

## CHAPTER V

### Engendering Tamilian:

#### ‘Woman’ in Anna’s Discourse

This chapter studies the function of the category ‘woman’ in Anna’s discourse. It examines whether women, as it has been repeatedly appraised by feminist critics, are devoid of agency and remain as objects of masculine politics in this discourse. By pointing out the dialogic relation that exists between the political and the literary field, it also attempts to reveal the function of the literary as a productive field of this political subjectivity. It is divided into three main sections. The first section deals with the two polarized imaginations of ‘woman’ in Anna’s political discourse and the significant role played by the category ‘domestic’ in it. The second section deals with the uniqueness of the imagination of domestic in Anna’s discourse and its implication for the modern Tamil political subject. Focusing on the ways in which they construct the ideal Dravidian/Tamil masculinity it reveals the dialogic relation between the political and the literary field in this discourse. The third section reveals the function of the literary as a field of subject production and highlights the challenges that the heterogeneity of the category ‘woman’ puts forth on available feminist criticism. Pointing out instances where women exhibit agency in this discourse, it attempts to foreground the challenges in evaluating it as either emancipatory/liberative or discriminatory, especially with regard to gender.

#### 5.1. Women in Anna’s Political Discourse

Two images of women figure in Anna’s political discourse. One is the image of the ideal woman – the ‘*veera tay*’ (valourous mother) or the ‘*anbu manaivi*’ (affectionate wife); and the other is the image of the ‘*dasi*’ – an anti-thesis of this ideal woman. The first one, ‘the image of mother or wife’ is the representative of the modern domesticity whereas the second

one, the image of the *dasi* is someone who resists the realm of the domestic and often challenges its very existence. The first one is pure, ‘moral’ and ‘venerable’ whereas the second one is impure, immoral, does not deserve any respect, and need to be cautioned against. The first one is an ideal image that has to be followed whereas the second one is disgusting and has to be detested.

Feminism has provided a way to understand this polarized representation of woman. It has identified the acts like: 1) providing the implausible ideal images to woman as role models, 2) propagating that the happiness and greatness of women lies in attaining that ideal and 3) representing those who repudiate/reject this ideal in lowly and mean ways as significant ideological functions of patriarchy. It has also created an awareness about the female subjectivity which is besotted or tormented between these two polarized positions – one highly venerable and the other utterly disgusting and detestable and deserve no respect. In Anna’s political discourse too one could see these two polarized representations of women. Seeing these representations as patriarchy’s trapping of women between two extremely ironic subject positions blinds us from seeing the complex subjectivation process of the discourse. Thus, a closer study of the discursive realm within which these two images of women are produced may help raise certain questions relating to gender and subjectivity.

### **5.1.1. Two Polarized Imaginations of Woman**

In Anna’s political discourse the polarized images of women appear mainly in pedagogical contexts where the necessity of certain ethical qualities and values or the falsity of certain political situations are explained. The first image of women – the *veera tay* or *anbu manaivi* - appears as a natural warehouse of certain ethical qualities and values that are necessary in the political sphere. For instance, while talking about the necessity to stand determined towards one’s political goal/aspiration she is invoked as follows:

Ask that *thaamaraiyaal* (lotus-like woman) who has got your love and so comes there – walking like a swan with her slender waist frail – with a plate full of sweet-tasted fruits “Because the path is long and dangerous can we give up the goal that we have taken for ourselves in our life?” You won’t get an answer – But a horror would appear in that woman’s eyes! “How is he able to ask it? If he calls even it is a forest in which snakes wallow/flounder I will rush without any hesitation. If he is someone who leaves his goal fearing the perils of the path, *Ammavo!* [A word expressing fear]” her eyes would speak “he would leave even the (effortless) act of strolling a little to get the love of his *kondaval* (the woman whom the man has taken as his life-partner, technically wife) by thinking that his heels will pain”. (37-38 *Thambikku Annavin Kadhidhangal Vol. 11* 1986)

The domestic woman here shows the necessity of being resolute in one’s aspiration through her shock and contempt towards unresoluteness. In another context she is invoked while talking about the awareness which the people of Tamil land must have to challenge the political process which imposes Hindi as official language of India.

If someone knocks at our door during midnight around 12 or 1 o’clock do we open it all of a sudden? Without opening the door, staying inside we would ask “who knocks at the door” – “It’s me, open the door” – “I won’t open if you just say “it’s me”, tell me who you are?” – “Don’t you understand? It’s me only” – “No. I don’t know, tell me who you are?” – “Can’t you recognize me even from my voice?” – “No, tell me” – “Ada, it’s me Aarumugam!” – Even then wise women wouldn’t open hastily. Only by opening the door a little and peeping outside by hiding in one corner they would clarify that it is Aarumugam allow him inside. Wouldn’t they? Some houses may open. But good houses won’t. (281 *Annavin Peruraikal Vol. 1*)

The awareness needed in the political sphere is paralleled with the alertness that a woman exhibits when someone knocks at her door. The detailed description of the way in which she scrutinizes the person standing on the other side of the door without trying to take chances hints at her alertness and wisdom. Even after the man behind the door says that he is her husband she does not believe it and open the door. She opens the door a little, peeps out, and sees whether it is her husband. Only after she gets a complete confirmation that it is her husband she opens the door. It also reveals her character. Thus, it is suggested that ‘some’ houses would open just for a knock, but ‘good’ houses wouldn’t. As in the first example, the wisdom of the domestic woman becomes analogous to the awareness of the dangers that certain political processes – which claim to be legitimate, rational, and beneficiary – could cause. She explains the need to be alert about those political processes and shows the ways of handling them.

In other contexts she appears as a role-model for certain ethical values that Tamils need to possess in the political sphere. For instance, the sacrifice that woman does for the happiness of the family is hinted as a role-model for an individual’s sacrifice for the society. In one of Anna’s Pongal greetings he invokes this self-sacrificial woman who undergoes the hardships of the heat of the oven and sweats in the kitchen so that her family (husband and children) can eat the tasty and sweet Pongal. In another context, (i.e. after the DMK captured the Tamil Nadu government and Anna became the Chief Minister) while asking the followers to be patient and extend their constant support to bring in certain changes in the governmental system and to win over the bureaucratic issues that hinder him from fulfilling his promises, he brings the following analogy:

Today is the Pongal. New Year. When your girl prepare pongal by putting the rice in milk and making it boil, you ask many times through your eyes and sometimes through words “Hadn’t it boiled yet?” And you hear her answer “So soon?” while her

look says “How impatient he is!” It is natural that the *maadharasi* (queen of women) has got the right to answer in that way. But it wouldn’t be proper if my answer is also the same, right? To get enthusiasm and strength that needed to do what I have to do I need your support and comradeship. You continue to give it. I know that very well. And I take pleasure in thanking you (for that). (128 *Thambikku Annavin Kadithangal* Vol. 21 1988)

The impatience of the husband symbolizes both his excitement and ignorance. The answer and gesture of his wife while instructing him to be little more patient also reveals his ignorance and provides a context for self-reflection. Reflection on his ignorance about the domestic chores is also a means for understanding his ignorance about the political or bureaucratic mechanism.

The image of ‘dasi’ is invoked in quite differing contexts. In contrast to the domestic woman who is a moral inspiration for the Tamilians in ethical duties, ‘dasi’ is a distracter who diverts the Tamilians from duties. Tamilian who let Hindi take over the place of Tamil is quite often compared to a man who “bewitched by the deceitful speech of a *dasi* abandoned his mother” (355). In addition to being immoral the *dasi* is, wicked, treacherous and thus need to be cautious about. Anna’s letter titled as “*Ivane Thamizh Maravan*” [“He is Tamil warrior!”] begins with a quote from Solomon’s verses in the *Bible* about a “*sagasakaari*” (a woman of loose moral who is skilled in charming men) charming an “ignorant young man”. This example is brought in as an analogy for the Congress’ unethical and immoral support for Hindi and its propaganda against Dravida Nadu. Quite often Tamilians are warned against being trapped by her treachery and bait. It is crucial to note that this essay ends with an anecdote about a ‘mother’ who guided the son to the right path of saving one’s culture. The present regretful condition of Tamil culture and the “captivated/mesmerized Tamilian” is

compared to the condition of a “dim-witted” person who without listening to his true friend’s advice went with a *dasi* but, regrets after getting disgusting and deadly disease (Arya Maayai Pg. 24-26?). The cunningness to which the Dravida land has succumbed to is compared to a man who falls dying by ignorantly tasting the poisoned lips of an *inbavalli* (a *dasi*-like woman who gives sexual pleasure)( 31 Perarignar Annavin Peruraikal Vol. 1). The ignorance of this “captivated/mesmerized Tamilian” who is magnetized by the cunning and deceiving propaganda of Hindi by the North Indian Congress leaders and later cheated by them is compared to:

An ignorant man/idiot who cuts the dark-coloured hair of his *illakkizhaththi* (the woman of his house) worrying that the Ekaaththaa who has come to reside in the neighbourhood has got only a little hair and offers to her to get only the wink and a luring smile that she offers for a second as his gift. (328 *Peraignar Anna Nadaththiya Arappor*)

The act of “winking” and “smiling luringly” at another woman’s husband symbolizes her disloyal character. She drags a man from the moral boundaries of the domestic into immorality. She is someone who is outside the moral boundaries of a family and persistently endangers its existence. The DMK which is aware of the deceiving tricks of the Congress to make Hindi the national language is seen as a “disciplined family” who would not be tricked or bewitched by the tricks of a *dasi* like “laughing sheepishly” “winking an invitation for sex” “luring or tempting by telling this and that” (86 *Naam Ellam Ore Kudumbam*). The Congress government’s deceptive proposal to the people of Non-Hindi speaking states to accept Hindi as the official language is compared to the act of a man who says to another man as follows:

The girl you married is pretty but, the one I would bring will be ignoble and she would also be loathsome. How long can you live with this pretty woman? Push her to

the backyard and have the woman I bring in the hall. (274-5 Perarignar Annavin Peruraikal Vol. 1).

In such comparisons Tamil embodying rich, ancient literary, and grammatical tradition and not being adulterated<sup>41</sup> is compared to a beautiful and kind *manaivi* (the legitimate woman of the house, wife). But Hindi which does not have such rich literary or grammatical tradition and neither ‘pure’ as it emerged from an ‘adulteration’ of many languages is imagined as an ugly, bad-natured, illegitimate, wicked, and immoral woman. The Congress government’s ways of persuading Tamilians –of rich tradition\_ to accept Hindi as their national language is compared to the insensible persuasion of asking a man to leave his beautiful wife for the sake of an ugly woman with loose character. The strong attachment and determination of the Tamilians towards their language is compared to the love of a man for his wife and family and it was also proclaimed that “at least in the age of *Silappathikaram* there was a merchant who went astray to Madhavi’s (a *dasi*) home for she gave the pleasure that Kannagi (his wife) couldn’t give. Here we don’t have men like Kovalans” (ibid 275). In these instances one could see that the political tricks, persuasions, and deceptions of the Congress government needs to be vigilant and cautious about is compared to the sexual tricks of the immoral *dasi* against whom family men have to be watchful and alert. Clarifying to the Tamilians that their goal is not getting victory in the election but making the election provide them a better possibility to attain their goal – the attainment of Dravida Nadu - it is observed that:

If our only intension is to get victory in this election, there are innumerable possibilities stand before us winking their eyes. If we wave our hands expressing consent the temptresses would run towards us with their wriggling waists, unhooked attires and luring smile. Yes thambi, it is enough if we just give in for temptation. But

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<sup>41</sup> Discourse on Tamil purity – add how it begun with cauldwell’s hypothetical opinion that Tamil can stand without Sanskrit and it is original.

we are not the men of mean desires hunting for the ways of attaining victory in elections. We neither should forget nor hide that our aim is to make use of this election time and attain our goal. (169 *Thambikku Annavin Kadithangal* Vol.2. Ma. Nadarasan)

The political tricks of the Congress party that are said to distract the Tamilian from his objective and determination are perceived as temptresses who come running “with deceiving winks” “wriggling waists, unhooked attires and luring smile.” The distraction it would cause in the Tamilians is called as a sexual temptation. At this juncture, it is helpful to ask who can possibly be deceived by such a woman. In other words, to whom are these warnings and precautions about the deceiving nature of the *dasi* – the analogy for Congress party, central government or Hindi supporters – addressed? Clearly in this heterosexual matrix such a deceit becomes possible only for a man and it is he who is warned against being deceived by a ‘*dasi*’. This suggests that the political consciousness and awareness that this discourse invokes is directed only at men. Even in a few places where women are directly addressed, they are warned against their men becoming a prey to such women. For instance, in one of Anna’s public speeches in which the insensible political persuasions of the Congress party is explained through the analogy of asking a man to desert his beautiful wife for the sake of an ugly and characterless *dasi*, it was asserted that “even men can be silent about it. But the thousands of women [addressed as ‘*taymaargal*’ literally meaning ‘mothers’] who have gathered here should upraise against it with rage” (275 *Perarignar Annavin Peruraigal* Vol.1.). Such addresses establish the active political struggle of women for their language and citizenship rights as a struggle to protect their legitimate place in the domestic. Women like Dharmambal who took part in the struggle against Hindi and those numerous women who dared even to go to jail during the first anti-Hindi agitation were repeatedly addressed and praised as ‘*veera taaymarkal*’ and “*Marakula Thai*” (brave mothers) – a significant image of

modern domesticity (1 *Dravida Nadu* 24.05.1959). Thus, in this political matrix domestic emerges as the rightful place for women who even indulge in active politics.

A closer look at the examples that deal with the ideal woman would reveal to us how she is repeatedly placed within the topography of the domestic – the house. The qualities such as determination, wisdom, sacrifice, or patience that show her exemplarity and receive respect and veneration are strongly related to the conjugal domain. The genre of Anna's letters – which aimed at creating awareness about world politics, history, revolutions, and so on and a genre that he discovered “to debate and discuss” political problems and “to let [his] ideas known” to the people and “get [their] consent” – in short a space for political debate and consensus – is also addressed only to ‘Thambikku’ i.e. ‘to the younger brother’ – a male addressee – further strengthens it. Thus, it is clear that the sphere that this discourse conceives and constructs for political pedagogy, discussion, debate, and consensus is overtly masculine.

How is one to interpret it? Can this be seen as the treacherous function of patriarchy to trap women within the family or domestic by denying them, even ideologically, the access to the political? Is the very attempt of demarcating the spheres of men and women as political and domestic is a carefully plotted act of patriarchy with the vested interest of depoliticizing women? If so why or how this woman whose existence is limited only to the domestic sphere is repeatedly invoked as the source or warehouse of the ethical that a man needs in the political sphere? How can she be a role model from whom the political-man has to learn? Feminist methodology sees it as a plotting of patriarchy that castrates the political self of woman by consecrating her as the ‘angel in the house’. It is yet another ideological project of patriarchy which by canonizing the image of the domestic-woman and by giving her a venerable position of a role-model for the political-man clearly demarcates the spheres of men and women as the political and the domestic. In the Tamil sphere, C.S. Lakshmi alias

Ambai's approach is very close to it<sup>42</sup>. In her article "Mother, Mother Community and Mother Politics in Tamil Nadu" she interprets this as a discriminated ideological function of patriarchy which has "converted begetting children [and staying at home or inside the realm of the domestic] into a political act invested with power" (78 WS) for women. She sees it as a politics of essentialization which divides "productive labour" into gender specific spheres namely the domestic for women and the political for men. She interprets the significance that is given to women in such "essentialisations" as "a cleverly woven pattern of sequences" which gives women the "illusion of centrality while really being marginal" (78 WS).

The phrase "cleverly woven pattern of sequences" clearly reveals to us that she sees it as a well-planned project of patriarchy to stabilize its authority during modernity. However such an approach fails to historicize not only patriarchy but also the complex relations that emerged between the domestic and the political modernity. It perceives them as essentially polarized spaces and fails to pay attention to the cultural processes that repeatedly reconstruct them in varied ways. In other words, against its critique of essentialisations, it approaches them as natural rather than cultural categories. This naturalization immaterializes the differences that historical contexts – here modernity and its technologies – instigate in self-construction and hurriedly label them as another instance of patriarchy upholding its conventional authority. Turning a blind eye to the role of historical and socio-political contexts prevents us from seeing the intricate processes through which gender reconstructs and sustains itself. In addition, by seeing the ways in which gender strengthened itself during this context as a carefully plotted patriarchal 'project' of men against women, it fails to accord any active agency to women in the process of their self-fashioning. On the contrary, seeing this as a 'process' rather than a 'project' would help us see the complex ways in which gender constitutes itself during this time.

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<sup>42</sup> See. her article "Mother, Mother-Community and Mother Politics in Tamil Nadu" for reference.

To understand the complexity of why or how the domestic woman, an image whose existence is limited to the private and the domestic sphere, was imagined as an inspiration and role model for a man to act in the public and political domain. It is helpful here to begin with a set of following questions: 1) what did the structure 'family/domestic' stand for during modernity? 2) What was its relation to the political/public – a sphere that has been established by the scholarly, especially the radical feminist intellection, an anti-thesis of the domestic/private – during this historical context?

In the examples of the venerable domestic women one can see a continuous and persistent analogy induced between two distinct spaces namely the domestic and the political. Such analogies are not peripheral as these two spaces are perceived to be built on certain common ethical values. For instance, in the example that we discussed in the beginning of this section we can see the quality of 'resoluteness towards an aspiration' integrates political obligation with conjugal commitment. The absence of this makes the man a coward and undignified in the political domain, and untrustworthy and insincere in the conjugal domain. To put it otherwise, it is the trait of unwavering resoluteness towards the ethically defined aspiration that qualifies the Tamil self both in the political/public and the domestic/private domains. One shall see here the qualities like aspiration, determination which are perceived as common to both private/domestic and public/political domains.

This clarifies that the ethical qualities and values like unwavering resoluteness, deep awareness and alertness, self-sacrificial or selfless attitude, patience and so on that are needed to build a strong political sphere is perceived to be a significant ingredient of the domestic sphere too. It is the presence of these qualities in a woman which makes the domestic a happy place. This reveals a specific relationship between the domestic and the political which resists one from any easy classification contrasting spaces or binary oppositions.

Researches on Indian modernity have identified that this interrelation between the public/political and the private/domestic emerged in India during colonial modernity with the advent of community reformisms and nationalism. They point our attention towards community reformists' and Indian-Nationalists' discourse where private/domestic was continuously perceived as a miniature of the society or nation and the reformation of the former was considered as an urgent necessity for the construction of a well-disciplined community or nation. When the well-being of the one was perceived to represent the well-being of the other, the deterioration of the one, it was believed, would naturally lead the other to same fate. As domestic was perceived as the taproot of the entire community and nation, the reformation of woman – the 'natural' owner of this space – was considered as a primary and significant project. It is believed that creating a good family – that is creating a responsible 'family man' and 'family woman' – is the primary step in creating an ideal community and nation. This discourse of Indian modernity has captured the attention of scholars. Works of Partha Chatterjee, Uma Chakravathy, J.Devika, G. Arunima, Anupama Rao and so on can be cited here as a few instances of such scholarly attempts to decipher this tendency of Indian modernity.

Among them the researches on the Nationalist discourse have noted certain significant characteristics of the Nationalist subjectivity. The nationalist subjectivity imagined the domestic as the place where the ancient Indian tradition persisted without any damage and thus accorded a sacred value to it. Though the political sphere, i.e. domain of the public, underwent certain drastic changes due to the rule of the foreigners, the domestic/private remained as the place where the Indian tradition could continue to survive. The sanctity of that place, it is imagined, as the sanctity of the woman who dwells there. Allowing them to lose it is equal to demolishing the last hope for the revival of the ancient Indian tradition.

Thus, reforming women so as to equip them to self-guard their purity and thus the purity of the domestic is considered the priority of a man's political duty<sup>43</sup>.

This domestic that remains a place where the sacredness of the ancient Indian tradition is protected also has to perform another duty as for the contemporary need. This duty is nothing but to produce good citizens for the nation. Producing good citizens is considered as the duty of the domestic woman – the wife/mother. This work of the woman of the domestic is considered as a great contribution to the country as they reproduce not just a good family but also a good country. Thus, it has to be noted that though women's existence was limited within the frontiers of the domestic it was not considered as an anti-thesis of the political. On the contrary, it was considered as a significant portion of the political and performing their role as a mother and wife was considered as the significant political participation of women.

This shows us the existence of the private/domestic as a space distinct from and at the same time constitutive of the public/political. Such an ambivalence of this space reveals to us a certain temporality that the category domestic attains during this context. It exists as a category that can be imagined in diverse ways. Noting the permeability that the concept domestic attains during colonial modernity, Anupama Rao in her book *Gendered Citizenship* observes that “the meanings which ‘domestic’ and ‘domesticity’ are not fixed and they reflect their temporal, spatial and ideological contexts” (80). This necessitates one to study the uniqueness of the domesticity i.e. – “an ideology pertaining to the nature and scope of activities in the realm of the domestic” – to make sense of its complex functions. In the Tamil sphere too domestic was imagined in various, at times even contradictory, ways by people of different ideological backgrounds beginning from community reformists like Iyothee Thoss and Maraimalai Adigal, Nationalists like Bharathi and Thiru.Vi.Kalyanasundaram, Non-

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<sup>43</sup> See articles of Partha Chatterjee and Uma Chakravarthi in *Recasting Women* for further references

Brahmin social reformers like Periyar and social reformer-cum-politicians like Anna. Though the identification of the domestic as a site of reformation is shared by all the way they imagined them radically differed from each other and constituted several ‘domestics’. In such a context, it becomes necessary to study the uniqueness of Anna’s domestic and the way it is related to the political to understand the intricate role of gender.

## **5.2. Domestic in Anna’s Discourse**

### **5.2.1. Imagining the Domestic in Anna’s Political Discourse**

In Anna’s discourse ‘domestic’ is a continuum of the Tamil golden past which it eventually constructs. It is a place in which the qualities of the Tamil golden past, which the Tamilian has lost today by succumbing to Aryan/Brahminical deception. Thus, it is a space that connects the present day uprooted Tamilian to his/her classical history and culture. This place, which functions as a hope for the revitalization of the Tamil self, is fundamentally characterized by *inbham*, which in English means ‘pleasure’. The words that denote the ideal woman – a representative of this domesticity – like *manathirkiniyaval* meaning ‘she who is pleasurable to the interiority’ reveals how pleasure is the foundational ground of this space. Such a construction of domestic as a place brimming with pleasure strikes certain significant differences from the various other contemporary constructions in the Tamil sphere. Significant among them is the egalitarian domesticity that emerges in Periyar’s discourse. The main reason for taking up Periyar’s domestic here is due to the complex relation that exists between Periyar and Anna. They share many significant features nevertheless striking certain differences. A comparison of these two would help us mark the subtler features of Anna’s domestic.

Periyar’s and Anna’s construction of conjugality has many similarities : a) negating conjugal as a divine relationship necessarily constituted by the ‘auspicious’ brahminical

rituals, b) stressing on mutual consensus and love as the foundation of a wedding partnership  
 c) negating endogamy as the normative form of marital system and so on. Despite these similarities, Anna's domestic differs in certain subtle ways from the former. Periyar imagines family/domestic by foregrounding the concept of equality. Family is a place of a relationship of mutual consensus between two individuals. They love and live together without one affecting/intruding in the other's freedom, rights and self-respect. While Periyar's imagination foregrounds equal rights, self-respect, mutual freedom etc as characteristics of the conjugal, in Anna's imagination it is a place brimming with desire and pleasure. Though mutual consensus and love are common features of these two imaginations, these variables exhibit certain structural and analytical differences. The set of vocabulary that Periyar invents to refer to marriage and wife would help us identify these differences.

Periyar coins phrases like "*vaazhkkai thunai*" – the life-partner, "*vaazhkkai thunai oppantham*" – an agreement between life-partner to refer to husband or wife and marriage exposes the rational egalitarian ground on which his domestic is situated. This shows us how mutual consensus and love that Periyar considers as the foundation for the ideal conjugal are rational categories substantiated by the discourse of rights. In contrast, Anna's domestic is solely founded on an affective plane. This is clear from the set of vocabulary that he invents to refer to the domestic woman. Though this woman appears as the wife of the Tamil man she is never identified by the word *pendaatti* a colloquial word that denotes wife in Tamil. She is denoted through a new set of vocabulary namely *un manathirkiniya mangai nallaal* (the noble/virtuous woman who is pleasurable to your [the husband's] heart), *un anbinai petraval* (she who has got your love), *un idayam/ullam vendraval* (she who has captured/won your heart), *Illakizhaththi, manaivi, manaiyaatti, illaal* – (the woman of your home), *illatharasai* (the queen of your home), and so on. These words along with the words that are used to denote conjugality "*illara or kaadhal inbham*", the 'delights/pleasure of conjugality or love',

show that egalitarianism is not the leading motif of the conjugal relationship in Anna's discourse as it is in the case of Periyar's. It is pleasure that functions as the leading motif. This in turn reveals the affective ground on which Anna's domestic is situated.

The contrasting imaginations of the domestic by Periyar and Anna stand as a part of the respective larger political sphere that they envisage to construct. The coinages of Periyar to refer to marriage or conjugality reveal how it is part of the larger rational political field characterized by egalitarianism, individual rights, self-respect and so on that he strives to construct. Anna's expressions like *manathirkiniyaval*, or *illara/kaadhal inbham* (the pleasures of conjugality/love) refer to the domestic as part of the larger affective political field bound by domestic love and pleasures that he aspires to construct. One can see that the words used to denote conjugality and domestic woman in Anna's discourse carry with them the aesthetics of the pleasure that characterize the conjugal space. However, these imaginations of the domestic by Periyar and Anna – one characterized by egalitarianism and other by pleasure – cannot be readily assimilated into the non-negotiable categories like reason and emotion. These categories are assumed – especially by Marxism and the feminism – to naturally carry with them certain significations for emancipation or domination despite the influence of socio-political or historical contexts and forces. It is from this ground that C.S. Lakshmi, V. Geetha and S. V. Rajadurai brand the emotional politics of the DMK as discriminatory or dominating. However a closer study reveals that the pleasure that marks Anna's domestic is defined in a specific way in this discourse and legitimized over other kinds of pleasures. This process of discrimination and legitimization challenges such a ready-made classification as emotional and repressive. Let us now turn towards Anna's literary discourse.

### 5.2.2. The Discursive Production of the Pleasurable Domestic

In Anna's *Kumarikottam*<sup>44</sup> there is a comparison between two kinds of families. The first lives in prosperity. It takes pride in telling others that they have “bought a house, bought a piece of land, made *irattai* chain [a gold ornament worn in woman's neck], bought a new Nellore cow which gives two *padi* (a large measuring vessel for liquids and grains) of milk” (74). However, in spite of the material prosperity they live worrying that “the house that they bought is just one-storeyed, that their land is not on the river banks, that the chain they made is just eight sovereigns, that the cow they bought is old” (74).

In contrast, the conversation in the second type of family is centred around their poverty. The first kind of family is in the position of buying properties and extravagances like a new house, land, jewellery or cattle, whereas the second does not even have money to spend for their basic needs. In spite of the materialistic prosperity and a pride over it, the first one is unhappy and discontented, the second one does not have “neither pride nor this kind of apprehension” (74). The following conversation between the husband and wife of the second

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<sup>44</sup> *Kumarikottam* describes the story of a radical son reforming his conservative father. Kuzhanthaivel Chettiyar is a rich man and a strong believer of Hindu religion and its normative caste strictures. Pazhani his only son falls in love with a lower caste girl named Nagavalli. She lives in a slum and is a converted Christian. Pazhani meets her in a Reformist organisation and they both fall in love. But the conservative Kuzhanthaivel Chettiyar stands against his son marrying a lower caste girl. Pazhani tries to convince his father. Irritated and frustrated to see the strong conviction of his son in marrying the lower caste girl, Chettiyar sends him out of his house. Pazhani leaving all his properties and sophistications behind comes out empty handed to Nagavalli. They both get marry in the Reformist organisation without Brahmin rituals. After marriage Pazhani without taking up a job works as a full-time social reformer. It is Nagavalli who wins the bread and butter for the family by working as a school teacher. In spite of hardships and poverty they lead a very happy life out of their love for each other. Nagavalli stands as a strong support and encouragement for Pazhani's social reforms. In the mean while Kuzhanthaivel Chettiyar falls in love with a young lower caste girl called Kumari who works in the construction site of the new temple that he is building. He tries hard to overcome his desire for her but in vain. But Kumari is an innocent girl and she befriends with Chettiyar without any deceitful motives. At one point, without being able to control his desire for Kumari, Chettiyar intoxicates and has sexual intercourse with her. Only after waking up Kumari finds herself to be cheated by Chettiyar. Fearing her elder brother Sokkan's threat to kill Chettiyar if the latter does not accept to marry Kumari within 5 days, she leaves her house and goes away to the next village. There accidentally she meets Pazhani and without knowing that he is Chettiyar's son she tells him her story. Pazhani recognizes that the one who has cheated Kumari is his father and takes her to him with the promise of making him marry her. Chettiyar who has actually decided to marry Kumari but was hesitant only fearing the society becomes enlightened by Pazhani and marries Kumari besides the strong opposition of the upper caste conservative people and Brahminical organisations. Thereafter, the money and the property of Kuzhanthaivel Chettiyar are spent for social reformative works and for uplifting the poor. And the unfinished temple that Chettiyar was building for Lord Muruga becomes the residential place and school for the poor and the lower caste.

family – Pazhani and Nagavalli, representatives of the pleasurable conjugality – reveal this to us.

“Where is the chain (neck wear) Nagu?”

“In school.”

“Don’t play like this. The beauty of your neck has lessened without the chain.

Where is it?”

“I’ve pledged it with Sett Sitaram (Marwadi) for Rs. 25.”

“Why?”

“Mm... Just for fun. You say that the landlord’s son-in-law is naive. But you don’t even know that you’re going to become a father in another three months. Only by getting Rs. 25 on the chain I paid the last two months’ doctor’s bill. And for the remaining ten rupees I bought Bernard Shaw.” (75)

Pazhani husband indulges in social reformism without taking up a job. Nagavalli, his wife is the bread winner of the family. She works as a school teacher. Since their relationship is based on love breaking caste and religion, she is transferred from one village to other every six months and lives in a financially deprived condition. As the conversation reveals to us she does not even have money to spare for the doctor’s bill. Even in the midst of such depravity, she buys the books of Bernard Shaw and takes pleasure in it.

Pazhani-Nagavalli’s happy family is differentiated from and legitimized over that of the first kind of family which takes pride in buying properties and other materials. Such discrimination is done not merely in terms of the nature of the objects that they collect. Talking about the function of two collections of objects that are mentioned in the early

Malayalam novels Udaya Kumar notes that they, “are distinguished from each other not merely in terms of the nature of the objects and of their interrelations, but also in terms of the subject’s implication in them” (164). As he rightly observes,

The mode of enjoyment of objects in the new domestic interior involves a new set of acts on the subject’s part, different from those which characterise the old notion of the collection of precious objects. The history of self-fashioning in the early novel is in some sense inseparable from the story of the differentiation of these objects and their collections. (164-165)

The land, gold, cattle and other material properties to which the first kind of family attaches itself to and the books of Bernard Shaw, that Nagavalli buys even in the midst of their deprived condition, have a delicate suggestion about the subject. The value that the first type of family attaches with certain kinds of objects is connected with the “traditional signs of wealth” which sees in gold and other material properties “the original and authentic sign of wealth and value”. In contrast, Nagavalli’s treasuring of Bernard Shaw’s book over gold chain indicate a sense of taste – which hardly can be separated from a sense of ethical – that averts from ornamentation or other material properties to new notions of pleasure – the one that wilfully desires and takes pleasures in objects that leads to the cultivation of a modern, progressive and reformist knowledge.

The desire and pleasure that this subject feels in buying Bernard Shaw’s books is discriminated from the craze of accumulating valuables and taking pride in it by the other one. Here one could see that the discrimination between the two types of families in the text does not depend solely on the “nature of the objects and of their interrelations”. It is based on the will and ability of the subject to desire, choose, value and take pleasure in a specific kind of object over the other. And the pleasure that marks the domestic in this discourse is constituted by individuals who embody such a will.

Another example from Anna's short story "Samooga Sevagi Charubala" would this clarify further. It is a story of one Charubala, young, educated, beautiful Brahmin girl who indulges in public life. She is a member of elite upper caste women and indulges in fake social services like repairing and painting the houses of the poor, cleaning the temple ponds, educating the poor about cleanliness and hygiene, teaching dance to the poor kids and so on and falls sick. But there is lack of sympathy and empathy to the plight of the poor. She also has class and caste discriminations in her. She does all the 'services' listed above not with the true will of helping the poor but for fame and popularity. Let us see the delicate suggestion that the description of the objects in her room has about her 'self'. She is described as wearing "decorative spectacles, decorative bag, ultra decorated boots, diamond earring, wrist watch in her hand, a thing gold chain in her neck" (173 *Annavin Sirukathaigal*) and her room is described as follows:

On teakwood cot, a bed and pillow wrapped with Tabeda covers are kept. On the wall Nehru's photo captioned with "Everyone has got their share in the five years plan" and an image of Bharata Mata. On the table Bharathi, Saratchandra, Shelley and Shakespeare! By the window a Buddha statue in little defected condition and a brand new Saibaba statue by that side. (174)

The description of objects does three significant functions here. First, it shows the economical prosperity of Charubala – her spectacles, bag, boots, earring, watch, chain, the cot, bed, and bed and pillow covers reveal this. Second, it reveals the ideological leanings of the character – the photo of Nehru and Bharata Mata shows her Congress leaning. This also has a close connection to her caste. Non-Brahmin reformists in Tamil Nadu often criticised the Congress and Brahmin affiliation. Thirdly, it shows the duplicity of her claims to progress and reformism. It is done by the contrast between the objects that denote her economical prosperity and that which show her intellectual and reformist capability like the books of

Bharathi, Saratchandra, Shelley and Shakespeare and the statue of Buddha and Saibaba. Though these books and statues are symbols of progressiveness, the contrast between the luxuries of other objects that possess these books reveal the duplicity of Charubala's character. The complex mixture of these books and other objects of luxuries show the duplicity of her reformist self by revealing its proximity to the assertion of neo-conservatism or neo-Brahminism during modernity. It reveals, in contrast to the outward appearance, the absence of a true desire for reformism – i.e. an absence of a true class and caste critique, and a sense of clear ethical value. Objects like books of Bharathi et al and the statue of Buddha and Sai Baba (instead of standing as a sign for her reformist interiority) reveal the duplicity and deceptiveness of her reformism – While overtly claiming to help the poor, she actually strategises to assert its authority. Here the discursive production takes place between the ironic differentiation 1) among the collection of objects and 2) between her claims and acts.

This new discourse on pleasure sees pleasure as the product of the active will that the individuated self possesses which in turn enables it to discriminate between objects, identify their respective values and choose a legitimate one out of it. While the absence of desiring, choosing and valuing in the first kind of family reveals the absence of individuality in them, the absence of it along with the fake social commitment and concern in Charubala nullifies the individuality that the objects in her room propose for her. Thus, in spite of a pride over their materialistic prosperity the first kind of family leads a life of anxiety and discontentment. Since the sense of social righteousness and commitment enables the subject to recognise itself as a subject, Charubala who lacks it remains an object along with the other objects in her room without any legitimate claims to selfhood and agency.

On the contrary, Pazhani and Nagavalli are individuated selves having a sense of taste and a sense of commitment. They possess a true desire for social reform. It is thus Pazhani, though a son of a wealthy landlord, leaves his father and his property when he opposes his

marriage with Nagavalli, a lower-caste Christian convert. Nagavalli as Chettiyar, father of Pazhani, thinks does not desire Pazhani for his wealth. After marriage when Pazhani takes up social reformism as his full-time work without taking up any job she happily runs the family with the meagre money that she gets by teaching in a school. She is contented only with the love he showers on her. It is thus, despite its financial depravity Pazhani-Nagavalli's family remain as an uncomplaining, contented and pleasurable space.

This pleasure, it is claimed in the story, is caused because “their life was built as per principle” (76 Annavin Sirukathaigal). What is this principle on which their life is founded? As part of his social reformism Pazhani in this story propagates that “(By) denying to realize the superiority of *kaadhal* marriage shouldn't be a command. It should not be a compulsion. Mutual love and consent should be there. Only the life that the lovers lead with consensus is pleasure” (73). Nagavalli's letter to her friend Amsa reveals her resolution that “Let him be a man of any caste, I would marry only a person whom I love, that too I would marry (him) only without (the presence of) a Brahmin (to conduct the marriage)” (68). In both these instances one could see that '*kaadhal*' and the conjugality constituted of it is represented as the axial point of their reformist objective. Pazhani-Nagavalli's conjugal life is marked by absolute pleasure in spite of their financial depravity, as their life is founded on *kaadhal*. This desire, *kaadhal*, that Pazhani and Nagavalli have for each other is different from *kaamam*, the desire that Kuzhanthaivel Chettiyar has for Kumari. Analysing this difference is necessary to understand subtle ways of subjectivation of this discourse.

### **5.2.3. *Kaadhal vs Kaamam: New Discourses on Desire and Gaze***

After Pazhani leaves the house and marries Nagavalli, Chettiyar develops a desire for a young lower-caste girl called Kumari who works as a daily wagger in the construction site of the new temple that he builds for Lord Muruga. When there is a certainty in the description of the desire of Pazhani for Nagavalli as *kaadhal* (love/desire), the description about Chettiyar's

desire for Kumari is described through a complex and confused set of vocabularies like: *kaadhal* (desire), *aasai* (wish), *maiyyal* (infatuation), *piremai* (love), *sabalam* (lustful temptation), *thaapam* (longing or yearning), *veri* (violent passion), *piththam* (madness), *ichchai* (strong sexual passion), *kaamam* (lust), *mohaanthakaaram* (sexual infatuation), etc. This difference in the description marks the difference between specific ways of desiring practised by these two characters, informed mainly by the kind of gaze they exercise on the woman they desire.

Nagavalli in a letter inviting a friend for her wedding describes the way she and Pazhani fell in love with each other:

He did not struggle a lot to win me over. He would come once in a while to the reformist organization. He wouldn't talk much, but when others talk he would listen keenly. That too when I talk it is a great pleasure for him. Gradually I converted him as a reformist. In the beginning he was just saying that people should live without caste clashes and animosities. As the days passed he became an extremist. I won him over through my speech. I have that pride and pleasure. But he won me over through his very look. (69)

From Nagavalli's statement "he won me through his very look", it is clear that it is his look or gaze which is instrumental in making her fall in love. But what does this gaze show her so as to fall in love with him and be ready to share her life with him? She explains that:

He has got a childlike (innocent) heart. He does not have the mischievous/oogling gazes and mean talks that many men usually have. I boldly would call him as "mister Pazhani". But he would not even call me confidently as Nagavalli. He would come near me with a smile. He is that shy. But his eyes were indicating/demonstrating his love very clearly. (69)

Here one could see that his gaze is discriminated from the usual “oogling” gazes of men and is legitimized over the latter as it expresses his *kaadhal* for her. What constitutes this gaze as an expression of *kaadhal* in the text? From Nagavalli’s letter we understand that Pazhani meets her in the reformist organization. He comes there occasionally and listens to the reformist speeches. At first he takes only a moderate position in issues relating to caste. But Nagavalli transforms the moderatist Pazhani into an extremist through her rhetorical ability. It is in this due course that they fall in love with each other. This rhetorical skill of Nagavalli, which shows her cultured, reformist self and her strong sense of social commitment, is the object of Pazhani’s gaze and desire. Similarly in other novels of Anna like *Parvathi BA* or *Rangoon Radha* too it is the cultured and reformist self of Parvathi or Radha which is the object of desire for Kumar and Parandhaman respectively.

The following is the description given by Parandhaman, the hero and narrator of the novel *Rangoon Radha*, about his first meeting with Radha, the heroine. Here he describes in detail about the qualities of Radha that attracted him and made him even to be bewitched. Parandhaman with his close friend Nagasundaram (who is also Radha’s elder brother) goes to see Radha in her college. As Parandhaman has already heard about Radha through Nagasundaram he is eagerly waiting to meet her. He describes the meeting as follows:

On the decided day we both went to the college. Radha welcomed us with love. All the qualities that I wished an ideal woman should possess. She had the rhetorical skills even to the degree exceeding my expectations. Many houses does not even have this rhetorical skills right? Tasteless conversations or loud clatters/clammers! Isn’t it very rare to find a family that sit relaxed for an hour and talk pleasantly about many issues? That too if a man and a woman who are related in some ways like son and mother, brother and sister or husband and wife begin to talk it ends up only in some dispute, not in peace. We couldn’t talk because we don’t know how to talk.... But

Radha did not just had this skill, she also had developed/cultivated it as a good art.

(128)

Radha's ability/talent to indulge in a conversation or discussion occupies a predominant place in Parandhaman's description of her. In another instance he describes the ideal qualities that he expects from a woman to marry her as follows:

She should be 20 years old – modesty should be there, but she shouldn't be a fool; she should be intelligent but shouldn't be unruly; Beauty should be there but the intention to charm men shouldn't be there; education should be there, but she shouldn't be a smug; she should be social with others but shouldn't have the nature of wandering in nooks and corners [connotes sexual immorality]. (11)

He recognizes that Radha possesses all these qualities only from the way she indulges in discussion. The lament that most of the families do not sit and talk together reveals to us how this subject considers "rhetorical skills" to be a significant or necessary ingredient of the pleasurable family. In an imagination of the family/domestic where discussions occupy a significant aspect of its pleasure, the talent to indulge in a discussion is seen a necessary feature. Even in *Kumarikottam* we have Pazhani and Nagavalli discussing about many social issues and it is these discussions that indicate the readers that they live a pleasurable life in spite of their financial problems. And from the observation that "But Radha did not just had this skill, she also had developed/cultivated it as a good art" it is clear that he finds an aesthetics in it and finds it attractive, pleasurable and compelling one's desire. However, he also enters into a justification of his desire.

Women's speech would quite naturally have fawning, wriggling, inquisitiveness, sweetness and so on. But, usually, only these are not enough. With these it should give/provide some clarity to our hearts. To think we haven't wasted our time there

should be a degree of intellectual fragrance in it. Radha talked with this intellectual fragrance. (139)

It is the talent of Radha to participate in a discussion with intellectual fragrance that makes her attractive and pleasurable to the modern educated man Parandhaman. This intellectual fragrance added with an ability to say things in a refined way differentiates Radha from other women. The way Radha appears all through the novel – as 1) someone who carries herself in a respectable manner, 2) as a pedagogical force through which Rangam, Radha's mother, learns much about the reasons for the pitiful plight of women, the need for autonomy of women etc 3) as a reformist who wants to rewrite Ramayana etc also reveal the autonomy of her mind. It is 'seeing' this individuated self which characterizes the *interiority* of Radha, like Pazhani of *Kumarikottam*, that Paranthaman's desire for her grows and makes him say determinedly to Nagasundaram that he wants to marry her. As we could see, a tasteful gaze towards the individuated ethical *interiority* of the woman plays a pivotal role in the definition of the man's desire towards her as *kaadhal*.

In contrast to it, Chettiar's gaze towards Kumari is directed at her body. It is constituted by a discourse of overt physicality and sensuality. While seeing her he thinks:

What a natural beauty! What a glow in her eyes! How well-built her body is! For all these she is poor! Everyday labour, dirty saree, *uppirajaathi!* (*Ottar!*) [belonging to one of the lower castes]. She is a *sowndaryavathi* (a woman of supreme beauty) who needs to be in a palace. (79-81)

He is described as "drinking her physical beauty" when she is in his proximity (79) and it is this physical beauty of Kumari (83) which kindles a desire in him. The way his desire for her grows is also marked by an explicit rhetoric of sensuality. When innocent Kumari touches him to apply some balm for his chest pain this physicality of Chettiyar's desire grows beyond his control.

Though, all the time he was thinking about her, never before she sat this close beside him. When her hands touched Chettiyar's chest he felt elated. He closed his eyes. Her breath felt like a pleasant cool breeze for him. He had many farfetched thoughts. His body started to tremble. Seeing his shivering body, Kumari thought not just chest pain Chettiyar has also got severe fever. (83)

The conflict that Chettiyar undergoes after this physical proximity that he enjoys with her reveals the lack of a strong ethical will or control in him. He becomes an object/vessel through which physical desire expresses itself without any restraint.

Chettiyar's yearning increased tremendously after the massage [by Kumari]. A fear about "what kind of a danger would occur if I stay here, what kinds of perversity I would do because of this exceeding uncontrollable passion" [engulfed Chettiyar]. Shouldn't stay here anymore [he thought. He went away from Maraiyur thinking that "It is good to go to some other place for one or two days". He did this for getting some peace of mind. But to whichever place he went she followed him... wherever he goes, whatever he sees every second she comes there. Every time his desire grew a step ahead. He came back to Maraiyur like a mad man. (83-4)

This absence of a sense of ethicality in him to restrain or relinquish his desire when he recognizes the impossibility of reciprocity from Kumari and the illegitimate way through which he quenches/satiates his physical craving – he intoxicates her and has sexual intercourse with her – play a predominant role in establishing the illegitimacy of his desire and lowliness of his self. Such uncontrollability is the result of its overt physicality. The usage of words like *thaabham*, *veri* and *piththam* here show both the physicality and uncontrollability of his desire for Kumari. When he satiates his desire for Kumari by intoxicating her, his *aasai* for her becomes *ichchai* (strong sexual passion), *kaamam* (lust) and *mohaanthakaaram* (sexual infatuation) in the narration.

The juxtaposition of words like *kaadhal* and *aasai* with *kaamam*, *moham*, *ichchai* and *veri* has a discursive indication not just to the difference but also to the hierarchy that exists between them. *Kaadhal* is not just different from *kaamam* or *moham* but also superior to it. It refers neither to the delights that one attains in the gratification of *kaamam* – boundless, undisciplined and uncontrollable sexual cravings, nor to the materialistic pleasures relating to money, position or power. It refers to the refined and cultured pleasure that one experiences in a monogamous, mutual emotional bondage. In other words, the pleasure that one derives in *kaadhal* characterizes the refined and superior ecstasy that is experienced via the *interiority*. The predominance of physicality in Chettiyar's desire naturally accompanies uncontrollability as physicality itself symbolises an absence of an autonomous, regulating ethical *interiority*. It however does not mean that desire in the discourse of *kaadhal* is devoid of sensual pleasures. The pleasures and the attraction of the body do occupy a significant place here. But in contrast to *kaamam*, it is a pleasure that results from the mutual emotional bondage that two individuated selves feel strongly between them.

The juxtaposition of the desire of Pazhani and the desire of Chettiyar does a very crucial function here. The dominance of physicality in Chettiyar's desire is contrasted with the strong and mutual emotional bondage that characterizes Pazhani's. This comparison highlights a difference in taste and ethics in relation to women, body and sexual pleasure in this discourse. The male characters' gaze on the woman is an indication of the presence and absence of a regulative apparatus called *ethical interiority*. When its presence makes Pazhani a refined and cultured person, the absence of it makes Chettiyar raw, unrefined and uncultured. It is this difference underlined by their gaze on the women they desire, that substantiates the hierarchical position they occupy in the text – Pazhani as the disciplinary force and Chettiyar as someone to be disciplined.

Such discrimination between two types of male gaze and the legitimization of one over the other plays a crucial role in the ordering of the political discourses too. The Brahminic Hindu gods and Devas were criticised mainly for their promiscuity and sexual immorality or ‘eccentricity’ represented in the puranic texts. Indiran is criticized for desiring other men’s wives and employing ‘mean’ strategies to attain them. Indirani, the wife of Indran, is criticized for desiring Lord Vishnu, a man other than her husband. Agaligai, wife of Rishi Gautama is criticized for not resisting or even enjoying the sexual act even after knowing that the one who copulates with her is not her husband. One can see here that sexual promiscuity in general plays a significant role in establishing their inferiority. They are criticized mainly for breaking the (normative) monogamous conjugal morality. The force that stimulates or pushes them to do it is *kaamam*, a boundless sexual craving. However, the role of the *kaama* male gaze towards woman, that this subject identifies in the Aryan-Brahmin culture and the *kaadhala* male gaze that it constructs for the Dravidian-Tamil culture plays a crucial role in its self-fashioning.

#### **5.2.4. ‘Gaze’ as a Marker of Cultural Hierarchy: The Critique of *Kambaramayanam***

*Kambaramayanam*, a Tamil rendering of the *Ramayana* by Kamban, which has been established as a sign of Aryan-Brahmin dominance on Tamil culture, is criticized predominantly for the kind of gaze that men like royal courtiers and warriors, Rama the hero, and the poet Kamban exercise on women. For instance, after King Dasaratha’s death, Bharatha goes in search of Rama into the jungle with his mothers, courtiers and warriors to ask Rama to take charge of kingship. The stanza that illustrate the journey of Bharatha’s crew across a river with the help of hunter Gugan compares it with the vaginas of women were covered by a thin/flimsy cloth. But when the water threw by the oar sprinkled on the women it wetted the flimsy cloth making their vaginas give its radiance to the men. Seeing this, the warriors became rejuvenated (8-9). This description stands as an evidence for the lowly

character of the men of Ayodhya and that of Kamban. They are described as “lechers”, “uncivilized” and “lewd” as they display a very low character that gets pleasure out of seeing women’s private parts. This gaze is interpreted as exhibiting the indignity, despicable nature of the knowledge of the people of Ayodhya who are praised as superior and moral people in the neo-Brahminical or neo-Hinduistic discourse.

Similarly, Rama is criticized for the low and mean gaze that he exercises on Sita during their first meet. Rama meets Sita in the garden of Mithila on his way towards the palace with Sage Viswamithra. When they meet a mutual desire for each other emerges between them. *Kambaramayam* describes that when Rama sees Sita, their eyes seize/grasp each other’s eyes. There emerges an identical mutual pleasure in both of them instantaneously. During this time when Sita’s eyes got pressed on the strong and well-built shoulders of Rama, Rama’s eyes pierced on the breasts of Sita. This gaze of Rama is described as “low” and “mean” and it is seen as an expression of his lowly desire for Sita. It is seen as a representative of his uncultured nature and that of Kamban’s aesthetics. It reflects the inferiority of Rama as his gaze expresses his lewd self. Similarly, during his period of exile to the forest, while showing the beauty/fertility of the forests to Sita instead of just describing nature, he enters into a description of Sita’s body including her private parts like breasts and vagina. Such a description of a wife by her husband is found not just as inappropriate and mean but also is unnatural.

Even a husband who knows the tricks of mesmerizing and wants to delight his wife by sugary talks would only cajole her as “My lady! Your face is a read-lotus! Your teeth are pearls! Your lips are corals! Your eyes spears!” and wouldn’t describe her breasts in various ways. Such a scene and thought [in *Kambaramayanam*] is inimical to nature. (30-31).

The way Kamban brings in women's private parts like breasts and vagina as metaphors to describe nature and beauty<sup>45</sup> and the way he enters into a detailed descriptions of these parts when he describes women irrespective of the mood or context<sup>46</sup> are highlighted/noted as examples for this. One such instance for which Kamban and his aesthetics was condemned. After Rama breaks the bow one of Sita's maid comes and tells her the news. Sita asks her who broke it as she desperately wants to know whether it is Rama. When the maid confirms her that it is Rama who broke the bow Sita's *megalai* – a piece of jewelry that is worn on the vagina – breaks and falls on the ground with a loud noise as her vagina grows big out of happiness. This is seen as an example that explicitly shows the lowly and uncultured nature of Kamban as he “sees” through his “x-ray lens” called eyes the condition of Sita's private part during such a moment. That is his focusing on such a physical/sensual signification to explain the pleasure that Sita felt while knowing that she has got the one whom she likes as her groom is found as coarse. It is observed that:

Let him describe that “Because of happiness Sita's eyes blossomed; ecstasy oozed from them. Her body enthralled. Because of unbearable happiness she had a nauseating feeling and leaned on her maids”. But is it necessary for Kamban to describe the condition of Sita's vagina to show the elation of Sita's interiority while hearing that Rama [as she desperately wishes] has been selected as her groom. (51)

The subject recognizes an inappropriateness and uneasiness while deploying a strong physical/sexual signification to explain the “elation of Sita's interiority”. It finds it as uncultured to explain the feeling of *kaadhal* (refined love or desire) which is related to the heart through the condition of the private parts. Here one can see how when “her eyes blossomed in ecstasy” is found as an appropriate description to explain the sense of *kaadhal*

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<sup>45</sup> Describing the decorations of Ayodhya city using women's body parts or describing nature like mountains using women's breasts as a metaphor etc

<sup>46</sup> Describing women's breasts according to their age when they come crying following Rama during his departure from Ayodhya for Vanavaasam etc

related to *interiority*, a description of the condition of vagina is found inappropriate. The latter is seen as raw, unrefined and uncultured as it characterizes Sita's ecstasy as relating to physicality rather than her *interiority*.

In these criticisms one can see that the focus of critique is the male 'gaze' – the gaze exhibited by the men of Ayodhya, Rama – the hero of the text, or Kamban – the author of the text. This gaze is seen as an expression of their unrefined and coarse self and an indication of the absence of *panbu* a characteristic feature of the *ethical interiority*. *Panbu* signifies a sense of social and conjugal righteousness. By social righteousness it refers to the presence of awareness about and commitment towards the society including a critique against its caste, class and gender discriminations. Kamban lacks it in two regards: 1) by portraying the Dravidian-Southerners as inferior to the Aryan-Northerners and by introducing the Aryan caste and other inferior cultures into the superior Tamil society through literature. Conjugal righteousness refers not to the marital commitment per se. It refers to a conscious investment in monogamous, mutual and refined love – called as *kaadhal* – as a basis/foundation for a romantic relationship. *Kambaramayanam* lacks it as the *kaama* gaze of the men in it reveals its unrefinedness. Thus, it is the absence of *panbu* – both social and conjugal righteousness – that makes it aesthetically unappealing for this subjectivity. Thus it is observed that:

I'm not a mean man who does not praise the poet who could excite the readers with his poetic skills by upholding even very ordinary/common natural scenery or acts. My heart is not made in an exceptional way so as to be untouched by the poetry. Thus, I won't fail to praise the poets who describe nature beautifully. Can the instances where Kamban uses his poetic skills in such ways fail to delight me? My heart agonizes only when he uses even nature as a noose for mean lustful sensibility. (59-60)

In a context of colonial modernity where history of the people is believed to be intermingled with that of their language and literature, and history – the “knowledge of the country's past

and of its progress or transition is essential by way of stimulus to future progress” texts like *Kambaramayanam* were seen as both politically incorrect and pedagogically misleading for this subjectivity. It is this which prevents this subject from giving *Kambaramayanam* the value of art (63). Interestingly, this disqualification of *Kambaramayam* as superior literature is done by placing it in a modern and world literary canon.

Not even a mad or an uncultured man would describe about his wife’s breasts and vagina to another man. No poets in the literature of any countries of the world have portrayed such a hero. Take from Homer to Bernard Shaw and see. Look even in the erotic literature from *Madhanakamarajan’s Story* to *Manmadha Vijayam*. You can know that in no texts there is a madman who describe that “My wife’s breasts and vagina are like this”. (23)

The frontier that is marked by Homer and Bernard Shaw on the one side and *Madhana Kamarajan Kathai* and *Manmatha Vijayam* on the other side is the normative literary canon established by modernity. The arrangement of these two groups of texts represents a vertical order in which the first group constitutes the apex i.e. hierarchically superior position whereas the second denote the bottom i.e. hierarchically inferior position. This hierarchy is constituted in accordance with their respective high and low ratio of possession of *panbu*. *Kambaramayanam* is denied entry into this canon as *panbu* is altogether absent in it.

Such a canon formation springs from a specific understanding of the function of a piece of art or literature in the context of colonial modernity. Literature is argued to have a pedagogical function to lead/guide people towards right path and make them better citizens which in turn would lead to the civilizational growth of a community or country.

Interestingly, one sees such an ‘absence’ of *panbu* also in *Silappathikaram* – a Tamil classical epic consecrated by this discourse as the canonical Tamil text and a major warehouse of its history of the Tamil golden past. In *Silappathikaram* there are many

instances where such descriptions occur often. Let us note: 1) Kovalan while praising the beauty of Kannagi admires the beauty of her breasts, 2) while describing the pleasurable life of Kovalan and Madhavi the condition and beauty of her vagina is described, 3) While describing the pain of separation of Kannagi after Kovalan leaves her for Madhavi the undecorated and unornamented condition of breasts and vagina is described along with other parts of her body 4) In “Indira Vizha Oor Eduththa Kaadhai” the description of nature is done through a metaphorsing or comparison of the beauty of the nature to the beauty of women’s body parts especially breasts and vagina 5) When Chitrapathi, Madhavi’s mother, meets the latter after she renounced the world and became a Buddhist monk she refers to the growth of Manimegalai’s vagina as part of the description of her beauty. 6) In addition to these, when the aged women bless Kannagi and Kovalan just after their wedding for a happy and pleasurable marital life it is on an explicit physical ground and the description of their pleasurable marital life in the text is overtly sensual accompanying predominantly descriptions about their sexual life.

It is useful here to note certain observations of Sudipta Kaviraj about the traits of the description of women body in classical/traditional aesthetics. In his article “Tagore and Transformations in the Ideals of Love” he observes that,

Shringara in the traditional aesthetics cannot derive its full meaning without a connection with rupa – beauty of the physical form, primarily, though not exclusively, associated with feminine figures. The shringaric aesthetic does not regard looking for physically and materially beautiful things and people as problematic, or even remotely shame-inducing. (165 Orsini)

Pointing out the “continual, mild eroticism that accompanies Kalidasa’s descriptions of nature in the *Meghaduta* (*The Cloud Messenger*)” he invites us to understand the

“unashamed openness of this eroticism, almost its indispensability for any aesthetic perception of the world” (165). He goes on to add that,

Notice of beauty is everywhere, and comes up in the most surprising places. Apart from the famous erotic descriptions in Kalidasa, or the more narrowly erotic poems of Amaru which refer to mundane figures, or slightly extra-mundane ones like *Meghaduta*'s *yakshini*, this form of description is unproblematically extended to figures who are objects of religious devotion. ... I think it will be correct to say that there is an aesthetic way of seeing the world which is *shringaric*. It sees the beauty of the feminine form and the beauty of the world as interchangeable, and thus allows a constant double movement of metaphors (165-166).

Citing examples from *Meghaduta* where “the beauty of natural things is always reminiscent of feminine beauty” – like “the darkening evening light on a hill looks like a breast”, “the waves of the Betravati River are like the rippling eyebrows of a woman turning up her face to be kissed”, “the full line of the white sand beach of the river against the blue line of water is like the glimpse of a leg when a blue sari is waved away by the wind” – he notes that “in all these cases the direction of the metaphor is from the natural things towards a suggestion of the female body” (166). He also observes how such a celebration of physical beauty occurs irrespective of status or mood. He cites examples about how the descriptions of the figures of divinity like goddess Parvathi or Radha and while “celebrating the immense and invulnerable power” of the goddess “who is going to defend us when we cower in terror before evil” physical beauty is invoked. He notes that even during the deployment of *raudra rasa*, as in the case of goddess Durga “the physical expression of the emotion of anger, imparts a strange and fascinating heightening of feminine beauty” (166). Then he adds that in the classical aesthetics, “Beauty, in short, is a happy miraculous gift, to be enjoyed by its possessor and by those in its presence” (166-167).

One shall see what Sudipta Kaviraj notes about the Sanskrit traditional aesthetics in general and Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* in particular in the Tamil epic tradition too. Both *Kambaramayanam* and *Silappathikaram* contain such traits of celebration of women's body, physical beauty and sensuality. And, against the claim that the Tamil nation and life of *Silappathikaram* is casteless and thus represent the original Tamil culture uncorrupted by Aryan imperialism, it shows strict caste divisions too. Interestingly, when *Kambaramayanam* is critiqued for its caste discriminations and overt sensuality and uncultured male gaze *Silappathikaram* which also contains such traits was not critiqued for such an aspect. In contrast, as we have noted in the last chapter, it was celebrated as a text that expresses the *manavalam* – the superiority of the interiority – of the Tamils during their golden age and was claimed to be the major warehouse of the ethical values that the Tamils need in the contemporary time to regain their lost sense of selves. When the method of vehement criticism is employed for dealing with the aesthetic traits devoid of *panbu* in *Kambaramayanam*, a different method has been identified by this subjectivity for *Silappathikaram*.

### **5.2.5. Creating a Classical Tamil History for 'Refined' Gaze: (Re)-Constructing *Silappathikaram***

In contrast to the silence about the absence of *panbu* in *Silappathikaram* continuous attempts were made by many members of the DMK to write dramas focusing either on the whole epic or on its specific segments. Anna's *Kal Sumantha Kasadar* and *Ilangovin Sabhatham*, Karanthai Ganesan's *Manamaravan Cheran Chenguttuvan* which appeared in Anna's *Dravida Nadu* itself, M. Karunanithi's *Cheran Chenguttuvan* and *Silappathikaram: Nadaga Kappiyam* (which also was made into a cinema named *Poophuhar* in 1964) can be cited as few examples. There were also attempts made to write modern epics based on the plot of the classical epic. Bharathidasan's *Kannagi Puratchi Kaapiyam* and Thamizh Vel's

*Madhavi Kaapiyam* etc can be cited here as few examples. These attempts proved not just as acts of dramatizing or adaptations of the epic in their interest to make it accessible. They also proved to be reconstructions, reinterpretations, retellings or new productions of the classical epic. Such productions, we discussed in the last chapter, created the life and times of the epic as marked by *maanam*, *veeram* and *tamilpatru* in the modern sense of the terms.

We also discussed how such constructs helped producing a continuous history for the modern Dravidian-Tamil subjectivity from the classical to the modern age. In the following paragraphs let us examine how the relocation of the gaze of Kovalan (and Ilangovaligal), becomes a significant performative act in constructing *Silappathikaram* as a historical document that carries the history of Tamil subjectivity. We would also discuss how a re-illustration of the male gaze and a recreation of the characters of the epic as having *panbu* and thus an *ethical interiority* in them does a necessary function in establishing a classical history for the domestic or conjugality that is constructed in this discourse. For this purpose we would focus mainly on the transformations that were brought in the character of Kovalan and Madhavi in M. Karunanidhi's *Silappathikaram Nadaga Kaapiyam*. Though not written by Anna the theoretical speculations and ethical justifications for such attempts at 'retelling' ancient epics were weaved by Anna. The "Prefaces" ("Aninthurai") of Anna for *Iraavana Kaaviyam* – an modern epic retelling of the *Ramayana* story with Ravana as its hero – by Pulavar Kuzhanthai and *Silappathikaram Nadaga Kaapiyam* – a dramatic reconstruction of the Classical *Silappathikaram* by M. Karunanidhi – clarify it.

There are two significant changes that Karunanidhi's dramatization of *Silappathikaram* brings in in relation to the discourse on gaze: 1) The change in the reason for Kovalan buying the garland of Madhavi and enters into a relationship with her. 2) The change in the characterization of Madhavi. In the classical epic Kovalan just buys Madhavi's garland that was auctioned in the market and goes to her house. But in the dramatization a

new episode has been introduced to create a complicate situation for Kovalan buying the garland. A new character called an old Greek merchant is introduced in the dramatization. When Kovalan, Kannagi and the old Greek merchant go to see Madhavi's dance, the latter's mother arranges the auction of her garland and announces that whoever buys it can get Madhavi. This happens without Madhavi's prior knowledge. Seeing Madhavi's beauty the lascivious old Greek comes forward to buy it offering the proposed amount of gold. Madhavi surprised by her mother's announcement and worried seeing an old man trying to become her partner pleads her mother to cancel the auction. But both her mother and the old Greek are stubborn in their decision. It is to save Madhavi from such a dreadful fate and to save her arts that Kovalan buys the garland. Even after buying the garland he does not go to Madhavi's home and does not have a least interest in having a relationship with her. He stays with Kannagi with a true love for her. But Madhavi falls in love with him and sends her maid to bring him to her house. Even after Kovalan denies her invitation many times Madhavi repeatedly sends her maid triggered by a true and pure love for him. It is on Kannagi's advice that Kovalan goes to Madhavi's home to explain that her desire is unattainable as he loves only his wife. But seeing Madhavi's pure *kaadhala* out which she has gone to the extent of laying down her life, Kovalan falls in love with her and stays there. Similarly, Madhavi, unlike a *kanigai* – a woman belonging the community of *devadasi* – of the classical epic, is someone who is determined to lead a monogamous love life in the drama. She detests leading a polygamous life of a concubine.

These variations in the plot and the character of Madhavi are rendered to bring in variations in the character of Kovalan and his relationship with Madhavi. The whole episode from the auction to Kovalan staying with Madhavi fashions them as individuated selves with *panbu* and an *ethical interiority*. Kovalan becomes someone with *panbu* by not allowing the lascivious old Greek from getting Madhavi. He becomes a true Tamilian with *maanam* both

by protecting the Tamil culture and arts by not letting a Tamil woman (Madavi) to be ‘enslaved’ by a Greek merchant and by saving the pride of Tamils when the Greek insults the former telling that no one in the Tamil country has got enough wealth to buy Madhavi. Later when he realises the true and pure love Madhavi has for him it is this *panbu* in him that makes him accept and reciprocate her love. Thus, Kovalan’s desire for Madhavi becomes a refined love stimulated by ‘seeing’ the refined and pure love that Madhavi has for him and the superiority of her arts rather than the sensual desire that the classical tragic hero has for the concubine.

Madavi, though born in a *Kanigaiyar kulam*, the community of artisans to whom the laws of chastity are inapplicable, wilfully respects monogamy and stands determined that she would live only with one man i.e. would enter only into a monogamous relationship. This exhibits her individuated self and the presence of *panbu* in her. It is because of this the love relationship that emerges between these two individuated selves “does not stimulate disgust or irritation” (iv “Preface” Silappathikara Nadaga Kaappiyam) in the subjects. The variations from the premiere/debut scene to Kovalan staying with Madhavi and the variations in the character of Madhavi, among other things, refines Kovalan’s gaze and makes his relationship with her as *kaadhal* (iii *ibid*). The *panbu* of Kovalan makes his love life with Madhavi, in spite of not being monogamous, a pleasurable instance for this subject. In the same way, the fact that Madhavi, in spite of being a *kanigai*, respects monogamous relationship, lives only with Kovalan, begets a daughter through him and becomes a Buddhist monk after his death leaving worldly life and pleasures are seen as characteristic features that ‘show’ her true and selfless love for Kovalan. It is this discovery of a quality of loyalty to heterosexual monogamous love relationship – the foundation of the normative in this discourse – in Madhavi which makes her a bearer of *panbu* and thus an *ethical interiority*.

It is crucial to note that historical validity for the cultural superiority and inferiority of the Dravidian-Tamils and Aryan-Brahmins is established using literary sources namely epics like *Silappatikaram*, and *Kambaramayanam*. Though *Silappatikaram* is the warehouse of the Tamil golden past that this discourse constructs, it does not consider the whole of it as a historical document. When the story of Cheran Chenguttuvan that the epic describes is considered as Ilango Adigal's witty attempt of recording "the historical time in epic time" (6 *Theeparavattum*), the story of Kannagi- Kovalan- Madhavi is considered only as a literary representation of the poet's imagination and thus fictional (iv "Preface" to *Silappatikara Nadaga Kaapiyam*). In such a case, how does it justify its attempt of creating a history for *panbu* in the Tamil golden past using literary characters like Kannagi, Kovalan and Madhavi as predominant sources? How do these literary characters stand as a testimony or evidence for the presence of *panbu* in the Tamil society during the Tamil golden past? This happens via the modern understanding of literature and its functions. Literature/art, as we already discussed, stands as a representative of the general civilizational growth of a society or culture during modernity. It is seen as representing the 'inner' nature or qualities of the people of a culture (6 *Theeparavattum*). Art or literature with 'higher' or 'superior' values represents the existence of a taste and sensibility for them in the society at large. However, the very imagination of people in this fashion – as a group formed by individuals who are claimed to have an open access to arts and literature irrespective of any factions of caste, class and hierarchal positions – is a possibility enabled only by modernity. It is in this modern understanding of literature and the people who are associated with it that the superior virtues that the literary characters like Kannagi, Kovalan or Madhavi 'embody' becomes an evidence for the superior quality of the people.

In the context of colonial modernity where literature is primarily believed to have a pedagogical function, the respective qualities of the aesthetic sensibility of the

Dravidian/Tamil and Aryan /Brahmin cultures stand as representatives of the respective superior and inferior cultural standards.

‘Exposing’ the uncultured gaze of *Kambaramayanam* towards women and forging a plot of cultured gaze for *Silappathikaram*, though seem to be a contradiction, they both actually work at establishing gazing as a qualifier of a person’s desire. They discursively institute it as a significant characteristic to identify the presence and absence of *panbu* and *ethical interiority* in a person. Pazhani and Parandhaman are differentiated from Chettiyar mainly by the presence of this *panbu* and *ethical interiority* in them. The reformation that both Pazhani institutes in Chettiyar and the DMK personalities institute in *Silappathikaram* happens only by the instillation of *panbu* in them. Thus it is clear that *panbu* functions as a disciplinary institution in the constitution of this political subjectivity. It also clarifies that literary sphere functions as its production field. Such a dialogic relationship between the political and literary sphere in this discourse obliterates the boundaries that strictly segregate them.

### **5.2.6. *Panbu* as a Disciplinary Force: Intersection of the Political and Literary**

*Panbu*, as we noted above, functions as a disciplinary force in the constitution of political subjectivity in this discourse. The two polarised images of women in this discourse – the venerable domestic woman and the detestable *dasi* – are differentiated and discriminated on the line of the presence and absence of *panbu* in them. It is the presence of *panbu* that makes the domestic woman ideal and venerable while the absence of it makes the *dasi* inferior, disgusting and detestable. It is clear from the fact that the superiority and inferiority of these two types of women are established by a modern value-based morality rather than a pre-modern birth-based morality. That is, the domestic woman attains the superior venerable position not because she is born into a particular class and caste but because she embodies

certain superior virtues like a strong investment in a conjugality constructed by monogamous and mutual love.

Similarly the *dasi* woman is held inferior not because she is born into a 'lower' caste but because she is a den of inferior virtues which threatens the happy existence of the domestic and the nation. The words that denote '*dasi*' in this discourse like *vesi* (prostitute), *ullaasi* (she who craves to lead/leads a luxurious life), *sallaabi* and *sarasakaari* (she who is skilled in the act of sexual intercourse), *saagasakaari* (woman of tricks especially sexual), *alangari* (she who decorates herself to charm men), *mohini/mayamohini* (a temptress who tries to charm men using her physical beauty), *kansimitti pal ilippaval* (she who winks and smiles at a man as a symbol of sexual invitation) etc hint only at the absence of *panbu* i.e. a social and conjugal righteousness. In other words the category *dasi* in this discourse does not represent a particular community but women whose is the embodiment of inferior qualities like cunningness, wickedness, disloyalty and so on. She is someone who enters into a sexual relationship with one or many men not for love but for her desire of money, position, power, status etc or for her boundless and uncontrollable sexual desire. Thus the polarised women categories of this discourse have a modern value-based signification in this matrix.

Here one shall note that *panbu* has a crucial and a complex disciplining function with regard to women sexuality and categorises them as good/bad and superior/inferior accordingly. But such a classification does not rely on the essential physical/biological purity of women as feminists like Ambai observes. Though outwardly the categorisation seems to represent it, it is not physical purity that differentiates them in entirety as feminist critique points out. This is mainly because the sexual culture of a person does not only implicate the physical purity but has a subtle implication for the presence of a will and its functional locus the *ethical interiority* which qualify him/her as a subject. The categorisation of the domestic woman and the *dasi* indicates the differentiation between 'individuated' and 'unindividuated'

selves, 'subject' and 'object', and thus 'self' and 'other' here. Thus, unlike the contention of feminist criticism the polarised categorisation indulges in the subjectification of women rather than objectification.

It is thus even a woman of high status or 'upper caste' if devoid of *panbu* becomes a 'dasi'. The Aryan Deva women like Indhirani, wife of Indran – the one who rules the world of Devas – becomes an inferior *dasi* because she approaches Vishnu, a man other than her husband, for a sexual relation induced/urged by *kaamam* (4-5 *Deva Leelaigal*). Similarly, even queens become *sallabi*, *ullasi*, *sagasakari*, *kaikaari* and so on for the absence of *panbu* in them (Ref. *Romapuri Ranigal*). Agaligai, wife of a rishi and a representative of the Aryan/Brahmin culture in this discourse, becomes an object of criticism and condemnation because she continues to enjoy or does not reject the sexual intercourse with Indiran even after she came to know that the one who is in sexual contact with her in the guise of her husband is really not her husband (2 *Deva Leelaigal*). The criticism on the sexual immorality or promiscuity of these women is nothing but a process of refusing them selfhood and establishing them as 'other'.

Second, it has to be noted that not all women who are into polygamous sexual relationships are criticised and condemned as *dasi* in this discourse. For instance, the protagonist of Anna's novel *Rangoon Radha* (2000) Rangam becomes a prostitute because of the cruelty and trickery of her own husband and younger sister. Though she leads a sexually immoral life and begets a daughter named Radha through her relationship with another man, she is not condemned as a *dasi*. In contrast she is pitied for the regrettable/lowly condition that she has been forced to embrace. She is someone who met this cruel and detestable fate because of certain social evils like greed for wealth, polygamy, superstitions and so on. However, she is someone who manages to preserve her *ethical interiority* in spite of her physical 'impurity'. Thus, she is not a *dasi*. More interesting are the portrayals of Ramba,

Thilothama and Menaka, the Devadasis/concubines of the Indra Sabha. Though these women indulge in polygamous and undisciplined sexual behaviour they are portrayed as pitiable characters as their indulgence in polygamy and immoral relations are interpreted as caused by the intimidations of the Aryan repressive structure that controls their lives. They are imagined as people who are frustrated and tired of being used as sexual objects and hate to continue with their immoral life styles. In addition, they are also imagined as someone who has a deep longing for the monogamous conjugal structure of the Tamil culture and have a high regard for Madhavi who though born in a Devadasi community like them chose a monogamous love life based on *kaadhal*. In spite of these frustrations and hatred for the structure to which they belong and a deep yearning for monogamous conjugality they are ‘cowards’ who do not have the guts to break themselves free from the detestable life styles. In spite of this cowardice they are portrayed as pitiable characters as they feel annoyed about polygamous and undisciplined sexual cultures and behaviours and share a fondness for disciplined monogamous conjugality. Thus, only those women who indulge in immoral, polygamous relations without any regret or repentance are criticized as *dasi*. Those women who become prostitutes out of compulsion or because they do not have any means for livelihood, though are not venerable, are not detestable either. They deserve pity and sympathy.

Third, women who are compelled or tricked into a mismatch marriage having one or many extra marital affairs either as a revenge for the trickery employed on them or out of true love for another man (monogamous here) is also justified in this discourse. For instance, a woman named Mesalina was tricked by an old king and was compelled into a wedlock with him. But this old king has an insatiable desire only for food and wine and spends his time only in eating and drinking without pay attention to his young wife. As a young girl both stimulated by her natural bodily desires and as revenge against the trickery of her husband she establishes sexual relations with many men and goes to the extent of killing men who

does not yield to her desire. Though her cruelty is criticised, she is pitied for becoming like this due to the compulsion of circumstances (43-51 *Romapuri Ranigal*). Similar was the story of Irami in Anna's short story "Sudumoonji". Raami is a young girl in love with Ekamparam. Arumuga Mudaliyar has an eye on Raami and wants to marry her. With the help of the Brahmin priest he changes the horoscope of Raami as having some blemish and thus would not match with that of Ekamparam. When the horoscopes do not match Ekamparam's mother stands against his marriage with Raami and threatens him that she would commit suicide if he is stubborn on marrying her. Ekamparam is left with no choice but to forsake Raami. Then, Raami is married to Arumuga Mudaliyar and comes to know about the latter's treachery during the first night. During his absence she calls Ekamparam to her house and tells him about his treachery. Both of them become grief-stricken knowing how they were fooled by the treacherous Mudaliyar. Mutual consolation blossoms as an adulterous relationship between them. In this, though Raami enters into adultery, she is not criticised as an immoral woman as her relationship with Ekamparam is constituted out of monogamous love. Moreover it is the treachery of Mudaliyar which is criticised and Raami's adulterous relation stands as a resistance/counter for his cruelty.

As we could see from these instances, women's physicality is not the focus of the disciplinary mechanism in this discourse. In contrast, the *ethical interiority* – the representative of an individuated, self-regulating, and ethical self – that functions as the disciplinary regime. The journey of a nation and people towards a superior culture and civilization is progress. In a discursive matrix where civilized life is recognized to be founded on the '*inbhamana kudumbam*' (pleasurable or congenial domestic) constituted by the *kaadhal* – the monogamous, mutual and refined love, between two individuated selves with *ethical interiority*, the Tamil culture which upholds this is seen as the ideal domestic woman and thus someone who can take people and nation towards progress. The Aryan-Brahmin

culture which is characterised by an absence of this regulating *ethical interiority* is identified as a *dasi* and thus a force that would lead Tamil people towards decadence.

The discursive structure that emerges in the cultural plane when transported to the political the Dravidian-Tamilian who has fallen from his golden past becomes a man who has forgot his lovable wife, Tamil by falling into the deceitful web of the Aryan/Brahmin *dasi*. The lovable wife, Tamil, is someone capable of leading the Tamilian and his country towards progress whereas the *dasi*, Hindi, who spreads the web of deceit, is someone who drags him towards decadence. It is in the similar way the DMK, the political party which fights for the safeguard of Tamil language and culture is conceived as a ‘well-disciplined family’ whereas the Congress which tries to bring in Hindi as the national language is often described as a *dasi*. Such conceptions reveal that ‘domestic’ and ‘politics’ emerge as related categories in this discourse. They seem to function as mutually constitutive categories in the process of self-fashioning. Let us analyse below the ways in which they are related.

### **5.2.7. Domesticizing Politics: The Function of Domestic in Anna’s Politics**

Anna is noted for an overt domesticisation of political relations in Tamil Nadu. He is addressed by the cadres as “Anna” – elder brother and he used to address his followers as Thambi – the younger brother. He continuously referred to DMK as a well-knit, loveable and well-disciplined family in his writings and speeches. More significantly, his political pedagogy is also characterised by this rhetoric of domesticity. For instance, Tamil language and land were often personified as mother, wife and daughter – significant images of the modern domesticity. Often the past glory of Tamil language and land are invoked to highlight their present abandoned and inglorious condition. In such instances one could frequently see that Tamil language and land are compared to a mother dejected by her irresponsible son. At times it had been claimed that the Tamilians’ forsaking interest and concern over their language and land for the sake of Hindi and India is like a son who lives sophisticatedly in a

three-storeyed house forsaking his mother to beg in the streets (200 *Peraignar Annavin Sorpozhivugal* Vol.2. Pa. Aarumugam). It was proclaimed that the Tamil language which lived with a rich literary and grammatical tradition with unfading fame and esteem now “has become a distressed/helpless mother standing as a deceived widow losing both her husband and endearing child” (359 *Naam Ellam Ore Kudumbam*). The lament of the Tamilian who sees the present inglorious condition of the Tamil language and land which had a glorious past it is compared to the agony of a husband “who sees alternately his T.B. infected wife who is losing her beauty and youth day by day and the painting in which she appears in her wedding costume”. The way in which Tamil Nadu is cheated by the Northern-congress leaders is compared to an innocent, helpless, dim-witted and pure virgin who is cheated by the sugary words of a “lascivious man who has got deceitful thoughts and the haughtiness of wealth” (10 *Annavin Peruraigal* Vol. 1). While explaining the Tamilians about the political illegitimacy of the North Indian leaders determining things for the Non-Hindi speaking people and alerting them to be aware of its consequences it is compared to:

A passer-by went and sat on the *thinnaï* (a raised platform) in front of a house. When the owner of the house inquired him, he said “I am very tired; please give me some water”. The owner brought him some water. Then when the owner went inside and was eating, he also went and sat beside him. They provided him food too. After eating he said “I’m very tired, I need to lie down for sometime”. The owner also provided him with a bed. Our present condition is similar to that of the condition to the owner who thinks at this juncture that “As a next step to this he would even ask us to send our wife to fan him it seems”. Northerners ruled this country – we agreed; they asked us to pay tax – we paid without any resistance; But now they impose Hindi. We are needed to think about the arrival of Hindi from the North like how the owner thinks that the passerby would even ask our wife to fan him. Those who do not have any

*maanam* (a sense of honour) and *soodu soranai* (a sense of shame and sensitivity) may fan. No one with *maanam* and *soodu soranai* would do it. (197-198 *Perarignar Annavin Sorpozhiyugal*)

The legitimacy of the North Indian leaders in deciding Hindi as the national language for India including the Non-Hindi speaking states is explained as “how would it be if a burglar who has come to steal in a house sees the sleeping daughter of that house and says “the right groom for this girl is in my street, let us talk and fix (their wedding)”? (289). The obvious foolishness of allowing the North Indian leaders to decide things for the people of the South is compared to the foolishness of asking Dutsadana – who stripped Draupadi of her saree – to suggest what kind of saree can we buy for Draupadi. It is observed that:

If Dutsadana is the one who decides whether Draupadi needs to wear clothes or not, would she get clothes in her life time? Likewise if it is Northerners who decide whether the Tamilians needs Tamil or not, how can Tamil language be rescued? If one asks Darma to say what kind of a saree does Draupadi need at least he could have bought her a country (cotton) saree. If it is Arjuna, he would have bought her even a decorative designer saree. If it is Druyodhana or Dutsadana what kind of a saree would she get? Aren't they people who striped even the saree she was wearing? Asking “What language do the Tamils need?” to the Northerners who snatched even the politics/political rights that we had is like the shameless story where one asks Dutsadana “what saree can we buy for Draupadi?” (294 *Perarignar Annavin Peruraigal* Vol.1)

In addition to these, the electoral victory of the DMK is compared to a ‘a youth coming of age’ getting married (07.06.1959 *Dravida Nadu* column titled “Vaalibhame Valarvaai” [Grow Ye the Youthful]), the fear that a young and inexperienced political party

like the DMK feels while taking up such a great responsibility of governance is compared as fear and worry of a young man from an ordinary family in taking up the responsibility of the family. The ground of that fear is explained as:

“Any young man of ordinary background would think “we are going to take up the responsibility of the family. We do not even have any (financial) support no. We need to take care of the family only on our own”. For the son of a wealthy man marriage is a game. But for a responsible poor man? Naturally worries and fear would occur. But for that can a young man who has come of age negate his responsibility? The condition of the qualified political party is also just like this. (2)

DMK’s position as the opposition party in the legislative assembly is compared to that of the position of “best man”. Similarly, the moments of celebration in the party were compared to that of the joys of a young man in the domestic/conjugal. For instance, the happiness resulting from the decision taken about DMK stepping into electoral politics in 1957 is described as follows:

As the young man who attains a heart that does ecstatic dance when his *manathirkisaintha mangai nallaal* smile by telling in a soft voice that she is pregnant and says that “Oh! Oh! It’s a drop of honey, an insatiable sweet syrup, I got the fruit of pleasure”, so is the feeling that thinking about the victory that we are going to attain by deciding to participate in this general elections gives to our heart. (33 *Thambikku Annavin Kadidhangal* Vol.11)

The proliferation of such a cognizance is clear from the observation made in the *Thiruvilakku Anna Malar* of 1966 (Thangavayalaar in an article titled “Anna: A political foreseer/soothsayer”) with regard to Anna’s attempts to produce a socially-conscious generation. He observes that, “as the head of the family who realized and assumed responsibility for the family, Anna produces citizens who realized and took over the

responsibility for the society” (48). One sees in the above cited examples a proclamation of naturalness to the young man’s (vayathu vantha) feeling of responsibility towards domestic/conjugal commitments and values and an attempt to invoke similar naturalness in relation to the Tamil language, land and the party (through a line of similes, metaphors and comparisons).

Firstly, in the examples cited above one could see different images of women – mother, wife and virgin – invoked in relation to Tamil. Imagining Tamil as “*athai magal*” and “*manathirkku iniya mangai nalla*” marks a significant shift in the modern political understanding of Tamil where it was placed in the position of an angel/goddess and worshiped. This reveals to us the repositioning of Tamil language from the religious to the domestic sphere in the cognitive plane of the modern Tamil political subjectivity. This problematizes the homogeneous maternal discourse in relation to Tamil language that Sumathi Ramaswamy highlights in her work. Though Tamil is frequently addressed as mother, it has to be noted that it was not the only conceptualization through which the modern subject’s relation with language is imagined. Thus, it is problematical to bring in these diverse relationships that the Tamil subject maintains with Tamil language and land under a homogeneous maternal relationship. Even in instances where Tamil is imagined as a mother it was not religious devotion but domestic duty and love that characterizes the rhetoric of *tamilpatru* in this discourse. Thus, it is problematical to bring in these different relationships that the Tamil subject shares with the language and land within the framework of devotion. The rhetorics of citizenship rights, duties, patriotism, and so on which constitutes the relationship of the Tamil subject with his language necessitates one to see the predominance of the political in such a discourse on *tamilpatru*. As we have pointed out earlier, this category ‘political’ is not constituted only of the components strictly belonging to the ‘public’. One often sees the values, qualities and ethics of the private realm through

which that those of this public/political realm is constructed. But such values and ethics do not succumb to the religious domain as Sumathi Ramaswamy establishes. They actually belong to the domain of the domestic.

Secondly, the examples show the extent to which the political field is domesticated in this discourse. It is within such a discursively domesticized political field that the slogans such as ““When *athai magal* (daughter of paternal aunt on whom the boy has a customary claim to marry) Tamil is there, neighborhood girl English is there, what is the need for the *oor thevadiyaal* (a common prostitute of a town or village) Hindi?” (quoted in *Aanmaiyo Aanmai*) mobilizes. These are critiqued by feminists as slogans demeaning the self-respect of women and interpreted as one of the mean attempts of patriarchy to trap women within certain polarizing subject positions like “*athai magal*” an image of legitimate conjugality who deserves a man’s respect and veneration, “neighbor hood girl” an image of sensual attraction and invitation and an object of a man’s sexual desire and the “*oor thevadiyal*” an image of impurity and immorality who deserves a man’s condemnation and detestation/hatred.

The ground of such criticisms is the discrimination that exists between the categories men and women in this structure. It is done in two ways. First, it was done by noting how such imaginations while categorizing women according to their sexual morality and thus disciplining their sexuality, in contrast frees men from any sexual morality or discipline and helps them satiate their sexual pleasures through women of different hierarchal relations namely legitimate wife, illegitimate but true lady-love and the immoral prostitute (*dasi*). Second, by marking the edge men have over women in these representations – like as a ‘*athai magal*’ she is someone who legitimately ‘belongs’ to him, as a ‘neighbourhood girl’ she is someone who is ‘available’ for his desire and as a ‘*oor thevadiyal*’ she is someone who can be ‘rightfully’ detested by him – they construe this as a yet another project of patriarchy.

Women characterized by these polarized positions though seem to be opposing and incompatible with each other, such criticisms note, ultimately are all images who serve the interest of men.

However by focusing only on the discriminated representation of women such criticisms fail to notice the crucial functions of these heterogeneous imaginations of women in the constitution of the Dravidian-Tamil political subjectivity. First, are these categorisations of women by having domestic as a yardstick, as implied in the feminist critique, are intended at disciplining women? The examples we discussed above reveal that the monogamous conjugal structure/domestic is the cognitive structure through which the political sphere is cognized in this discourse. That is, in this discursive matrix the political sphere is conceived, cognized and imagined only through the domestic. This further problematizes the relation of the private and public. When the researches on the nationalist discourse has revealed to us that 'domestic' has been a significant part of the 'political' during modernity and thus the reformation of it was considered a significant political project, the instance of Dravidian-Tamil discourse shows to us that the domestic is the very cognitive structure through which the political is conceived, cognized, imagined and thus constructed.

In this regard the polarised representations of women have a significant function in this political discourse. The women images are not intended to sketch the normative discipline for women (as it has been critiqued by feminists). In contrast they are intended at imparting political knowledge for men. They are discursively produced in the cognitive plane to provide necessary political pedagogy to men. In other words, these women images and their categorisation based on *panbu* stand as the primary lesson through which the new class/caste, masculine political constituency makes sense of the unfamiliar political sphere. This reveals to us the indelible role of this categorisation of women in the constitution of masculine political subjectivity. However what is the nature of this masculinity? Is it

homogeneous? Is it repressive of the women's political and sexual subjectivity as it has been observed in the feminist critique? To understand this let us the discursive production of masculine subject position in relation to this heterogeneous categorization of women in literary narrative and examine whether the category 'woman' is devoid of agency in this discourse.

### **5.3. Literature as a Realm of Subject Production**

Charubala, the protagonist of the short story "Samooga Sevaki Charubala" is described by the narrator as follows:

Social server Charubala has got cold and fever. Shanthibhavanam was in lot of commotion. She is the only daughter of the income-tax officer Kothandarama Iyer. Won't it be this amplified/exaggerated then? That too Charubala was becoming famous by doing social service. Cloud like hair, full-moon shaped face that it was caressing, half-moon shaped forehead, talking eyes, quivering lips, body is gold, walking is dance, speech is music – age 22, education inter.

Decorative spectacles, decorative bag, ultra decorated boots, diamond earring, wrist watch in her had, a thing gold chain in her neck – always smiling, pleasant-faced with everyone – can Charubala not become a spectacle of that town/city?

Even those stingy men who go there to pour out their problems that "income is very less and lot of loss this year" and by that get the mercy of the officer, as soon as seeing this gold statue would return by talking praise of their business. See the nature of whirlwind that this beauty stimulates/kindles. (173)

One could see a strong physical thrust in this description. Though Charubala's educational and social background and her social concern are described, it effortlessly and predominantly

accommodates a description of her body. The description of her body parts like hair, face, forehead, eyes, lips, body and her walk and talk occupy a predominant focus in her introduction in the story. Similar is the description of Valli in “Singala Seemaatti” and Kumari in “Kumarikottam”.

There were also many women among the workers who involved in this temple construction. Kumari is one among them. Neither too fair nor dark, but a body gleamed due to work. Inquisitive look. A smile would naturally crawl on her face. Whatever work she does, she would be singing in a soft voice. Her age is less than 20. A kind of bewitching force is there in that girl’s look that stands with the pride of youth. Her rugged speech would even stimulate desire in a saint. (77)

These descriptions form the context of introduction of these women characters in the story. And there is a predominance of physicality in such descriptions which goes into the details of their body – namely shape of eyebrows, nature of their eyes, shape and colour of lips, body etc, and how they stimulate sensuousness in the onlooker. Likewise the narrative on Charubala-Raguraman and Chettiyar-Kumari’s physical closeness and sexual relationship also are characterised by preponderance on physicality. The situation of Kumari applying balm to Chettiyar is described as follows:

Another day he asked her to apply balm for his chest pain. Little shy. But with the heart devoid of cunningness Kumari applied the balm on his chest. Though, all the time he was thinking about her, never before she sat this close beside him. When her hands touched Chettiyar’s chest he felt elated. He closed his eyes. Her breath felt like a pleasant cool breeze for him. Myriad thoughts sprouted in his mind. His body started to tremble. (83)

There is a sharp focus on the contact of Kumari's body with Chettiyar's and the sensation that it stimulates in the latter. The physicality of this sensation is revealed from the reliance of the narrative on the contact and proximity of Kumari's hand and breath with Chettiyar's chest and body. Similarly, the narrative on their sexual relation or intercourse also predominantly focuses on extreme sensuality.

The place in which Chettiyar stayed is a small room in the half-built temple. An earthen lamp was blazing with not much brightness. It was the time when the workers are sleeping. Kumari came running there urgently. (84)

The narrative which begins like this develops as,

As someone who is in a hurry to see the rats Chettiyar went near the sacks by rubbing on Kumari. He took a kind of pleasure in it. She felt a little frightened. After cleaning the place she stood there wiping her sweat with her saree's free end. Chettiyar gave the *legiyam* (an electuary made up of herbs) to Kumari telling "Here a gift for you! Eat, it is very tasty and also good for health". (85)

and reaches its apex as follows:

She started laughing in a loud voice. The whole room appeared illuminated for her. An exhilaration started to brimming in her. Without paying attention to her clothes slipping down and hair getting loosened she was laughing and singing. Kumari's eyes started to roll. She started feeling sleepy – she felt as though her pupa is going upper and penetrates into the upper eyelid and she is going higher and higher. She got an indiscrete courage that she never had before. *Legiyam* (herbal electuary) started to take over/boss over her.... After this Chettiyar couldn't be controlled even by fear. By cajoling her as "kannu Kumari" he hugged her, attached his face with hers, also lips... Kumari by erupting "*Cha! Kattaila poravane!*" (an abusive word referring to corpse

uttered during heightened anger) started to go away from his grip. During this since her dress slipped down on the floor and her leg got tangled in one end of her saree, she tripped and fell down. Chettiyar made her stand. She lost her stiffness. The sense of dizziness increased more and more for her. She lost even the tendency to resist. She also started to play by giving a hug for a hug and kiss for a kiss. (86-87)

The focus on the lighting of the place, the physicality of the drives of Chettiyar towards Kumari, the description of Kumari's vulnerable condition through the uncontrollability or eccentricity of her senses and body like: eyes, voice, the condition of her dress, hair etc reveal the absolute reliance of the narrative on Kumari's body to induce the sensation of sensuousness or titillation.

Likewise, the description of Charubala-Raguraman's sexual life is also characterised by a language of overt physicality and titillation. How hard Raguraman pulls her, kisses her, how she struggles without getting breath, how he caresses her feet to wake her up and how he takes pleasure in seeing the marks of their love game on her cheeks, forehead, thighs, waist and so on are also described (179).

Such a predominance of physicality in the narrative on women has been read by feminists as a contradiction of this ideology as it seems to go against its own criticisms. As we noted earlier *Kambaramayanam*, a demonstrative text of Aryan culture and its imperialism on the Tamil culture, is critiqued heavily for using women as objects of titillation. But the description of women and sexual relation that we discussed above seem to stand against the very ethicality of the subjectivity. Such descriptions frequent not just in proper literary genres like novels or short stories, but also in Anna's semi-fictional critical texts like *Kambarasam*, *Devaleelaigal* or *Romapuri Ranigal*. For instance, *Kambarasam* while exposing the 'uncultured' gaze of Kamban on women's body enters into detailed

descriptions/explanations of the meaning of the stanzas which eventually turn out to be titillating and voyeuristic.

This has been continuously noted as a contradiction by feminist criticism. These criticisms mark this feature as an ambiguity/inconsistency of the DMK's ideology and ascribe it either to the ethical duplicity of the individual leaders like Anna or to the absence of a strong political agenda in their ideology towards women and their emancipation. They also mark it as a patriarchal project/conspiracy to retain women as sexual objects and their bodies as objects of titillation and voyeurism. But such criticisms repudiate to note the discursive structure that constitutes this narrative process. They fail to address questions like: 1) Are all women objects of titillation in this discourse? 2) Is woman's body in general invested with an erotic signification? 3) Do women appear here only as sexual objects denied of sexual desire/agency? And more significantly 4) Is the Dravidian-Tamil masculinity constructed in relation to the nature of gaze on women homogeneous?

Parvathi, the protagonist of the novel, *Parvathi B.A.* is introduced as:

Parvathibai B.A. is a cultured girl. She is brought up in an orphanage, got a degree with the help of her intelligence, joined the Society of Rationalists due to her interest in propagation and became a person worthy of Parthiban's love. Parthiban said that they can get marry in a year or two. But she does not become a Shakuntala! She kept Dushyantha in some distance. (15)

As against the description of Charubala and others one can note a complete absence of physical description in the introduction of Parvathi. The narrator introduces her as a "cultured woman" to the readers through her intellectual capability – B.A. stands as a signification for it, and her social concern – her interest in doing propaganda and creating social awareness against class and caste discriminations. Her social background is explained through her

condition of being an orphan. Though the description that “She did not become Shakuntala. She kept Dushyanthan at some distance” seems to have a physical and sexual signification it actually refers to her awareness and astuteness and stands as an indication of her individuated, thinking self.

Firstly, both Parvathi and Charubala are educated women involved in public life and propaganda. In such a case, what constitutes such a difference in their description? Charubala is a pampered child of a well-off Brahmin family and is someone who is indulged in fake social services like ““Removing the moss from the temple tanks and cleaning its steps”, “Giving sermons (ithabathesam) for hut-dwellers immersed in ignorance and are ignorant of living cleanly and hygienically and teaching *kolaattam* (a popular group dance in which generally women move around striking short coloured sticks to the rhythm of a song) and other dances for poor children and by that creating pleasurable pastimes for many villages” (178) and so on. Even when she involves in certain activities like repairing the huts of poor villagers, she does it just for attaining the target of her organisation and for the sake of fame. The duplicity of Charubala’s social concern and the absence of genuine sense of social righteousness in her – i.e. a real awareness and critique of class and caste discrimination which is one of the attributes of *panbu* – has a discursive relation with her protruding neo-conservative Brahmin identity in the story.

In contrast to it, Parvathi, as it has been mentioned in the description, is an orphan and is someone who is genuinely interested in societal reforms. She is deeply aware of the class/caste discriminations in the society and is very critical of them. She voices for the poor and the needy and works for their welfare and rights. This genuine social concern of Parvathi is credited in the story by her social background which is indefinable in terms of caste. When Parvathi’s references to/interest in Stalin or French revolution etc stand as indication for her genuine liberatory and revolutionary self, the books of Saratchandra, Bharathi, Shelley and

Shakespeare and the statues of Buddha and Saibaba in Charubala's room, as we noted already, indicates only the duplicity of her claim for social concern and emancipation. The wedding gifts that she gets like "A hut and an *erkalappai* (the rod connecting the plough with the yoke used for ploughing the land) made up of silver and coated with gold" (178) as a token of honour appreciating her service to the poor shows the duplicity of her and the society in which she is a part of. Both she and her society are indifferent to the real emancipation of the poor but takes pleasure and pride in their 'service'. It is thus against a poor man's continuous insistence that she won't be able to do it properly, she repairs his hut by force which later falls on his child's head and causes its death. This in other words indicates the absence of *ethical interiority* in her. It is thus, with the objects that remain just as objects without having any implication for the subject's interiority, Charubala also remains as an object – a mere female body – among them in the narrative. It is this difference which discursively constitutes the difference in the way Parvathi and Charubala are introduced in the respective stories by the narrator.

But not only characters like Charubala who lack a sense of social righteousness are described in such physical terms. As the examples noted above reveal, Valli and Kumari, characters who are not reformists like Parvathi but at the same time do not show any duplicity like Charubala are also described like that. But what differentiates their description from that of Charubala and Parvathi is the description come from the narrator through the gaze of the men who desire them. Both Valli and Kumari are described in the presense of the men who desire them. It is while describing Chettiyar's desire Kumari is introduced in the narrative. The description indicates the latter's mean desire for her. When the social indifference legitimizes the narrator's description of Charubala in physical terms, in the case of Kumari her innocence necessitates that such descriptions come through the gaze of the uncultured man who desire her. These narrative positions in the text are very significant as they reveal to

us the presence of heterogeneous masculine subject positions in relation to different kinds of women in this discourse.

The description of Kumari functions as a discursive sign that reveals the character of Chettiyar via his 'gaze'. As we discussed above, the gaze of Pazhani and Paranthaman express their refined love for Nagavalli and Radha and the gaze of Chettiyar express his coarse physical desire for Kumari. In this regard, these kinds of descriptions stand in the narrative as a discursive indication for the physical, uncultured and thus uncontrollable desire of the male characters towards these women.

In the same way, there is a difference in the description of sexual intimacy/relation according to the nature of the characters and their desire. In contrast to Chettiyar-Kumari's, the description of Radha-Paranthaman's sexual intimacy is devoid of overt physicality. Body in general and the woman body in particular appears her just as a sign or indication of the physical involved in their pleasure rather than an embodiment of the pleasure itself.

I wanted to pull her near me, kiss her and tell – But don't know how my Radha understood it, she leaned on me like creeper. On her cheeks – Yes, it is my hands which played first, then lips... "My pleasure" I called (her). She closed and opened her eyes for a second. A red lotus blossomed. She came near me. A sweet and pleasant breeze blowed on me! She smiled, I ate a fresh feast (in it). (208)

Similar was the description of Pazhani-Nagavalli's sexual relation. More significantly such descriptions also carry a justification for this indicative physicality by prioritising sexual desire and its satiation for women.

When Nagavalli was writing a letter to her friend Amsa about her victory in love, Pazhani was reading *Naidatham*. When he was reading the context where Nalan and Thamayanthi involve in the games of love he felt like sharing the aesthetic beauty of the poem with Nagavalli. He came inside. Took the letter, read it and felt happy. Also

gave her a present. It is a usual present only. What else does he have with him? If Kuzhanthaivel Chettiyar had agreed for their marriage not just a diamond necklace, or different sorts of bangles he could have given many other things. But now the groom couldn't give the bride anything else but a garland of kisses. "It is enough (for me)" said that *sarasi* (the woman in love). In what way the diamond necklace that an old husband gives is equal to it? (72)

A prioritisation of the sexual pleasure over other materialistic delights is done from the point of view of Nagavalli's delectation of it. While describing about the way she and Pazhani fell in love with each other in the letter to her friend Amsa, her verbalizing candidly concentrates on their sexual intimacy and enjoyment.

It was around 6 o'clock in the evening that day. Amsa! Whatever be it these men are little hasty only. When we were talking, suddenly he embraced me. I, who has got the capacity to shatter the challenger's argument into pieces, said fawned and said "Aiyo! Leave me. Someone is going to come". It is good that Pazhani didn't listen or conform to what I said! Our lips.... It's natural only no di! Then every evening he started coming. While teaching children in the school I would be thinking about what would he talk today, how would he play and so on. I needed to ask "what is the capital of Bengal?" But instead I asked "what is the capital of Calcutta?" The intelligent girl Vanitha in my class got up and said "the question itself is wrong". I burst into anger. Then realizing my fault I myself laughed. When I laughed I was reminded only of him. You know why? No. You are prankster. I won't tell you. (69)

In spite of such a focus on the physical these descriptions strike a stark difference from that of Charubala-Raguraman's and Chettiyar-Kumari's. Though the act is very physical in both Radha-Paranthaman and Nagavalli-Pazhani, the description focuses mainly on the interior pleasure that the subject derives in it unlike the others that predominantly focus on the

physical act itself. More significantly, as against the latter, there is no focus on the body of the woman to exhibit that pleasure. When the description of the former is short and focuses on the interior pleasure of the physical relation, the description of Charubala-Raguraman and Chettiyar-Kumari's sexual intimacy is long, detailed and focuses on the condition of physicality itself: like Charubala's lips, forehead, cheeks, thighs, hip, etc; Kumari's clothes, hair, body, voice etc; or physical drives and pleasures of Chettiyar. Such tensions in the narrative in relation to different kinds of women are very significant as they constitute the very fabric of this masculinity. These tensions reveal that the masculine subjectivity constituted in relation to women in this discourse is not homogeneous as it has been implied in feminist criticisms. But it is discursively heterogeneous. They co-exist in the same discursive regime so as to differentiate, discriminate and legitimize one from the other. The ideality of Pazhani's gaze or Pazhani-Nagavalli's sexual act is constructed only by juxtaposing it with that of Chettiyar's and Chettiyar-Kumari's. In other words, the discursively productive nature of this literary regime is founded only on their co-existence and juxtaposition. This shows the distinctive logic of the literary realm.

Wedlock/matrimony cannot be the normative structure that constitutes the difference in the narrative position as Charubala-Raguraman's sexual act happens only after marriage and Pazhani-Nagavalli's takes place before their marriage. More significantly Raami-Ekaambaram's sexual relation is not just out-of-wedlock but technically is also adultery. But the description of it is devoid of the overt physicality.

Her anger did not subside even after she made Ekambaram come to her home through the help of her housemaid (when Aarumuga Mudaliyar goes to play with Vedam) and told him about the treachery. Ekaambaram shouted in anger that "Fraud! Did he do a treachery/trick like this? He has stolen my very eyes from me (by taking you)?" Then he cried "I'm an idiot. I was deceived". Raami tried to console him by telling "Don't

cry *kannu!* All these happen as per our fate, what can we do?” But would it end with the consoling scene? She wiped his tears away with the free end of her saree. Telling “My goodness! I have lost (some one so precious like) you!” He embraced her. She bemoaned “its enough darling! this is what we are destined for” He tried to control the quiverings of her lips by kissing it. Can it be done? Both of them tripped and fell into the well of pleasure. After that they did not regret too. (53-54)

Though it is adultery it is not an object of titillation and voyeurism as it happens between two individuals whose love is mutual and refined, whereas in the case of Chettiyar-Kumari, the love is neither mutual nor refined. The overt physicality and sensuousness in the narrative is a discursive indication denoting the absence of *kaadhal* – mutual and refined love – and thus *panbu* and *ethical interiority* in the transmission of the sexual desire. Chettiyar-Kumari’s sexual act is an object of voyeurism and titillation due to this absence. Though Charubala-Raguraman’s is a mutual desire, the absence of social righteousness in her grants the voyeuristic freedom to the narrator.

In the case of Chettiyar-Kumari after the titillating narration of their sexual act the narration enters into a field of conflict between titillation and ethical consciousness. The crudeness, duplicity and selfishness of Chettiyar are repeatedly reminded in relation to the innocence and pitiable condition of Kumari. Chettiyar’s desire for Kumari becomes *ichchai*, *kaamam* and *mohanthakaaram* and the physicality of his gaze towards her is highlighted.

It is a pleasurable night for him! But for her it is a night of deceit. She does not know that she has been scapegoated for his *kaamam* (lust) – she lost her self-control, he attained pleasure. He didn’t even think that he attained her by doing trickery. He only felt satisfied that “anyway I got what I wanted”. Not just that. He also felt happy that he obtained the skillful lover in her in a very clever way. It is a pleasurable night,

that's all he knew! She is a pretty girl, that's all he knew. He got her, that's enough for him. (88 *Annavin Sirukathaigal*)

The complete absence of ethical sense in Chettiyar is exposed in the conflict of the narration to jump from titillation to ethical consciousness. This is done by highlighting the innocent, cheated and pitiable condition of Kumari who without knowing about the treachery “sleeps like a child” and wakes up in the morning “with scars on her cheek” to know her dreadful fate. When the innocence of Kumari brings in a conflict in the narration to oscillate from titillation to ethical consciousness, the lack of *panbu* in Charubala justifies the narrative's voyeuristic freedom. Though Chettiyar and Kumari enter into a conjugal relation at the end of the story, the description of their sexual event is marked by overt physicality as their relation was not a legitimate one when it took place. The refined pleasure expressed by a language of symbolic indication, which is denied for such an event in the narrative, is granted with legitimacy after they enter into wedlock.

Nagavalli, pinching at Kumari's cheek said jokingly “You are a very great person Kumari. See they are going to build even a temple in your name.” “What they say is wrong Amma! It should be named only as the temple of Lord Pazhani” cleverly replied Kumari. Nagavalli poked fun of her saying “In such a case, even that won't be appropriate. Only the name “*Legiya Temple*” will be suitable for it” and started to run away. Kumari ran behind chasing her. Both father and son saw that scene and smiled at each other. (95 *Annavin Sirukathaigal*)

Juxtaposition of the difference that mark these descriptions and the varied reasons that effect this difference in the text inform us of the modern ethical frame that constitute them. The tensions in the narrative and the multiple narrative positions that one sees here indicate the heterogeneousness of the Dravidian-Tamil Masculinity. This heterogeneity integrated by

a value-based morality challenges one to bring in a homogeneous critical framework aimed at revealing either the “progressive” or “regressive” nature of this discourse. In addition, such a framework also fails to note that ‘woman’ is not a homogeneous category here. They are discursively heterogeneous. It also resists accounting for the agency (both political and sexual) that women like Parvathi, Nagavalli and Radha possess in this discourse.

The keen interest with which this chapter tries to reveal the heterogeneous kinds of desires, pleasures and ethical values that constitute the Tamil/Dravidian political subjectivity is an attempt to go beyond the homogeneous critical frameworks. The constitutive factors of the different or even opposing kinds of description of women and sexual intimacy in the literary discourse are also applicable for the description of Tamil and Hindi or DMK and Congress or South and North in the political discourse. An understanding of such an intricate relationship between the literary and the political – as productive spaces mutually constituting each other – restrains one from seeing literature merely as an object of aesthetics or a tool of political propaganda, as it has been conventionally viewed<sup>47</sup>. It also necessitates a closer study of what it is conventionally termed as the ‘propagandist literature’ and its intricate relation to the political sphere especially when it comes to gender.

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<sup>47</sup> Jayakanthan, a significant stalwart in the Tamil literary sphere and the bitterest critics of Annadurai marks that “*Only fools have called him [Annadurai] a scholar... whatever he [Anna] has written worth nothing more than a garbage and has to be burnt right away to save space in the book shelves*” (78 Kannan). Similarly, P.C. Ganesan while commenting upon Anna’s short stories notes that “*Anna has failed as a short story writer*” (79 Kannan). In spite of the differences in the age, one sees in both these an attempt to segregate literature from politics and analyze it for its own literary worth. In contrast to them, the critical social historians like Arunan, V. Geetha and S.V. Rajadurai have recognized the significant role played by literature and cinema in the politics of Anna and the DMK. Though paying attention to the significance of Anna’s literary works in his politics they tend to see them as tools ‘used’ to fill the gaps in his political ideologies. In spite of the differences in these two approaches they share a common attitude regarding art and literature. For both of them literature is an expression of an individual’s genius and is an instrument – for aesthetic pleasure/enjoyment for the former and political emancipation for the latter. This instrumental approach towards literature fails to notice how literature functions as a field of relation and production in that context.