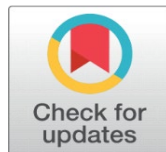


SEXUALITY AS A REFLECTION OF EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE FILMS OF P. PADMARAJAN

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ABSTRACT

P. Padmarajan, a revered auteur of Malayalam cinema, is celebrated for his avant-grade approach to film making, seamlessly integrating romance and realism to craft timeless classics during the 1980s and 1990s. This study critically examines the portrayal of sexuality as a conduit for exploring emotional and psychological development in Padmarajan's works. Analysing seminal films such as *Namukku Paarkkan Munthirithopukal* (1986), *Arapatta Kettiya Gramathil* (1986), *Thoovanathumbikal* (1987), *Njan Ghandharvan* (1991), the Paper underscores the pivotal role of early experiences in shaping sexual identity and desires. By employing psychoanalytical framework, the research elucidates the intricate connections between human sexual experiences and psychological growth, revealing the layered complexity of Padmarajan's oeuvre within border discourses on gender, sexuality, and emotional development in cinema, offering insight into symbiotic relationship between narrative aesthetics and character psychology.

Keywords: Malayalam Cinema, Sexuality, Emotional Development, Psychoanalytical Theory, Gender Representation, Character Psychology

1. INTRODUCTION

The 1980s and 1990s were a time of significant transformation and remarkable growth for Malayalam cinema. This period was referred to as the “renaissance of realism” and the “decade of experimentation”. This era is often celebrated for its artistic achievements and the emergence of iconic filmmakers G. Aravindan, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, P. Padmarajan, Bharathan, Priyadarshan, and Sathyananthikad who emerged as the pioneers of the new wave movement, focusing on social critique and human relationships and exploring a range of themes from family dynamics to political satire.

P. Padmarajan's name is synonymous with the master of Malayalam cinema, renowned as the avant-grade filmmaker and screenwriter who blended drama and romance to create classic realistic films in the 1980s and 1990s. His work is characterised by a blend of realism and deep psychological insight. Padmarajan's stories dealt with various themes like mysticism, romance, intimacy, social issues, anarchism, and individualism. Three decades since Padmarajan departed the scene, however, even today his film holds a special place in the hearts of movie buffs. He is notable for portraying the female character sexuality. Breaking away from a patriarchal view of society, his movies helped pave the way for profound and bold female characters.

Throughout the film, Padmarajan skill-fully blends elements of romance, drama, and social commentary to create thought-provoking and emotional experience for the viewer. The film, widely regarded as a classic of Malayalam cinema, has become cultural touch stone in the region. Menon (2011).

Thoovanathumbikal is a romantic evergreen movie, story revolves around Jayakrishnan, who is a man from the middle class who falls in love with two women, Radha and Clara. Another film, Njan Gandharvan, is an esoteric fantasy film about a young girl who falls in love with Demigod, a celestial stranger. In this movie, Bhama's sexual awakening with its celestial lover. Arappatta Kettiya Gramathil is a film set in a brothel about a girl named Gowri Kutty who is forced into prostitution and three friends, Zakharia, Hilal, and Gopi decide to save her. Another movie, Namukku Paarkkan Munthirithopukal, is the most influential love story of that era. In the movie, a young man, Solomon, falls in love with his new neighbour girl Sofiya.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dr. Remya (2021) "The Politics and Poetics of Visualizing Rain and Romance in Reel and Real Worlds: An Analysis of P. Padmarajan's Thoovanathumbikal as an Adaptation". This study highlights the distinctions between the Thoovanathumbikal film and its adaptation from the novel Udakappola. The film presents a triangular love story with a conventional conclusion, while Padmarajan introduces a bold and independent character named Clara, who seeks to escape societal constraints. It is important to note that the film serves as a partial adaptation of the novel. The novel is deeply personal and autobiographical, yet it lacks the intimacy and romanticism found in the faces of harsh realities.

The study titled "Portrayal of Women in Padmarajan's Cinema: With Special Reference to Novemberinte Nashttam" (2020) by Sreedevi T and B.K Ravi examines the protagonist of the film, Meera, who grapples with childhood traumas and mental health challenges. When she develops feelings for her senior, he ultimately rejects her upon learning of her mental condition. This research delves into Meera's psyche through the frame work of psychoanalytic theory, aiming to provide insights into the complexities of human mind.

Alessandra Salerno, Monica Tostob, and Samson D. (2014) "Adolescent sexual and emotional development: the role of romantic relationships". This study explores the adolescent is a stage marked by rapid psychological changes in adolescents. This study examines the increasing number of emotional and sexual relationships among teenagers, accounting for both personal and environmental factors. It emphasizes various issues related to psychosocial adaptation, particularly when it comes to romantic relationships, which can be extremely important drivers of personal growth.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Significant research has been conducted on the evolution of Padmarajan's films concerning gender, sexuality and women's identity. However, this study aims to examine sexuality and the emotional development of characters in Padmarajan movies, an area that has not yet been explored.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

Examine the relationship between the characters connection in the film and how the sexuality reflects the psychological journey of the character. This study is entirely centred on human sexuality and the psychological aspects of the mind, demonstrating how psychoanalytic theory can illuminate the variety of human experiences.

5. METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study takes a qualitative approach to analyse the portrayal sexuality as a mirror of emotional development in Padmarajan's films. The selected movies are Arappatta Kettiya Gramathil, Namukku Parkkan Munthirithopukal, Njan Ghandharvan Thoovanathumbikal. The study uses the scene, thematic, and narrative analysis based on the elements in the psychosexual development theory.

This paper employs an in -depth analysis of the psychological evolution of the characters represented in Padmarajan's movies using this concept of psychosexual development popularised by Sigmund Freud. This theory delineates five distinct stages that individuals start from infancy to adulthood, each linked to a particular erogenous zone. The stages include Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latency, Genital stages. In Genital stages, it commences in adolescence and continues into adulthood. This stage signifies the maturation of sexual drives and involves a renewed focus on the genitals, alongside the development of the individual's ability to engage in love and meaningful relationships. In terms of scene analysis, psychosexual is a popular way to comprehend a character's sexuality and psychological state.

6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To explore how the relation between human development and the sexual dimensions of life emphasizes their interconnection with personal growth.
- To observe how the manner in which sexual attraction fosters emotional bonds in human relationships.

7. REPRESENTATION OF SEXUALITY IN PADMARAJAN MOVIES

Padmarajan viewed sexuality as encompassing sexual feelings, attraction, intimacy, and emotional connection with others, rather than viewing it through a lens of vulgarity. His films prominently feature various forms of sexual relationship, including heterosexual, homosexual, and lesbian connections, as well as the portrayal of sex workers. He effectively illustrates the representation of sexuality during the 1970s and 1980s, a time when societal attitudes largely regarded

sexuality as immoral and vulgar. His films often challenge these prevailing views. He did not regard sexuality as vulgar; rather, he believed it facilitated personal growth.

In Arapatta Kettiya Gramathil (1986) four friends plan to visit a village brothel. Zakaria humorously remarks, "Today is Vishu, and it is time to break virginity". The film is set against the backdrop of a brothel, contrasting the typical narratives of Malayalam cinema from that period, which often depicted rural Kerala. Padmarajan challenges these conventional narrative styles. In the Chalakkudy tharavad, a typical house serves as the setting for a brothel. Padmarajan reinterprets the concept of a brothel, presenting it within the context of a household with family members. Gouri Kutty, the new girl in the brothel, is a young orphaned and impoverished individual ensnared in the flesh trade. This film explores themes of socio-political commentary and sexual exploitation.

Njan Gandharva is a supernatural romantic film that tells the story of a cursed Gandharvan. According to Hindu mythology, Gandharva are cursed for his transgressions, with their punishment being to make a woman fall in love, engage in a physical romance, and then abandon her. When Bhama discovers a wooden sculpture on the beach, she is drawn to its beauty and decides to keep it. That sculpture magically transforms into the Gandharva, who eagerly kisses her. Bhama finds herself passionately in love, but he vanishes immediately afterward. Here Padmarajan shows a mythological narrative that explores sexual attraction between a human being and a celestial being.

Thoovanathumbikal is a timeless romantic narrative within the Malayalam film industry. The story revolves around the characters of Jayakrishnan, Clara and Radha. Jayakrishnan finds himself in love with two women, grappling with the dilemma of whom to choose as his life partner. Clara is a sex worker, depicted as a woman of both beauty and intellect, who loves him without being aware of his status as a landlord. In 1980s, the term "sex worker" was often shunned, with society viewing such individuals as immoral and unworthy of acceptance. During this period, Padmarajan introduced the character of Clara, who challenges the negative stereotypes associated with sex workers in Malayalam Cinema. Clara emerges as both female figures, breaking conventional molds within the industry.

Deshadanakkili Karayarilli film illustrates the character Shari identifying as a lesbian and feelings for her friends. This film is recognised as the first Indian production to delve into the theme of womance. Padmarajan is set in the period when the homo sexuality was largely unacknowledged in society and acceptance of homosexuality in our country only began to emerge in 1990s. The focus is in the two teenage girls striving to liberate themselves from heteronormative constraints, highlighting the complexities of sexual identity.

Knowing as the commercial art film, Thakara is 1979 film written by Padmarajan and directed by Bharatha Thakara is the central character, has mental disability. Padmarajan demonstrates how a mentally challenged man can love a woman both mentally and physically. In this instance, Subhashini is a girl who feels a physical bond with Thakara while being attracted to every village man. He gives Thakara a normal human personality and a sexually aroused mental illness; his love for her eventually turns violent.

8. SEXUALITY AS A REFLECTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Padmarajan's films are celebrated for their emotional richness and intricate portrayal of human relationships, subtly addressing various dimensions of

sexuality. A notable aspect of Padmarajan contribution in his ability to humanize sexuality; the character's sexual desires are depicted not merely as physical impulses but as essential components of their emotional and psychological depth. His films reflect an intricate understanding of sexuality, presenting it is not merely as a physical or biological phenomenon but as complex psychological and emotional experiences. Padmarajan's films rarely indulge in explicit portrayals of sexuality. Rather than focusing solely on physical intimacy, Padmarajan's exploration of sexuality is deeply connected to psychological, emotional, and social development.

Padmarajan's treatment of sexuality is multifaceted and never reduced to a mere physical act. His film captures the tension between love, desire, and emotional vulnerability, where the sexual relationship is not just the act of physical closeness but an emotional journey toward healing and understanding. The character's growth, from emotional vulnerability to emotional maturity, often parallels their sexual awakening. In his films, love is often entangled with personal trauma, societal expectations and psychological conflict. The protagonist struggle with not just with his romantic desires but with understanding his own emotional depth and needs. Padmarajan's film engage with the complexity of desire in all its forms be it romantic, sexual or platonic. Through his lens, sexuality is not about physicality; it is profound emotional experience tied to personal growth and self-understanding.

Arappatta Kettiya Gramathil presents a narrative where Padmarajan prioritizes the exploration of emotional depth within each character over the conventional aspects of filmmaking. The story line unfolds over a span of 24 hours, transitioning into a thriller in the second half. Gouri Kutty as a young girl who is caught in the web of human trafficking. Hilal exhibits inappropriate sexual interest in Gouri, treating here as a mere object. Upon realizing his misunderstanding, Hilal expresses regret for mistaking as sex worker. She revealed her status as an orphan living with her grandmother before brought to the brothel by Maluamma. This revelation ignites Hilal's tries to understand her internal struggles, thereby fostering an emotional bond. Padmarajan skilfully illustrates not only the sexual dynamics but also profound conflict of a girl yearning to escape her situation.

Njan Gandharva is a supernatural romantic film. According to Hindu beliefs, Gandharva is cursed, destined to make a woman fall in love with him, engage with her both mentally and physically, and then abandon her. Bhama, the protagonist, becomes enamoured with Gandharva. It presents a world where human beings and celestial entities are connected through their romantic journey, creating a unique narrative that spans two different worlds. In this film, he seeks to take Bhama's virginity while forming a deep emotional bond with her. In the latter part of the film, Gandharva expresses a desire to live as a human, acknowledging Bhama's fortunate family background, which prompts him to visit her home with a marriage proposal. Padmarajan illustrates the profound emotional connection he has with her, culminating in Bhama sacrificing her virginity to save him from punishment for his transgressions.

In the film, Nammuku Parkkan Munthirithopukal, intimacy transcends mere physicality. The love story of Zofia and Solomon unfolds across the picturesque grasslands of Mysore, where his attraction is evident upon first encounter. Padmarajan portrays an extraordinary Syrian family, with Solomon deeply concerned about Zofia's familial challenges, which strengthens their bond. Solomon articulates his affection through biblical references. Padmarajan presents a bold and mature love story that lacks physical intimacy; instead, it emphasizes emotional closeness through shared experiences, such as travelling together and enjoying

moments in the vineyard. This development fosters a psychological connection, suggesting that there is something deeper than mere sexuality.

Thoovanathumbikal is a classic romantic narrative that explores the complexities of a love triangle. The protagonists, Jayakrishnan, encounters Clara, a sex worker. Captivated by her beauty, they engage in physical relation. Although, Jayakrishnan is aware of her profession, he develops a desire to marry her after losing her virginity. In a poignant beach scene, he expresses his wish to marry her, revealing his deep emotional attachment. Clara, in turn, shares her reasons for choosing her profession and the challenges she faces, fostering an emotional depth reminiscent of other films such as Arappatta Kettiya Graamathil, Nammuku Parkkan Munthirithopukal, Padmarajan illustrates that a woman is more than her physical form. These scenes in his movies demonstrate that a healthy sexual attraction can foster a profound emotional bond.

According to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, sexuality encompasses the notion of "psychosexual development", which posits that an individual's growth occurs through various life stages. The genital stage, which focuses on mature sexual relationships and the capacity to form healthy adult connections, is viewed by Freud as the pinnacle of psychosexual development. In this stage, an individual's sexual identity and relationships become paramount, beginning at puberty and extending throughout life. This development stage is vividly portrayed in Padmarajan's films through its characters and all the individuals exhibit an interest in the opposite sex. The principal characters in the films such as Thoovanathumbikal, featuring Jayakrishnan and Clara; Arappatta Kettiya Graamathil with Hilal; Nammuku parkkan Munthirithopukal showcasing Zofia and Solomon; and Njan Gandharvan, which includes Bhama and celestial being, illustrates that the genital stage signifies the emergence of romantic and sexual emotions, ultimately leading to the establishment of intimate relationships. During this phase, individuals attain sexual maturity and begin to explore their feelings. These scenes in Padmarajan's films serve to validate Sigmund Freud's psychosexual development theory, highlighting the motional highs and lows experienced by the characters. This stage transcends mere sexual attraction, emphasizing the importance of forming meaningful connections with others. According to Freud, individuals encounter conflicts and challenges during this stage. However, the psychological development among these individuals extends beyond these issues, fostering a balance their needs for intimacy and autonomy. This is exemplified through the struggles faced by characters such as Gouri, Clara, Zofia, who confront numerous challenges, including sexual assault and poverty.

9. CONCLUSION

The film effectively illustrates the representation of sexuality as a reflection of psychological development. These films demonstrate that each character undergoes the genital stage. According to Freud, this period is characterised by the sexual instinct being oriented towards heterosexual development. In Padmarajan's film depiction of the maturation of sexual drives and the evolution of an individual's ability to form love and meaningful relationships. Although all of his films were commercial failures, this decade has recognised them as Classics. Through Padmarajan's lens, sexuality is not physical love; it is portrayed as emotional experiences intricately linked to personal growth and self-awareness.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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