Spatial Politics of Women in Adoor Gopalakrishnan's Films

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Abstract— Film narratives occur in unique and yet diverse spatial contexts. Notable among them are the socio-cultural spatial location within the filmic space. A number of scholars (Khatib,2004; Mennel,2010;de Lauretis,1984, Kostantarakos) have examined the spatial locations of narratives. The available research literature shows gaps in our understanding of the social production of space mediated by women in filmic spaces despite the works by Laura Mulvey and (1975) Theresa De Lauretis (1984). This study is an attept to understand the spatial politics of women in Adoor Gopalakrishnan's films employed with qualitative texual analysis.

Keywords— Critical Discourse Analysis; Feminism; Domestic Spaces; Public Space; Gender Relation

1. Introduction

The significant role of the media, in general, and the film, in particular in disseminating information and creating image of the real life by the use of language as powerful social tool, is totally irrefutable. Film narrative styles occur in unique and yet diverse spatial context, notably among the socio-cultural spaces produced within the filmic space. The relationship in-between women and space have now been recognized as an important issue for feminist discussion. Development in psychology and geography have encouraged the use of social maps' to explore the way in which space is perceived (Ardener;1981). Especially in the film number of scholars had examined the spatial location of narrative (deLaur etis;1984 ,Khatib;2004 ,Jain-Shanker;2009, Men nel;2010) which are important for several reasons. First, film acquires a power of control by fixing in place the conflicting idea about the constitution of social space. Secondly, the film spaces are temporally replaced by real space in which we live. Third, by space, one can contribute to the dynamics of the narrative event and can be shown to play an important part in the development of the variety of considerations, both ideological and aesthetic knowledge (Konst antarakos;2010). Film medium as considered the potential mass communicative medium, women has always subjugated in the narrative trajectory. Women studies had appeared at first in the United states in the second half of the 1960's, with the wide reach in the course of development and programmes, emerging in other Western countries during the 1970's. Subsequently, the invention of feminist scholarly theory invented the gender or women related studies, which is now a global phenomena. Media representations of women, then, were a central concern of the 'second wave' feminism of the 1960's and 1970's. Betty Friedan's (1963) The Feminine Mystique traced the post-war construction of the American ideal image of femininity (what Friedan called the 'happy house wife heroine') through media representations, found in women magazines and advertising images (Thornha;1998). The present study attempts to examine the modes and patterns of social production of space (Lefebvre;1991) in the negotiations of the women characters within the filmic spatial politics of women Adoor Gopalakrishnan's films. The available research literature shows gaps in our understanding of the social production of space mediated by women in filmic spaces despite the works of Laura Mulvey and (1975) Theresa De Lauretis (1984) etc., which had contributed enormously to our understanding of the ideologies behind images of women in films. This present study is an attempt to understand the space, political discourse of women in Adoor Gopalakrishnan's films. The space, spatiality of women is fairly uncomplicated, which really refers to the location, mediation of ideology within the public as well domestic space.

2. Space, Politics and gender relation in Kerala Society

Kerala occupies a unique position in the socio- cultural and political map of India which is located on the Western side of the Southern region of India. Though this stretch of land is not as big as other states represented in India, the cultural synthesis and the political developments have had a great impact on the early settlements.

Academic research proven that the south Indian states of Kerala is a typical example of the progressive success story and it's frequently acknowledged for the superior status of women in the state. Unfortunately this has not succeeded any major changes in the mind-set of the people toward women hood. Until, now the people's attitude remain as a pseudo- modern female identity. It is unveiled in the argument of V.T Usha. "education attainment and limited degree of economic freedom do not seem to have conferred on Kerala women a high degree of social freedom. In dress and demeanor she is more constrained than her educated counterparts elsewhere in India or abroad. And with the passage of time and in spite of 'progress' on several fronts, her safety in the workplace of the place outside the home have become uncertain" (Usha;2004).

The high social development indices have given rise to the 'myth of the Malayali women' as enjoying high status than their counterparts elsewhere in the country, especially in view of the fact that high female literacy in the state. This myth has been augmented and nurtured by evidence that matrilineal forms of kinship patterns were prevalent among certain communities in Kerala (Maridul and Epan;2001). However, the high level of female literacy and employment, one-third reservation of seats in the local governance bodies, high sex ration and low fertility rates together with high female physical health achievements indicate that the women of Kerala have achieved certain amount of social and political empowerment in the public domain. However, the development and the esteemed education and other socio-political developments are not strongly improves the women equality in these peculiar society. This has been remembered as the surveillance and other women victimizer incidents. In this context the gender equality had been extremely complex phenomena in this state which are works in the ale psyche of everyday life.

3. Studies on space Politics and Gender Relation in Indian, Malayalam, Gopalakrishnan's Cinema

The Kerala society is a very repressed society at all levels the patriarchal family structure is very strong and the marriage system is becoming increasingly worst. It is like selling and baying. These days most of the marriage set up is like that. The religious backlash is also enforcing it and the collapse of the economic structures is also very hopeless… Men are really, really frustrated, but they are enjoying themselves by attacking women. Women should be submissive to them. With the family structure and within the society, men are playing out their superior role. On other levels they are very powerless in the strata of power. But in front of women they are becoming very powerful and they are use all their power (Erwer; 2011,139pp.). Emancipation is an outstanding character of the women of Kerala, which distinguishes them from their counterparts elsewhere in India (Nair; 1984). The higher status of women in Kerala has a long historical past. It is also influenced by various ecological and sociological factors. Historically the Sangam period was the turning point for women in society that throughout the Sangam women enjoy high status in the society. In Sangam period Nair women in society was very prominent. The important reason for the high status of Nair women was "Marumakkathayam" (matrilineal), the law of inheritance through the female line (Jayasee;1989).

In the film of earlier decades, women characters were more individualistic and powerful, capable of thinking for themselves and acting on their own. In fact, most well known film actresses of recent years have gone on record complaining about the lack of powerful role in contemporary Malayalam cinemas, which provide an opportunity for them to display their acting prowess. The actresses are typecast in role such as the loving and dedicated mother, the dutiful wife, the suffering sister, the obedient daughter and so on. On the other side, there are the figures of the mean mother- in-law, the errant daughter-in-law, the selfish daughter, sister, usually married off but demanding their dues from the family of their birth, taking side with the mercenary husband against their own kith and kin. According to the story position, if the women characters are good, they suffer all along in silence, and perhaps will be rewarded in the end; or else, their reward is the happiness of their loved ones; if they are mean they are normally rewarded with some punishment in the end. Of course, no women in consulted with regard to her opinion in the matter, for she is not expected to have an individual opinion, as different from the commonly accepted one (the male centric one) (Usha; 2004,).

Malayalam films are popularly narrative mode, enjoy the patronage of population in the southern part of India that has reached the high level of social development and literacy level. The matrilineal system leading the region has a complex pattern of development. And also the equally complex attitude towards the women-hood makes attraction for researchers. The paradoxical position occupied by women in this society in reflected in film as well. Malayalam film had maintained its distinct identity in terms of selection of stories and narrative aesthetic right from the beginning to the present. But it comes in the presentation of women in film, we do not have any particular differences compared to other language film. In the view of specific mode of cinematic practice in Malayalam and it's the relation to the category of women and spaces of work and home helps us to ask question regarding what has been left out of history. Located in every day space, these films provide a gendered version of modernity. By representing women's choice between public and private, work and home, these films as cultural form have shown female subjectivity under negotiation (Menon;2010). In the socio- politically and economically developed state in the country. The women identity has ben detrained within the spatial practice of women in the everyday practice under the negotiation of patriarchal notion. It has been captured in the visual magic of Adoor frame.

4. Review of Literature

Media representation of women, then were a central concern of the 'second wave' feminism of the 1960 and 11970s. Betty Friedan's (1963) The Feminine Mystique traced the post-war construction of the American ideal image of femininity (what Friedan called the 'happy house wife heroine') through media representations, found in women's magazines and advertising images (Thornha;1998). In this political ideal image on the magazine and media alert the women scholar to look the

allegoric aspect of film ideology and women representation.

In the Analysis of Claire Jonston's works not only underline analysis of capitalist but of patriarchal ideology. Within a sexist ideology and a male dominant cinema, women bodies may be constantly on shows as spectacle within film, but women as women largely absent. The women operate in films as a sign, but sign which draws its meaning not from the reality of women's lives but from the desires and fantasies of men. Women are, essentially, a message, which is being communicated in patriarchal culture, and it is in her inscription through stereotyping and myth as a sign, that she operates, finally, in the dominant culture forms. In art, therefore, in the film text, the representation of women are not primarily a sociological theme of problem, as it is often though, but a sign only which is being communicated. (Thornha;1998).

De Lauretis (1984) emphasize the films subjectivity is not a fixed entity but a constant process of self production. Film narration is one of the way of reproducing subjectivity, each story derived it's structure from the subjects of desire and from its inscription in social and cultural codes. Narrative structures are defined by oedipal desire, which should be understood as socio-political economy, dominated by men's control over ones women, as a way of emphasizing the sexual origin of subjectivity. Sexual desire is bound up with the desire of knowledge, that is, the quest of truth. The desire to solve riddles is a male desire for excellence, because the female subject herself is the mystery. Woman is the question and can hence not ask the question nor make her desire intelligible (Theresa; 1984).

In Satyajit Ray's Devi; Constructing a Third – World Feminist Critique, opens the female subjectivity with explicit manner of spatial aesthetic. The iconic sense of the movie deals with the problem of female subjectivity. And also it has widely criticized ideology as expressed through patriarchal feudal structure and Hindu religious orthodoxy with lured and the spatial narration (Bishnupriya;1999). In the narrative diegesis keeps the male controlled of spatial practice in the screen. In this movie Ray's improvises by using the camera's explorative space and props the spatial details of gendered subversion in the visual discourse. The female protagonist Doyamoyee's access of halls, ceremonial place and public space all are that of her public sphere. These public spheres determine the identity of her public and private politic of women in domestic premise. The existing literature show there has important relation in the understanding of spatial metaphor and spatial politics of women in narrative location of women in film. And the patriarchal male dominant social ideological center power relation space in physical and private space of film domain.

5. Methodology

This research work on spatial politics of women in Gopalakrishnan films are based on three films, primarily include, specific reference to the *Elippathayam* (Rat–

Trap,1982) *Nalupennungal* (Four Women, 2007), *Orupennum Randanum* (Women and Two Men, 2008). These Films are historically contextualized by women centered spatial practice of society as well as public and private. This study is concerned with exploring the manner in which spatial politics of women in Adoor Gopalakrishnan's films. For this purpose the researcher has chosen qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis method.

Qualitative researchers, assume the social world is a pattern of symbolic relationships sustained by human action and interaction, its other hand assume that people interpret there soul and natural environments and orient their action in way that are meaningful to them. (Kenney; 2009, pp.11-12).

Visual Image is never innocent: It is always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledge's. A critical approach to visual images is therefore needed: one that thinks about the agency of the image, considers the social practice and effects of its viewing, and reflects on the specificity of that viewing by various audiences, including the academic critic. (Rose; 2012, pp.17). However, any problematic notions are implied by visual image, particularly Gopalakrishnan's films centered in patriarchal ideology and power relations in everyday life.

According to Fairclough and Wodak, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) "systematically explore often opaque relationship of causality and determination between a). discursive practice, event and text, and b) wider social and cultural structure, relations and process; to investigate how such practices, events, text (image) argue out and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggle over power".

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), one of the potential approaches to analyze media text. According to James Gee, the meaning of sign/code are shaped by discourse- basic way of knowing and thinking constituting the meaning of social practices in specific contexts or social world (Gee; 1996).

Critical Discourse Analysis is a research enterprise which critically analyzes the relations between language and society. More specifically, Critical Discourse Analysis research that studies the way ideology, identity and inequality are a (re) enacted through texts produced in social and political context (Dijeck; 2001).

In the argument of Fair Clough's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis is not a method or a "tool in a box of tool", but is rather, a theoretical perspective on language and semiosis (any type of material that is used to convey meaning; conversation, written texts, billboards, television programme, photographs, or any other way of signifying) "which gives rise to way of analyzing language of semiosis within brooders analysis of the social process" (Clough; 2001). Critical Discourse Analysis is important in two ways the first one is attempting to uncover the manner in which language (visual) is involved in ideology, identity formation, and relation of power.

6. Discussion and Findings-Spatiality of working class women

In the very first experienced on the screen probably the spectator to understand the context with the spatial relation of subjective location. So, every visual should have tent to convey something. When looking into the individual spatiality of subject which leads us to the complexity of spatial discourses. In the patriarchal societal sense hidden identity works passively in the determination narrative location.

Fig. 1: Movie Scenes

In the narrative aspect of this visual are two women talking while in Pinnampuram (back side fig.1.) of the domestic space, particularly this space is feminine space. And also the non-living elements on the frame are associated with women. In character position, working class women who's sitting in the marginal location, but Chinuamma's position is higher than the location of workers women and also touched with earth. The spatial discrimination very consciously works within the power and ideological discourse in the spatial determination of upper cast and lower cast politics. As well as similar sequence is when the working class women asks coconut oil at *Pinnampuram* and also seeks permission to take bath at private pond, the Rajamma upper cast women refuses to permit the private pond for working class women.

6.1 Public Space

Public space is not innocent to access women movement. Indian society witness a culture of misogamy: most public spaces lack a sense of 'belongingness' (de Certeau 1984) and suffer from a general animosity towards women. The most of the common form of harassment faced by women in public spaces is locally known as 'eve-teasing' which manifest itself in lewd comments on the physical beauty of women or the way they dress, whistling, staring, striking, singing song etc, (Bhattacharyya ; 2009).

In the particular sequence (Fig.2) when *Kamakshi* return to temple visit, on the way a man whistling at her, this signifies the public space is not safe for women as well as it remembers the spectator to understand the politics of unmarried women in the public space, and also her spatial sense has been reminding the 'belongingness' in public space.

Fig. 2: Movie Scenes

6.2 Private (domestic) Space

Domestic spaces always floated with gendered discourse, men habituate front spaces women longing at interior side of the domestic premises. In the narrative function of the visual tune, domestic space are controlled by the masculine discourse traditional space are granted the freedom for women with closed accessibility. Women use the "female space" of the domestic sphere to develop associations and enhance their own power (st Karen Kalttunen's; 1982). Even in feminine space women are free to access but are reserved with patriarchal cautions. In the argument of Grosz traditional space are male dominated but those place help them relate to their cultural identity.

Fig. 3: Movie Scenes

Rajamma always reserved the kitchen and Pinnampuram. As well *poomukham* here the unwritten ideological notion works behind the spatial dominant at home. And women are always reserved within their private room and kitchen space and *pinnapuram*.

6.2 Liminal Space

The relationships between the public space and domestic space has the identity crisis in the Indian context, public spaces open to access everybody but when entering the private space of people we demand notion of intimacy or acknowledge. In the first shot itself it seeks the contemplation of individual women and the challenge of living without marriage. Despot, in the beginning shot a men knocking the door, here the luminal notion is assembled between the character spaces of outside and inside, at the point of sense the inside women and outsider men are isolated with door, when she opens the door, only he enters inside. In the specific narrative space, function as

one who live in the society according to the decision of individual. Finally, the last shot makes the spectator think about her decision.

Fig. 4: Movie Scenes

In the similar sequence in *Chinnuamm*a, *Nanupilla* visit at her home he seeks permission to get inside(Fig.4), public people has the restriction to enter the private space. The ideological sense of this permission is a product of social practice for public and private space. Here the narration proclaimed the liminality of spatial politics which is inner and outer sensibility of domestic.

7. Conclusion

Space, spatial politics of women in film is very crucial in Adoor Gopalakrishnan's Films, these spatial discourses have been employed in the narrative diegesis open the gendered discrimination in the narrative location of films. In this ruptured spaces, women habituate in ideological conscious of patriarchial notion. This spatial practice has been politizised with gendered disparity.

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