

Unheard Voices: A Study of Psychoanalysis in the Tamil Film *Pariyerum Perumal*

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Abstract

Psychoanalytic criticism adopts the method reading and interpreting the literary work by Sigmund Freud's indication with dreams, unconscious desires and anxieties. Tamil Cinema had a history of nine decades from its first movie *Kalidas* (1931). The past movies did not have any notable Dalit films but the movies with the higher caste pride, egotism and its arrogance towards lower caste. In the beginning of 21st century, a new arena is created by few film makers like Pa. Ranjith expressed the agony of being a "Dalit" in the society. Mari Selvaraj, a well-known writer whose debut film in 2018 *Pariyerum Perumal* (Horse Laden Deity) portrayed the struggle of a Dalit student in the casteism rooted society. The intermediate caste people next to Brahmins, considered them as chivalry or warrior caste known for bravery and discriminated the lower caste as untouchables and low working caste. The movie *Pariyerum Perumal* deviated from other Tamil films which rejected the fierceness to take revenge on upper caste people and forced on the empowerment. The movie is known for the realistic approach of the situation without exaggeration. The paper focuses on the psychoanalytic approach to the unheard voices of Dalits in the chosen movie which is not voiceless but deliberately silenced or preferably unheard in the Grand Narratives of Tamil Cinema for the past decades.

Key Words: Anti-Casteism, Desires, Anxieties, Discrimination, Education, Honour Killing

Psychoanalytic Criticism is the study of literary texts or films with the idea of Sigmund Freud and later theorist. It adopts the method of reading and interpreting the work of art which is considered as the manifestation of writer's obsessions. The analysis of the dreams, ambivalence, unconscious desires and anxieties of the characters, imageries and symbols depicted the hidden meaning in the unconscious state in relation to the individual, family and society.

Tamil Cinema had a history of nine decades which is classified into three phases. First Phase "talkie" (1931 – 1950) is the period be similar to the street theatre with earlier folk artists in the themes of puranas, myths and folklore which is nothing projected the real life. Second Phase, the Melodrama period (1951 – 1975) depicted the life in exaggeration, excessive dialogues and escapism. Third Period (1976 – 1985) Tamil Cinema moved towards social realism with partially realistic and anti-sentimental films. Another important achievement of this period is the form, style and production values inculcate in it.

Tamil Cinema has its umbilical connection to politics. There are many social and political changes held in the state because of the cinema. National parties failed to grasp the importance of this effective medium in politics. From 1960 to the mid of 1985, the films portrayed a communist or socialist message. In the late 1980's there is a shift of Casteism

from the higher caste to intermediate caste over Dalits. In 1990s there is a thriving of Nativist (a form of social realism), the movies began to celebrate the caste identity and characters. In the modern time, after 2010, the Tamil cinema started to allow representing the Dalit Struggles by Pa. Ranjith's film like *Madras* (2014), *Kabali* (2016) and *Kaala* (2018).

Mari Selvaraj, a Tamil writer well-known for his books *Marakkave Ninaikiren* (Remembering To Forget), *Thamirabharaniyil Kollappadathavargal* (Not Murdered in River Thamirabharani). His books are mostly autobiographical in nature and depicted the class and caste struggle in southern Tamilnadu. His debut film in 2018 *Pariyerum Perumal* (Horse Laden Deity) portrayed the struggle of a Dalit Law college student, Pariyerum Perumal in the casteism rooted society. The film has visually pictured the existence of cruel caste practices and the pain of oppressed people by caste discrimination.

Sigmund Freud classified the structured mind into three metaphorical parts based on the conscious and unconscious state of mind that is Id, Ego and Superego. Id operates at the unconscious level which emphasizes on elementary, instinctual drives and desire with two biological instincts of Eros, the instinct to survival that involve us in life-supporting activities and Thanatos, the instinct to death that involve us in negative thoughts, destructive, antagonist and fierce behaviour. Ego acts as a channel to check the operation of Id and makes it to operate in socially appropriate way. It is based on infancy and develops in the beginning of infancy stage. Superego is the part of mind in which morality, ethics and higher principle exist in and encourages us to behave in socially and morally accepted way.

The paper first focuses on the binary opposition of the Id's activities on the characters in the film. Being an oppressed caste student, his Eros Id instincts him for education which is the only way for him and his community to empower. Once the reputed old man in his caste was abused by a police, he requested Pariyan to come to the power which meant the education. So he joined in Thirunelveli Law College and gave oath to the principal that he will become a good lawyer like Dr. Ambedkar. The lower caste people are struggling for the survival and life-sustaining activities in the hierarchal society.

Pariyan: Sorry grandpa, We won't go for hunting hereafter.

Old Man: Not that. We will hit back one day. I will tolerate anything for our people

Pariyan: What now! You want us to study. Tell me what to study.

Old Man: LAW

-*Pariyerum Perumal* 00:46:50

On the other side, the oppressor caste exhibited the Thanatos Id which wanted to destroy the low caste people when they became equal to them. In the beginning of the film, the murder of Pariyan's dog Karrupi is the symbol of Thanatos Id. The dog belonged to the native breed of southern Tamilnadu called Cippipaarai and the name of the dog literally meant the black which denoted the colour of oppressed caste. The upper caste men did not want them to grow up a cippipaarai dog breed because once it was used by Zamindars and landlords, a symbol of equating with upper caste people.

One more thing is the gender of the dog is female. In some village, there were some unwritten rules that the oppressed people should not rise dogs especially the male one. If the dogs have mate with oppressor caste people's dog, they will kill the dog and punish the dog's guardian. When the low caste people are not allowed to own a dog for hunting, then how would they raise the voice against oppressor caste. The inner agony of these people did not instinct to take revenge on the upper caste rather they wanted to get power by education. But in the educational institution too, there is a thirst for power dynamics which ends in fight between two caste people in the Government colleges.

The next focuses on language problem in the educational institution. From an unprivileged village and Tamil medium educational system, Pariyan and other students would not be able to understand the teaching. When Pariyan expressed his feeling towards the way of English learning, The teachers having a bad impression on his caste which again discriminated him in the classroom. He tried to prove that all the students were not understand the way of teaching, portrayed him as indisciplinary student in the classroom. For that Pariyan's English Professor said, "Quotala vandha Kunji" (Chicken from Quota system). This made Pariyan hectic because he scored high marks in his tenth and twelfth public examination but the only drawback is the English language. Though the oppressed caste people had the knowledge and talents, people had misjudged them that they were using government quota system for their empowerment.

The English Enigma of Pariyan is understood by Jo, a higher caste girl in his class who is willing to teach him English. Jo moved very closely with Pariyan and he was invited by Jo for her sister's marriage. In the marriage function, Pariyan was assaulted cruelly by Jo's relatives and one of her brother, disposed his urine on him, "Uncle, how dare he come to our home and sit equally before us, leave me, I will kill him with my own hands (*Pariyerum Perumal* 01:05:40)". Jo's father warned Pariyan to be away from his daughter, or else his relations would kill his daughter too with him. Even the friendship is misunderstood by these people as love and they prohibited their friendship. From this incident onwards, Pariyan was psychologically disturbed.

Just like the murder of dog Karuppi, the oppressor's community did not tolerate the lower caste people's friendship with higher caste community girls. Without any mistakes, Pariyan was victimized by the oppressor caste people and he tried his level best to away from Jo and other people. Pariyan was indulged in unbearable torture like locked in the girls' toilet and attack on his father but he tried his level best to continue his studies.

Another one symbolism in the movie is the colour "Blue" which denoted the concept of brotherhood under sky that all human beings are equal under the blue sky. Throughout the song of "Naan Yar" (Who am I) the hero had the blue colour in his face. The colour represented his quest for equality among the society and the particular oppressor community's overpowering on the Dalit people. The whole song "Naan Yar" questioned the deaths of Dalit people in the name of honour killing.

Rail thedi vandhu kollum naan yaar
(Forced to die before the train.... Who am I?)
Pookum maramengum thookil thongum naan yaar
(Hanged in the blossoming trees.... Who am I?)
Kudisaikul kadari erintha naan yaar
(Burnt inside the hut.... Who am I?)
Malakkuzhikul moochai adakum naan yaar
(Stopped the breath inside the septic tank.... Who am I?)

The song interrogated the cruelty of Dalits death in manual scavenger works and honour killings. The society wanted the oppressed people for these kinds of menial jobs. The villain of the movie is an old man who killed the oppressed caste people when they intervened into the life of oppressor caste community. He framed the crime as murders and suicides which is unheard in the social noises. The old man said very egoistically that he did the murders as a service for his "clan-god" (Kulasamy).

The Pleasure Principle drives the oppressor caste people to discriminate in all ways because of the Thanatos Id's drive. Pariyan's father is doing the work of female karagam dancer, so his appearance would like a female (probably transgender). Jo's brother made Pariyan's father nude in the college campus and forced him to meet with accident. For that too, Pariyan's parents felt that was not new to them and used to it. Even they wanted Pariyan to quit the college to away from this kind of discrimination

The film, *Pariyerum Perumal* did not sympathise the discrimination of Dalit people rather it pictured the shrewdness of the oppressed people in daily life. . All these incidents are the quarrel between the Eros Id of the oppressed caste and Thanatos Id of the oppressor caste. The unheard voices of these oppressed people are only for the survival and socio-economic upliftment. There is a deviation from the Dalitism ideology of "voice-less", it is not voiceless rather it is powerless. Without power of expression, these voices are deliberately silenced, or preferably unheard.

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