

Translating 'Pure', 'Clean' and Woman's Body: A Case Study of Memory and Experience from within and outside the Fishing Community

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Abstract

This paper is a part of my ongoing PhD research. The work as a whole does focus on how the day-today lives and beliefs of the fisherfolk have become to what it is now, tracing back to the unwritten history they have been carrying along generations, through collective memories and icons based on their experiences, from a literary point of view. This paper, in particular, is based on the narratives of the fishing community from Alleppey, and Trivandrum, two major coastal districts of Kerala, a Southern State in India, and also compares their oral narratives and representations in other media. The research questions that led to this study have popped up while reading the famous Malayalam novel, Chemmeen by Thakazhi Shivasankara Pillai.

The paper is based on the query about the existence of certain myths, especially those concerning the chastity of women and the concept of purity, as highlighted and overtly emphasised in this particular novel and other similar narratives. How does their collective memory get translated into their day-today lives and rituals? This paper specifically looks into the layers of translation interconnecting the concepts of purity and woman's body based on conversations with the fisherfolk, and their representation or misrepresentation in other media.

Keywords: Memory, experience, translation, gender, fisherfolk narratives.

Brief Introduction to the Community

Located at the extreme southern tip of the Indian subcontinent, Kerala is situated between the Arabian Sea to the west and the Western Ghats to the east. Kerala's coastal line extends to approximately 580 km in length, while it varies between 35–120 km in width. Geographically, the state can be roughly divided into three climatically distinct regions, viz., the Eastern Highlands (rugged and cool mountainous terrain), the Central Midlands (rolling hills), and the Western Lowlands (coastal plains)¹. Recognised by UNESCO as an indigenous community, the *Mukkuva* Community (Fishing Community) of Kerala is one among the many marginalised communities in the society. Despite the large number of people belonging to the community, the inferior treatment meted them is often due to the manual labour they are communally engaged in.

According to G. John Samuel, the *Mukkuvars*, believed to have emigrated from Ceylon, are today found in Kanyakumari District, coastal areas of Kerala, Lakshadweep, and in some scattered areas of Karnataka and occupies a major area of Sri Lanka. Although they are described as a homogeneous ethnic group, their present lifestyle is believed to vary according to geographical, ecological and other influences (Samuel 1998: 118). They are a community that has differing ethnic identities based on the state or country of domicile. Although they are considered a marginalised community in India, their social and numerical position make them an important community in Sri Lanka. They are also located in Lakshadweep Islands of India but are called *Melacherries*. They are also identified as the *Araya* caste among the communities who follow Hinduism towards some of the southern parts of Kerala. Inhabiting the

¹ India, National Portal of. "Kerala."
<http://knowindia.gov.in/knowindia/state_uts.php?id=14. n.d>

coastal regions of the state, their main source of income for livelihood is fishing.

Oral Narratives and its Significance in the Community

The community owns a rich oral tradition. The folk element prevalent among the *Mukkuvar* can be found in various genres of their narratives such as folktales, myths, beliefs, songs etc. It's a surprise that their oral tradition is still an under explored area in research though their culture is impregnated with their indigenous and local knowledge. As an indigenous community, they have a close relationship with the sea and its ecology. With the intervention of modernity and technology, many of their exclusive cultural memories and knowledge are being forgotten and deteriorating as the generations pass by. Underlining the fact that we live in a patriarchal society, there are certain dogmas which are still followed among the fishing communities for ages, based on gender.

While they respect the sea as a Mother, rather than a Father figure (according to the Hindu Mythology Sea is considered a Male God, *Samudradevan*, *Varuna*), it's fascinating to observe how gendered spaces are mapped in their society which lead to geographical limitations of women, though the intensity of these beliefs can vary from region to region. Even if it's stating the obvious that the society follows Patriarchy, the gap lies in the fact that these oral texts were never learnt from a folk or literary critical perspective. Till now, the life of women from the community was studied only from a human/gender rights or economic perspective, but a study concerning their portrayal in the myths or their beliefs remain untouched. This paper focuses on how the body of a woman and the concepts of "pure" and "clean" is represented in three different contexts- in a mainstream literary text which was also adapted to a motion

picture, a one-act play and some personal narratives from the members of the community.

Translation from within the Community and outside

In the paper, ‘Translating Europe's Others’, Talal Asad and John Dixon talk about the intricacies of translating the Other's in the context of Colonialization by Europe. Even if the scenario is different, reading the context as ‘The Mainstream's Others’ equates this to their observations. When an upper class/caste person writes about "the others" who are considered to be the minority or marginalised of the same society, the tendency is that it brings in the same effect. They discuss the historical and political context within which the two parties relate to each other-the society to be represented and the society for which that representation is destined (Asad & Dixon 1985: 170). It is also equally important that how a dominated language accommodates the narratives of these communities, which mostly remain in the oral form.

The lived experience and collective memory of a culture which has travelled over generations, within themselves undergo a translation and become part of their belief system adapting to their day to day lives. It can be reinforced by what Asad says, “In Ethnography, the primary material is oral and what's vitally important it is, for the most part, embedded in the activities of the everyday life. Hence, only a lived experience can talk authentically about a memory rather than observing from the outside world” (Asad & Dixon 1985: 173).

‘Pure’ (शुद्धः: *śuddham*), ‘Clean’ (शुद्धिः: *śuddhi*) and Woman’s Body

The words *śuddham* and *śuddhi* have a Sanskrit origin and are derived from the root word *śuddh* which means pure. *śuddham*

means pure and *śuddhi* means clean. Pure and clean in every culture and community, throughout the time have undoubtedly been associated with the woman's body. Evidences from various cultures are in abundance to substantiate this belief. Starting from religious to historical to socio-cultural texts and norms, fidelity and menstruation are two of those major factors which determine "her" pure and clean body, anywhere in the world. The case is no different in the fishing communities.

Discussion of the Texts

Chemmeen – the Celebrated Novel and Cinema

In the Post-Colonial India, there has been a boom of education, literacy and literature even though the access was very much limited to certain social strata. *Chemmeen* (1956) by Thakazhi Shivashanagara is a novel written in such a social scenario that gradually became one of the canonical literary works in Malayalam. The time period is also very important in the literary history of Kerala, as 1940's marked the advent of realistic novels in Malayalam literature and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai is one of the most eminent figures who promoted the genre². Thus, *Chemmeen* has always been considered as a masterpiece text in the Malayalam literary history. For its popularity and well-acclaimed reception among the readers, the novel was awarded some of the prestigious literary awards in the country. It was later adapted into a motion picture which won national awards in several categories and got translated and published in some of the major World Languages, thus reaching out to a global audience. *Chemmeen* is the only novel which grabbed the attention of the global reading public till mid-2010's which in fact opened a door for the global society to the fisherfolk

² George, K. M. Western Influence on Malayalam Language and Literature. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi. 1998. P: 104-106. Print.

community and their existence. The novel *Chemmeen* is written in the backdrop of a coastal village in Alleppey. Through the novel, Thakazhi narrates the story of the relationship between Karuthamma, the daughter of a fisherman who is a Hindu by religion, and Pareekutti, who is the son of a Muslim fish wholesaler. The novel revolves around a myth which is claimed to exist among the fishing communities along the Coastal Kerala, about chastity. The myth as depicted in the novel is that “if a married fisherwoman is infidel when her husband is in the sea, the Sea goddess (*Kadamma*, literally translated as Sea Mother) will take him along and he would never come back”. Going by the myth, a woman’s chastity was believed to have had all the power to bring back her husband safely from a tormenting sea. In support of this argument, following is an excerpt from the English translation of the novel done by Anita Nair³:

On a mere plank wood, the first fisherman had rowed through waves and currents to a point beyond the horizon. While on the shore his faithful wife had stood facing the west waiting. A storm blew up and churned the sea. Whales with their mouths gaping open gathered. Sharks beat the water into a frenzy with their tails. The undertow dragged the boat into a whirlpool. But he miraculously survived all these dangers. Not just that, he returned to the shore with a huge fish (Nair 2011: 7-8).

The word ‘faithful’ holds the complete meaning of the whole scenario. The whole novel reaffirms the myth about women's

³ *Chemmeen* was first translated into English in 1962 by V.K.Narayana Menon titled, “Anger of the Sea Goddess “ which has been included in the UNESCO Collection of Representative Works (Gollancz publishers, London/Harper and Brothers, New York. The text has undergone multiple translations in English and in this research, the translation included is that done by Anita Nair.

body, the concepts of chastity and purity which are the safeguard of the men's lives and ultimately extending to that of the culture and community. However, when the knowledge of this myth became popular through the literary work, it got overgeneralised to mean the complete stretch of the coastal community. The following are some of the passages from the translated novel which substantiate the argument:

(...) She had not been entrusted with the life of a man going out to sea. And if such a life was in her hands, she would cherish it. She knew how to take care of it. No one needed to tell her, a fisherwoman, that. Chakki⁴ continued to speak, 'Do you know why the sea cries at times? The sea knows that if the sea mother gets angry, all will be ruined. But if she is pleased, she will give you everything, my child. There is gold in the sea, my daughter, gold! (...) Virtue is the most important thing, my daughter. The purity of the body and mind! A fisherman's wealth is his fisherwoman's virtue (Nair 2011: 8-9).

On the day of Karuthamma's marriage, her mother tells her, "Daughter, we are entrusting a man to you. It isn't as simple as what you think. We are not giving a girl to a man. Contrary it's the other way around... Our men live in a sea where the waves rise and fall, daughter!" (Nair 2011: 103).

As a curious reader and as a researcher, the multiple encounters I had with the fisherfolks revealed that there exists no such prominent myth which is particular about the women's chastity as highlighted in the novel. The hypercritical stand that had been raised by the members of the fishing community

⁴ Chakki is a character in the Novel, Chemmeen who is the mother of Karuthamma.

from the time this novel was released is still not to be heard in the mainstream literary arena. The community believes that whoever goes to the sea committing a crime won't come back as the Sea Mother punishes them, just like a mother or goddess punishes her children. And, infidelity is just one among those crimes. As it's mentioned in the novel:

Do you know why the sea cries at times? The sea knows that if the sea mother gets angry, all will be ruined. But if she is pleased, she will give you everything, my child. There is gold in the sea, my daughter, gold! (Nair 2011: 9).

They believe that the Sea Mother will provide them with everything according to their need and punishes them when they do wrong. Hence, they forbid themselves from doing any such act that offends the Sea, believing that Sea sees and hears everything. It accompanies with their belief that *Kadalamma* takes away all the dirt along with her and purifies the shore.

Some of the other notable passages from the novel which can be read in this particular context of woman's chastity are:

One of the old sea ditties told the story of one such woman. Her fall from grace caused the waves to rise as high as a mountain and climb on to the shore. Dangerous serpents foamed and frothed as they slithered on the sands. Sea monsters with the cavernous mouths chased the boats to swallow them whole (Nair 2011: 104).

While talking to her lover after the marriage and before leaving the shore, Karuthamma wished to tell him she would pray for him. But she wasn't sure if she could. A fisherwoman was allowed to pray only for one man's welfare. The man she was entrusted to. Her tradition wouldn't allow her to pray for another man. So how could she say that to him? (Nair 2011: 107).

But, a very interesting statement that caught my attention is the following lines. "These days there is none of that strict code of purity. These days men too have changed. People and customs change. But a daughter of the sea has to safeguard her virtue." (Nair 2011: 104). Even when they talk about the changing times with 'no strict code of purity' being followed these days, and men are hinted as having the liberty to live as they wish to, the daughter of the sea is imposed with the virtue of morality. She is still expected to hold the key that safeguards her society. The burden of these moral codes never seems to have a chance to get dissociated from a woman's body.

The interesting query is that, how a general belief which involves no gender discrimination simply gets narrowed down into a myth which revolves around the woman's body? How has a woman become a guardian angel of a whole community just by generalising a myth which has nothing to do with their memory or day to day experiences? How has a whole community been portrayed in front of a mainstream society worldwide through a woman's body as a cultural signifier? Why are the oppressed voices, yet strong still unheard regarding these misrepresentations? These questions take us back to the point – the privilege of a translator from outside the community. The societal privilege of caste and class, in the context of Kerala, (India) allows a translator to manipulate facts in a literary work and present it to the world serving what suffices their need. In this context, the novelist is being addressed as the translator, as he claimed in his work that it's from his close experience of living near a coastal village⁵ which prompted him to write this novel, also perpetuating and thus immortalising an unwritten oral myth among the community.

⁵ Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai has written about it in the introductory note to his novel *Chemmeen* P: 10).

The canonisation of this novel also challenged the movement of the literary works from within the community to find a space in the mainstream literary arena. The brilliant critique written for *Chemmeen* against the misrepresentation of the community all throughout the novel by a well-acclaimed doctor and scholar from the community, Velukkutty Arayan had been shut down immediately and his original literature is still rarely available even for reference or research purposes. He was not critical about mentioning the myth in the novel but warned about the potential Thakazhi's exaggeration and overemphasis of the myth had, to destruct the novel completely (K. E. N 2013: 45). Keeping the reality about the community in darkness and embracing the hypersensitised myths through a fictional work by judging the whole community through those lenses, pushing them even down in the societal hierarchy is the biggest tragedies these misrepresentations have caused. Even if there were instances where the author tried to bring forth strong resistance from different characters against the system at different points of time in the novel, all those efforts died without given a chance for a possible societal reformation by breathing the last breath along with the tragic love story (K. E. N 2013: 47). It has also to be noted that, these communities have their own indigenous variety of the language with exclusive vocabulary which cannot be easily understood by others. On a linguistic level too, the dominating language and culture failed to accommodate the community's exclusive linguistic variety. The language is rich with vocabulary and style closely associated with their fishing job which is almost missing throughout the novel. Their variety of language is again considered much inferior to the 'Standard Malayalam', and is often referred to as a slang which includes a lot of otherwise considered derogatory and substandard vocabulary.

Directed by Ramu Karyat, the novel was adapted into a motion picture in 1965. The portrayal of the woman's body was even more problematic in the cinema. Women in the community are mostly of darker skin complexion as they are geographically located much closer to the sea, and naturally, the salty heat waves result in a tanned skin tone. They are emotionally very strong as they live in a highly men-oriented space, and in most cases, they are the ones who control the family and finance, as the men will be busy going to sea. But when the novel hit the silver screen, the female protagonist was represented as a very fair and shy lady typical of the usual filmy heroines. In a note written for the English translation of the novel *Chemmeen*, Meena T Pillai—a renowned film scholar from Kerala remarks, "The taut body of Sheela's Karuthamma marks the transformation of the central female subject of a coastal community drama into an objectified erotic figure created on demand to the visual and erotic desires of Malayali audiences... Therefore Sheela (the renowned actress from Malayalam movie industry) as Karuthamma⁶, though most unlike in physical features to real fisherwomen (generating innumerable 'academic' critiques on Sheela as "Veluthamma⁷ referring to her fair skin), caters to popular audience expectations on how the heroine of a melodrama can plausibly be constructed on celluloid according to the aesthetic conventions of the cinema, in the process becoming popularly accepted as realistic (...)" (Pillai 2011: 253). Malayalam cinema is always known for its male gaze oriented take, Karuthamma was also not an exemption. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to state that, even the Karuthamma was introduced in the novel was not as fragile and opinion-less like in the movie. The key factors were lost in translation as the

⁶ Karuthamma can be literally translated as Black Mother.

⁷ Veluthamma can be translated as White Mother.

female protagonist was represented in the adaptation of the novel. The motion picture has reached more audience than the readers of the novel and the misrepresentation too has reached every category of audience.

While the experiences in a coastal village led Thakazhi to write a novel which has limited the sea simply as a background of the story of a romance and an overemphasis laid on the myth of chastity, there are writers who try to reflect on the community women's real-life experiences, in their own style and originality through their works.

Matsyagandhi and the Smell of Fish

It is in that context the one-act play *Matsyagandhi* written by Sajitha Madathil, an acknowledged theatre artist, becomes very relevant. The text referred here is a performance of the one-act play by Shylaja P Ambu in 2012. The play is located on the shores of Thiruvananthapuram. The play was critically acclaimed for addressing the real-life issues, the fisherwomen face in the society in terms of their body by locating them in the mainstream and public spaces. The act deals with the intervention of modern techniques of fishing in the day-to-day life of the fishing community i.e. how the big trawler fishing boats and ships of the importing companies have become life-threatening elements for the fishermen who go for fishing on their small boats. The protagonist is a female, an *Araya* woman who narrates the tragedy which she has undergone by losing her husband to a similar accident and crying frantically to the audience about their miserable lives. She brings in an interesting interconnection built by intertwining the reality with mythology by narrating the myth of Satyavati, parallel to her experience.

The myth of Satyavati dates back to the times even before the epic of the *Mahabharatha*. Satyavathi was the daughter of the

Chedi king Uparicarvasu, born to an *apsara*⁸ Adrikâ, who was turned into a fish. One day the semen of King Uparicarvasu happened to fall in the river Ganga, and Adrikâ accidentally swallowed it to become pregnant. When the fisherman caught the fish and found two human babies in its stomach, he presented the baby boy and baby girl to the king. Because of the fish smell of her body, the baby girl was given back to the fisherman. She was adopted as the daughter by the fisherman who lived on the banks of the Yamuna. Due to the smell her body emanated, she was also called *Matsyagandhi*⁹. Got attracted to her beauty, a sage named Parasara had a conjugal relationship with her and fathered her son Vyasa, who later compiled the *Vedas*, and authored *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata*. Interestingly, the earlier name of Satyavati was also Kali indicating her dark skin tone. The sage granted her a boon which transformed her *Matsyagandha* to the fragrance of musk. Later, by getting captivated by the fragrance of her body King Shantanu married her (George 2003: 262-63).

Satyavati becomes relevant here for the same smell of a fisherwoman's body. She later states in the play¹⁰, (my translation)

(...) when the Government snatches away the authority of the sea, this *matsyagandham*¹¹ is my hope now. For the tourists who come here to see the sea, along with the fish, now we will also be there, the *Matsyagandhis*. And, this whole shore will be filled with small *vyasas*, who don't know who their fathers are (Sajitha 2012).

⁸ A celestial nymph.

⁹ Williams, George. M. *The Handbook of Hindu Mythology*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2003. P: 262-263.

¹⁰ Translation of the relevant parts from the One Act Play *Matsyagandhi*.

¹¹ Smell of fish.

The women from the fishing community towards the southern coast of Kerala, are very much active in selling fish in the market and processing them, even if they won't go fishing in the sea. They follow the traditional way of selling fish by carrying it in the vessels or baskets on their heads. Dealing with fish all day long, it's natural that their body will smell of fish. There is a common tendency among the mainstream populace not to accommodate the fish sellers in the spaces such as public transportation and all other mainstream domains because of their body odour. While in the mythology, as a baby girl she was rejected for her fish smell and later as a blessing, the smell transformed into the musk fragrance for Satyavati that attracted king Shantanu, in reality, the Araya woman continues to smell the same 'fish stench' which is considered as 'unclean' by the society. Thus, in this context, the woman's body gets associated with purity in terms of odour and cleanliness.

As the play continues, someone asks the fisherwoman, what is she doing on the sea-shore leaving her hair open? She confronts the audience and the public by asking certain questions from their day-to-day encounters. She questions them about her husband, the small baby fishes and the *Arayans*¹² who have lost their lives because of the trawler boats, nets and foreign ships. She sarcastically responds to the people who advocate the myth that if the *Arayathi*¹³ stays on the shore leaving her hair open; the Sea Mother will get angry. She decides to let her hair stay open from then onwards. She continues by saying, (my translation) "Let the Sea Mother get angry! Let her anger bring down all those trawler boats and foreign ships (...)" (Sajitha 2012).

¹² The Fishermen who follow the Hindu religion.

¹³ Fisherwoman (Wife of a fisherman).

She concludes the play by associating the stench of her body with that of the smell of the baby fishes getting killed every day by the huge fishing ships and machines.

This stench of fish is not from my fish basket. It is the smell of the sea decaying. The stench of the little fishes being slaughtered by the trawler nets. It is the stench of the dead dreams of *Matsyagandhis* decaying (Sajitha 2012). (My translation).

The Pure Mother Sea and Impure Fisherwomen

In both the above-discussed texts, the commonality draws attention to the association of woman's body to the concept of purity and cleanliness. According to the popular belief of the community, regardless of its regional location, they consider Sea to be the purest and believes that 'She' takes away all dirt from the shore¹⁴. During field visits to the coastal villages of Alleppey, I met certain fisherfolk who believed that the Tsunami which had hit the South Indian shores in December 2005, was ultimately the Sea purifying the shore. They say, "it was something which has happened because the shore was highly polluted and the Sea Mother came in high waves to clean the shore by taking away all those accumulated particles which were causing the dirt". While Sea is considered female and believed to be pure and clean, it's interesting to observe that even within the community, the woman's body is considered to be impure associating it with menstruation and hence, is not allowed to go into the sea, and in certain parts not even to the shore. They believe that while menstruating, even her accidental touch on the fishing gears and crafts such as nets and boats will keep the fishes away from coming near them

¹⁴ Excerpts from the field notes (Alleppey), translated by me.

and the men who went for fishing will have to return empty-handed from the sea¹⁵. There are specific rituals which some of these regions practise, purifying the instruments from this touch and making them worthy of catching fish. They also believe that women (from the community) are not supposed to enter the Sea, as it may pollute the Sea. Even if times are changing, I have met some older women from the community of Alleppey who have not even gone to the seashores, because of this strong notion of purity.

Observations

The paper was mainly focussing on how a woman's body has been represented in three different textual contexts using the parameters of purity and cleanliness. While *Chemmeen* has nullified the existence of every other possible belief just by hypersensitising the myth of chastity, it showed us an ample context in which how a translator's privilege works. While representing a community through his/her writing, you have the liberty to focus on what you think will grab the readership of the target text. But, the question of ethics remains there unanswered. The privilege is because of the security his subjective location in the upper strata of society provides him, which negates all the controversies brought forth from the otherwise marginalised fishing community, like for example the critique by Velukkutti Arayan. But, lately, there have been strong voices emerging from the communities who still critically talk about Thakazhi's *Chemmeen* which is important to be discussed even today, many years after its publication.

¹⁵ Narratives from the shores of Trivandrum. In conversation with Mr. Robert Panipilla and referring to his book, *Kadalarivukalum Neranubhavangalum* (can be translated as, 'Sea Knowledge and Personal Experiences') published by D. C. Books in 2015.

As discussed, the problematic representation of motion picture made the portrayal even worse by subduing the personality of Karuthamma to just another naïve heroine on screen. In both the cases, Thakazhi created Karuthamma as the representation of many women who are cautious of their body, those bodies that are chained to the titles of morality whose virtue would be judged only based on chastity and fidelity. Even if it was placed in the fishing community associating it with an overemphasised myth, the fact that it was undoubtedly a reflection of the whole of the society that always judges a woman based on these parameters.

While Sajitha tries to bring forth the issues of fishing communities through her one-act play, the focus strongly revolves around the woman's body. Even though it's closer to the reality which they live in, the burden of the female body as a cultural signifier for morality is strongly addressed. While in *Chemmeen* the female protagonist always tried to adhere to the myth and safeguard her chastity, we see an Araya woman in *Matsyagandhi* who is using her body as a protest against the dreadful experiences she had to go through which are the aftereffects of the 'so-called' development and globalisation. While the previous text was a romantic novel which narrowed down the woman's body as a sacred property that would safeguard the whole society, the latter uses the body as a strong means of protest by articulating and refusing to follow the myths the people believed in for generations. She uses her body as a tool to avenge those people, by fighting against the government because of which she and many other Araya women who have lost their husbands. Her fight is also for all those baby fishes who are being killed every day by the big trawler boats. By liberating her body from the moral ties and explicitly expressing her desire for the Sea Mother to get angry and bring down the huge vessels which caused the deaths of all

the Araya men in the sea, she creates a voice of protest. She embraces the odour of her body that the society views as unclean because of the fish stench and hopes to attract the tourists who come to see the sea, equating herself to *Matsyagandhi* from the Puranas. By associating the stench of her fish basket with that of the decaying dead baby fishes in the sea and her dead dreams, she makes us realise it's not just the death of her husband but also the destruction of the ecology of the sea which has deeply affected her. Even if the author of the one-act play doesn't belong to the community, on a larger level it gets translated as her protest against the parameters of morality attached exclusively with a woman's body by the patriarchal society.

In the conversations with the older fishermen from the coastal villages of Alleppey and Trivandrum, they shared their beliefs which surrounding *Kadalamma*, the Sea Mother. There was not an instance they agreed to the portrayal of their community through the novel *Chemmeen*. As mentioned in the above discussion, it has been negated by the members of the community that there's no such stand-alone myth which is based on the women's chastity in any of those shores which were part of my fieldwork. But, they practice a strong notion of purity which is associated with menstruation, the bleeding woman. While Sea is a mother who reproduces for the sons of the Sea i.e. the fishermen, fulfilling their daily needs, the women have restricted movements in the sea and shores, especially in the coastal villages of Alleppey. It's an obvious fact that many of the religions consider menstruating women's bodies as polluted entities and they are restricted in most of the sacred spaces. Likewise, the sea is considered a sacred space by the community, where Sea is not just the Mother but also a ferocious Goddess. But at the same time, these beliefs are products of memories and experiences which are handed over

to them through generations. Ultimately those memories are translated as myths or part of a belief system which became an inseparable entity of their everyday life. The translation happens strictly within the community where there are no external agents that can influence this process.

Conclusion

By problematising the woman's body as focus, the primary concern of this study was to observe how each narrative translates the woman's body and brings in variations in the meanings of concepts of pure and clean. It was also to highlight how the subject position of the translators affects these semantic manifestations. In the first case, Thakazhi talked about the myth of chastity as a complete outsider or in his words as an observant participant but ended up exaggerating it into a prominent reality. Adapting the novel into a motion picture was an additional level of unethical translation to the already existing misrepresentation. On the other hand Sajitha Madathil, who is not a member of the community did justice to her fictional representation by linking them with real-life instances. The gender of the author also favoured much to the realistic portrayal of the female protagonist. The third instance where the memories are translated from within the community gave a clear picture of how purity is associated with a female body. The attempt was to draw attention to the fact that the scope of the translator to bring forth a meaning associated to any particular entity is large and multiple. In this study, it shows that the translator is also an author, interpreter and an orator who has the flexibility to fit into any of these roles. But, it cannot be ignored that there are potential consequences too which can cause a damage to the cultural identity of a community or people by misrepresenting them to a target culture and audience.

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