

June 2019

VOL. 11, No. 1

ISSN 0975 – 6302

# TJES

**TERESIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

A Peer Reviewed International Journal



*Published by*

**Department of English and Centre for Research**

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam, Kerala, Kochi - 682 011

*(Affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala)*

*email : teresianjournals@gmail.com*

## **Teresian Journal of English Studies**

A peer reviewed international journal on English language and cultural studies

June 2019

© St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam

ISSN 0975 – 6302

Subscription Rates:-

	Individual	Institution
Life Membership	₹ 5000/- (\$ 100)	₹ 7000/- (\$ 110)
10 years	₹ 2500/- (\$ 50)	₹ 3600/- (\$ 60)
5 years	₹ 1250/- (\$ 25)	₹ 1800/- (\$ 35)
Annual [1 issue]	₹ 300/- (\$ 7)	₹ 400/- (\$ 8)

US \$ 3 per year should be added towards air-mail surcharge.

Edited by Dr Celine E. Printed by the Principal. Published by the Principal on behalf of St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, Cochin - 682 011, Kerala, India. Printed at Green Offset Printing Press, Ernakulam, Cochin - 682 018, Kerala, India and Published at St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, Cochin - 682 011.

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The Editor  
TJES, Teresian Journal of English Studies  
Department of English and Centre for Research  
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Statement about ownership and other particulars about the newspaper - **Teresian Journal of English Studies** - to be published in June issue of the journal every year.

FORM IV

Place of Publication : St. Teresa's College,  
Ernakulam - 682 011.

Periodicity of its publication : Bi-Annual

Printer's Name : Principal

Nationality : Indian

Address : St. Teresa's College,  
Ernakulam - 682 011.

Publisher's Name : Principal

Nationality : Indian

Address : St. Teresa's College,  
Ernakulam - 682 011.

Editor's Name : Dr. Celine E.

Nationality : Indian

Address : St. Teresa's College,  
Ernakulam - 682 011.

Owner's Name : St. Teresa's College,  
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Ernakulam - 682 011.

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15th December 2018

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# **The Silence that Speaks: A Re-visioning of Kannaki's Character**

Sruthi Catherine Thomas

Abstract

This paper attempts to read mythical contexts within *The Cilappatikaram*. The structure and content of Indian literature is heavily influenced by mythopoeic imagination. The paradox of myths is that they are factually false, but they have a power that transcends their inaccuracy. People believe in myths, but not in the way that they believe in the discourse of history. Myths ask even fundamental questions about human life and this is what sustains them. *The Cilappatikaram* is an assertion of Tamil ideals of chastity and kingship, the epic has an ethical and political subtext; the chastity of a woman is inviolable and it is the duty of a king to protect and uphold it. This is possible only when the king rules justly. If he swerves from justice, he puts his kingdom in danger. Thus there is a conflation of the domestic and the public, of akam and puram which marks the characteristic feature of Tamil poetics.

Key words : Myth, public and private domains, value systems, mythopoeic imagination

*The Cilappatikaram* is the quintessential Tamil poem which is the nearest approach to a great epic that India has produced in a language other than Sanskrit. The Indian imagination is mythopoeic and hence myth, rather than history is the route our nation takes to understand itself. Myths enable the past to be present forever and to inform the future. Indian epics are closely associated with rites and rituals. Mark Schorer's observations on myth are applicable in Indian context.

Myths are the instruments by which we continually struggle to make our experience intelligible to ourselves. A myth is a

large controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life. It unifies experience in a way that is satisfactory to the whole culture. (94)

*The Cilappatikaram* may have originated from the desire to account for the existence of rituals associated with the cult of goddess Pattini. But within the mythical context, there lies a greater intention, which is to chronicle the geopolitical structure of Tamil culture. Alongwith an assertion of Tamil ideals of chastity and kingship, the epic has an ethical and political subtext; the chastity of a woman is inviolable and it is the duty of a king to protect and uphold it. This is possible only when the king rules justly. If he swerves from justice, he puts his kingdom in danger. Thus there is a conflation of the domestic and the public, of *akam* and *puram* which marks the characteristic feature of Tamil poetics.

Pattini whom the whole world now worships had proved the truth of the Tamil saying: “The virtue of women is useless if the king rules unjustly”. She made the Cola realise it. She made the Pantiyan, lord of the south realise, “The king cannot survive if his spectre is crooked.” She made the Ceral, the Lord of the west realise, “The wrath of the kings will not be appeased till their vows are fulfilled, and made known to the kings of the north.”(28.210-20)

On reading *The Cilappatikaaram*, it becomes evident that in the initial part of the text, the identity of Kannaki is defined in relation to her husband. No thought has been spared to what her childhood was like or whether she used to assert her strong will when things went against her will. Had this been done, it would have been easier to make a psychoanalytical study of the shift in her responses and this could have resulted in a rational explanation to the apotheosis that she undergoes towards the last part of the text. The very little that is known from the text reveals that this woman hailed from an affluent family in the city of Pukar. As the epic records, “In fame Pukar rivals/Heaven itself, blinds the Serpentworld in pleasures”(1.19-20). Thus the city of Pukar which is the geographical space Kannaki has occupied since childhood is



being compared to heaven itself. The heavenly quality of the space she occupies makes an indelible impression on her mind and it eventually gets reflected in her character. In *Psychology in Everyday Living*, Dashiell remarks:

No expression without impression; no response without stimulation. A man does nothing, is not active, in any manner involving the effectors...unless in some way he is being influenced by energy changes occurring inside or outside of him, which play upon his receptors-provided we expect a few cases of smooth muscle and gland excitations by hormones. (43)

Also the section, 'Psychology in Social Life' of the book says that one of the principal elements in effective adjustment to social life is the knowledge of folkways(14). Therefore, Kannaki's initiation into the sexual world could have been through observing and interpreting the mores of the city, which excelled the "Serpentworld" in its pleasures.

Kannaki and Kovalan's love before marriage is described on Platonic terms contrary to the values and practices of the society they lived in, as clandestine unions of lovers belonging to higher class families were rampant during that period which is evident from the accounts in Sangam poetry (with respect to the Kurincitinais) which was written around the same period as The Cilappatikaram(2<sup>nd</sup> Century-5<sup>th</sup> Century C.E). Nancy Sherman draws on Freud's concept of "Trieb" or drive and describes it as internal stimulus applied to the mind that is satisfied by the reduction of the tension they cause as opposed to the external stimuli which is satisfied by actions of flight or withdrawal(159). Being an inhabitant of Pukar, yet denying sexual gratification, which was quite sanctioned in the society she lived in, would have resulted in psychological tension in her mind and it is with this suppressed libido that Kannaki enters marriage.

On the other hand, Kovalan is described as the "god of love" and as the "incomparable Murukan"(1.41-42). This evokes the image of Krishna who also had innumerable lovers. This would have led to an increase in Kannaki

expectations about him and on relating this to her repressed libido prior to her marriage, it could be said that marriage for Kannaki also meant a release of her sexual energies at a large scale. Having thus gauged the extent of Kannaki's libido, it is crucial to understand how the epic sees Kannaki's repressed energy. The description of Kannaki's wedding night leaves evident signs of a wild, vibrant self in Kannaki which her attending maids have felt. They take Kannaki to the wedding chamber "chanting"

May the tiger-emblem, inscribed on the brow  
Of the Himalaya, dwell on its golden crest  
Forever. May Cempiyan, of the spear fierce  
In the great battle, whirl his ever-victorious wheel. (1.65-68)

Apart from being a prayer aimed at the King's welfare, this verse leaves startling undertones of Kannaki and Kovalan's sexual union. The tiger is the emblem of Cempiyan's kingdom. The emblem is the King's identity. Therefore, they are two separate entities coupled due to a common characteristic which is the ferocious and carnivorous nature of the two elements. If the "spear" mentioned in the passage is a phallic image denoting Kovalan, then the "tiger-emblem" could be seen as an image of Kannaki because Kannaki is now an emblem and has now become a part of Kovalan's identity through marriage. The attending maids are chanting the verse in the form of a prayer or an entreaty. Connecting the image and its embedded meaning it could be said that they are praying that the ferocious tiger like Kannaki may dwell on the "golden crest" (Kovalan) forever. They are also praying that Cempiyan of the "spear fierce" like Kovalan may gain victory in the battle. The battle signifies the nuptial night and could even mean their marital life. An anxious tone could be attributed to the voice of the maids as they had apparently felt the unrivalled energy in Kannaki which is carnivorous, wild and ferocious.

The energy that the maids speak about can also be interpreted as Kannaki's id. Freud describes the id as "a cauldron full of seething excitations...It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts...It has no organization, produces no collective will...only a striving to bring about the

satisfaction of the instinctual needs”(Suprenant 117). The id in Kannaki which is immediate sexual gratification that she had repressed before marriage for unknown reasons finds expression in great intensity after her wedding. The immensity of her libido is discussed in the epic using striking imagery.

And other flowers that blossomed in the fields:  
The fragrant screw pine, its white petals  
In bloom; and in the champak arbour, swirls of matavi  
Drained of their nectar by bees who plunged  
Into the lush hair of the bright-faced girl.(2.16-20)

The hair of a woman is a symbol of her female sexuality. This has been discussed widely in various oral folktales of the Deccan region like “The Serpent Lover” trans-created by A.K.Ramanujan. The flower also explores a sexual imagery. Elaine Showalter in her study of *Hamlet* speaks about Ophelia and her deflowering. “Her flowers suggest the discordant double images of female sexuality as both innocent blossoming and whorish contamination, she is the green girl of pastoral, the virginal “Rose of May” and the sexually explicit mad woman who in giving away her wild flowers and herbs, is symbolically deflowering herself”(224). As Showalter points out, flowers denote the sexuality of a woman. In lines sixteen to twenty, the bees that have drained the nectar of flowers fall into Kannaki’s hair. This shows that her sexuality has a far greater enticing power for the bees than the flowers. The flower imagery continues in the succeeding verse also. Kovalan on their nuptial bed wears “a wreath of jasmines in bloom: their white petals/Opened by bees”(2.39-40). Kannaki on the other hand wears “a garland of shimmering red and purple water lilies” (2.42). While Kovalan is associated with white flowers which stands for purity and innocence, Kannaki is associated with red and purple water lilies which stands for burning and seething desires. The feminine and the masculine traits in this context are interchanged here. Kannaki’s flowers are more striking than that of Kovalan. Thus, the woman’s sexuality here is far superior to Kovalan.

Apart from flowers, the union of the couple is also described using elemental forces of nature such as the sun and moon. “Such was the scene as if

the sun/ And moon had together bathed the entire world/Clasped by the sea,in their light”(2.36-38). These lines appear before the description of Kovalan’s and Kannaki’s flowers. While the sun is fiery and takes dark hues like red and orange, the moon is white. Connecting the colour of the sun and the moon with the colour of the flowers, it is seen that Kannaki is compared to the sun while Kovalan is compared to the moon. These attributes are applicable to the libido of the couple where Kannaki’s energy is unmatched. Kovalan’s sexual energy when compared to Kannaki is gentle. Also, the moon is visible only through the light emitted from the sun. In other words, the moon can acclaim qualities of its own only in the presence of the sun. On analyzing the metaphor, it is seen that Kovalan acquires value only through Kannaki. The relationship of the couple, especially their sexual life can be judged on a similar basis.

Line sixty three of the second canto also speaks about a vital detail, “How he rejoices to see me thus writhe in pain!” According to Freud, it was the accumulation of energy produced by sensory stimulation in the organism above an optimum level that was experienced as pain while its subsequent reflex discharge in motor action was experienced as pleasure. It was in terms of such reflex discharges of energy that Freud had first described the system of the primary process in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Redding 128). Kovalan has understood the power of Kannaki unconsciously impelling him to describe the geography of her body which is indirectly connected to her inner psyche. Kovalan’s pain therefore could be understood as arising from the unreleased energy on encountering a superior ‘power’ both sexual and physical in Kannaki. She baffles him to the extent that she appears mysterious to him. This is expressed by Kovalan explicitly:”a picture/Beyond my reach” (2.91-92).

The patriarchal world sees female sexuality as a threat and attempts to contain it. But The patriarchal world sees female sexuality as a threat and attempts to contain it. But Kannaki’s character refuses to conform to this attempt of patriarchy and unleashes her femininity to the full extent and burns down an entire city. Thus an entire city is made to pay the prize for wronging

a woman. This thesis has attempted to map Kannaki's thoughts behind her apparently calm behaviour and also how the geographical conditions and landscapes get projected into her mental space. An attempt has also been made to understand whether Kannaki's apotheosis or attribution of godhead is patriarchy's attempt to misinterpret the strength of a woman by establishing her as an epitome of chastity, quite contrary to her real nature which can only be understood by a close examination of her psyche.

The 'truth' behind Kannaki's true self can only be revealed by Kannaki herself. Also, this study of Kannaki's psyche is neither an attempt to challenge the religious cult of the Tamil state nor is it a venture to demote the status of Kannaki. It is only a way of looking at one among the multiple meanings that the text offers. Kannaki is and will remain a distinguished figure that literature has offered mankind.

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# **The Depiction of the Posthuman and Social Media in *Black Mirror***

Maria Cyriac

Abstract

The advent of internet transformed countries and dismantled barriers allowed people across the globe to communicate, collaborate and exchange ideas irrespective of the barriers of geographical location and time. Cybernetics connected with systems of control and communication in human and machines made cyberspace a reality, that exists only virtually. This paper is an attempt to analyse the *Black Mirror* from the perspective of posthumanism. The television series *Black Mirror* sheds light on the angst about the technology riddled future. The paranoid pessimism of this science-fiction anthology is shaped by the nervousness at the way we have become strangers to ourselves. The *Black Mirror* projects anxiety about the future. The series explores the way in which technology is altering the foundation of the society.

Keywords: Post humanism, technology, collaboration, cyberspace, internet.

Contemporary society is completely immersed in new technologies. The extensive growth in this field resulted in making it accessible to almost all parts of the society. Because of accessibility and convenience, one has become more and more immersed in these technologies and one prefers to live in a hyperreal or simulated world rather than the real one. The current society is completely engrossed with and absorbed in technology. One of the major inventions that paved way for this preoccupation with the digital technology is the creation of the internet. The invention of internet brought with it a plethora of changes in the field of communication and information gathering. The creation of internet was a giant leap in the history of mankind, as it brought the world extremely close.

The advent of internet and the use of information systems brought about drastic changes to human life. It transformed countries, dismantled barriers, and allowed people across the globe to communicate, collaborate and exchange ideas despite the barriers of geographical location and time. It made the transfer of knowledge, information, data, and communication easier than before.

The idea of cyberspace initially existed only in the pages of a science fiction novel, but recently with all the advancements that have propped up in the current century this slowly became the actuality of the modern life. Cybernetics with its concerns about systems of control and communication in human and machines made cyberspace a reality, that exists only virtually. “The word cyberspace denotes an information space in which data is organized in such a way as to give the person an appearance of power and access to information” (Featherstone 2-3).

The term cyberspace was coined and popularised by the American novelist William Gibson in his 1984 novel *Neuromancer*. Gibson defined cyberspace in his novel as,

Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding... (33)

But the term cyberspace cannot just be understood as a “space behind the computer” (Gillis 203). Cyberspace is a public space where people can exchange thoughts, ideas, share information, provide social support, conduct business, create art, play games or engage in political discussion. Earlier these social interactions required physical presence of the person involved in the discussion at the same social and geographical setting. But with the advent of cyberspace these interactions do not necessarily necessitate a shared physical or bodily presence of either parties. Rather it is characterized by the

interconnection of millions of people throughout the globe communicating, collaborating and interacting with each other by email, chat rooms, or social media applications like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Cyberspace is an immaterial, non-physical space experienced by the static body. However, it is also part of lived space and its users experience cyberspace and embodied space at the same time. It is possible to say that its users, through their digital screens, produce cyberspace. It is important to question the effect of cyberspace on the physical space since it has been continuously transforming the physical environment through the use of digital screens.

David Bell in his work *Cyberculture: The Key Concepts* defines cyberspace as,

cyberspace and the Internet should be regarded as uncontrolled and unregulated electronic spaces where anyone is free to be whatever they wish and express themselves however they like.... Cyberspace will play an important role knitting together in the diverse communities of tomorrow, facilitating the creation of 'electronic neighborhoods' bound together not by geography but by shared interests. But this will not produce a common public space; rather, it will enable a global platform for a very loosely networked collection of private cyberspaces. (35- 36)

Even though internet and cyberspace have made life easier and have given billions of people access to an enormous amount of data and information, there is a dark flipside to it. The access that internet gave to the public, caused a lot of sinister crimes. This led to an alarming rise of criminal activities like, scamming, cyberbullying, cyberterrorism, sexual harassment etc.

Charlie Brooker through his television series *Black Mirror* sheds light on the angst about the technology riddled future. The paranoid pessimism of this science-fiction anthology is shaped by the nervousness at the way we have become strangers to ourselves. There are no alien invaders or supernatural



phenomena, instead what *Black Mirror* presents is an anxiety about the future. It holds up a “black mirror” to society and refuses to flinch at the reflection. The series explores the way in which technology is altering the foundation of the society.

The arrival of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter blurred the distinction between public space and private sphere. The hitherto private sphere and private matters are now exposed for everyone to see on these platforms. Individuals bare every single thought that s/he has; information about oneself is flaunted in the form of pictures or videos. One creates a second life in cyberspace. It is the only space where one can be anything one wants to be. One of the episodes in the series that paints the negative effects of immersion in cyberspace is the first episode of the third season titled “Nosedive”. It exhibits the most realistic situation about today’s perception of social engagement. The fake interconnectedness of modern social media plays out in face-to-face situations between characters in this *Black Mirror* episode.

In the episode “Nosedive” Brooker envisions a society that chases after ‘likes’ and ‘reactions’ on the pictures and videos uploaded onto their social media account or how many ‘followers’ they have. This is the universe where an individual is entirely reliant on social media. Everyone races after a desirable ‘rating’ - an average score that’s affected by everything one does on a day to day basis, from a sideways glance given to a woman walking past one during a morning commute to the lack of enthusiasm you displayed for the gift that someone gave you. “In this world, we’re all so caught up in our own heads. It’s easy to lose sight of what’s real. What matters.” (21:34- 22:02). It plunges the viewers into an immediate future in which every interpersonal encounter, however minor, concludes with the participants rating each other out of five on their phone. These ratings are a kind of currency where if one manages to get above 4.5 then the world is his, but if the rating drops below 3.5 then one becomes a pariah, unable to even rent certain cars or enter certain buildings. The episode portrays a time where people look only into their smart phones. They swipe and they rate not just taxi drivers and restaurants but

people, too. They take photos of themselves being happy and looking good. Then they post the pictures and wait for feedback, approval and validation from their peers. They are posting their lives, not so much their real lives but the lives they want other people to see and think they are living. Mostly they worry, about how they are seen and about their social status. It's basically a combination of apps like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Uber and all the rest.

The scenario that this episode creates is not as farfetched as the other episodes in this series. Because there already exist apps like People, 'where your character is your currency', an app that lets you review other people. It was hailed as a 'Yelp for people', People gave users the capacity to rank any person around them on a star system. Caitlin Dewey in *The Washington Post* wrote "Where once you may have viewed a date or a teacher conference as a private encounter, People transform it into a radically public performance". Everything you do can be judged, publicized, recorded. In Africa, your social media reputation can get you a bank loan, and in China the state has started ranking citizens with a 'social credit' system that is based on rewards and punishment system. This episode already exists in reality. This episode is an explicit portrayal of the world of social media, where all that really matters is your score, a number that reflects your popularity, class, and happiness, all-in-one. In the real world, that score is just represented differently, through our follower count.

In "Nosedive", Charlie Brooker portrays a society in the so called 'near future' where every single person is rated on the basis of everyday mundane activity using mobile devices and an eye implant. The actress Bryce Dallas Howard plays the character of Lacie, a woman looking for the approval of her soon-to-be-wed childhood friend. Lacie's social standing was decided by technology and voted on by the people she interacted with. Having above four-point-five out of five - meant that Lacie could qualify for a luxury apartment. If she lost her temper with a waiter or shop assistant, or if she associated with people with lower scores, her score would. It's not just about the technology, it is more about people. In this sense, "Nosedive" is both

dystopian fiction and social satire. Lacie lives in a version of America where every tiny interaction is ranked by the people involved on an app that syncs with augmented-reality contact lenses or retinal implants. Her relationships with the other characters reek of superficiality due to her maintained face, which renders her more valuable than those less than her 4.243 rank in the publicized social system. The episode aims squarely at the anxiety fuelled by a modern obsession with quantification, “Nosedive” radiates this anxiety.

“Nosedive” replaces the social media platforms as a self-curating and validation-seeking backbone of a future society. But the issues at play go beyond the way users project their best and most desirable selves onto their Instagram and Facebook feeds. The characters in “Nosedive” anxiously alter their lives to be respectable and glamorous online, within certain narrow guidelines. The social system Brooker highlights in this standalone episode mimics the contemporary issue of social merit obsession, which makes viewers realize the seemingly distant future setting of the show narrates their own present infatuation with digital and social connectivity.

But “Nosedive” isn’t about representing reality. It’s out to deduce the end game of customer ratings systems, which turns the world into a giant prisoner’s dilemma of applied power. As exaggerated and unlikely as it is, it’s also an effective story, because even in the bizarreness of its metaphor, the story is completely relatable. Bryce Dallas Howard’s performance goes a long way towards making the story work, because she projects such a fragile, brittle form of happiness when she’s working hard for validation, and she’s so rawly naked and afraid when her tricks stop working, and her real self-starts pouring from the image that she built for herself.

This feeling would be familiar to anyone who’s ever censored their own image on social media out of fear of exposure, or just in hope of sparking a particular response from a particular person. It should be familiar to anyone who’s ever had someone else post an unflattering photo of them or fielded a hateful comment from a stranger. And it should also be familiar to anyone who’s been on an online sphere where they can be rated and ranked- anyone who’s owned a business that’s featured on Yelp, or released a podcast or a

YouTube video, or even just sold items on Amazon Marketplace. There's a personal bruising effect that comes with a bad ranking, especially when it's anonymous. It's the feeling of being judged not just by one person, but potentially by the entire world.

And that's where *Black Mirror* takes its clever turn. What happens to Lacie amounts to an exaggerated morality play about the dangers of conformity and the small pleasures of exerting individuality. It's the small details that make this a recognizable world. But at heart, "Nosedive" isn't really about the future. It's about the things we take for granted in the present, and how it takes an exaggerated, satirical version of the world we live in to make us see ourselves clearly. This system of procuring lifeless online presences exists even in the absence of physical ratings, but those public social standings is what Brooker's "Nosedive" uses to present viewers' social nightmares right in front of them in the most ominous way possible.

The protagonist and her peers deprive themselves of a genuine life in exchange for fictional satisfaction, they are living in a "fake smile jail cell" (24:11) as one lives in the current era. Brooker highlights cognitive estrangement to place the viewers in an alternative reality, and then reveals the reality to be their own. This defamiliarization often occurs in the beginning of the episodes where the human/technology relationships seem like something in the distant future. It becomes clear as plots progress that viewers are often closer to the science fiction world - sometimes already in it - than they realize. He simply amplifies this obsessive relationship with technology by delivering it beyond phone and tablet screens and letting publicized social standards directly influence the characters' way of life through job qualifications and housing restrictions. Characters' battle with each other for supreme social media followings, and this realistic battle grows more tangible in "Nosedive" by letting those lower rating suffers without special privileges and even without employment.

Everything plays at a level of superficiality, if one is constantly thinking about what others will think before one is willing to think for oneself. Lacie's brother argues with her about her obsession with a higher rating,

IAN. I am sorry, but I miss the normal you. Before this obsession, when we had conversations, remember... This whole ranking thing, just comparing yourself to people who only pretend to be happy... (24:20- 24:25)

People distance themselves from their surroundings and are so tightly restrained only the best part of their identity is presented in front of the society. In a way, Lacie is a representation of the modern population. It's very common now to have social media intertwined into people's lives, but "Nosedive" takes it further, to the point where social media is now in control of everything, even how people treats an individual.

In many ways, it's the episode's closing moments which are the most powerful. Lacie has been locked away and removed from society at large; her meltdown at the wedding finally pushes her social score below 1. At this moment she finds a freedom of sorts, having the first genuine and unfiltered interaction with another human being.

"Nosedive" makes the viewers realize the pitfalls of chasing after 'likes' and 'views'. The only way to get out of this vicious circle is to completely distance oneself from this sort of social climbing games. The only character that asserts her own identity is the truck driver Susan who picks Lacie up from her hitchhike. The episode highlights the fact that happiness is not centred on the number of 'likes' or 'views' but rather it is by breaking out of the so-called numbers game.

SUSAN. Checking my feed for danger signs? I get it a lot. I got to be an antisocial maniac, right?

LACIE. You seem...

SUSAN. Normal?

LACIE. Yeah!

SUSAN. Thank you, it took some effort. (38:25- 39:25)

Lacie and Susan's interaction is the only genuine part of this episode, as Susan explains why she left behind the all-consuming culture of ratings after her husband's chance at a potentially life-saving cancer treatment went to another person with a 4.4 rating while he was a 4.3. People in this world are too busy trying to up their scores that they don't pause to consider the social hierarchy that their current rankings trap them in. The most interesting aspect of "Nosedive" is its portrayal of a world where an individual's social media score is chained to his/her social stature. To those who are deeply embedded in social media, the so-called social media influencers this is already reality, the more followers you have, the more important and relevant your 'opinions' become.

On the other hand, for those who are not as deeply entrenched in social media, the danger is that of being sucked in, because once you are, it's very hard to get out. At one point in "Nosedive", Lacie explains "the numbers game" (24:01), saying that "that's how the world works" (24:05). At this moment in time, the numbers game is how the social media world works. Our task, then, is to ensure the two worlds don't become one.

Drenched in a world immersed in social media the "Nosedive" delves deep into the ramifications of cyberspace. The preoccupation with apps like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram created a generation of youth that is completely addicted to a 'black mirror' in the palm of their hands. The body and mind of an individual is completely controlled by the media and internet.

*Black Mirror* is a television series that sheds light on how technology can create terrifying new problems that cannot entirely be solved. It is an important message for anyone living in the contemporary society. To Brooker, the excessive use and dependence on digital technology and social media wreaks havoc on an individual's life. He emphasizes the problem posed by the use of these technologies but doesn't provide any solution. Technology to Brooker is a powerful tool in the hand of those in power. It creates a submissive, machinic and monotonous society that does whatever those in power bids it to. In his revelatory

*In Black Mirror* narratives, Charlie Brooker does not give the viewers an answer rather, he draws attention to the existence of these negative capabilities of technology and leaves the question of what is to be done open-ended. *Black Mirror* reflects the reality of the age by displaying from different perspectives how radical changes that happened in the field of technology has affected humanity. The ingenuity of *Black Mirror* is that it shows one's love and fascination with technology but also the torment it can bring with it; technology is used for a lot of appalling things, but the bottom line is never simply that technology is bad. It shows that technology is neither benevolent nor malevolent but can be used either way. The viewers have the possibility of tuning out; turning off their TV, stop tweeting or putting their best self online; yet rarely anyone ever chooses to do so.

Technology might entail unsettling events, have tormenting ramifications and disconnect users from their physical reality, which is not enough to persuade an individual to change their current behaviour. *Black Mirror* manages to caution the viewer about the role of technology without lessening its importance and uniqueness. The series is therefore not preaching or condescending but puts forward the idea that even as one swears off tweeting or promises to stop googling, one's phones are still the last things one sees before falling asleep and the first things that one reaches for when he/she awakens. *Black Mirror* does in large part symbolize a structured culture that sometimes replaces direct experiences in its totality, and sometimes juxtaposes them alongside simulated manifestations. It further problematizes technology by suggesting that connecting to such technologies in turn disconnects its users from people around them and their immediate environment.

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# **An Exploration of the Ethnicity of Jewish Community in Kerala**

NEETHU GEORGE

Abstract

This paper examines the vanishing miniscule Jewish community in Kerala, their culture and diaspora. This is an attempt to describe and interpret the adaptation of Kerala culture by Jewish people and their dream of going back to their promised land. The concept of diaspora of the community with respect to Bhabha's concept of third space is discussed. The Jewish diaspora is vanishing from Kerala society. But their contributions to the state's culture and development cannot be neglected. Diasporic communities inhabit specific spaces and their intercultural experiences constitute them as hybrid subjects..

The Jews are a special group that settled in their spaces known as Jewish towns. They have their own specific cultural traits, religious worships, customs and ceremonies. They keep themselves apart from other people by holding on to their own linguistic, racial or cultural characteristics

Keywords: Jewish diaspora, third space, culture, ethnicity, diaspora

The Jewish diaspora or exile happened in eighth century AD at Mala. It refers to the dispersion of Israelites or Jews from their ancestral homeland and their later settlement in various parts of the world. The term exile denotes the fate of Israelites who were sent away from the kingdom of Israel during the eighth century BCE. The Jews are an ancient community who arrived in Kerala as traders around ten centuries ago and have made rich contributions to our culture. They developed the Jew Street at Broadway and the Ernakulam Market along with the seven synagogues. They all hold testimony to the Jewish influence in Kerala history. With the community migrating to Israel, their promised land, their historical past lies in tatters. The dwindling population and neglected synagogues reflect the predicament they face. After

the formation of Israel in 1948, members of the community started migrating to their Holy Land and only a few, around thirty to be precise, remained in Kerala. The Jew Town at Mattancherry, which is famous for the *Paradesi* Synagogue, had around five Jews – four women and one man, of which only one remains.

The seven exquisite synagogues in Kerala–Paradesi and Kadavumbhagamin Mattancherry, the Thekkumbhagam and Kadavumbhagam synagogues at Ernakulam Market, and the three at Paravur, Chendamangalam and Mala are gradually disintegrating due to neglect. The Association of Kerala Jews is striving to conserve the buildings and is planning to approach the Union Government seeking steps to protect them as heritage structures.

The Jewish diaspora is vanishing from Kerala society. But their contributions to the state's culture and development cannot be neglected. Kochi was a marshy land and not at all developed before the arrival of the Jews; they developed it as a trade centre. The Ernakulam Market was under the control of the Jewish community till 1935 and then it was handed over to the Kochi Municipality. The Kerala Jews are known as the Cochin Jews in the popular jargon of Israel and other parts of the world. Besides the textual evidences, the linguistic and ethnographic data challenge the centrality of Kodungallur in Kerala Jewish history, as well as the notion of an isolated and deteriorating Jewish community. In Kerala the Jews organized themselves into separate communities, each with its own synagogue and a sense of cultural identity. Diaspora has been a common phenomenon for many people since ancient times and the particularity of the Jewish instance was pronounced negative, religious, indeed metaphysical connotations traditionally were attached to dispersion and exile.

During the Middle Ages, due to increasing geographical dispersion and re-settlement, Jews were divided into distinct regional groups which are now generally addressed according to two primary geographical groupings: the Ashkenazi of Northern and Eastern Europe, and the Sephardic Jews of Iberia (Spain and Portugal), North Africa and Middle East. These groups have parallel histories sharing many cultural similarities as well as experiences of a

series of massacres, persecutions and expulsions, such as the expulsion from Spain in 1492, the expulsion from England in 1290, and the expulsion from Arab countries in 1948 – 1973. The Jews of Israel comprise an increasingly mixed wide range of Jewish communities making *aliyah* (immigration to Israel) from Europe, North Africa and in other places of Middle East. There are smaller groups like the Yemenite Jews, Indian Jews and others who retain a semi-separate communal life even now.

According to Homi K. Bhabha, culture is always diasporized. He observes that culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. Bhabha argues in his essay, “Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of Modern Nation” that in-between space of the margins occupied by diasporic communities is an empowered one and such space is empowered because of the difference of displacement of areas from which the cultural identity is negotiated (291). Bhabha’s idea of in-between space is the hybrid interaction between different cultures and histories that makes both negotiation and revision of culture possible. Thus, the in-between space becomes the space of productivity and Bhabha calls it third space.

For Bhabha, diasporas are “gatherings of exiles and emigres and refugees; gathering on the edge of foreign cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafes or city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines, gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present” (Bhabha 139). Diasporas inhabit spaces and their intercultural experiences constitute them as hybrid subjects. Therefore Bhabha thinks that the third space occupied by the diasporic subject is filled with creative possibilities.

The Jews are a special group that settled in their town known as Jewish towns. They have their own specific cultural traits, religious worships, customs and ceremonies. They keep themselves apart from other people by holding on to their own linguistic, racial or cultural characteristics. They developed Judeo Malayalam, a dialect of Malayalam language. The

publication of P. M. Jussay's book *The Jews of Kerala* is indeed a blessing for the people engaged in the study of Kerala Jews. The book explores the history of Jewish settlers all over in Kerala. It was believed that the earliest Jews in India were sailors from king Solomon's time. The Jewish exiles came to India after the destruction of the first temple in the Siege of Jerusalem of 587 BCE and after the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE; many Jewish settlers arrived at Cranganore, an ancient port near Cochin. Cranganore, now changed its name as Kodungallur.

In 1768, Tobian Boas of Amsterdam posed some questions to Rabbi Yehezkel Rachbi of Cochin. Some of those questions were about the origins of Jews of Cochin and the duration of their settlement in India. In Rabbi Yehezkel's response, he says that "...after the destruction of the second temple (may it soon be rebuilt and re-established in our days) in the year 3828 of anno mundi; i.e. 68 CE, about ten thousand men and women had come to the land of Malabar and were pleased to settle in four places; those places being Cranganore, which is also called Sengale" (Sassoon 370).

A disciple of Jesus, St Thomas is believed to have visited India and converted people into Christianity. Because of the conversion many of the Jews who became Christians at that time became *Nasrani* or Saint Thomas Christians. The community called *Knanaya* which is a sub-group of the *Nasrani* Christians claim a Jewish background and they have similar customs and rituals as the Cochin Jews.

The Cochin Jews had a close relationship with the Indian rulers. These were coded on the copper plates where the community was granted with many special privileges. The dates of these plates known as *Sasanam*, is controversial. The plates are engraved with the date 379 CE, but in 1925, a tradition set it as 1069 CE. Indian rulers granted the Jewish leader Joseph Rabban the rank of prince among the Jews of Cochin, giving him the ruler ship and tax revenue of a pocket principality in Anjuvannam near Cranganore, and rights to seventy-two free houses. The Hindu king gave permission for the Jews to live freely for an indefinite duration, build their synagogues and to own property without any conditions. A family connection to Rabban, the king

of Shingly (another name for Cranganore), was long considered a sign of both purity and prestige within the community. The Rabban's decentants led this distinct community until a chieftainship dispute broke out between two brothers, one of them named Joseph Azar, in the sixteenth century. The oldest known gravestone of a Cochin Jew is written in Hebrew and dates to 1269 CE. It is near the Chennamangalam Synagogue built in 1614, which is a museum now.

The *Paradesi* Synagogue in Cochin that was built in 1568 was gifted by the Maharaja of Cochin Raja Rama Varma, is an important synagogue, which has survived in Kerala. Now it has become a great centre of attraction because of the beauty of its interior and Chinese tiles. It was built with the help of the Spanish, the Dutch and the Europeans and shares a common wall with the famous Mattancherry palace temple. The Synagogues at Chennamangalam and Parur were reconstructed recently. The Cochin Jews consisted of three sects of people. They are white Jews, black Jews and *Meshuchrarim*. White Jews were the high professional and merchants and they were treated as the full members of the Jewish Synagogue. Black Jews comprising traders and craftsman were allowed to pray and were not given full membership. *Meshuchrarim* were a group of freed slaves and had no communal rights and no Synagogue of their own.

After the Indian Independence in 1947 and the establishment of Israel as a nation, most Jews mainly the Cochin Jews immigrated from Kerala to Israel. Most of the white Jews preferred to migrate to Australia and other Commonwealth communities. The Jews in Kerala had their DNA analysed to know about their race and preferred to go to their original homeland. Thus the Jews played a great role in the history of Kerala by opening international markets for the products of Kerala and creating a sense of awareness among the low castes to attain their rights and privileges and which would lead to their progress in the society. The White or *Paradesi* Jews claimed that they were the only Jewish community remaining in the whole of Kerala as well as the community that boasted of the oldest history in India. In many ways they were typically Indian, yet they retained an ethnic and cultural identity that was

unmistakable. Both men and women wore sparkling bright *lungis* and *sarees*, ate the Jewish-Indian food and even adapted some of the Hindu customs in their way of life. But they remained orthodox in their Jewish beliefs, and their fair skin was an arresting contrast against the polished ebony complexion of the Keralites. In glowing garments they wandered through Jew town like ghosts communing with the living. Back in 2002, the elders still harboured hopes of saving future generations by pressuring the last young Jews and Jewess among them to marry, deploying the most devastating of weapons in their arsenal of persuasion: guilt, on an apocalyptic scale. ‘Mary, bear a child, or the end of thousands of years of Jewish history rests on your heads’, they told the youngsters. This failed and the fate of the White Jews was sealed. Malayalam language and identified enthusiastically with Kerala customs and traditions, but at some point they stopped marrying the Jews who had been there many centuries before them. In written accounts, the *Paradesis* were referred to as White Jews and the more ancient *Malabari* communities as Black Jews, though there is not always a clear distinction between them in terms of skin colour.

Diaspora offers an alternative ground to that of the territorial state for the intricate and always contentious linkage between cultural identity and political organization. Jewish diaspora is still regarded as the most precise or concentrated diasporic experience in several respects. One of these is the persistence of Jewish communities, outside the homeland. They lived in the absence of political hegemony enjoyed by fellows in the homeland, but, for centuries they existed in the absence even of a substantial community of fellows actually living in the homeland, such that the Jewish diasporic relation to the homeland is primarily commemorative, rather than kin-based or economic.

The present and the future of Jewish communities means travelling ideas, people, and cultural forms throughout the world, constantly engaging in dialogue with each other, and changing the meaning of Jewishness in the process. The end of diaspora also means radically rethinking Jews’ relationships to one another across these disparate communities and places.

The only thing that the Jews have in common is the fact that they have self-identification as Jews. They move away from the binary of diaspora/homeland. This should be celebrated as evidence of Jews' ability to put down roots, to build houses and to live in them, to plant gardens and eat their fruit, as the prophet Jeremiah said more than two thousand years ago. It is evident that Jews are a group of diverse people with many cultures, many homes, and infinitely creative ways of expressing what it means to be at home, as Jews.

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# **Food as a Marker of Identity in Postcolonial Cultures**

Arya Balachandran

Abstract

The role of food in moulding and defining a person's selfhood and his habits within a cultural ambit and how it shapes a national identity in the wake of cultural diffusion are discussed in this paper by studying in detail, Kavery Nambisan's work *The Scent of Pepper*.

Individual cultures can be perceived from the practices like the food they eat, the crops they cultivate, the dress they wear and the places they live. Cultural heritage is a matter of pride as well as a burden to the communities. They need to preserve and protect their indigenous culture without it getting mixed with other cultures. On the other hand, migrations and modernisation spreading its wings across the world adamantly push for the assimilation and amalgamation of cultures and ideas. In such a struggle, some natives hold on to the uniqueness of their native lands while some go for the hybridisation of cultures, leaving behind the idea of indigenous cultural heritage.

Keywords: Food, culture, assimilation, modernization, third space

Food is an integral part in one's life; a basic necessity. Man's dependence on food for sustenance has provided him with a varied food culture. Culture being the lived experiences of people, man's life and his culture are intertwined with food. On individual level, people attach great importance to the cuisines in their culture, since they grow up by attaching personal values and feelings to it. Habits and values inculcated in children by their families are carried on in life. Food and the memories associated with it can bring comfort and peace along with a longing for the past in a person. Individuals following food patterns of their culture in their daily lives thus feel a sense of belonging to their family and culture. Mary Anne Schofield in her



preface to the work *Cooking by the Book: Food in Literature and Culture* talks about this alternative function of food in a person's life: "Food cooked, eaten, and thought about provides a metaphoric matrix, a language that allows us a way to get at the uncertainty, the ineffable qualities of life" (1).

On a larger scale, food denotes the values, lifestyle, traditions, beliefs and history associated with an ethnic group, a state or a nation. Food and food habits, just as the other attributes like clothing, occupation, agriculture and traditions play an important role in defining and preserving one's culture. Roland Barthes in "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption" claims that food "is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behavior" (21). A study of culture is possible by exploring this multi-functionality of food. Our understanding of personal and collective identities can be understood from food and sometimes, the apparently simple act of eating can generate complex and conflicting cultural meanings. The role of food in moulding and defining a person's selfhood and his habits within a cultural ambit and how it shapes a national identity in the wake of cultural diffusion are discussed in this paper by studying in detail, Kavery Nambisan's work *The Scent of Pepper*.

A nation or a community upholds a culture of its own, by following the customs, traditions and beliefs rooted in their history. These individual cultures can be perceived from their ways of life like the food they eat, the crops they cultivate, the dress they wear and the places they live in. Cultural heritage is a matter of pride as well as a burden to the communities. They need to preserve and protect their indigenous culture without it getting mixed with other cultures. On the other hand, migrations and modernisation spreading its wings across the world adamantly push for the assimilation and amalgamation of cultures and ideas. In such a struggle, some natives hold on to the uniqueness of their native lands while some go for the hybridisation of cultures, leaving behind the idea of indigenous cultural heritage. The imitation or 'mimicry' of the dominant culture as Bhabha observes, produces a hybrid

culture “with a range of differential knowledges and positionalities that both estrange it’s ‘identity’ and produce new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power”, opines Leela Gandhi (149). It becomes difficult indeed to keep up the old and valued ways of living in the wake of changes. The cuisines of the land which holds a crucial role in its cultural heritage also becomes open to changes.

Nambisan’s work outlines the time frame from the British colonisation of Kodagu in India to Indian independence. She has observed the Kodava life in its minuteness and has reproduced it magnificently in her second novel, *The Scent of Pepper*. Kodagu, with its anglicized name of Coorg is now part of the state of Karnataka. Kodagu has a distinct self-sufficient/succulent culture, rich with their traditions, rituals, beliefs, myths and an authentic cuisine of its own. Kodagu is the land of a race of people, who call themselves Kodavas. Their life in close relation to the nature, with the forest and the river being the major sources of food bestowed on them a unique food culture. They also had trade relations with the neighbouring states, especially Northern Malabar in Kerala, which led to a close connection in the food culture of both these areas. Since Kodavas lived close to nature, their life and sustenance mainly revolved around agriculture and hunting which developed their indigenous food patterns.

The British found the hills of Kodaguverly fertile for their coffee plantations and the people vulnerable and submissive, and settled in this land which has a rich heritage, a variety of local customs, and a rich food culture. With the exertion of British rule over the Kodavas, their cultural history received an impetus and their exclusive culture turned hybrid. The Kodavas who regarded food as a means of exerting their identity was in a state of dilemma and their identity also suffered a change with the turn of history. The life of a true Kodava lies entangled with the cultural rituals, and the preparation of food in association with each ritual and celebration. Food and the act of feeding are given great importance by the Kodavas. The title itself, *The Scent of Pepper* suggests the significance of food for Kodavas.

Nambisan has tried to convey the role of food in the lives of the people of Kodagu by attaching great importance to the acts of food preparation, feeding, production and trading of food. The foodstuffs needed were cultivated in their farms and lands. Their houses were furnished in such a way as to give prominence to the food preparation and feeding. Their traditional rituals, customs, festivals and ceremonies were incomplete without a sumptuous feast with Kodava specialties. They deemed food with great powers, like the power to control secret desires. Food for them served the acts of expressing emotions of love, hospitality and special bonds. Food articulated their desires and even deteriorating mental health.

Food habits of the Kodavas were closely associated with the traditions and customs of Kodagu. Pregnant women were overfed in Kodagu as a custom. "Tradition demanded that pregnant women eat eggs laid by red hens, ladles of ghee, and akkiotti with wild honey, in addition to a lehyam made of jaggery, til, almonds and sunflower seeds in the morning, and a cleansing paste of garlic, asafoetida, cinnamon and pepper at night" (12). Such a diet led them to puerperal sickness and the stronger ones survived to outlive their husbands and lived comfortably giving birth to ten or twelve children. Hence it was termed a wise tradition. It was also part of tradition to abstain from meat, milk and spices when someone in the family dies. Also food had to be offered to the spirit of the dead and to the crows for eleven days following a death. "The crows enjoying the food meant that the dead too was satisfied" (16). They end their abstinence by eating *thaliyaputtoo* with chicken curry and drinking coffee with milk. A hundred guests would also be fed on the same day. The inextricable relationship of Kodavas to the food is explicated through their traditions.

"Whatever a Kodava does or does not do, he loves to eat like a king" (111). This statement by Chambavva in the novel itself states the role of food in a Kodava's life. Nambisan has brought forth a celebration of culture in *The Scent of Pepper*. She has used the medium of food to express the authenticity of culture. Every celebration and festive occasion was accompanied by a splendid feast in Kodagu with the special Kodava delicacies. Be it the naming

ceremony of a child, a marriage, or a funeral, food is an irreplaceable component. Pork is an inevitable part of their food culture as is alcohol. Every important occasion demanded both to be served in plenty. Rice and rice gruel, *pandi curry*, jaggery coffee, *thaliyaputtoo*, *noolputtoo*, *thambuttukadamb aputtoo*, *paputtoo*, *akkiotti*, pumpkin curry, chutney made of jackfruit seeds, chicken, mutton and game meat preparations, river fish curry are few of their authentic dishes. The cultural festivals in Kodagu, like the *Kailpodh* and *Puthari* are mentioned in the work as celebrations which center on their agricultural and military tradition. A Kodava life will be incomplete without these festivities of tradition and the celebrations of their culture which is marked by their food with indigenous flavours and tastes and their foodways. A Kodava identity thus lies intermingled with their food culture.

The central character in *The Scent of pepper* is Nanji, who keeps herself aloof from the invader's foreign rule and strives to keep alive the native traditions through the age old customs and aboriginal food patterns. She keenly observed the traditional rituals of the land and prepared sumptuous feasts for celebrating the festivities. She refused to accept the westernization with her ideals rooted in the rich culture of Kodagu, in which food holds a crucial role. "Nanji had an instinctive dislike for changes and resisted those that did not spring out of her tenets" (22). Through her Kodava dishes, that were ethnically pure, she impacted those around her with a sense of belongingness and a Kodava identity. This identity suffered a fatal blow with the arrival of British and their culture. Nambisan's novel can be viewed as a review of the British dominance and the inflection of their culture which altered the authentic Kodava culture. She goes on to describe how part of the Kodavas supported British rule and aped them, while a few like Nanji, Baliyannaand Subbu remained unchanged holding on to their native traditions and cultures, which boosted their national consciousness in the wake of colonisation. "There were many Kodavas who loved to ape the British and they had no time to worry about freedom. British culture was a flaky upper crust, which could not be scraped away without leaving pits and scars in the younger generation" (87), says Nambisan.

Nanji's husband Baliyanna had the opportunity to live in a different culture, but he preferred to follow his Kodagu lifestyle like Nanji. Both of them were against the modern and unconventional ways of life brought in by the mingling of cultures. Baliyanna's hostility towards British rule is evident in his behaviour towards them. He explains its reason to be "a matter of taste" (67). He never forgave Appachu, his brother for marrying Majorie, a half caste as he considered the British half in her as unclean.

Subbu, fired by the nationalistic fervor searches for his identity throughout his life and eventually, establishes himself as part of the Kodava culture, influenced by his mother's principles and values along with the food she makes. Subbu was sent to jail for taking part in anti-government activities. In the British jail, his ideals and beliefs of freedom fails to provide him the solace, which his culture and food gave him. "He [Subbu] recalled many delicate flavours until he could make the watery coffee taste like Nanji's filtered ambrosia, the kanji like mutton pulav and the floating bits of insects like roasted meat" (162). The ability of food to distinctly mark one's affinity and allegiance to a particular culture can be identified here. Even when he returned from jail, fired by the nationalistic fervour, Subbu filled himself with the best of Nanji's food first.

General Cachera Machaiah, a retired Subedar Major and second cousin to Baliyanna was dear to Kodavas for his fine knowledge in English. His allegiance to Kodava culture, traditions and its foods remained unaltered though he worked for British. His wife being a non Kodava and a saintly woman regarded food as a dirty word and detested general's carnivorous diet while she fed herself with only rice and vegetables. General retained his Kodava spirit by cooking for himself, liver, pork and patridge. He was passionate about the future of Kodagu and wished for the past days of plenty "when Kodava wives gave bottles of ghee and honey to beggars" to recur (45). He also grieved for the Kodagu, which has fallen into the hands of "lackadaisical white men" (45).

Appachu, Nanji's brother in law was sent abroad for education, where he married a half caste and got baptized to please her. Unlike, Baliyanna,

Appachu and his brother Machu who met with accidental death while in England were blessed with an ability to adopt English customs without awkwardness. Appachu, because of his love for Majorie baptised himself and this left him no option, but to leave Kodagu. He was pushed out of his house by his brother for the same and lived his life in the British way with Majorie in Bangalore. They lived in a gracious bungalow with greenhouse and garden chairs eating “buttered scones and eggless cake on Wedgewood tableware” (104). Chitrita Banerjee writes about the westernisation of Indians educated abroad in *Eating India*. “Westernized Indians, especially those who had the opportunity to go to England for Higher education, came back with many anglicized habits, and it was in their dining rooms that this Western idea of breakfast first acquired an Indian presence”(57). Appachu missed his home, and culture, and more gravely, Kodava foods. While in England, Appachu had written to his mother about the monotony of the meat and cabbage in England, and about his love for good Kodava food. Gradually, he returned to Kodagu as a Kodava and re-established his Kodava identity through Kodava foods.

Mallige was way too different from Nanji and Subbu. She was inspired by the British culture rather than the Kodava culture and she lacked the qualities of a Kodava women. She never had the ability to manage her household and workers. She was ignorant of the art of cooking and she lacked the robustness to work in fields. She was concerned with the decorative aspect of her house and was engaged in stitching and embroidery all the time. Her efforts at cooking were unnoticeable. She brought up their son with her value systems and called him Timmy, anglicized name for Thimmaiah. She bathed him in a basin instead of opting out the traditional way of seating him between her feet. In Agra, she blended easily into the cantonment life and the wives there “exchanged sweater patterns, learnt pudding recipes, and made perfect cakes shaped like boats, rockets, Mickey mouse and Donald duck”(213).

British rule brought forth many changes in Kodagu. Industrialisation spread across the land through British hands. Kodava women wore slacks, bobbed their hair, served tea with cream cakes and sandwiches, kept beautiful gardens, sent children to boarding schools, and started using knife and fork.

These changes were scorned by Subbu, as he felt that the “adoration of a new culture had nearly obliterated the old” and advocated nationalism (244).

Along with the natives who clung on to the traditions, a group of natives who imitated the British blindly is clearly portrayed in the work. They are depicted as clones of British in India. They were furiously coping with an alien culture. “They borrowed names, food habits, attire and etiquette, and it formed a thin flaky crust over their timeless culture ... these Coorgs laughed, talked and moved with the same precise confidence as their white superiors. They painted themselves, they flirted” (48). These people by imitating the British, attempt to come out of their identity as Kodavas and try to gain superiority over the Kodavas who clinged on to the tradition and culture of Kodagu. Imitating British is seen as a way to achieve the foreign identity they longed for. As Frantz Fanon puts it in *Black Skin White Masks*, “White men consider themselves superior to black men” and black men try to escape this feeling of inferiority by externally imitating the white men in their ways of life, by putting on the “white mask” (117).

The Kodavas, other than the British clones, also experienced the British influence though they resisted their rule. They came into contact with sophisticated modes of British eating and became familiar with the English foods including toast and weak tea. Few of them also accustomed themselves with the knowledge of the British ways of eating with spoons and forks and their table manners. Sometimes, they had to succumb to English food as a part of courtesy. But, they never let go of their rich tradition of food. Nanji, Baliyanna and Subbu, though they pay visits to Clara’s place accepting her invitations and relish English food, they refused to infuse that culture of food into their lives. Subbu ate sausages with jam and spread mustard on his bread. Subbu’s confusion and awkwardness while having English breakfast reiterate the otherness of natives. Baliyanna ate runny eggs and hard toast, chewed bacon and speared the sausages efficiently with his fork. And Nanji also dutifully did justice to English cakes and sandwiches and drank tea. The food as well as the foodways were foreign to them and they let it remain like that. Nanji’s resistance of western values is clear from her refusal of Clara’s offer

to do up her garden. Nanji liked her garden to be wild and order less unlike the monotonous British gardens. But she finds the British food culture as intrusive making her resistance feeble.

Just like the British influence on natives, the influence of natives on British was minimal, but significant. They found the native culture as strange and unacceptable in the beginning, but later on, they got accustomed and adapted themselves. The main factor they had to fiddle with was the native food. Clara Fox as described by Nambisan faces the process of acculturation in Coorg. “Clara now felt more at home in Kodagu. The gong like voices of the natives, which had at first frightened her, the curries that ravaged her stomach, the ghee and honey that overwhelmed her taste buds, were now familiar and pleasing”(79). In Boju’s marriage, she even tries out everything “except the pink soda in a bottle with a marble stopper” (113). She got accustomed to Kodava culture and expressed dislike towards the English customs. She resented going with other English women to tennis party, at-home, club sessions and balls. She realized her mother in law Feodara’s words about Kodavas to be true that “they have no style only tradition” (58). Other British men like Alistair and Rice, the planters settled in Kodagu also held a positive attitude towards natives.

*The Scent of Pepper* underlines the cultural essentialism and the significance of food in the creation of a national consciousness in the wake of colonisation. The British ways of living and their culture was absorbed into the Kodava culture and there came into existence a hybrid identity with roots in the past and following the modern ways of British. Nambisan models her characters in a way as to show the impacts of colonisation on natives and their absorption of foreign culture and to show the cultural essentialism as being upheld by few. The postcolonial aspect of cultural revival and reestablishment also considers food culture as a crucial standpoint for its importance in the life of people in asserting nationalism. Her ideas are let out mainly through the medium of food in her work. Kodavas, who admire their culture of food, are therefore chosen as subjects with a purpose.



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# **Psychological Undertones of the Victimized: Analyzing the Terrifying World of Human Trafficking in ‘*Taken*’**

Arun Prasad.R

Abstract

The paper entitled, ‘Psychological Undertones of the Victimized: Analyzing the Terrifying World of Human Trafficking in *Taken*’, focuses on the terrible social issue of human trafficking worldwide. The rising capitalism, globalization and booming trade had posed numerous avenues of growth, yet at the same time it is heart rending to be aware of the fact that even human bodies are getting commodified. The paper takes into its purview the 2008 film, *Taken*, and dwells deep into it to analyze the issue through its intricate maze as represented in the movie. The prime objective of the paper is to closely observe and mark out the psychological undertones- agony, pain and trauma- underwent by the victimized. The paper delineates the existence of the abuser and the abused (the victimized) in the world of human trafficking, where beings of one’s own kind predate on the other. An effort to discuss on the psycho-social support especially for the victimized and also for the abused so as to let them integrate into the society is outlaid. The paper also points out the fact that the abuser too require the molding caress of love and security, for they are resultant of an inequitable society where have-nots are deprived off the basic needs, thrusting them to embark on any sort of outrage to gain monetary comforts.

Keywords: Abuser, abused, agony, trauma.

Films from the past and the contemporary scene had portrayed issues that play havoc in the society. The coming of the age of technology, rising trade links and commercialization had kept up the boom in monetary sector, but not in terms of solving issues that permeate our age. Issues such as global

warming, wars, migrations, race conflicts, violations of human rights, etc., are tormenting issues of the present, to which even intricately sought after ideas of intellectuals and sociologists alike had failed to materialize. Human trafficking is one such global issue that requires utmost attention, for it is a heinous crime that mocks and denigrates the human ideals ingrained into the thoughtful platforms of what is termed a civilized and progressive society. In a world of transnational trade and commerce, it is no wonder that even human bodies become icons of commodification. Human trafficking tracing its origins from the slave trade of colonial era, involves the abduction, transfer, purchase and abuse of human bodies either for sexual pleasures, often recorded to gain momentum in internet; or for unpaid domestic services. The recent turmoil in the Arab world, destruction of Syria and the economic dearth in the African continent had led to mass exodus and illegal migrations to the metropolis, especially to the west. Moreover the instability in the economic status of eastern European nations too had resulted in mass migrations to Western Europe and United States. The unstable grounds of migrant population in their new world pose several challenges to meet their needs in an ever-competitive world. Such a rising divide between the haves and have-nots had thrown the marginalized to be involved in such heinous crimes as human trafficking. The economic divides, the resultant frustration to cope up with a commodified world, poor acknowledgment of societal values and dreams of making quicker monetary benefits had facilitated mafias and gangs, often interlinked with local and global arenas, creating a complex human trafficking maze too complicated for the law implementers to cut across. The rescue, rehabilitation and integration of the victims into society, requires the law enforcement task personal and as well as general public to be better aware of the depths involved within the sphere of this social issue.

Human trafficking in its every sense, involves multi dimensional human rights violation and thus it is collectively kept under the umbrella term, modern slavery. The fact that the trafficked beings are subjected to extremes of physical and psychological torture, calls for the attention of human rights activists. ‘Trafficked victims seldom have access to health or social assistance

or legal remedies such as financial compensation for work related injuries or illness...'(Zimmerman8).The financial requirements and debts incurred by victims to regain both physical and mental health often pushes them to subsequent trafficking, ultimately challenging their lives. Realizing the fact that human trafficking calls for human rights action, it is very important that we spread awareness and tackle it with the aid of anti trafficking policies. The spread and outreach of human trafficking is nowhere else better portrayed than in literature, especially films. Such literature and films aim at not merely imparting awareness on the complexity of its terror world, but also helps portray the physical abuse and psychological back lashes thrust upon the victims. Besides alerting the human rights activists, such films could also help researchers and policy makers to frame effective curbing measures. Thus literature and films on human trafficking prove to be of ample use to general public and law enforcers alike, for it enlightens them on the extend of the web of human trafficking and furthermore gives them a vision on the inescapable plight of the victims.

Written by Lue Besson and Robert Mark Kamen, *Taken*(2008) is an action movie based on human trafficking set in the tourist city of Paris. Directed by Pierre Morel, it stars LiamNesson, Maggie Grace and Katie Carsidy. Nesson, the father figure who playsthe role of Bryan Mills in the movie is a retired C.I.A agent and a divorcee, who tries to maintain his love for his only daughter, Kim. However his ex wife, Lenore is indifferent to his approaches to Kim, often warding him off. Bringing a sharp turn to the movie, Kim along with her friend Amanda plans a trip to Paris, to which Bryan is suspicious of, for Paris being famed for abductions.However he consents to the repeated requests of Kim, asking her to make him calls while on the trip. Upon arrival at Paris, Kim and Amanda meets Peter, an attractive French man who offers to share a taxi. Kim and Amanda reach her cousins apartment, but soon encounters violence for a group of gangsters break open their apartment and abduct Amanda. Fearing the worst, Kim rings her father, who listens to the events of abduction recording every detail to facilitate her rescue. Realizing that one of the abductors had picked upthe phone, Bryan warns

them to leave his daughter for he might take revenge. However the abductors well aware of the difficulty to track through the trafficking maze, counters him with a good luck wish. Listening to the description of the appearance of the abductors, which he had earlier asked Kim to yell over phone; Bryan finds crucial evidence which he shares with one of his former C.I.A colleagues and finds that the person kim was referring to could be Marko Hoxha, a gang leader of the Albanian sex trafficking ring operating in Paris. Being notified that he might lose Kim forever if not rescued within ninety six hours, he flies to Paris and breaks open the apartment to find Kim's discarded phone. Finding a vague image of Peter in one of the photos, he traces Peter in the airport, but soon loses him in a truck accident. Losing the final clue leading to Kim, Bryan meets a French intelligence agent, Jean-Claude Pitrel, who advises him to extend his investigation to the red light district of Paris, run by an Albanian sex trafficking ring. In a makeshift brothel, he rescues a drugged young woman wearing Kim's jacket. Letting her revive using improvised detoxification, Bryan gets to know from her that Kim is safe in a home. Bryan enters the house in the guise of a Parisian police officer and soon identifies Marko Hoxha. In the fight that ensues, Marko is spared of his life except his gangsters. He soon reveals the fact that Kim is about to be auctioned for being a virgin. Bryan infiltrates into a sex slave auction, only to defeat Kim's potential buyer, Patrice Saint-Clair. Rescuing Kim from the dark maze, to the relief of the audience he flies back with his daughter to U.S. Lenore, his ex-wife reconciles with him and allows him to bond with him.

The movie presents the complexity of human trafficking, etching through the camera rolls the horrifying depths to which its roots had infiltrated. The story line provokes human consciousness, for it reminds us of a web to which once stuck, can never be severed. Human trafficking is thus an antagonistic track cutting through the centuries old fabric of human rights and civility. The plight of Kim and her rather ignorant friend, Amanda who is lost to the world of death, reminds us of the injustice and unwilling sacrifice the victims are forced into. It is the youthful spirits combined with freewill to know and explore which drives both Kim and Amanda ultimately into traps.

Interestingly enough, Kim's domineering father, Bryan Mills who keeps a watchful eye fails to convince her of the pitfalls lurking elsewhere on the paths of unchartered journeys and trips. His words are at once scorned at, for he almost appears to be a social outcast for his intellect and observational faculty far exceeds the vision of the contemporary society. He is shunned by his ex wife, Lenore, who fails to perceive his far sightedness. The stress, agony and traumatic scars left upon the victims are well etched through instances and series of shots in the movie. Kim, who is relatively young and ignorant about worldly matters is closely followed by her father. He discovers that Amanda, Kim's companion is being abducted. He instructs Kim to be cautious and makes her temporarily hide beneath a bed, asking her to shout out the appearance of the man dragging her. Taking a deeper plunge into analyzing the movie, one gets into the shock of the intensity and spread of human trafficking across the world. Bryan Mills, the retired C.I.A field agent becomes a replica of a savior angel, almost unraveling the dark and sinister underworld of human trafficking. He appears to be aged, tired, worried and anxious about his daughter; yet his wise movements and timely interference salvages many young lives. Having established the significance of the movie in the portrayal of such a heinous and nerve racking theme, let us now move on to the victimized as represented in the movie.

The victimized presented in the movie- Kim and Amanda- are not representatives of the lower rungs of the society. They are from educated middle class families, who dream of an even wider world which motivates them to embark on a mission to travel and seek knowledge. The abduction scene leaves us breathless and the atrocities that both the girls will have to suffer later can be imagined, for they are grabbed by their hair and pushed across the floors. Bryan who is across the oceans in U.S, after coming to know of it, does not fall into emotional doldrums; he carefully listens to his daughter's phone until it was picked up by an abductor, who challenges him to find them out. Later in Paris, Bryan willfully unravels an Albanian sex trafficking ring, where he finds women beaten up and drugged, some of whom he successfully rescues, but fails to find his daughter. The greed and lust for

human flesh and monetary gains is nowhere better revealed when Kim is marked a virgin and put up for auction. She is bought by an Arab. Her final rescue from the flesh trade and the reunion with her mother leave the audience gasping. However there is no payback for the trauma and agony that Kim had undergone, especially after having seen her companion being abused to death.

Ever since the outbreak of commercialization and globalization anything and everything had been converted into a commodity. Commodification is the craft of selling and purchase of products; moreover, it can be perceived as a global culture in the contemporary scenario. Since the rise and expansion of trade, and ever since the inception of slave trade, the human bodies too had been packaged in the outlets for sale and purchase. Women, teenagers and children had always been in the margins to be exploited in such trade counters to gain monetary benefits. 'The human body and its parts has long been a target for commodification within myriad culture settings... these include slavery and other oppressive labor practices, female reproduction; and the realms of sorcery and endo cannibalism' (Sharp 287). In the movie, Kim almost reaches the verge of witnessing the horrible experience of getting her own body being commodified. She would have been doomed to darkness if at all she were not rescued at the apt moment. The scenes of auction portray the maze of human trafficking. It is too atrocious and inhuman to perceive. The abusers are largely products arising out of the marginal and down trodden sections of the society, who had come to face with the oddities of life in all spheres including social and economic backwardness. Such have-nots, in order to overcome the terrible gloom of backwardness resort to easy monetary gains and no wonder human trafficking is an easier option. The state of affairs of the abused is too critical for the physical violation ends up in irrecoverable pain and trauma. The experience of trauma by the abused is painful and 'it creates a speechless fright that divides or destroys identity' (Baleav149). Traumatic events that arise from bodily intrusions leave lasting agony from which escape becomes almost impossible. It creates psychological barriers upon the inflicted and creates adaptation to life impossible, and pushes one's psyche into extremes of helpless states of affairs, finally reaching a

catastrophe. Seen from the perspective of the abused, human rights activists ought to understand them taking into account the different layers of intrusion into their personal spaces, the complexity of physical abuse inflicted and the psychological trauma that permeate their psyche forever. Seen through the molding factors that shapes the abuser as depicted in the movie, they hail from the socially derelict migrant Albanian community in Paris, who had created the trafficking ring for quick monetary benefits. The haven of trafficking, Paris, represents any other metropolis that offers the perfect cover for the abuser. Moreover being touristy, it provides the open gates to trap in more victims. The depiction of the metropolis of Paris in the movie sheds the romantic and aesthetic conventions associated with such a place and instead creates a feeling of terror and unsteadiness. The victims in the movie, Kim and Amanda are two mere specs of experience in the vast panorama of the victimized. The loss of Kim's companion Amanda to death leaves the maze of trafficking a matter of life or death and indeed keeps the viewer's hearts scarred.

*Taken* aptly portrays the intense agony and trauma inflicted on the rather innocent victims, who barely get a chance to relieve themselves of the persisting trauma. It is certain that the rapid rise of trade and commerce at the global level had led to intense monetary benefits. Yet it is heart rending to find human bodies being treated as mere commodities for physical comforts. The theme etched in the movie delineates a subculture in the post modern world, where human beings predate on its own kind for monetary and physical gains. Realizing the fact that human trafficking is at once troublesome an affair for the abuser and the victimized, human rights volunteers combined with governmental agencies and forces guarding transnational boundaries across the globe should take effective steps to curb such mishaps. Leading social activists and nation builders must realize the growing divide between the haves and have-nots and adopt socialist methodology to maintain a healthy society of equality and progress. The younger generation should be made to listen the dirge of an economy oriented society devoid of human rights and equality. At the same time the issues of the victimized along with the abuser



should never be left unattended. A holistic measure combining counseling and corrective measures alone can bring back the life for the victimized.

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# **The Representation of Female Body in *Francis Ittycora***

Indu Thomas

Abstract

T.D. Ramakrishnan is a Malayalam novelist who experiments with the form and content of the novel. He portrays an underworld of commercialized sex and a life view which legitimizes the commodification of sexuality that is male dominated and at times perverted. Throughout the novel, the woman's body is objectified. The human body occupies an equivocal and even paradoxical dimension throughout the novel. The complexities of representing female bodies is projected in the narrative. The author has created space for mentally strong as well as physically enticing women.

Key words: Sexuality, female body, repression

Within the medium of literature, women have been objectified and the female body has been traditionally presented as passive but much of contemporary writing challenges this demeaning practice. Modern socio-political discourse continues to stigmatize women, and it is the writing of women and the narratives, by women which re-establish the role of the weaker sex in the literary sphere.

Feminist theory has often been critical of naturalistic explanations of sex and sexuality that assume that the meaning of women's social existence can be derived from some fact of their physiology. In distinguishing sex from gender, feminist theorists have disputed causal explanations that assume that sex dictates or necessitates certain social meanings for women's experience.

T.D. Ramakrishnan's is probably the first attempt in Malayalam literature to break free from the traditional format of fiction writing adopting popular fiction writing. Representation of female body through the eyes of a man is fully explored by the author here. The female characters outnumber the

male characters in the novel. The author has created a space for mentally strong as well as physically enticing women. He narrates an underworld of commercialized sex and a life view which legitimizes the commodification of sexuality that is male dominated and at times perverted. Throughout the novel, the woman's body is objectified as a point of externalized sexuality. The human body occupies an equivocal and even paradoxical dimension throughout the novel. It is evident in certain ritualistic practices conducted by the Eighteenth Clan. 'The School' allows any sort of sexual practice as long as they pay for it. The novel is a manifesto of desire; desire emanates from the urges of one's body, the desire not simply to gratify the libidinal urges but also to enhance the urge and pleasure of the body, one's body or that of others, by inflicting pain. The unending quest of Xavier Ittycora reached its cannibalistic end of eating up the body of the girl in the literal and figurative level, it couldn't drive him to conquest since he became suddenly impotent with the vision of the mutilated girl with amputated breast. The exaggerated and sexual fetishes deviate into cannibalism.

"If there be paradise on earth, it is here, It is here, It is here" (*Ittycora* 30). These words are inscribed in golden letters on the walls of the school. The School is run by three women with mathematical names Rekha, Resmi and Bindu. All of them are professionals in various fields. There is a living room which is the discourse centre, a body lab and a liberation centre for the guests. The discourse centre is the only area where guests did not have to pay to enter but they needed high recommendation to be invited and had to come bearing expensive gifts for the three women. The sessions conducted here were called as Sora. The body lab has just one piece of furniture, a king sized bed that could be raised and lowered each of its legs in the shape of beautiful girl. Rekha explains to Cora:

Our Body Lab, unlike the one in Iraq, is not a torture chamber. We experiment in pleasuring the body. Don't worry, we don't use modern technology. We teach the Art of Love Making in a different way. We merely guide the client into

discovering the marvellous possibilities of his own body.  
Welcome to our Body Lab. (*Ittycora*11)

The liberation centre at ‘The School’ stages the drama of torture, the man fully attired clad in a full suit, using the whip on the two females crouching like slaves, who wear perforated gowns that exhibit their sexual organs. Females strangled almost to death, women bleeding to death after a heady orgy; such is the sexual liberation Itticora propounds. The chemistry between the male and female principles here echoes with classic accuracy the war propaganda with which the Pentagon defended its bloodbath in Abu Gharib prison in Iraq:

Inflicting pain on a suspect would not be considered torture unless it caused death, organ failure or permanent damage.  
(*Ittycora*8)

Kuttan, the Union minister and Scriptor are the most privileged guests of the School. Kuttan once tells Rekha: “Girl, you are putting on weight. Unless you are careful you won’t be in demand anymore”(74). Here Rekha cringed with embarrassment and she becomes thoughtful about her weight which had increased by two kilos within a year. Kuttan asked Rekha about the tattoo piercing on her body and her reply was ‘No pleasure without pain’(*Ittycora*27). There is a song Pain for Pleasure by Sum 41 which these women sang when they celebrated sex:

The seas have parted, The ending’s started, The sky has turned to black.

A killing spree through eternity, Pain for Pleasure

It’s midnight now must escape somehow, torture is his leisure,  
don’t try to hide he’ll make you subside, as he exchanges pain  
for pleasure

Pain for pleasure, he is the hunter you’re the game

Pain for pleasure, Satan is his name! Look Out.(*Ittycora*73-77)

In one of the chats at their so called intellectual hub at the discourse centre, Rekha brings up the idea of freedom which the devadasis of the past had in Kerala. Ofcourse, they had freedom a casteist wife did not have, but then gain that freedom was also inextricably linked to performing their femininity in prescribed ways.Likewise Rekha's bikini picture flashed in the newspapers welcome their sexual freedom.She is doing wonderful experiments and innovations in the art of love making.

Secret societies and strange rituals of the Secret society formulated by *Ittycora* of the 'eighteenth clan' is depicted in a detailed manner,especially descriptions of the rituals like '*Corakkukodukkal*',with all the steamy details.The human body is depicted in its conflicting aspects-the sudden shifts that the human body undergoes from a sheer material reality of feasting, drinking and pain, to one of pure abstractions in the *Nilavara* where,it is believed that *Corapappans*savours the chastity of the girl. What happens in the *Nilavarais* kept unknown to the reader.

From a world of material existence which is familiar to everyone,the readers enter a world of imagination where impossibilities can happen. In the ritual every girl on the onset of menstruation is to be offered to their idol. Susanna, a friend of Bindu has a mesmerizing account of her own experience as '*Corapennu*',that is Cora's woman':

He will teach you what it means to be a woman. He will take what he wants from you and give you what you need. He will like you only if you behave nicely to him. If he likes you, he will leave his mark on you in the form of a love bite.  
(*Ittycora*45-46)

Susanna was whipped by the old patriarch eighteen times on her chest,waist,cheeks, and feet by shouting 'You are Cora's woman for tonight.Satan's Virgin!'*(Ittycora 47)*.She is to be celebrated tonight and then her virginity would be restored. In the scattered beams of light she saw the

might of the malehood that she had experienced for the first time. Here there is a change in the mindset of the girl from fear to confidence. She is happy to be a *Corapennu* though it was forced upon her. For the cult of Kunnankulam, the cannibalism works here where we can see through the ritual the bare flesh of the virgin of the family is submitted to Cora.

There is brief description about Xavier Ittycora's mother in the novel. On one of the business trips the senior Ittycora had paid hundred gold sovereigns for a Grecian beauty who was later to become Itty Cora's mother. Once he got her, Cora wound up his business trip and on the return journey which took twenty one days and nights, he did not allow her to sleep at all. The exhausted girl was brought to Adupputty mansion in a palanquin. When she entered the house as the 14th woman of the forty five year old Cora, she had not yet turned sixteen.

IyyalaKotha is yet another strong female character in the novel. Her name was Chirutheyi. She was from the Padinjarekovilakom. She had been promised in marriage to the younger thampuran of Nilambur but she was abducted by Cora on her way to her mansion. Itty Cora heard her voice and was determined to see her. He would take her if she was beautiful; otherwise he would let her go. The daughter was seventeen or eighteen. Her heavy derriere caught Itty Cora's attention (*Ittycora* 88). "I'm not going to sin alone. I'm taking you with me" (89). Saying this he lifted her on to his horse. Once touched by a *maplashe* knew that she couldn't go back to the palace or her old way of life. There is an instance where Chirutheyi's aunt explained her indirectly about wooing a man. Here female body is all set for a celebration of vigour.

IyyalaKotha is an example of an emancipated woman. IyyalaKotha is not one woman, the novel clarifies that IyyalaKotha is "the name given to any woman the Cora's instituted and kept at the *Kalappura*" (113). Ramakrishnan thus says: "Cora liked antelope meat and also women who were docile like a doe. Such a doe was always there in the *Kalappura*, just that he will use her on some days. The rest of the days, she has complete freedom" (113). This

“complete freedom” consists in satisfying libidos of any one he sends there and looking after the pepper cultivation when he is not around:

Itticora’s life changed after he made Chirutheyi the new IyyalaKotha. All those who had treated him as a kid, now started paying their respect. His father gave him complete command of the Ponnani Pandikasala, the Chinese and the Arabs came in search of him. (*Ittycora*, 113-4)

Iyyal, which had a huge population of deer and panthers, had been so named by Itty Cora’s father. In Hebrew the word Iyyal means deer. Cora *mapla* liked venison and doe-eyed women. There was always such a woman in the outhouse that was used to store grain. Though he used her occasionally for his pleasure, she had complete freedom. She would receive guests with venison and liquor brewed from bran. IyyalaKotha used the bedroom downstairs when she was alone and the one upstairs if she was entertaining guests.

For the Coras, a woman was a commodity like everything else. They would use her to the full when she was with them and if they got a good price for her she would be sold outright or rented out to those who wanted her. Though it was more profitable to sell a woman, they preferred to use her in the wily games that lay behind their business transactions. His father advised Itty Cora to prepare Chirutheyi for all this. But Itty Cora had a soft corner for Chirutheyi and could not bring himself to do so. Finally when the father realized that his son was incapable of informing Chirutheyi of her position in the Cora household, he took matters into his own hands. He made her as his sixth Kotha and she was immensely excited to be his girl.

The sense of freedom enjoyed by Kotha is seen in her words after she fell into the hands of Cora’s father. “She was comforted only when he saw Chirutheyi’s smiling face. Still he fumbled for words not knowing what to ask her. She greeted Itty Cora, ‘You rushed home worried, didn’t you? Don’t be upset. There are no problems here’ and took him upstairs(*Ittycora* 11).

There is a huge passage in the novel about the transformation of Chirutheyi into Kotha. A big celebration and certain rituals were performed by the workers of Cora and they made her Cora's woman – Cora's woman – the country's woman'. She was intertwined by serpents around her navel and was made tattooed. The conversation between Cora and Kotha after the rituals even show the satisfaction that she has received being Kotha:

Are you upset?' 'Well I've to say that I am, a bit. But it's alright. I've anyway lost my roots and the status I had gained by my birth. If we live with each other both of us will get fed up after a while. That will not happen to a Kotha. We can be together whenever we want, but if we like someone else then it won't be a problem. This will reduce our selfishness.  
(*Ittycora*97)

T D Ramakrishnan's valorization of *Ittycora* as the spearhead of anti caste ventures seems as flaccid as the sexual freedom the novel professes to put forward. He treats his slave Kandankoranas a friend, has food at the same table, and shares *Iyyala Kotha* who is considered to be the public property of the area with him.

What is even more interesting is that while *Corapappan* remains a constant in all the cultural representations the *Corapennu* emerges as a mysterious variant through Katrina, Morigami, Susanna, and finally Bindu as Angelo Pereira. Bindu represents the *Corapennu* of the new episteme. In that sense the *Corapennu* is a double of the trio-Bindu, Resmi and Rekha. The trio do not realize that they themselves practice and are part of what they are hunting for. From Hypatia through *Iyyalakotha* to Bindu, one can read a legacy of subversion, consequential of a legacy of repression, forbidding sexual perversions and the dominance of women in love making. These women cartographies of a repressed feminine writing is a counter performance through their bodies.

Hypatia is a pervading presence in the novel. Hypatia born between AD 350 and 370 was a Greek scholar from Alexandria, Egypt, considered as



the first notable woman in mathematics who also taught philosophy and astronomy . The name Hypatia means “highest, uppermost, supremest. Hypatia rebuffed a suitor by showing him her menstrual rags, claiming they demonstrated that there was “nothing beautiful” about carnal desires. Her life continues to be fictionalised by authors in many countries and languages.

Hypatia as a historical personage once again gets trampled on, as Ramakrishnan’s focus is more on her physical charms, than on the liberated life of rebellion and the challenging of female stereo-types that defined her person. Rather strangely in the sub-text of her ‘true story’ he adds a footnote which describes her vital statistics as having the sacred mathematical ratio of 1.618033...and claims that she was born with those measurements, the claim is not documented though. This sacred number called the golden spiral or phi is the regarded as “the blueprint of life and is manifested in all known organic structures; from the bone structure of human beings to the seed pattern of sunflower”(199).The same has been linked to fertility goddesses, the womb, female serpent forces, continual change, evolution of universe and so on. As for the human body, its echoes are seen in our bone structures, rather than in its flesh, nor it isa matter of female bodies alone.

The novel’s concentration on Hypatia’s immaculate body to the exclusion of her female rebellious spirit which just gets a passing mention culminates in the voyeurism that flagrantly stands out in the final mutilation scene.Francis Ittycora manipulated Michelangelo’s *Pieta* and its installation at St Peter’s Basilica in Vatican.It was Cora who insisted him to give Mother Mary the face of Hypatia .He even helped Michelangelo to retain his homosexual stature.

T. D.Ramakrishnan fails in portraying the true brilliance of Hypatia. He sacrifices her veracity and rebellious spirit ,to create the image of a lascivious woman with heady sexual desires, whose physical attributes gets detailed but intellectual abilities ignored.The Hypatiantheories are the media through which the equations connecting power with desire and numbers craving and money longing and sex,sin and violence are addressed.The writer mentions an overt sexualization of Hypatia:

Wearing a light cream, transparent Doric chiton, her curly hair tied high, as she leaned towards her left studying her papyrus scrolls, she looked like a Grecian goddess. Her face unwrinkled by age, firm breasts, and flat stomach created suspicion among the Alexandrians. Not taking into account the rigorous schedule of exercise, horse riding, and strict diet, that she followed to maintain her beauty, people accused her of being Satan's woman. (*Ittycora* 61-62)

Her physical relationship with a ruler named Orestes is analysed in the novel. They had a passionate affair within themselves. But she went on disagreeing with the marriage proposal offered by him. "But I am not a young girl to jump with joy" (*Ittycora* 64).

Very soon she was attacked by St Peter's men for hurting the Christian norms and rituals. She was brutally assaulted. "You corrupted a man who became a Christian after receiving the Holy Communion by enticing him with your breasts and hips. You persuaded him to commit sin. Are you, who just prostituted herself this morning, talking to us about dignity? Who has left bite marks on your lips . . . ? The lips of an unmarried woman. 'Believers, look at the mark of sin on this whore's lips.' Looking at the blue bruise on her lips they screamed, 'The wages of sin is death.' (*Ittycora* 70-71). The crazed mob used oyster shells to scrape the flesh off her body and then burnt it. They examine her body for further signs of prostitution. She was lashed with a whip several times until blood flowed down her body. But Hypatia bravely accepted her death without any reaction to their deeds.

'Corapoottu' is yet another interesting aspect in the novel. Rekha was in the Body lab with Benny. She was lying on the floor motionless with her left hand folded under her. He said that he pinned her down in the 'Corapoottu', Cora's lock. It is an important *adavu* displayed at the *Onathallu* in Kunnankulam. The left hand is twisted backwards and the opponent is forced to bend down and the eighth rib pierced with the forefinger. Then the loser is hoisted on the victor's shoulder and slammed on the floor. The victim is rendered immobile and loses the ability to speak till the clasp is unlocked. It

can be unlocked only by the person who locked the victim. You have to kick the victim beneath the buttocks twice with your right foot and poke him on the left side beneath the tenth rib with your forefinger then lift and twirl him thrice and put him down on his stomach. You need to have in-depth knowledge of the nerves and vital spots in the body. When the scriptor saw Rekha looking at him helplessly he told Benny to set her free. He freed Rekha immediately and pulled her to her feet. "That was to punish you for your arrogance" (*Ittycora* 222). We can that power politics is part of the identity politics of women. The politics of selfhood has no relevance if divorced from power politics.

Meanwhile Cora meets a mathematics researcher named Hashimoto Morigami in Peru. Xavier Ittycora was mesmerised by her beauty and even imagined her as a nude Venus emerging from the sea, she welcomed me like a friend of many years by kissing me on both cheeks. The sun setting in the Pacific Ocean visible through the window reflected Morigami's alluring beauty. Even Morigami was interested to woo Ittycora. She had metamorphosed into Boticelli's Venus when she gets into lovemaking with him.

Morigami took Ittycora into to El Parque del Amor which is a love park. In the middle of the park is Victor Delfin's statue of a pair of lovers locked in erotic embrace, El Beso. El Beso means the lovers. Below the statue, Antonio Cilloniz's words are engraved. Lovers can enter this park whenever they want. An image of Boticelli's Venus was on the home page of her blog. Morigami speaks towards the end:

Sex is having a magnificent effect in the formation of one's political and philosophical attitudes".Whoever wants to be happy, let him be so: about tomorrow there's no knowing. (*Ittycora*309)

*Francis Ittycora* shows a new face of Malayalam literature, and with its innovative narrative structure and imaginative theme spanning to multiple centuries and continents .The author target the moral double facedness of our culture. The lifestyle of characters seen in the novel is very unusual for a

Malayalam novel. All female characters are developed from the same mould, they are all emancipated and they have a readiness to take inherent risks in their life. The work received many critical reviews that validates the work by presenting it as a metaphor for a period of sexual promiscuity, thus endorsing acceptability.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. N. Sajan

Postgraduate Department of English, Sree Narayana College, Kannur

Soorya Alex

Postgraduate Department of English, Sree Narayana College, Kannur.

Dr Rakhi Raghavan

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Pazhassi Raja NSS College, Mattanur, Kannur.

Nuzhat Unneen

Research Scholar, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam.

Aswin Prasanth

Research Scholar, Amrita University, Ernakulam.

Augustine George

Research Scholar, Amrita University, Ernakulam.

Reely Raphael

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Little Flower College, Guruvayoor

Febi Abraham

Assistant Professor, Rajagiri Viswajyothi College of Arts & Applied Sciences, Vengoor, Perumbavoor

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