

Emotional Reverberations Abridge The Ambience of Sea -
Special Reference to the Malayalam Classic Movie 'Chemmeen'

Dr. D. Rejikumar

Assistant Professor, MES College Nedumkandam, Idukki

Abstract

The mythical personification of the sea has been quite common in many novels and films from modern times. The relevance lies with its depth and the waves frequently meeting the shore. Besides, the sea becomes rough and occasionally disastrous along with a calm and quite nature. Since these fluctuations have close resemblance with the emotional reverberations of human beings, many literary writers and poets have compared such movements of the sea and the emotional changes in people. The same theme has played vital role in the script of the famous Malayalam Classic movie, 'Chemmeen' directed by Ramu Karyatt which was a Novel by origin, written by the famous Malayalam writer Thakazhy Siva Sankara Pillai with the same title. The emotional heights of the characters depicted in both the novel and film are identified with the ebbs and flows of the sea. The aim of the Paper is to inquire into the emotional reverberations of characters in the classic movie *Chemmeen* as they have comparable extend to the vivid movements of the sea. The relevance of the topic lies with the repetition of similar situations as appear in various other contemporary literary writings and movies as well.

Key Words: Ramu Karyatt, Thakazhy Siva Sankara Pillai, *Chemmeen*, emotional reverberations, *Marakkan*, Mother Sea, chastity, emotional heights, ebbs and flows, *Pareekutty*, *Karuthamma*

Introduction:

Depiction of emotional reverberations in the ambience of sea had become quite common in films since earlier times. The relevance lies with the depth of the sea. The rough and disastrous nature of the sea at times, entrenching its calm and quiet behaviour often resembles human behaviour and emotions. Tides, frequent waves approaching seashore and the broadened nature of the sea can be alleged to have close affinity to human emotional reverberations. The literary writers and film makers ever have utilized such fluctuating characteristics of the sea for

depicting the exact emotions of their characters at particular instances. Gradually the aesthetes could understand the mood and emotional level of a particular character if he/she is seen at a sea shore. In many cases, the character/s need not even talk anymore, if appear/s at the backdrop of a sea. The individual emotions and the waves have the same ebb and flow at certain moments. A mythical personification of the sea often plays a vital role in the life of human beings.

Chemmeen:

The ever famous Malayalam Classic Movie *Chemmeen* wholly moves at the

real backdrop of the sea. The life of ordinary fishermen is pictured there. The beginning scene involves the commotions of collecting fish from the net, selling them and also the maintenance activities of the fishing net. The dialogue of a character in the beginning itself reveals their ancestral affinity to the sea. When one of the characters tells that Chempankunju is saving money to buy a boat and net, his colleague asks, “Why does Chempankunju try to buy a net and boat of his own, when we all know that the whole treasure of the sea is for the *Marakkans*?”¹ In a similar manner, Chakki, mother of Karuthamma the heroine of the film reminds her, regarding their fragile life and beliefs within the boundaries of strict social traditions that enliven the sea life of *Marakkans*. It is that, the life of the fishermen moving onto the sea is relied on the fidelity of the spouse at home or rather, their chastity alone protect the fishermen. The same belief is evident in the Malayalam songs that followed.

Kadalinnakkare
ponore.....Kanaponninu ponore.....
Poy varumbol enthu
kondubarum?.....
Kai niraye....Poy varumbol Enthu
Kondubarum?.....
Pathinalam Ravile ...Palazhi
thirayile....
Malsyakanyakamaraniyum...
*Manikya...Kallu tharamo....*²

Similar is the content of the song, which begins as,

Pennale....Pennale...Karimeen
kannale Kannale....
Pandoru mukkuvan muthinu poyi...
Padinjaran kattathu mungi poyi....
Arayathi pennu thapassirunnu....
Avane kadamma konduvannu....

Kanavan thoniyil poyale...
Karayil kavalu nee venam.....

The song briefs that if a fisherwoman lacks her chastity, her husband will never come back from the sea or rather the Mother Sea will take him forever.

The songs envisage the myths and beliefs entangled among sea and the fishermen. Hence an affair of a fisherwoman with a person from another religion would subject the entire community to the wrath of the mother sea, as of their belief. This was the message given to Karuthamma by Chakki who tried to continue the love affair with a Muslim trader called Pareekutty. But the depth of the love of the couple got rejuvenated more and more with the ebbs and flows of the waves. Their meetings always found space at the seashore, where the murmuring waves frequently kissed the seashore, formed a serene background for their growing love. The rise and fall of the waves and the movement towards the seashore with the murmuring sound resembled the intensified emotions within them. Whenever there an emotional conflict occurs within a character, the scene of the murmuring waves coming onto and off the shore can be seen regularly in the film. The emotional mind of the character is often identified with the ups and downs of the waves. For instance, When Chakki advises Karuthamma that the future of the life for every fisherman (*Marakkan*) at sea rests with the truth and chastity of the fisherwoman at home, she gets worried for some moments. At this time the smashing waves is shown at the seashore so conveying that the emotional stress of her mind is in concord with the thrashing movement of waves.³ Karuthamma had fallen in love with the

Muslim trader, Pareekkutty. The act was supposed to be against the truth and beliefs of their community. However both of them continued their love affair till death which caused relentless ups and downs of various emotions synonymous with the waves visiting the shore very frequently and sometimes with much power. The waves assume enormous power at times and lull the shore at some other times. It is quite comparable with the human temperaments in many a time.

The fisher folk had believed that the sea is their mother who supplies everything they want. Hence they feel akin to the sea which can get at their feelings so far. This ideology has strictly been underlying in Chemmeen. When Chakki prompts Karuthamma to keep up the truth and chastity of a fisherwoman, it abridges the life of fishermen and the sea. The personification of the sea to the level of 'Mother' also finds reason for the sharing of human emotions with the sea. Just like any mother, sea can protect and soothe out the woes of her sons and daughters, as it is believed by them. The sea in the movie is not mere a pool of water but a pivotal whole time character, actively involves in deciding the fate of the poor people, depend up on her. She has also similar emotions of her dependants. She becomes calm, rough and even cruel at times and as the context may be.

The movie Chemmeen in all respects depicts life of fishermen as clearly allied to sea. Every scene, when the characters encounter emotional heights from time to time, the presence of sea is shown with slow or sometimes powerful waves coming up the shore and retrieve, as if with the emotion of the character, and as is the case may be. The whole story is unveiled at the

sea shore. Hence as the permanent backdrop of the movie, the crucial scenes from the beginning to the end are backed up with the sea. A few more instances persist as evidences.

Chembankunju borrowing money from Pareekutty, buys boat and fishing net and makes considerable amount of money. Pareekutty had a deep desire of getting the hands of Karuthamma in marriage. But the greedy and heartless Chembankunju cheated Pareekutty by neither paying him back the money nor giving his daughter in marriage, leaving him to big debt after all. Though Pareekutty never complained, it was against the truth of the Mother Sea. Hence in the end, Chembankunju lost Chakki, his beloved wife, daughter Karuthamma and also the whole money he had amassed, which was being stolen by his step son and second wife. So he became insane and wandered along the seashore losing whatever he had gained.

Pareekutty meets Karuthamma at her home and asks her if she loves him. Her reply was that her love to him would last till her death. The scene next to the dialogue is the roaring waves, clashing each other and flowing in different directions⁴ which denoted something unusual to be happened in future. Karuthamma complains about the unpaid money to Pareekutty. She demands Chakki that she shall be married only after giving back the money to him. The scene of the waves⁵ again appears as a sign of emotional reverberations.

The depth of the sea resembles the depth of human emotions. This is evident throughout the movie. The song that begins,

*Manasa maine varoo....
Madhuram... Nulli tharoo...*

*Ninnarumapoo...vadiyil
nee....theduvathare...aa..re?*

*Kadalile Olavum .. Karalile
mohavum Adangukillomane...
Adangukilla...⁶*

This means that the waves in the sea and the hopes in the human minds will never end.

The meeting of the couples at the seashore before Karuthamma's marriage also shows the depth of their love. Pareekutty says that even if she goes away from there, he would be there on the seashore singing songs and finally with broken heart, he would die and afterwards his spirit would wander there singing songs. Instantly, Karuthamma replies him that she also would join him on his death.⁷ This became true later. Pareekutty then adds that both their spirits would be hugged together then and sing songs during moonlit nights at that seashore. At this moment too, the ambience is that of the roaring sea which identifies with their emotions.

References:

1. Siva Sankarappillay Thakazhy(story), *Chemmeen*, Classical movie, (directed by Ramu Karyattu) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGJrCK0y7Bw>, screen shot at 5 min 59 secs. (The fishermen of the seashore were called to be of the category, *Marakans*) (*Chemmeen* is a kind of precious and tastier small fish which is also called Prawn and is available in plenty in the Arabian Sea during certain special fishing season called *Chakara*.)
2. Ibid, screen shot at 10 mins 29 secs to 11 mins 25 secs.
3. Ibid, screen shot at 9min.10 secs to 10 mins 25secs..
4. Ibid, screen shot at 24 min. 35-50 secs.
5. Ibid, screen shot at 55 min.45secs to 56 min.11secs.
6. Ibid, screen shot at 1hr 03 min. 55 secs to 1hr 04 mins 43 secs.
7. Ibid, screen shot at 1hr.04 min. 47 secs to 1hr.06 mins. 50 secs.
8. Ibid, screen shot at 1 hr. 30 min. 00 - 45 secs.
9. Ibid, screen shot at 2 hr 06 mins 04 to 2 hr 10 min 7 secs.

Chakki dies of her deep sorrow and Karuthamma is walking along the seashore quite unaware of it. She is watching the roaring sea⁸ which was actually seemed trying to convey her, the message about the death of her mother since no one would come over there and inform her about it. But when Pareekutty came there with the message it put her into more troubles and scandals.

Finally, while Palani was in the sea, baiting after a big shark, Karuthamma went to see Pareekutty and became together in a hug. As of the belief on broken chastity of the spouse comes off true, the sea became extremely rough as if in wrath and one of the huge whirlpool swallowed Palani. The roaring sea at its most cruel phase is shown in the last scene. The next morning, the hugged dead bodies of Karuthamma and Pareekutty and at a distance, a baited corpse of a shark are seen on the seashore,. The sea became calm again after a series of emotional reverberations which could be found as closely allied to the emotions of characters of the novel.