

## FICTIONAL AND CINEMATIC VERSIONS OF CHEMMEEN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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### Introduction

The study of Comparative literature is one of the attractive areas in the realm of world literature. It has become the hunting ground for literary scholars across the world. The growth of Comparative literature in India largely depends upon the translation of Regional literature in India. Indian literature in translation gets vibrant in exploring the inner spirit of different region's socio-cultural values in India. Films have been playing a vital role in protecting the social ethos across the world since the arrival of cinema. The directors of films draw novelistic plots from literature to capture the inner spirit of soils from the respected societies. Thakazhi's Chemmeen is considered one of the remarkable literary works in modern Malayalam literature. Moreover, Thakazhi's Chemmeen was transformed into a film in 1965 and it was also successful as the novel. Both the novel and the film are highly popular among the literary scholars and audiences in India.

Research Methodology:

The paper strives to exploit H.H.Remak's theory of comparative study in studying the novel and the film. The paper seeks to study the two different artistic versions from a comparative perspective and explores similarities and dissimilarities between two media and it investigates the social connection with the novel and the film. The American Comparatist, H.H. Remak remarks,

“Comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country and the study of relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief such as the arts (e.g painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history and social science (e.g politics, economics, sociology), religion etc on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human experience” (Qtd in Introduction to the Study of Comparative Literature: Theory and Practice, 1).

Discussion:

The genre, novel is a literary narrative work in fanciful imagination with a colourful characterization. Chris Baldick, Professor of English states that the genre disregards the constraints that govern other literary forms, and acknowledges no obligatory structure, style, or subject-matter. Thriving on this openness and flexibility, the novel has become the most

important literary genre of the modern age (173). But the film is a scientific art, usually sprocket cellulose based material with a photo sensitive emulsion. This is an electronic medium while fiction is a print medium. The experience is different between watching films and reading the novels. The novel makes the readers passive in action. The audience becomes active and dynamic because the film feeds and feasts the aesthetic sense of the audience after watching the film. The impact of film is more effective than the novels. According to Edward Quinn, Film as a photographic medium, has developed a technical language to deal with its organization of space and time. Terms such as Close up, Cut, Deep, Focus, Dissolve, Establishing Shot, Freeze Frame, Montage and Shots are essential in the vocabulary of film. Films that tell a story are, like verbal Narratives, divided into two basic categories: fiction and non-fiction. Fictional films employ the traditional generic terms of literature and drama, such as comedy and romance (A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms, 165). A novel is an individual's work whereas a film is a collective work such as story writing, screenplay making, dialogue writing, music, lighting, sound recording, camera setting and editing. Every work in the film production is seriously undertaken by the director. The success of the film is collapsed even if a careless mistake is done by anybody in the creation of the movie.

The novel is decoded and interpreted by the readers. Reading novels is a difficult job for readers. But there is no difficulty in following the story line of the movie and the film never takes much time as the novel takes. The major fact is that now people do not have patience to read innumerable pages. Reading the novel becomes tedious and tiring to readers whereas the film is very interesting to be watched. Only educated people can read novels but it is difficult for uneducated people to understand the story of the novel. Education is unnecessary in the case of films. Hence, mass media is a universal language. Finally, interpersonal communication takes place while reading the novel whereas the film communicates to the heterogeneous mass in the society. Such differences make them different and both literary art and scientific art stand by their own distinctions. Both novel and film unify human mind psychologically. Todawad states that the film and novel work hand in hand to boost the progress of human civilization (150). Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind* (1939), Ann Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) are all based on novels.

Chemmeen is a unique story of devotion, greed and sacrifice. Chemmeen also deals with the eternal values of fisher folk community and individual's confrontation with the society. The plot of the novel revolves round the events and incidents in the day-to-day life of a fishing village. The novelist develops and constructs his story on representing various aspects of fisher folk lives by observing the tradition and custom of the respected villages. Thakazhi focuses on two villages, Ambalapuzha and Tirukunnapuzha. Both villages have a

framework of traditions and customs. The people of the fisher folk community believe that these rigid restrictions help them lead their life smoothly.

Thakazhi shows the four divisions of the fishing community with their sub-castes in the villages. They are Arayan, Valakkaran, Mukkuvan, Marakkan and other lower working class sections. They have a headman to guide the society. Only high caste people are allowed to buy boats on the seafront. But, in Chemmeen, Chemban kunju, Karuthamma's father, buys a boat and he is criticised by the upper caste people. One of the other important rigid rules in the two villages is not to marry woman from outside the caste and from the outside religion. The central character, Karuthamma loves Pareekutti, who is a Muslim fish trader. Karuthamma is a low caste Hindu. Both of them wish to get married. Karuthamma has to give up her love for Pareekutti on account of the prevailing strict conventions and get married to Palani. The second part of the plot is constructed through the beliefs of fisher folks of the village. The novelist, with reference to fishermen's life, employs multiple beliefs. One of the major beliefs of the fisher folk community is that, the sea Goddess Katalamma dwells in the deep dreadful sea. She protects the people and she takes the people in her hands. The sea Goddess is a woman. She is personified as Arundhathi. All people on the seafront should be pure and faithful. Before going to sea, the fisherman should have a bath in the very early morning. Every woman should be chaste. They believe that the fisherman will die if the fisherwoman is not chaste at home.

The novelist writes:

“This wide-open sea contains everything, my child. Everything, why do you think all the men who go out there come back safely? It is because of the women at home who live clean lives. Otherwise the currents in the sea will swallow them up. The lives of the men at sea are in the hands of the women on shore” (Chemmeen, 8). “When the Goddess of sea had her periods, they didn't go out fishing” (Chemmeen, 59).

The movement of the events is interlinked with the dialogic impact in the novel. The dramatic development is logical and convincing. The large gamut of the narrative has been molded according to the vision of the novelist. Sivasankara Pillai never denigrates the romantic element and the romance from the core of the novel, yet the powerful moral bound does not allow the characters to violate it. The social realism and the matter of fact is striking and impressive in the novel. The characters lead a life dominated by traditions and taboos from the beginning to end. The action goes by cause and causality in the novel (Aspects of the Novel, 73).

One of the artistic qualities of any literary work is the appropriate use of characterization in the novel. Good characterization satisfies the taste of the audience and it will not vanish from the readers. All the characters live in front of reader's mind. Thakazhi

draws his characters from a typical coastal village of Kerala. He portrays their behaviour of the rural atmosphere with old orthodox beliefs and customs. The majority of the characters stamp their sense of individuality in Chemmeen. According to E.M.Forster, there are two kinds of characters such as flat and round characters (Aspects of the Novel, 93). The flat characters are generally built around a single idea or a single personality trait, while the round characters are dynamic and multidimensional in their functioning. They are capable of performing infinite tasks in their course of life. In Chemmeen, Karuthamma, Pareekutti, Chakki, and Chemban kunju are round characters who show their dynamism and consistent growth in the novel. The rest of the characters, Palani, Achakunju, Nallapennu, the headman of the village, Kalikunju, Kunjupennu, Kandankoran, Ayyankunju and Ramamuppan are flat characters in the novel, Chemmeen.

A screenplay is like a soul to a film. Script writing and bringing the liveliness in the screenplay is crucial in film making. Script writing evolves from various works such as birth of the story, permutation and the structure of the screenplay. The screenplay may be brought from the director's own experience, real events, interesting stories from newspapers, journals, magazines and novels. A few directors adapt old stories and make them into new ones. The story is also developed from the mind of the director or a storywriter. Usually, any story line of the movie discusses the themes of victory of a virtuous woman against the hardships or the failure of love due to of obstacles, Love triangle, realization of a reckless man in life, taking revenge, guiding an immoral and wicked person, sacrifice and family problems in the movies. The major theme in the novel and the film are the same. Thakazhi examines the theme of love and underlines the hurdles in the course of lovers' life. He examines the cause and effect of the rigid traditions of the society in relation with problems of marriage with other caste people in the society. But, Karuthamma and Pareekutti break down the rules of the village and get united physically and emotionally in the end of the story. They also encounter death together heroically. The lovers believe that living in the world is too difficult for them to survive in the society. They decide to die because they do not have guts to face the society. It denotes that love may be failure on the physical level but it is a triumph of victory at the spiritual level.

After getting the story, there is a discussion on the theme of the story with the film director, producer, screenplay writer, art director and other technicians. Their discussion focuses on the changes of the story to suit the medium. The director should know the flexibility of scenes and changes while producing the films. The director modifies the stories. The story writer should concentrate on the theme, presentation, organic unity in preparing the film script. The themes of the film should express verisimilitude of the society. It is brought under the categories of love, taking revenge, revolting, an individual leader's history and national integrity. The director should clarify himself in producing the film for the cinema world.

. The story and the theme should be simple and the story should have suspense and turning points that make permutation possible in films. There would be a number of characters, deviations among characters, mental turmoil, sudden activities, arguments and fights in the permutation of the film. The director has also added entertainment scenes to strengthen the trend of the permutation and to prevent tedium in a film. The film, Chemmeen, is based on triangular love theme. It causes an effect in every heart of the audience. There are suspense and turning points in the film, Chemmeen.

The theme of the story should be didactic to the audience. Chemmeen also attempts to prevent an illicit relationship in the society and it endeavours to regulate an order for people to live in the society. Both the director Ramu Kariyat and Thakazhi endeavour to instruct that one should avoid such illicit relationships. Both attempt to seek consistency in the marital life. There are sub elements in the permutation of the film; exposition, conflict, development and resolution. Exposition introduces the story, the location and the characters. The conflict is raised through the development of the theme and finally it is resolved at the end. In Chemmeen, the director shows a commendable exposition of the sea, the movement of the love, and the characters. Then he unfolds the development of Karuthamma's marriage to Palani, downfall of Chembankunju and the frustration of Pareekutti over loss of Karuthamma. Finally, Karuthamma has lost her belief in marital life after meeting Pareekutti. Then the union leads them to commit suicide. Thus, the sub elements help to build up the permutation of the film. There is no variation in creating the characters of the film from the novel. The director has followed the path of Thakazhi's characterization in the novel. But, selecting the actors is more important than other duties in film making because, characters play a major role in creating a film. The director does not even hesitate introduce new faces in the film in order to recreate the spirit of the original characters. The story gets alive with the development of the characters in the film.

The director, Ramu Kariyat has chosen the actors in the right way while choosing the actors for Pareekutti, Chemban Kunju, Palani, the headman of the village, Kandankoran, Achakunju, Ayyankunju, Ramamuppan, Chakki, Nallapennu, and others. The director has faithfully drawn the actors and actresses of the state. He knew that transforming the actors into the characters in the film is big challenge to him and the success of the characters outlive in the memory of audience, thereby the audience and the actors communicate with each other. The director, Ramu Kariyat has employed the strategies of cinematography to draw the audience. The portrayal of Karuthamma's features through Sheela also impresses the audience's mind but the readers of the novel may doubt if Karuthamma is fair or black. The director represents Karuthamma fair and good looking with exuberance of youth in the film. The present researcher has looked at this from the cinematic point of view that a film is an entertainment. It should relieve the tension of modern currents of people. The audience of

theatre comes to be relieved from their sorrows and get pleasure from the film. Totawad Nagnath Ramrao states that the external features like physical attributes to support the understanding of the characters are visible as the audience is left with no choice but to fall in line with director of the film. The visuals of the film leave deep impression on the audience for two reasons: the actors who portray the characters appeal to the audience; the action both valiant and romantic (154). Hence, the director had to change and alter the physical features of the heroine in the film, Chemmeen.

The film director has also interpolated several special features in the film, Chemmeen. They are songs, symbols, graphics and art. Songs also constitute one of the unique features of a film, Chemmeen. Songs are metrically composed with music in the film. The film, Chemmeen has also good songs. There are four hit songs in Chemmeen. All the lyrics are composed by Vayalar and the singers who sang in the film are K.J. Yesudas, Manna Dey and P. Leela. All the songs are integrated with the movement of the story. There are four powerful songs in the film. They are ‘Kadalakkara Ponore, Maanasa Maine Varu’, ‘Pennale’ and ‘Putha Purkkarne’. The director interpolated the songs in the movie. The songs are fused with the development of theme in the story.

The film is not exceptional in giving the songs to the leading character, Pareekutti. The song ‘Kadalakkara Ponore’ is a choral song that deals with the spirit of fisherman’s adventure in the sea. The spirit of this song is based on folklore and it is in the form of an apostrophe. The song is interlocked well with the story. Pareekutti sings this song joyfully on seeing the fishermen in the sea and he asks the fishermen what they will bring back from the sea. He asks if they will bring golden flowers like fish from an illusory island or serene dove of the heart lake. The background of this song is that Pareekutti sits on the seashore. Music is also amalgamated with the song. The next song ‘Maanasa maine Varu’ deals with the love of Pareekutti for Karuthamma. The director, Ramu Kariyat, gives the opportunity to Pareekutti to express his love through this song. The song shows the Romantic spirit of Pareekutti towards Karuthamma. He states that she is longing for her love and he states that she is shy. Pareekutti sings the song in immense joy and says that the tide of the ocean is never stopped and so also the desires of a brimming bird. Pareekutti calls Karuthamma as his childhood mate in the song. Songs help the director and art director narrate the story in the film. The background of the song is that Pareekutti sits on the seashore filled with strong emotions of love. The next song, ‘Pennale’ is about Karuthamma. It is a choric song. The song addresses the beautiful heroine and portrays her beauty. The mythical belief about Katalamma is brought into this song. The life of a fisherman at sea is in the hands of his wife’s chastity. If she is loyal to her husband, the sea Goddess will save him from all disasters and dangers. The background of the song is that Karuthamma’s marriage to Palani has been fixed. The song indicates that Palani is a fisherman and asks Karuthamma to be

faithful to him. Thus, the song is interrelated with the story and plays a choric role in the film.

The final song, 'Putha Purkkarne' is about the appearance of the season of Chakara. Usually, fishermen get Chemmeen (shrimps) during this season. The fisherman earns a lot of money. The season is like a festival. Everyone is happy and they are in festive mood. The singers greet and bless all fishermen for good haul from the sea. The whole song reflects the happiness and the gay mood of the fisher folk during this season. Chemban Kunju, Chakki and Karuthamma do eagerly anticipate the season. Hence, the background of the song is set in the film, Chemmeen.

The director has employed various techniques such as visual symbols in the film, Chemmeen. The director has exploited the visual symbols to express his deep and hidden meaning to the audience. In the film, Chemmeen, the director has focussed five symbols such as the waves of the sea, the crow, the dove, the crab, and the eagle. Every symbol gives a deep meaning about the respected character to the audience in the movie. The director has exploited the waves of the sea, as a symbol to express a special meaning to the mind of Karuthamma. According to him, the mind of Karuthamma is synonymous with the waves of the sea. The director has simultaneously turned the camera on the waves of the sea and the facial expression of Karuthamma. This focus could be found continuously in the film, Chemmeen whenever Karuthamma appears on the screen. The projection of the waves symbolizes the mind of Karuthamma who is torn between tradition and modernity. She could not be completely free from the rigid social customs and traditions but, at the same time, she could not give up her love. The significant meaning of the waves of the sea is that Karuthamma's mind is oscillating between Pareekutti and Palani even after the marriage. When Pareekutti comes to intimate the death of Chakki, Karuthamma is afraid to come outside the house. She believes that she may defile the seafront by having an affair with Pareekutti. She believes that she may not be able to control her own self before Pareekutti. Moreover, she thinks deeply about Palani's expedition in the sea. She believes that Palani will disown her for her illicit relationship with Pareekutti. The director has employed the symbol of the waves throughout the development of the film to present the mental oscillation of Karuthamma in the film, Chemmeen.

The crow is another symbol in the film, Chemmeen to underline the important incident of death in the film. The black crow is shown before Chakki's death. The director focuses on the crow which is bathing in a small puddle and it continues to immerse itself in the water and shakes its head. The crow, water and the puddle are related to the rituals of funeral. This symbol is very effective in the film, Chemmeen. A dove is also represented as a symbol in the film, Chemmeen. The general assumption of projecting dove in the movie is that the dove symbolizes the attachment of Pareekuuti and Karuthamma and their psychological struggle. The director of Chemmeen effectively uses the symbol of the dove

to underline the meaning of love and peace of mind in connection with Karuthamma and Pareekutti. Dove also implies that it is the messenger between Karuthamma and Pareekutti. But really, there is no physical contact between them. After the marriage of Palani and Karuthamma, Pareekutti becomes disillusioned and sad. He cannot forget his love for Karuthamma. Besides this, his business is also declining. In the situation, Ramu Kariyat has employed the symbol of the dove. Pareekutti sits in the shadow of a boat in the evening and he scribbles on the sea sand and nearby him a dove is sitting. This is a visual image. The dove indicates that Pareekutti's mind is full of love for Karuthamma. But, the love could not be expressed and at the same time his mind is not peaceful. Not only does the dove indicates the mind of Pareekutti but also denotes the mental state of Karuthamma. She is in the deep blue sea. She cannot accept Palani as her husband and at the same time, she cannot forget Pareekutti in her mind. Both Karuthamma and Pareekutti do not have peace in their mind.

The eagle is another symbol in the film, Chemmeen. The director has indirectly employed the symbol of eagle in the film. The eagle is represented as an observer of all incidents and the problems of the fisher folks in the village. The eagle is often shown above the village flying around the sky. The people believe that eagle looks at the incidents and the problems of the fisher folk on the sea coast and he will punish such people who defy the sea front. Moreover, they connect the Hindu mythology of Lord Krishna with the bird, Eagle. Thus, the director has projected the eagle in the film, Chemmeen. The other effective visual symbol in the film is the representation of crab. The crab is a kind of ten legged, arthropod. The word, crab is derived from the Latin word cancer. In the film, Chemmeen, the symbol, crab is employed by the director to denote the mental illness of Chemban kunju. After Chakk's death, he loses everything including his mental balance. The director projects the crab in the sea sand, which burrows in the ground. This scene symbolizes that the guilty consciousness has corroded Chemban Kunju psychologically. He has really dug the ground for himself. According to the director, his greedy nature over money leads him to the sufferings of mental fever, which is like a cancerous disease. According to Todawad, the visual images stimulate our perception directly. Film is more sensory experience than reading. There is a colour of sounds, emotions, movements, languages etc in the verbal language (155). Thus, the director poignantly uses this symbol of the crab to signify the mental illness of Chemban Kunju.,

Cinematography is the art of making cinema in connection with the production of cinema. The basic Cinematographic features of a film include visual story-telling, rhythm, camera angles and movement and framing and composition of camera shots. In Chemmeen, the story is visually presented to the audience and it has a fine flow of movement, which gives a rhythm to the film. The camera is a technical instrument to produce the photographic effect through various angles and movements of the camera. The framing and composing of the camera shots are also the part of the film shooting. Camera shots are helpful to study the

characters' features and the facial expressions of the characters. The different shots powerfully project the feelings and emotions of lead characters in the film, Chemmeen. The director has taken different shots such as close up, long shot, very long shot, knee shot, hip shot, mid close up and extreme close up, fade in, fade out, zoom in and zoom out. Music is also used in films. The music director, Salil Chowdhury compose good back ground music to the film. He worked hard to arrest the audience with his music in the film. The songs and visual symbols also score the features of cinematography to enhance the interest of the audience. The art director's role is as important as the director's role in the film. In certain places, the art director prepares sheds in the studio to show the reality in the film. The art director keeps all in his mind and he frames the need of the situation to suit the movement of the theme in the film. The director endeavours to hide the differences between indoors and outdoors shooting in the film. The duty of the art director is to look at the dress, make up of all characters in the movie. He never hesitates to bring about originality or reality through actors, actresses, places and situations in the film. The popularity of the stars in Chemmeen also is one of the reasons for the success of the film. The roles of Pareekutti, Palani and

Karuthamma are played by Madhu, Sathyam, and Sheela. They were the leading actors and actresses of the times. Mostly the acting of Madhu, Sathyam and Sheela is good and commendable in the movie. It is no wonder that the film Chemmeen gained a large audience in India. The film is very effective but the novel is not effective and it is full of descriptions, dialogue. The description of the novel is transformed into graphic projections or into dialogue or an action in the film. The director does everything for the sake of creating curiosity in the minds of audience to watch the movie. There are many scenes more effective than the novels.

In the very opening of the film, the director introduces a love scene between Karuthamma and Pareekutti. This scene gives a photographic picture of the blue sea and boats. The dialogue starts in the novel like this (This is also the same dialogue in film). "You know my father is going to buy a fishing boat and a net, which will then be our own" (Chemmeen, 3).

The description of lovers and their feelings and emotions in the novel lack the effectiveness in the novel but it is achieved in the film. The film presents graphically the mental attitudes of Pareekutti and Karuthamma. The visual picture shows his shivering out of fear. The expression of inner feelings of Pareekutti, Karuthamma, Chemban kunju and Palani arrest the mind of audience in the film. The significant scene in the movie is the portrayal of first expedition of Chemban Kunju from the sea. The director focuses on the character and attitude of Chemban Kunju after his first haul. He pushes his own child, Panchami on account of his greediness towards his first haul and ignores Pareekutti even though he has got a loan from Pareekutti. The novelist, Thakazhi describes Chemban

Kunju's attitude that Chemban kunju orders them not to touch uppa from his boat (Chemmeen, 53). He gets hold of Panchami and gives her a push. She skids and falls down crying to her mother, Chakki and Karuthamma weeps over this. "My goodness, who is this? The devil? Someone said (Chemmeen, 53). This scene is effectively presented in the movie. The traders including Pareekutti gather round the boat but Chemban kunju pretends as if he knows none of them before.

"Will you trade the fish with me," Pareekutti asked. Chemban Kunju behaved as if he had not even seen Pareekutti[...]. "Have you the money? I must have cash" he said (Chemmeen, 54).

On contrasting the novel and film, the novelist fails to bring out Chemban Kunju's feelings and Pareekutti's feelings in the description of narration. But, the director has focused the sudden change in the face of Chemban Kunju, his behaviour and Pareekutti's feelings and emotions towards Chemban Kunju. This scene is powerfully portrayed in the movie. The director focuses on every character's face in the scene. For instance, Karuthamma's and Chakki's disgust over Chemban Kunju's changed behaviour is well brought out in the scene. After the death of Chakki, Chemban Kunju does not want to intimate his wife's death to Karuthamma. No sooner did Chakki fall sick than Chemban Kunju asked her daughter to look after her mother. But she refused to take care of her mother because she might meet Pareekutti in the village. But, however, Pareekutti goes to intimate the death of Chakki to Karuthamma. Pareekutti has already promised Chakki that Karuthamma is his sister. He has said it only for the sake of the sick woman though he cannot forget Karuthamma. In the film, the scene is more effective than in the novel. Pareekutti has done it for Chakki's sake. But, psychologically Pareekutti cannot accept Karuthamma as his sister. In the film, Pareekutti's face is shown with unexpressed feelings of sorrow. Karuthamma fears meeting Pareekutti on account of not trusting her own self. She believes that if she goes outside, she may defile the seafront. Hence, Karuthamma's soul is also caught between the devil and deep blue sea. This is brought out effectively in the film. The novelist describes about Chemban Kunju's madness. The director, Ramu Kariyat has employed the visual symbol of a crab in the sea sand to represent the real madness of Chemban Kunju.

Conclusion:

The paper has seriously studied the similarities and dissimilarities between the novel, Chemmeen and the film, Chemmeen. The paper has also studied the novel and the film in relation with society. It underlines the source of the story of Chemmeen which hails from the fisher folk community in south coast of Kerala. The paper has also discussed the significance in the popularity of actors used in the film and stressed the need of changing the characters in the film. It has also highlighted the significant cinematic features in the film.

The film, Chemmeen is really very effective and so it can outlive the novel in the literary world.

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