

# PORTRYAL OF FEMALE DESIRE AND LESBIANISM IN LIGY J. PULLAPPALLY'S SANCHARRAM

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The concept of cinema was developed by Thomas Alva Edison , the famous American scientist who invented cinematography. The first real film was produced by French brothers Lumier's , in 1895. In India it was introduced a little bit later. In the beginning there was only silent picture in black and white. Today cinema has become the most popular and cheapest mode of entertainment. Beside providing entertainment cinema provide a kind of education. Now cinema become the reflection of society. The beginning of Malayalam cinema in the early era after 1928, first silent movie "Vikathakumaran". The rich art, heritage and cultural background of Kerala were reflected in Malayalam films. Now movies are important sociological and cultured tool that shapes our perceptions of both the past and present. Mainstream Malayalam cinema focuses on family and male audience from the beginning to till now. The family concept of Malayalam cinema is only based on heterosexual aspects. Homosexual relationship is still taboo for majority. Queer elements are not popular to Malayalee audience. "Randupenkuttikal" is the first prominent Malayalam cinema encounter with lesbian relationship. Despite narrow portrayal at time certain movies like Desadanakillikarayarilla, Sancharram, Ardhanari , Muthoon etc which represented LGBTQ community.

This paper attempt to analyse the female desire and lesbianism in Ligy. J. Pullappally movie 'Sancharram' against the backdrop of a heteronormative society. Sancharram questions the rhetoric of heterosexuality a natural and homosexuality is not "normal". Sancharram is one of the best movie which discuss same sex love till now.

Key words: Queer, Homosexuality , Heterosexuality , Lesbian , LGBTQ , Malayalam cinema

## INTRODUCTION

Cinema is a powerful medium to ferment society. Movies are like mirror , that emulate society. Films have ability to clout society in different ways. The contribution of film in queer movement have a drastic influence in society and educate people to think in new dimension. In Malayalam cinema delegation of LGBTQ community became detectable only after 2000. Even though homosexual relationship is untypical to society.

Sancharram (The Journey ) is a 2004 Malayalam language feature film written, directed and produced by Ligy J. Pullappally, inspired by her short film Uli . Its a true story of two lesbian lovers in the South Indian state of Kerala. The Journey has won several awards, including the Chicago Award for best film. It has screened throughout the U.S. and in many parts of India. The movie Sancharram tells the story of two young friends, Kiran (Suhasini V. Nair) who is a Hindu, and Delilah (Shrruiti Menon) who is a Catholic, from their first meeting as young children. In fact, Sanchaaram could be the first Mollywood film that is completely focussed on homosexuality.

The film starts when the little girl Kiran along with her parents arrives from Delhi to their Tharavad in the villag. Kiran, a Hindu, and Delilah, a Catholic, from their first meeting as young children to young adulthood, when they realize their love for each other. They were friends since their childhood.

Not only Kiran has feelings for her, as one of their classmates Rajan is also in love with her and asks Kiran to write letters to Delilah expressing his love for her. Kiran thinks of this as a way to express her feelings for Delilah and starts to write letter for Rajan. When Delilah reads Rajan's love letter, Kiran is able to complete the lines. When Delilah realizes that it was

Kiran who wrote that letter, unable to face Delilah, Kiran leaves the place. Delilah has also feelings for Kiran and chooses Kiran as her lover. Two starts a secret relationship. Delilah's confusion, guilt, and fear about being in a lesbian relationship are very much a reality for many women even today.

Rajan however, finds the two sharing an intimate moment he is quick to tell Delilah's mom who immediately arranges her marriage and prevents her from seeing Kiran, locking her up and stopping her from attending school. When her mother & other relatives continue to impress upon her the consequences of her actions, and her grandmother being her only support, Delilah's guilt increased. Kiran's parents too are disapproving of what they refer to as "unnatural" love. Regardless of her attempts to convince Delilah to run away with her, Delilah resists and resigns herself to marriage. The lovers are separated and are forced to conform to the rigid norms of middle-class morality.

While Delilah's wedding proceeds as planned in the end, Kiran cuts her hair and walks away from her decision to commit suicide. A heartbroken Kiran walks to a cliff overlooking a waterfall, where she and Delilah had once gone together. At the same time, Delilah is about to take her marriage vow but stops. She runs out of the church and yells Kiran's name. Kiran looks behind her but doesn't see anyone and loses her hope. She reaches for a cocoon on a branch and slips on the edge, but is able to stop the fall and pull herself up. As she lies on her back, Kiran sees a blue butterfly flying above her. Delilah looks up to the sky and sees a blue butterfly in the air. The ending to the movie is not entirely expected and while it isn't what one might hope, and positive for many women even today.

## MIRRORED FEMALE DESIRE IN THE MOVIE SANCHARRAM

Sancharram portrays an alternate sexuality as a woman is an impossible situation. Sancharram produced at a time in which lesbianism was very much considered a taboo subject in India as well as in Kerala. The movie broke down the common narrational pattern of Malayalam cinema in that period. The movie questions the so-called "normal" heterosexuality and portrayal of same-sex love as a main theme. Through this movie Pullappally showcased female desire and lesbian relationship which is not much familiar for Malayalee audience.

Like a poem Pullappally express their love in the movie. Kiran's realisation of love towards Delilah has represented in the movie through different situations. During an all-night study session, Kiran realizes that her feelings for Delilah have taken a new and unfamiliar turn. In another scene when Delilah tries to change her dress in front of her after arriving from school, Kiran is running away. When Delilah's fingers touch her leg in darkness, she tries to keep her feet apart. Kiran's mystical dream of Delilah dancing in a darkened room shows her feelings for Delilah. Kiran is now fully aware that her affection for Delilah is more than just friendship. This movie speaks of women's desire as a matter of choice. In a scene Kiran and Rajan are looking at Delilah standing on the other side of a wall. There is nothing abnormal about Rajan's look but Kiran's look is not acceptable. Kiran is conscious about it that is why she runs away in shock when she knows that Rajan has seen her looking at Delilah.

The sexual aspect of the girls' relationship is hinted at but not explicitly portrayed. There's a suggestion of impending sex as they gaze at each other in the pool, the water reflecting light across their faces, its lapping sounds serving as stark background music. The pond scene is beautifully present their physical affection. There is another scene in the forest which they share their feelings.

In Sancharram Pullappally sketches female desire, same-sex love and emotions like a music. This movie speaks of women's desire as a matter of choice. In fact, Sancharram could be the first Malayalam film that is completely focused on homosexuality. Their love is closely connected with nature. Sancharram is a beautiful journey of self-discovery. The ending of the love story is unconventional in terms of the happy ending we would expect, the outcome is hopeful and realistic.

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949)

De Beauvoir states that , there are biological differences between the sexes, women only become women because of the circumstances of their society, leading her to the conclusion that the facts of biology take on the values of social norms. We only know what has been taught to us, and what we have been conditioned to think as appropriate or shameful. It's crucial that we understand that every person has unique desires and that they are entitled to their choices. The topic of a woman's desire and her thoughts on sex are still considered taboo – to the point of there being very little conversation on the subject. Liberalism and feminist movements have helped provide female authors with the space to experiment with female desire and its various shades. But today, authors are choosing to brave this taboo to give conversations around sex, desire and love from a woman's perspective the space they deserve.

## CONCLUSION

People with different sexualities including homosexuals refer to themselves as the LGBTQIA+ community. India is a country, where cinema is powerful enough to form the opinion of viewers. If films portray LGBT community in a sensible manner, this will certainly create a positive and piercing impact on the mindsets and psyche of the audience. For the past few years we can see the LGBT community sharing the space. They have been represented in realistic and sensible manner. Ligy J. Pullapally's movie Sancharram (2004) is a hidden gem in Malayalam cinema which discusses the topic of same sex love. Like the title Sancharram (The journey ) it is a beautiful journey of self discovery . People should be able to love without the fear of being judged. Love has no sexuality, race, skin tone, or gender. Their sexual choice does not determine who they are as a person. Love is love.

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