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## Novel Interpretations: A Study of Adoor Gopalakrishnan's Selected Films Based on Literary Texts

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### Abstract:

Cinema as an avenue of expression is an art par excellence, whereby it re-creates a different world through images and sound. Of the various disciplines of art that have shown interdependence and affinity between two art forms, film and literature attains a special interest. Even while undergoing revolutionary changes in the process of establishing their own identity in the complexity of twentieth century art, these two art forms have not been behind in following the trend of artistic exchange rather than artistic purity. This shift from artistic independence to artistic interdependence has become a unique and essential feature of aesthetic development in the twentieth century. The paper propose to look into three films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan *Mathilukal (Walls, 1989)*, *Vidheyan (Servile, 1994)* and *Naalu Pennungal (Four Women, 2007)* based on literary texts by renowned authors in Malayalam literature Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, Paul Zacharia and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai respectively.

**Keywords:** Film, Literary texts, Adaptation, Interpretation, Freedom, Power, Powerlessness, Servility, Other.

Among the pantheon of Malayalam filmmakers, Adoor Gopalakrishnan has secured commendable achievements in the realm of adapting literary texts into films. His first feature film *Swayamvaram (One's Own Choice)* in 1972 placed Malayalam Cinema in the international arena. The film is often said to have set in what is termed as 'New Wave Cinema' in Malayalam or 'Malayalam Parallel Cinema'. Adoor also pioneered the Chitrallekha Film Society that heralded the Film Society movement in Kerala.

The three films *Mathilukal (Walls, 1989)* *Vidheyan (Servile, 1994)* and *Naalu Pennungal (Four Women, 2007)* by Adoor have won several national and international accolades. The aim of the proposed paper is to analyze how the source text (written text) have been translated into another medium (visual medium), so as to consider the film as a re-interpretation of the source text by the director and to examine the changes that have been brought about by the director while transcreating the source text onto the screen.

The relation between film and literature had not been smooth, as many writers and theorists placed literature at a higher pedestal and viewed adaptation as an imitation of the literary source that is not commendable. There were even attempts to separate the two

medium, and even if the two were to be compared the theorists and writers focused on the aspect of fidelity of the film version to its literary text. In the proposed paper, however the objective is not to delve into the aspect of fidelity, but to look into the films as an outcome of the critical reading of the source text by the director.

There had been always a link between fiction and film from the beginning and this is evident in the following statement that “the generic kinship between the novel and film is built upon the basic thesis that both are narratives” (Bluestone xi). Film as a medium has certain elements which it shares with its literary counterpart fiction, in terms of the plot, milieu, character, theme, dialogue and so on. George Bluestone makes a comparison between novel and film and claims that both are story-telling medium. The difference mainly rests in the fact that the novel is primarily a verbal medium and the film is primarily a visual one. He further goes on to bring in contrast between the two by stating that "the novel is a conceptual and discursive form, the film is a perceptual and presentational form" (xi). Film and fiction both are linguistic phenomenon, that is, both are based on the concept of sign, which comprises of signifiers and signified. In literature the images are perceived mentally, where the readers exercise their imagination to understand the images described through words. In film, the images are perceived with the eyes and the effect is immediate, as it is explicitly presented visually.

In the process of adaptation, a director may not strictly follow the narrative as presented in the source text, but brings about changes through various means so as to suit the visual medium and also as per the interpretation of the source text by the director. Andrew Davies cites that there are three main reasons as to why a filmmaker might bring about major changes while adapting a literary work to film - “One is simply the changes demanded by a new medium [...] Secondly, sometimes filmmakers make changes to highlight new themes, emphasize different traits in a character, or even try to solve problems they perceive in the original work [...] third main reason for a filmmaker to make dramatic changes to an adaptation, and it is one that anyone who works on a masterpiece classic is motivated by: how to make a classic story *new* for a contemporary audience” (Costanzo 11). In the process of adaptation, when a director indulges in the activity of reading the source text he/she is primarily taking up the role of a reader. The director interprets the text and forms an idea of the filmic narrative in the mental space which later takes on the form of a film from the script prepared by the director. The process of adaptation thus goes through multiple stages before culminating into the final product and in the process the source text achieves a new perspective that might not have been envisaged by the author of the source text.

George Bluestonein has stated that the filmmaker is an independent artist, not a translator for an established author, but a new author in his own right and it stands true in the case of Adoor Gopalakrishnan (Costanzo 11). Going ahead with this premise of director as an author, Adoor who is considered as an auteur had translated the selected source texts into a new filmic space with its uncomplicated, non-melodramatic and sensible plots accompanied by powerful storytelling that is marked by simplicity. As a director, Adoor exerts his distinctive style by promoting a consistent theme in the filmic narrative so that his artistic

imprint is unmistakable in the body of work. There is reiteration of similar themes in the three films that has been taken up for the study and also recurring visuals and aesthetics. The three films chosen for the study are adapted from novellas, and when a short story or novella is considered for adaptation, it usually serves as a springboard for the development of ideas, rather than a straight adaptation. As per the requirement of the visual medium and the director's reading scenes which are considered essential to the story, but over extended can be condensed or even merged, or characters that had minimal role in the novella may be expanded or modified.

In all the three selected films, certain common traits could be identified, especially with regard to characterisation. Shyam Benegal had stated that most of Adoor's characters are people who live in the margins, who are fractured than flawed, constantly attempting to transcend the condition in which they are placed. In *A Door to Adoor* Suranjan Ganguly states that his films are narratives of dislocation [...] primarily focuses on men and women who have been physically and psychically displaced from the mainstream society. Victims of choice and circumstances, they grapple with forces that are sometimes self-generated but more often than not unleashed by larger historical and cultural processes that are beyond their control or comprehension (Joshi 5-6). Adoor's protagonists are men and women who usually function outside the contexts of mainstream society, and their lives governed by complex factors that are sometimes self-generated, but more often beyond their comprehension or control. Thus the choices the characters make in their search for self, identity, and freedom becomes a major theme in the three selected films.

*Mathilukal (Walls)* the novella basically deals with the growth of an artist in confinement, but in the film Adoor focuses on the concept of freedom from two perspectives, one from the broader perspective of the nation that is passing through turbulent times towards achieving Independence through the Freedom Movement. Within this bigger picture is placed the writer-protagonist Basheer's struggle, who simultaneously fights for the freedom of the country through his literary contribution creating awareness among the people and who fights for his own freedom at an individual level while serving in the prison. Basheer, the writer-protagonist, is physically displaced from his everyday world when he is jailed during Quit India Movement. The director very cleverly draws parallel between the fight for freedom both at level of nation and at individual level in the film. In order to bring about the political situation emergent in the country, Basheer is shown adopting strategies employed by political leaders like Gandhiji's Satyagraha for his physical freedom from the police lock up.

The film *Mathilukal (Walls)* plays mainly on two planes, the boundaries of which overlap and dissolve into one another. First, is the delineation of the author's inclination and sensibility, and what is unearthed from the depths is the gift of humour, philanthropism, empathy, and tolerance. On the other hand is the writer's life in prison and his relationships with the lives that are strewn around him. Basheer's trait of having equal degrees of amiability and affection towards the criminals and murderers in the prison as well as to the good hearted and stern prison authorities is deftly brought out in the film by the director. His love for the bounteous nature is depicted through his conversations with the squirrels running

around the trees in the prison yard and the rose plants that he had planted in front of the prison cell. Nature enriches his inspired and creative self, and as someone who is capable of conversing with the elements of nature, in the bitter loneliness and desperation inside the prison he crafts an amorous relationship with a woman's voice across a wall. Bridging these two planes, the director presents the resounding waves of the prisoner's disappointments, frustration, agony, desires and intense suffering.

*Mathilukal (Walls)* stands as a testimony for multiplicity of interpretation, as it can be analysed in multiple ways – as an autobiography, as an account on re-reading the concept of freedom cutting across multiple levels, as a history of a place, a psychological study, as a work that display a deep rooted relation to nature, about spiritualism and as a text rich in symbolism. The novella is a juncture where autobiographical and fictional elements merge in such a manner that it becomes difficult to distinguish the two. And it is these elements that Adoor attempts to recreate onto the screen through the visual images.

Basheer who had been imprisoned for participating in Freedom Movement itself brings out his intense yearning for freedom that has taken the form of a fire within his soul. The prison cell, then, is also an existential space that serves as a setting for his meditations on identity, selfhood and escape (Joshi 22). Basheer while serving in the lock-up and prison dwells on the barriers that dogged human minds forever and in the process, the freedom-fighter radically reformulates his notion of freedom, whereby the film assumes the grab of poetry on freedom. As an individual, Basheer strives to treat everyone on an equal plane and yearn for a freedom that is beyond the social relationships and limitations. As a study of the artist in confinement, the film shows how Basheer transcends the limits set on his liberty through the power of his creativity and discovers that true liberty does not lie in scaling the walls of the prison, but the walls created in the mind.

In *Vidheyan (Servile)* Adoor show cases the existential angst of individuals caught in turbulent situation within which they strive to achieve identity and freedom. Here the protagonist Thommi is displaced from his native place, his familiar ground and pushed to a new alien land as a result of historical reasons. In this given new situation, Thommi strives to find a place in the society and continues with his quest for identity and freedom along with his wife Omana. Their quest for identity is closely associated with the notion of home, as an individual derives strength for his identity in correlation with his home, the place of stability. In Thommi's case, who is already a weak willed character, finds himself at loss when he is displaced from his comfort, secure zone of home to a new place, and in the new scenario he faces an identity crisis. The act of leaving one's home for better life and a freer world plays havoc to his very concept of identity and freedom when he encounters a stronger and intimidating character of Bhaskara Patelar. The encounter and development of master-slave relationship between Patelar and Thommi thus forms the site for Adoor's study of the psychology of power, power and powerlessness, and servility.

In *Vidheyan (Servile)*, Adoor interprets the concept of freedom within the complex matrix of power relations portrayed through the master-slave relationship between Patelar

and Thommi in the feudal setup of South Canara, Karnataka. In the film, Thommi's strange attractiveness towards Patelar serves merely as the starting premise and with the progression in narrative he goes on to become Patelar's faithful aide, collaborating in acts which even harm his own interests. The novella provides insights into the life of the servile narrator who lives his life to quench his master's ruthless thirst for violence and deprivation. In spite of his introspective awareness about serving the devil, the narrator cannot act as a conscientious individual until the master is murdered, which leaves the servile man rather perplexed by the newly gained freedom (Joshi 24). The aggression displayed by Patelar becomes disturbing because of its sheer randomness and his authority upon Thommi turns oppressive as it is accepted without questioning. Patelar appears as someone who needs no pretext to attack and coerce obedience, who relishes in the sense of empowerment and control which such violent behaviour generates. Thommi who is a docile character is ready to sacrifice his freedom and liberty and embrace enslavement in the belief of receiving material security and protection from the authoritative figure, i.e., Patelar.

The film deals with the aspects of power and powerlessness, and also looks into the element of its interchangeability based on the situations and circumstances. Notion of power and powerlessness is not absolute and permanent which becomes evident in the depiction of Thommi's alienation in an unknown unfamiliar land in the beginning of the film, and gradual movement towards Patelar's disintegration after his wife Saroja's murder. In the beginning of the film, Thommi is chained to the powerful figure of Patelar following him as a servile. Patelar who used to assume a powerful posture sitting on a chair with his rifle and surrounded by his cronies, is reduced to a meek individual in torn mundu and shirtless having food with Thommi from the same leaf towards the end of the filmic narrative. There is in fact a reversal of roles with regard to the image of the hunter and the hunted. In the initial part of the film, Patelar is portrayed as the hunter with his rifle in hand creating havoc in others' lives, but towards end of the film stripped off all his luxuries and status, Patelar in a worn out mundu becomes the hunted.

In *Vidheyana (Servile)*, Adoor presents the characters who are multi-dimensional and round, and more of a representation of theme in itself that serve to explore the ambivalent nature of master-slave relationship between Patelar and Thommi. The ambivalent master-slave relationship plays an important role in the evolution of Thommi's identity and his notion of freedom as both are inextricably linked to the authoritative figure of Patelar. The relationship is characterized by mutual dependency, wherein the master is dependent on the slave's loyalty and the slave dependent on the master's maintenance and a probable humane treatment by master. Their relationship as slave and master is governed by exploitation and affiliation, and submission of slave under the master's authority and intimacy. The one who is servile bow to the master's wishes because of the constant threat of punishment, and at the same time slave become indispensable to the master, function as confidant, and be party to his misdeeds or secrets.

In the film, the ambivalent relationship between Thommi and Patelar to a certain extent could be compared to the relationship between Lucky and Pozzo in Samuel Beckett's

*Waiting for Godot*. Pozzo-Lucky displays an intriguing master-slave relationship and the play also traces the role reversal that occurs in their relationship towards the end of the play. In the two act play, Pozzo is the master who is in control of his position and his slave Lucky is silent, but who often slips into intermittent bouts of verbal attack in the first act. By the end of the second act, Pozzo becomes blind and gradually becomes dependent on Lucky who has become dumb. Though they cannot stand each other, they cannot also part from each other, as their lives have become so intrinsically intertwined. It is also similar to the idea developed in George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* that if pushed to the extremes, fear and loathing might turn into a kind of affection.

Similarly in *Vidheyan (Servile)*, Patelar assumes a mighty authoritative position and Thommi follows his master like a servile in the beginning of the film. Though there is no exact role reversal in the film as in *Waiting for Godot* with regard to characterization, but there is an instance where for the first time in the narrative both Patelar and Thommi are placed at an equal plane as both sit on the ground and have food from the same leaf when they are hunted by relatives of Saroja, Patelar's wife, in the forest towards the end of the film. Adoor depicts an overwhelming vision of human bondage which is more of a psychological bondage in the film through the two characters. In the film, the behavior displayed by Thommi is something akin to Stockholm syndrome. Stockholm syndrome or capture-bonding is a psychological phenomenon in which hostages express empathy and sympathy, and have positive feelings toward their captors, sometimes to the point of defending and identifying with the captors. These feelings are generally considered irrational in light of the danger or risk endured by the victims, who essentially mistake a lack of abuse from their captors for an act of kindness. Stockholm syndrome can be seen as a form of traumatic bonding, which does not necessarily require a hostage scenario, but which describes "strong emotional ties that develop between two persons where one person intermittently harasses, beats, threatens, abuses, or intimidates the other." One commonly used hypothesis to explain the effect of Stockholm syndrome is based on Freudian theory, which suggests that the bonding is the individual's response to trauma in becoming a victim. In the film, Thommi expresses sympathy for Patelar as he feels that the cronies surrounding him has made Patelar to lead an illusionary life of authority. At the same time he shows signs of resistance when he becomes a part of the group that plots Patelar's murder. Though he is dehumanized and abused by Patelar, Thommi still makes himself believe that Patelar is kind as he looks after Omana, Patelar had given him a job and also feels humbled and elated towards the end of the film when Patelar addresses him by his name for the first time. The film does not deal with the plight of the oppressed, but on the dynamics of oppression and the notion of freedom within this bondage of oppression.

Adoor's film is more of a study of psychology and structure of power, and also an attempt to examine what lies buried beneath the existence of an obsessive servility. The film also explores the concept of servility, the psychology of power and concept of freedom, and how it works through the characters of Thommi and Patelar. In *Vidheyan (Servile)* we encounter characters that cling to the vestiges of feudalism, refusing to integrate themselves into the processes of changes that had occurred in the historical circumstances and Patelar

stands out as the perfect example for the same. As a result, Patelar display a neurotic obsession with power, which he exercises either on his immediate family members or the community at large. The victims give in to his atrocities to a great extent as a result of a certain level of ingrained servility, the legacy of their place as outsiders within a specific social hierarchy. The character of Patelar lacks conscience and moral compunctions, and he commits crime impulsively without motivation and disturbingly devoid of any guilt. In a way, he is a servile to the powerful impulses he was born with, acting out the compulsions he has inherited from his class and upbringing. Saroja's awareness of his misdeeds becomes a reason for her murder by Patelar which unveils his servility to his own will and fear. In a way, Patelar corrupted by his cronies is a victim of his own circumstances and background. In the final equation, both men, despite their very disparate social and economic backgrounds, reveal themselves as outsiders. The film ends with the death of Patelar at the hands of his enemies and Thommi's return to his wife and 'freedom'.

In *Naalu Pennungal (Four Women)*, Adoor narrates the tale of four women who aspires for freedom, for a life on their own terms where they can take a decision about their own life and needs. Based on four short stories by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, the film creates a mosaic of four short stories centered on women from different walks of life, separated from each other by time, economic strata and social boundaries. The connecting link in all these four stories is the four women protagonists who traces their journey of growth and progress which is depicted in the most sublime and humane manner by the director. The four protagonists are in a way 'Outsiders', 'Others' as they do not fit into the conceptual boundaries dictated by the society in terms of the various roles they are supposed to play in the societal setup. The thin line between promiscuity and morality, fidelity and desires, and also the clash between wishes and deprivation is what the auteur par excellence sets to explore in *Naalu Pennungal* (Ganguly 43-44). Adoor also portrays beautifully the era and patterns of society with the rituals, along with the presentation of the power and will of womanhood.

In the first episode *Oru Niyama Langanathinte Katha (The Story of Breach of Law)* the society challenges the marriage of a prostitute to a homeless labourer primarily on three counts, firstly she belong to the lower strata of the society and had decided to cross the threshold set by the society. Secondly, the society finds it unacceptable when a woman who had been treated as the 'Sexual Other' decides to lead a different mode of life. And finally her decision, i.e., her marriage is questioned due to lack of legal documents sanctioning their marriage. Adoor portrays sympathetically in the film how the protagonist Kunjipennu who has been considered as the 'Sexual Other' by the society is treated when she decides to turn a new lease of life and defeat her with the man-made rules.

In the second episode *Kanyaka (Virgin)* Adoor portrays a woman who defends herself when the society questions her chastity and morality within marriage, as she remains a virgin due to her husband's impotency. She faces the darker side of life, but through her sheer mental strength she survives the difficult situation in her life. *Chinnu Amma* the third episode features a married but childless woman, who nourishes the aspirations to become a mother



and how society tends to treat the couple's inability to bear a child as solely the woman's 'fault'. The film also reveals the manner in which men perceive a woman in a vulnerable situation as an easy target for satiation of his own lust through the character of Nara Pillai. She rejects his advances when Nara Pillai offers her a way to conceive and fulfill her dream of becoming a mother.

*Nithya Kanyaka (The Eternal Virgin)* portrays Kamakshi, a woman of mettle and character who dons the role of 'eternal Other' throughout her life and finally becomes wedded to loneliness with her ancestral house as her sole companion. It portrays the journey of a woman who was once dependent on others and later emerges as a character with stronger conviction of leading a life on her own terms. Though the stories are placed in different time periods it does not fail to illustrate that the life of women is similar world over, whether they belong to upper class or lower class, whether in one part of the hemisphere or the other and this particular facet of the stories lends an element of universality to the film that helps the audience connect to the film.

There is a thematic and chronological progression in the film, so also a call for the freedom of the women is reflected in a subtle yet strong manner in the film. But a question could arise as in 'freedom from what?' Here the question that the director deals with is not about freedom from 'what', but freedom 'to choose' – to choose a life, to lead a life on one's own terms. While the first story is set in the forties, the last one is set in the late sixties. As the narrative progresses, we can see perceptible growth in the degree of awareness among the characters which resolve them to take their own decisions despite being trapped in circumstances created by societal norms. Each characters coming from different strata of society are fettered by society and family till each of them rises above their circumstances to choose their own path and break free.

Adoor Gopalakrishnan's films are drawn from real life and people, and use his films to address underlying social issues latent in the narrative. The director through the kaleidoscopic stories of four women protagonists starting with the one at the lower strata of the society lacking all materialistic comforts to the last with all the materialistic comforts reveal that life of women irrespective of the social background is always dictated by the certain social markers set down by patriarchal norms. The four stories though distinct in its nature are connected through patterns and rituals directly reflecting the everyday realities and socio condition of Kerala.

Adoor's films not necessarily try to solve issues, but invite his viewers to open their minds to different experiences and life lessons that each character presents. He does not give answers, but his films guide us as viewers to an understanding of a realm that is unfamiliar or about uncertain aspects of life from which we can learn and grow. The films are contemplative and introspective, as it leaves much to the imagination and critical appreciation of the audience. For instance, there is no real plot associated with *Naalu Pennungal (Four Women)* and is an open ended film as the director does not provide any type of closure enabling the viewer's attention to the individual stories of the women. Adoor's treatment of

theme of *Naalu Pennungal (Four Women)* is such that the plot progresses through the protagonists and these protagonists' character evolves naturally and effortlessly.

In the three films chosen for the study with regard to the women characters there exist two ends of a spectrum ranging from absence of women character in *Mathilukal (Walls)* to their presence in *Naalu Pennungal (Four Women)*. The role of women characters in these films thus ranges from the 'absent presence' of Narayani in *Mathilukal (Walls)* to the subtle yet strong presence of Saroja and Omana in *Vidheyam (Servile)* to the conspicuous presence of Kunjipennu, Kumari, Chinnu Amma and Kamakshi in *Naalu Pennungal (Four Women)*.

Adoor's *Mathilukal (Walls)* as a film is set apart from his other films in general, as it unveils a love story of the writer-protagonist Basheer with a female character Narayani that is never present on the screen other than her voice. At the same time no other films of Adoor has such intense and powerful sensuality by virtue of the absent presence of a female character which becomes highly suggestive and powerful. Their love is aural, not based on sight and through their imaginative capacity they enter into a world devoid of walls within the confines of prison walls.

Basheer's novella, *Mathilukal (Walls)* in a way focuses on literary inventiveness. There is a subtle suggestion that the novella's protagonist, the renowned writer, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, suffered from occasional bouts of Schizophrenia (Joshi 16). Basheer as a writer had no uncertainties with regard to the real stature of his heroine, but Adoor to an extent have given a degree of ambivalence to Narayani's character in a subtle way. In a way Adoor questions the certainty of her existence, thereby adding on new heights in film's creative domain.

The film *Mathilukal (Walls)* is based on what the writer has depicted in the novella and Adoor has attempted to portray the character of Narayani with a tinge of ambivalence, that is, as part of the writer's fantasy. This is part of a larger discourse in his cinema on the relationship between the real and the imaginary, fact and fiction. The existence of Narayani and Basheer's passionate involvement with her is for real or imagined becomes immaterial, as this episode is employed for the purpose of bringing out the debilitating loneliness and inner turmoil that he has undergone while in prison.

The notion of absence/presence when applied to character within the filmic text confers a different reading on the narrative. For example, an ongoing discourse in a film on a central character that is actually off-screen implies either a reification (making her or him into an object) or a heroization of that character. Thus, discourses around absent characters [...] position them as object of desire (Hayward 1), and here Narayani becomes the object of desire for Basheer. The slow pace of time in the filmic narrative is lifted with the arrival of Narayani in the film. Like Candace Compson in William Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury* influences the character of Quentin Compson through her absent presence, Narayani too in *Mathilukal (Walls)* plays a decisive role through her unseen presence and becomes the reason for living to Basheer after the release of all political prisoners, except him. She becomes a

trigger for him to redefine the concept of freedom, as he discovers freedom within the confines of the four walls of the prison and in her company. The creation of powerful absent female presence is further enhanced through the use of sound track in the film.

*Vidheyan (Servile)* primarily deals with the male bonding in the feudal set up, and the women characters are instrumental in the progression of the narrative. Adoor explores the role of women in keeping the system alive, through their silence, suffering and secondariness. Saroja is a powerful character in the film and martyr for the cause of her husband's salvation. Lonely and separated from her son, she is finally murdered as Patelar seems to be afraid of her silence, kindness, constant moralizing as well as her nasty brothers and relatives. He kills her to free himself from his dependency on her. The added impetus given to women by Adoor in the film has major implications regarding treatment of the theme and point of view.

His film, *Naalu Pennungal (Four Women)* is about four women placed in different time periods caught up in their own battle of survival, submissive and passive in the beginning, but ultimately evolving as stronger individuals making a choice in their life. In the four episodes, there is a slow digression of the man from the muted presence to the final exclusive absence which also functions as the common motif which binds these four short stories together in the film. In the first story, Pappukutty who takes Kunjipennu as his wife becomes a reflection of her fate with no home and serves more as a muted presence in the narrative. When the story moves to *Kanyaka (Virgin)* the man here though possess a dominant presence throughout the story, but remains elusive and in *Chinnu Amma* the man becomes a neglected catalyst of impotence. And by the time the film manifest into the final stage in *Nithya Kanyaka (The Eternal Virgin)* the theme and pattern becomes more clear, as here the woman has matured, through tides, experience and virtue, and eventually reconciles with the belief- that a man is not necessary for her survival. Eventually her final decline on the knock on the door closes the chapter of this remarkable film. The film *Naalu Pennungal (Four Women)*, though set in a bygone era, the film still resonates with the viewers as the society still does not see eye to eye a woman who have been stamped to be perceived as underprivileged and 'Other'.

Adoor's adaptation gains grandeur and an eternal relevance in film history because of the scenic realization that springs from his keen visual sensibility, and artistic harmonization of aural and visual spectra. This becomes recognizable through unique style Adoor had developed that is marked by vivid use of colours, extended shots and close-ups, and a calm, unhurried pace, with striking imagery. In the process of adapting from the source text to the film, there are bound to be changes from the source text in terms of the screenplay, language and interpretative aspects adopted by the director. Adoor is meticulous with regard to the arrangement of background and background visuals based on the story that is adapted. How the story has been depicted in cinematic terms with the use of camera, sound and editing principles will decide the ultimate shape of the film. The basic tool of the filmmaker are a series of images and sounds and the principle of montage or editing which decided the order in which they are arranged, which would also depend on the basic theme. Thus not only

through the theme, but through music, lighting, camera style the director have brought in a sense of connection in all the three films.

Film is not only a language of images, but also a language of sounds. Aural effects can be obtained from the sounds of nature or artificially generated and music, it has been eternally proved, has greater emotive and curative potential than the other fine arts. The purpose of adding music to films is usually to underscore and increase the emotional content of the images. In all the three films, Adoor has resorted to minimal use of music without breaking the continuity of the film. As per the director, the function of music in the film is to enhance the experience and intensify the emotions that are associated with a situation and also moral sentiments. As a director, Adoor makes use of silence as an important tool to convey the theme that has much more deeper levels of meaning. Silence has been used to underline the dramatic moments thereby adding depth and meaning to the narrative. The appropriate use of silence in films takes it to another level of understanding as it becomes the time when the audience contemplates on the given situation and the characters grow. Silence would become more effective and meaningful when it is bracketed with sound and this has been effectively used by Adoor in his films. The meaningful silence/pause thus enhances the flow of narration to a great extent in accentuating the emotions at the right moment. With regard to the setting in the films, Adoor mostly resorted to real locations and not any elaborate sets. For instance, in *Vidheyam (Servile)* and *Naalu Pennungal (Four Women)*, the film is shot in real locations, in *Mathilukal (Walls)* the director had to use elaborate setting of the prison, as the narrative was solely location specific. Thus all the three films brings out the traits that set Adoor apart and raise him to the level of an auteur by virtue of the distinctive way of visualizing the source text onto the screen.

In general, discourses on film adaptation attribute greater importance to the source text and treat the film as merely derivative, thereby evaluating the film on the basis of fidelity to the source text. However, readers of literature themselves are interpreters who create their own personal 'films' in their imagination. Similarly, when a filmmaker attempts to adapt a literary work into film, he incorporates his own personal vision and his insight into the source. This implies that the adaptation of any work of art from one medium to another is always a personal interpretation. Dudley Andrews opines that the success of adaptation should be searched on the aspect of fertility than fidelity of the film to the source text (402). The three films taken up for study thus are personal interpretation of the director and the director who adapts a literary piece is in fact performing the job of a critic, interpreter or creator bringing in his own perception. Adoor's adaptation of the three source texts thus can be considered as critical interpretation of the source text and as an intertextual activity, freeing it from the insistence on fidelity which allows the filmmaker to use it as a creative platform to experiment and expand his reading.

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