before any designs are created, before any research is done, they must comprehend the tone, themes, character arcs, setting, and plot of the narrative. A designer can follow hints left by scripts to find the proper path. Costume designers frequently dissect a script for these wardrobe hints.

They are creating imaginary characters rather than designs for performers. Additionally, they need to comprehend their character arcs, inner and outside conflicts, and how they fit into the environment of a movie. Here, they blend the findings of their research with narrative. A character's wardrobe may need to reflect their social standing, personality, and identity in order to do this. The use of color is one of these designers' most potent means of expressing a character's personality through clothing.

Both costume design and fashion convey the identity of the wearer and elicit strong feelings from the audience. A costume designer follows the fundamental design tenets of harmony, contrast, balance, and proportion just like a fashion designer. As well as the fundamental components of a composition: line, shape, color, and texture. But the main goal of costume design isn’t to make the person wearing the garments appear attractive; that’s only a goal if the script specifies it.

4. METHODOLOGY

In this paper Barthes (1974), analytical method which appears in his classic work S/Z (1974), is used as a new way of analyzing personal stories. This paper uses
Roland Barthes semiotic analysis 5 codes: Hermeneutic, Proairetic, Semantic, Symbolic, and Cultural are used to analysis as the methodology to analysis the costume of the characters. Annila (2014), Vojković (2020), Tohar et al. (2007) has used the Roland Barthes semiotic analysis in their study and are able to give a detailed results when the research deals with social or cultural aspects.

Semiotic analysis probes behind the surface of the message, examining verbal indicators alongside visual and aural ones to reveal more fully the underlying meaning structures and to clarify which components are responsible for producing the intended effects.

All writings share five different types of semiotic components, according to Barthes. These signifiers are collected by him into five different codes: hermeneutic, Proairetic, Semantic, Symbolic, and Cultural. The Hermeneutic code revolves around the element of mystery or enigma within a text, The Proairetic code involves the elements of action and causality within a narrative, The semantic code pertains to the meanings of individual signs or symbols within a text, The Symbolic code deals with cultural or symbolic associations attached to certain signs or elements within a text and The cultural code encompasses the broader cultural context within which a text operates.

few selected scenes are analyzed which use Costume to advance the story.

5. IYOBINTE PUSTHAKAM AND COSTUMES

We can understand that Fashion is what people choose to wear at any particular period. The style indicates the socioeconomic standing of the wearer. As a result, costumes can represent the status of society today and highlight the political forces in play at a given period. Through the designs and construction of the clothing, the costumes allude to the outcomes of the parts; as a result, they have become synonymous with the personalities of the actors.

Time and spatial representation are the primary purpose of fashion in movies. The clothes mirrored the behaviors of the characters in the movie. Transformation through wardrobe is done in a movie. The costumes can be used to define and convey the time period of a movie, regardless of whether it is set in the past (in what are known as period films), the future, or a flashback to another location and time. Fashion may establish a universe in a movie that does not match reality as we know it, such as the one portrayed in the Harry Potter films, in addition to expressing place and time in the past or the present. The outfits can be provocative and representative, such as the black and white attire, because fashion serves an expressive role.

When British businessman Harrison adopts a native and names him Iyob, the native's life improves. Iyob eventually succeeds Harrison in acquiring the Munnar tea estates due to his unwavering commitment to his master. Iyob is poised to be deposed by his own offspring when his sons Ivan, Dmitri, and Aloshy mature, and old age sets in. Iyob's reaction to his choice and its effects are the focus of the story, which also has a communist leader's suave narration.

Iyob refers to Aloshy as the prodigal son when he returns from the Navy and the church priest emphasizes that he is to be given a hearty welcome if that is the case, just like in the Holy Bible. Iyobinte Pusthakam is the prodigal son parable. However, in this case, Aloshy is the lost son rather than the prodigal son, and he returns after learning wisdom and not losing money. This illusion that the gone son is the prodigal son is simply and directly inverted in this film.
Despite having a male name, Iyobinte Pusthakam places Women at the forefront since bastardy and miscegenation are viewed as threats to established patriarchal power systems. The film's brutal deportation of Martha's tribal family sets the tone for casteist discrimination and land dispossession early on.

The costume of the movie, the Coat of IYOB plays a significant role. Iyob is an illiterate ordinary man with a lot of ambition to be a westerner. In the first scene, (Figure 1) Iyob wears a white shirt and Shorts at that time he was an ordinary slave boy of a British businessman. And after being baptized he continuously tries to wear a coat that also s a domain power and the religion of Christianity.

The change in the costume of Iyob shows his character development in the story. Iyob tries to fit in a world which is not his. Without any eligibility, Iyob tries to wear the coat which Harrison removed. When Iyob wears the coat, the narrator says a local Malayalam word that “NADAN SAYIP” which means the Native Westerner. And through this, the landlord emerges in him. Iyob Tries to present himself as a Westerner but he is still a Keralite in thinking. While Harrison dies Iyob’s costume changes to full pants. This shows that Iyob’s character and his attitude has also changed. He wants to replace Harrison with his look by owning everything.

Figure 1

Figure 1 Iyob is Being Beaten by the Worker of Harrison.

Source Screen Captured From https://www.hotstar.com/in/movies/iyobinte-pusthakam/1000105376/watch

Figure 2

Figure 2 Scene Shows the Cruelty of Harrison

Source Screen Captured From https://www.hotstar.com/in/movies/iyobinte-pusthakam/1000105376/watch
The color of dress Iyob wears is light shaded dress while he was with family (when his wife was alive) and while he wants to be dominating his costumes are made of hard material and bright color. And in many scenes Iyob tries to imitate Harrison. Iyob has always wanted to be a westerner but he couldn’t be like them.

Iyob get disturbed when a business man Angoor Rawther (Jayasurya) approach him. Iyob love to be a Westerner he always wants an Upper hand in any decision but here Angoor is an educated, well-dressed man and in every aspect Angoor have an Upper hand than Iyob. The costume of Angoor clearly presents that he is an educated person and to somehow, he too wants to be landlord.

Towards the end of the movie the attitude of Iyob changes and that can be seen through his costumes itself. As Iyob wears a coat from the beginning, at the climax of the movie instead of coat Iyob wears a hard material dark coloured blanket. His power is being lost from his own house. his sons took the power from him as he takes it from Harrison. Here blanket symbolize his lost power and empathetic attitude.

Another character is the communist man Varkey in the movie. While other politicians in the movie wear white he wears a black shirt. Malayora congress was a party at that time and the communist Varkey was a rebel within him so he wore black all the time. But towards the end of the movie, he wears a white shirt that says the revolution is over. The character’s costume presents something about his
politics. He is the narrator. He is typing a book with the same name of movie. The movie starts from his narration and end with the ending of his story writing “Shubham” which says it is the ending and was a happy as his costume suggests. Others in the political party always try to wear white but here Varkey being a Social Worker always choose black. This might represent the economic conditions of the character.

Figure 5

![Image](https://www.hotstar.com/in/movies/iyobinte-pusthakam/1000105376/watch)

**Figure 5** Iyob Sitting Like Harrison.


Figure 6

![Image](https://www.hotstar.com/in/movies/iyobinte-pusthakam/1000105376/watch)

**Figure 6** Ageing Iyob is Been Treated Very Badly by His Sons and His Worker.


Figure 7

![Image](https://www.hotstar.com/in/movies/iyobinte-pusthakam/1000105376/watch)

**Figure 7** Father is Seeking Help of His Son.

Figure 1  Hermeneutic code  This is the introduction scene of Iyob in the movie. He is the one who is beaten by the worker. This is the time in 1900’s when British men were taking the land and starting plantations of tea and other species.

Proairetic Code  As Iyob is being beaten by the worker of Harrison, Iyob doesn’t care about his action and stands still. This changes the mind of Harrison lord and he makes Iyob his pet.

Semantic Code  The stick used to beat Iyob can be taken as a semantic way of telling the situation of the oppressed.

Symbolic Code  Iyob wears a white shirt and khaki trousers and this is a normal dress of any Keralite boy of that time. The one who is beating is the man of lord and he wears a coat which Presents he is more superior than Iyob. others are wearing traditional mund of kerala which states that they belong to no one.

Cultural Code  The culture of the period is clearly explained. As in Kerala there was a system of making the people do whatever the landlord wants. Here Harrison wants everyone to be a part of deforestation. Beating the one who is not willing to work was a common thing at that time.

Figure 2  Proairetic Code  The scene shows the cruelty of Harrison. Besides Harrison Iyob stands as a dutyful pet. The landlord system can be seen in this scene. Only Harrison is sitting and others are just standing beside him, this presents he is powerful.
| Figure 3 | Hermeneutic Code | Harrison leaves Munnar and Iyob see of him till the gate of the home. To this part of the movie Iyob is an obedient worker of Lord Harrison. |
| Proairetic Code | From this scene Iyob's character is developed and he changes his attitude too. |
| Semantic Code | The nature of his body movement is not stiff as he is a worker. Bending head running with the speed of the car. |
| Symbolic Code | The green gate can represent the new hope and beginning of Iyob. |
| Cultural Code | Iyob is leaving Munnar and Iyob see him off till the gate by folding his hands. Even though Harrison is in the car Iyob plays as obedient worker. |

| Figure 4 | Hermeneutic Code | He is returning in a car. With a stiff body posture, having a bag in his hands. |
| Proairetic Code | The change in attitude of Iyob is clearly visible here. As he is returning with the knowledge of death of Harrison. The next thing he may do will be some problematic thing and that is visible in the scene. |
| Semantic Code | Costume of Iyob had changed as he now wears a pants and overcoat with shoes. His bodily movements are now stiff as he has the power within him. |
| Symbolic Code | On the demise of Harrison, Iyob arrives in his master's car to the bungalow. This shows the shift in power structure as the servant has now assumed authority of the assets of Harrison. |
| Cultural Code | The dress of Harrison states the culture of the period. The shift from servant to master. |

| Figure 5 | Hermeneutic code | This scene is the replica of figure 2 which is described above. Here some characters are only changed. Replacing Harrison Iyob is here. the children are here too. |
| Proairetic Code | The shot is somehow connected to the Figure 2. Iyob is trying to being as Harrison. He replaces Harrison and places himself and others are mostly same. Giving the children money. |
| Semantic Code | The costume's colour of the children are mud colored but of the helper of Iyob is white. He places his legs a little bit high. |
| Symbolic Code | Here too the dog symbolizes the aggressive attitude of its owner |
| Cultural Code | Pathetic condition of labors is portrayed in this one. The Child labor. |

| Figure 6 | Hermeneutic code | Iyob is very tired now. Ageing is visible in his appearance. |
| Proairetic Code | One who had power but now it is been lost is seen here. He is been treated very badly by his sons and his worker. |
| Semantic Code | His dress's material is light and color is dark themed. |
| Symbolic Code | Iyob is using a stick for walking. His state of mind is visible as he need a safe hand to hold. |
| Cultural Code | Fighting for land even in close relation. |
| Hemeneutic Code | Iyob be sitting in a home in forest. He is too tired and scared. |
| Proairetic Code | The story changes here and Iyob's character is changed. His next steps are to save the life of his third son from his other son. Iyob's power is fully faded now. And he is scared. He ran away from his own son to save his life. |
**Figure 7**  
**Semantic Code**  
Holding the tea glass can be signified as his scared mind. The hard material blanket also suggests this. And loss of power from his own hand.

**Symbolic Code**  
Instead of the coat here Iyob wears a hard material blanket which means he is trying to be a Keralite again.

**Cultural Code**  
Father is seeking help of his son.

**Figure 8**  
**Hermeneutic code**  
Varkey the communist is different from the others of his political party. The political party have some ideologies of Gandhi. But Varkey is different.

**Proairetic Code**  
The scene is a meeting with Iyob about the land of the layman.

**Semantic Code**  
Except Varkey everyone is wearing white dress. The revolution he wanted stays with his mind and this is seen in every scene and every movement of him.

**Symbolic Code**  
His black shirt denotes the rebel in him. Watch he wears the torch within him says about his intellectual way of thinking.

**Cultural Code**  
The political atmosphere of the time is expressed here. If anything, happen to the native the political leaders will go with them for a meeting for resolving the problem.

**Figure 9**  
**Hermeneutic code**  
This scene refers the ending of the revolution in the period where everyone has got what they deserved.

**Proairetic Code**  
After this scene Varkey has been caught by the police. And the story he was writing showed “shubham” which means “happily ended”.

**Semantic Code**  
The white costume says a peace message as it is over. He drinks a tea and place the empty glass in the table. He is comfortable in his chair.

**Symbolic Code**  
Varkey is now staying in party office which was the house given by Aloshy (son of Iyob). The picture background of him is of Iyob and Annamma his wife.

**Cultural Code**  
There is a typewriter in the scene which is not visible in this particular shot.

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### 6. CONCLUSION

This paper is studied and investigated the historical backgrounds of the movie and its costumes by analyzing the costumes of Iyobinte Pusthakam a Malayalam movie directed by Neerad (2014). The costumes of the movie were designed by the fashion designer Sameera Sanish who won the Kerala State Award for Costume Design in 2014 for the same movie. A costume is more than just a simple item of clothing worn by an actor or actress, it is one of the components that drives the story’s growth and flows the story. It is not just a means of portraying and symbolizing a character, it is also a means of performing roles that captivate people and enhance the quality of the film. The actor or actress’s costume in the film is more than just a decorative item, it can also reflect the character's or actress' image in a way that is in keeping with the narrative.

Iyob’s costumes can be considered an important story telling tool in the movie. The Communist Varkey’s costume clearly states his Political Ideology. Even he is in a party which values Gandhian way but here Varkey stays different as he was a rebel. Iyob’s costume changes as his character is developed throughout the story. There is a tragic fall for him and there too his costumes do not fail in telling the story effectively.

As costumes are important and new items can include in this industry, this can be a good opportunity for everyone who is in the field. Costumes if given proper importance and opportunity for the designers, the industry can grow well and this can make more talented designers. Movies are now going through a different phase and in that costumes are playing important role. To mention age or period costumes
are really important. Big budget movies like Bahubali, Rudramadevi, Ponniyan Selvan released recently are all periodic movies and have great importance of costumes. Costumes if properly designed and executed in movies Indian movies can get into the world scenario. Fashion is affected by historical trends, present events, and the future. This brings us to the final manner in which movies and television shows exert influence on fashion. The interplay between culture and fashion finds ample representation within the realm of film and television. By airing more diverse and inclusive programs and movies on their platforms, streaming businesses will propagate the cultural trends where the Audience will follow.

Including people from varied origins in roles on film in a suitable and authentic manner requires, among other things, their attire and physical attributes, lives, and skills. The selection of clothing and accessories by individuals serves as a significant indicator of their personal traits and the societal backgrounds in which they are nurtured. Moreover, this inclination prompts fashion designers to cater to a wide spectrum of individuals in the practical realm by offering a diverse range of garments, jewelry, and cosmetics. Furthermore, the emergence of personality style, a novel trend that recognizes the interplay between culture and fashion, has been influenced by the portrayal of such dynamics in movies and television.

Costumes are the first impression of a character and hence they are important in movies. Which is clearly liked to the box office revenues. From the trailer itself the viewer may get some kind of information about the story through their costumes. In Iyobinte Pusthakam we can clearly get the notion that it is a periodic movie.

The Indian film business which is among the leading countries to generate about 200 billion Rupees per year. About 40 million people are employed directly and 60 million indirectly in the textile sector. Making better costumes and marketing it throughout the world can increase the Indian economic growth as well.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS
None.

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