

## **Marxist Feminism: An Analysis on Class Structure and Position of Women in Malayalam movie -“Chemmeen”**

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### **Abstract**

The Malayalam film industry, prominently known as “Mollywood,” is one of the fast-changing faces in Indian cinema. This paper tries to examine one of the Malayalam movies, *Chemmeen*, through the lens of Marxist Feminism. The primary text chosen for the study is the movie, *Chemmeen*, an adaptation of Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai’s novel with the same name. The story revolves around the lives of Karuthamma and Pareekutt, lovers whose life cannot be led together because of the strong influence of caste and class in their society. This is one of the liberal texts in Malayalam Literature narrating the Kerala fishing community’s lives, customs, traditions, and beliefs. The research paper’s primary focus will be on society’s hierarchy through the reflection of Mollywood cinema, the stereotyping of certain characters based on their class and caste, the aftermath of marriage, and the domineering male-centric society female fellowships through deities.

**Keywords-** Marxist Feminism, Mollywood, Patriarchal Hierarchy, Capitalism

In the 1840s, Karl Marx noticed the unpaid, reproductive work of women playing a crucial role in Capitalism. Marxist feminism is about the exploitation of women in the name of capitalism. Marxist women activists differentiate themselves from the philosophic and monetary theories of Karl Marx. He sought the financial rules that underlie capitalism and spoke of them in his magnum opus *Das Kapital*. Thus, the Marxist women activists have confirmed an anti-capitalist future.

Marx and his partner Frederick Engels developed the foundations of Marxist financial affairs, the philosophical function of Capital. Marx has shown how industrialists exploit

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regular workers for profits that are made rich without paying at least the respect they give to their specialists. Marxist women's feminists claim that the social profit trend is responsible for the role of lower-than-average women and various types of mistreatment. Preference and profit also support the decision-making class by preventing staff from working out together. Women's professionals are targeted at a higher rate than men, and women are disrespected publicly due to sex and racial segregation. Ladies are also a source of unpaid housework, a perception that allows industrialists worldwide to save billions of dollars every year.

As far as society, private property, and state are concerned, Frederick Engels relied on anthropologists to demonstrate how the mistreatment of women had been established in ancient times when matrilineal collective social orders had been coercively superseded. To man, the social structures in which the sole wealth and the private property are based. (Male-centric profits powered by social orders have turned out to be disproportionate since prosperity and globalization, even though the leftovers of matrilineal society have been preserved far and wide in inherent social orders). By their administration and reverence, the ladies are progressing towards becoming 'slaves' without influence. Engels explains this as the verifiable genocide of the universe against the female sex. Marx and Engels viewed the women's entry to the paid work show as an initial move towards women's freedom so that they would not disturb men's dependency, whether or not they liberated them from class violence which they're sharing with the men. The realization of the total freedom of women and the multi-racial collective workers of all countries needs world communism, which is the emergence of the authoritarian and accommodating institutions of the onset of human presence (Nayar, 2019).

The novel, *Chemmeen* written by Thakazhi, sheds light on the hardships people are going through in order to keep themselves alive. The novel was further adapted into a film in 1965 and re-released in 1966. The film received massive applause from society. The year 2015 celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of this film, where many audiences in Kerala in different theatres enjoyed the movie that found a safe place in Malayalam. *Chemmeen*, the film, won the National Award for Best Feature Film in 1965 and appeared at both the Cannes and Chicago Film Festivals. The movie won a Certificate of Merit in Chicago, the principal Malayalam film is regarded as a global celebration. The Chicago Sun Times on eighteenth November 1967 detailed that Barry Stone, a celebrated cinematographer and creator who was

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in the meeting group said that when the Chicago Censor Board completed the process of watching it, the individuals in the house said it was the most splendid film they had ever seen.

The main characters of the movie are Karuthamma and Pareekutti. Karuthamma is the daughter of a miserable fisherman, and Pareekutti is a decently successful business person. Karuthamma, an innocent and obedient girl, never ceases to escape from the "home" and "high walls" created by her father, a wall that keeps her from her freedom. The irony of the plot is that her father himself is an individualistic, iconoclastic person who is not able to abide by the laws laid down by society but still convinces his two daughters to be devoted followers of the laws encircling the whole idea of religion. Chembankunju rejects convictions that lead to stagnation, poverty, and vulnerability. Indeed, even individuals from the class named "Valakkaran" can buy angling vessels (lower stations can't search for work). However, Chemban does so, although he has a place with the purported lower caste of Mukkuran. When the ocean turns red and other anglers remain on the coast, persuaded that the Katayama (Sea Goddess) has its principles, Chemban begins his pontoon. Chemban is a mechanism that activates complex powers of transition.

*Chemmeen* will forever be known for the brilliant cinematography by Marcus Bartley and U. Rajagopal. Every detail of the fishing village has been captured meaningfully. The waves, the maritime anglers in their pontoons, the angling nets, the stand-apart artwork-like edges, and the ocean depicted in Sathyan's battle with a shark in twirling waters made the film worth viewing. The close editing of Hrishikesh Mukherjee was another highlight of this film. The film's content was composed by S.L. Puram Sadanandan followed the novel steadfastly, and Ramu Kariat helped him form a framework. For example, Mukherjee deleted the childhood of Karuthamma and Pareekutti that had been canned. Chembankunju had become a more rounded character at the end of it, and many scenes had to be reshot (*Behind the scenes of Chemmeen - The Hindu*, n.d.).

In *Chemmeen*, Karuthamma battles against those who are denying her dreams and trying to reach her dreams by death. Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai poses a critical inquiry of modesty: does this mean reliability to the spouse or sweetheart? A lady in our way of life is compelled to conceal her actual sentiments and to carry on with a counterfeit life. It is forced to suppress the feelings for the good of the family, for the good of society, for the protection of society, traditional customs, and traditions, and therefore gender plays a significant role in

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the development of personality in the family and community Characters of the narrative live by the roles of their male peers Chakki suffers like the wife of Chemban Kunju, Karuthamma suffers.

Karthumamma is viewed as an “object” by her father to achieve his goal of owning a ship, using his daughter as an asset to induce his greedy deeds by renting a boat to Pareekutti, his daughter's lover. One could also see how the women are put, be it Karthumma, who finds herself in a state of helplessness, as she is torn between what her fishing community wants from her in the form of a perfect daughter, mother, and wife, and what her heart wants to do by being more in love with her life. Chakki, Karthumamma's mother, plays an essential role in acknowledging the wrong that she is encouraging her daughter to do, even though she is mindful that she is working to bring sorrow to her daughter's life.

Chemban, with the characteristics of a selfish and ignorant man, continues to be an avid supporter of what his society expects him to do and ensures that his daughters fill the gap between their close-knit community and their customs. Chemban is aware of his failure to maintain his family ties with the group of fishermen, his relentless desperation to be elevated in the ladder of the elite, or his remarriage with the wife of a man from whom he lends money. The text is a perfect example of how women are treated as substitutes in exchange for material satisfaction.

Karuthamma could be seen as a feminist liberator. She is an inspiration for those who want to test the prevailing norms of society. Karuthamma hates how her father and mother manipulate Pareekutti to meet their needs. She also reveals her father's criticism of lending money to Pareekutti. Her problem separates her from other women. She is debating her mother's confidence in Kartalamma's rage and the notion of innocence. She's not trying to live in a taboo. She needs to conquer the obstacles of the caste to follow the faith of devotion. Determination and will are also essential parts of a new individual. Karuthamma scares her mother to give back that money by claiming that she is going to accept the marriage.

Palani, when the debts of Pareekutti are paid, he even threatens to reveal his father's deceitful behavior, and he plans to buy a second ship that makes Pareekutti bankrupt. But she takes the radical stance of patriarchal dominance and the ruthless and manipulative actions of her family. Karuthamma rejects stereotypes of class and religious prejudice and embraces her desires and wishes. The impulses are independent of each other. She doesn't care what others

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think of her actions. Karuthamma makes an intense stride towards the opportunity of articulation and recognizes that ladies are in any event at the male stage, at any rate in affection; however, she can just show it in death. By affection, she addresses conventional power and communicates her character by cherishing and communicating transparently. She entered into the field of taboo.

### **Conclusion**

Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai (1914-1998), the father of Malayalam new era of novel, helped to announce the revival of Malayalam literature by selecting ordinary people as a fundamental subject for his stories, which are also related to the socialist movement of Kerala. Chemmeen was published in Malayalam in 1956 and was the first Malayalam text to win the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1958. Since then it has been translated into more than 30 Indian and foreign languages. In 1962, it was translated to English for the first time by Narayana Menon. The relationship between people in a society is realistically shown in the movie. The bond between Karuthamma and Pareekutti changed the entire society. And the character of Karuthamma, as a strong woman from the fisher community deserves the spotlight. The women in the movie are objectified and looked down. But on the other hand, the Sea Goddess and nature is worshipped as a female. Moreover, the fisher community believes that it is the grace of their Goddess that they are still alive. The capitalisation, hierarchical binary relationships, caste and gender plays an important role in this movie.

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