DECONSTRUCTING THE COCHIN CARNIVAL

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By

ALEESHA A GEORGE

Register No. AB21ENG004

III B. A. English Literature

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

Cochin - 682 011

Kerala

Supervisor

DR. PRIYA K NAIR

Assistant Professor

Department of English

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

Kerala

March 2024

DECLARATION

I hereby declare the project titled, "Deconstructing the Cochin Carnival" is a record of bona fide record done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Priya K Nair, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

Aleesha A George

Register no. AB21ENG004

III BA English Literature

Ernakulam   St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

March 2024   Ernakulam

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled, "Deconstructing Cochin Carnival" by Aleesha A George is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

Dr. Priya K Nair

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Ernakulam   St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

March 2024   Ernakulam

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Aleesha A George

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Introduction

A society's culture reveals the way it works. A nation's culture can be used to evaluate it. India is a nation that values its culture and customs immensely. Kerala's culture alone is the reason it is referred to as "God's own country." All literary theorists started considering cultural studies in the latter half of the twentieth century. The Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin coined the term "Carnivalesque" to describe the way traditional forms of carnival, reverse power hierarchies. Bakhtin wrote during the first half of the twentieth century. The Carnival can be portrayed in a painting, sculpture, film, etc. Movements were referred to as "Carnival" by Mikhail Bakhtin. The Carnival Celebrations are where this phrase originated. Catholic churches have street rallies and people wearing masks around this period. Bakhtin claimed that folk culture and carnivalesque were distinct. A community's culture encompasses its political, intellectual, and economic aspects. Exploring culture, caste, class, religion, gender, ethnicity, and other aspects is essentially the goal of cultural studies. In daily life, cultural studies consist of three key components. One is our way of life, our level of consumption, and our social relationships. It illustrates our social interactions. Among the most crucial elements of the "Cochin Carnival" is this; each and every participant in particular engages with the audience members who are watching the processions during the Carnival. With their humorous talks, these participants win the hearts of the audience to add more joy to the festival.

Everything is allowed during a carnival. There is no precise difference between the audience and the actors in this performance. Carnival offers a constructive substitute point of view also. Additionally, it brings together a wider range of ethnic communities and religious groups. It's all done with a spirit of celebration and humour. Everything is jovial and vague

during the carnival. And this is the subject of my project, the renowned festival of Cochin Carnival.

One of the most festive occasions in Kerala is "The Cochin Carnival." Annually, Fort Kochi hosts the Cochin Carnival, a celebration of boundless joy that never gets old. December 22nd is when it begins, and January 1st is when it finishes. Commencing with the hoisting of the Indian National Flag in Vasco da Gama Square, this vibrant celebration features a grand parade featuring exquisitely adorned elephants on New Year's Day. Beyond its visually stunning aspects, the carnival embodies values like participation, peace, progress, adventure, and environmental consciousness. The city adorned in white decorations signifies tranquility, while its diverse attractions, including folk arts, traditional performances, and competitions, attract tourists.

The Cochin Carnival has its roots in the colonial past of Portuguese and British control, specifically in the colonial New Year's festivities. The Cochin Carnival, a cultural representation of Fort Kochi's mixed past, arose gradually as a result of Portuguese influence. On New Year's Day, this celebration transforms into a visual feast complete with folk performances, colorful costumes, music, and percussion, as well as elephants in captivity. Beyond just being entertaining, the carnival promotes involvement, harmony, advancement, adventure, and environmental consciousness while decorating the city in white to represent calm. The carnival, which is the biggest yearly tourist draw in Kerala, is notable for being secular and dedicated to social advancement, with a growing number of different groups, including the transgender community, taking part. This culturally significant event, which is celebrated worldwide as a celebration of life's vitality, comes to a close with the burning of a massive effigy of Pappanji, often taken to be a replica of Santa Claus.

This thesis, "Deconstructing the Cochin Carnival," examines the Cochin Carnival using Mikhail Bakhtin's Carnivalesque theory as a tool of analysis. The center and essence of Cochin is the Cochin Carnival. Using Mikhail Bhaktin's Carnivalesque Theory, this thesis provides a thorough examination of the Cochin Carnival. The first chapter discusses the definition of the concept of Carnivalesque and outlines the Carnivalesque components of Mikhail Bhaktin's theory. We learn more about the Cochin Carnival's history, objectives, and effects on Kochi's local community in the second chapter. In the third chapter, a few well-known Malayalam films that depict the carnivalesque aspects of Cochin Carnival celebrations are discussed.

Chapter 1

The Notion of the Carnivalesque

Russian philosopher, literary critic, and scholar Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895–1975) focused on literary theory, ethics, and the philosophy of language. His studies on a wide range of topics influenced academics from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines, including literary criticism, history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. These traditions included Marxism, semiotics, structuralism, and religious critique. Bakhtin participated actively in the 1920s Soviet discussions on literature and aesthetics, but his unique viewpoint was not widely recognized until he was rediscovered in the 1960s by Russian academics.

The Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin is credited with coining the term "carnivalesque." He used the term to describe times when customs and norms are abandoned, the world is flipped, and everyday routines are put on hold. The word derives from carnival festivities in Catholic cultures, where people dress up in masks and have a wild time, creating a surreal atmosphere. Deeply ingrained in human psychology, Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque is defined by the subversion of power dynamics through chaos and humour, enabling the expression of speech and conduct that are typically deemed odd and improper. Bakhtin considers the early 1500s French writer François Rabelais to be a near-perfect example of the carnivalesque.

Inspired by the grand carnivals of medieval Europe, Carnivalesque theory refers to a literary style that uses chaos and fun to disrupt and liberate the prevailing mood or stylistic presumptions. Mikhail Bakhtin first introduced "carnival" in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, and he expanded on it in his subsequent writings. Bakhtin asserts that "carnival" has a profoundly ingrained psychological foundation in both the collective and individual human

psyches. Anti-elitist by nature, it is grounded on the physiological realities of the lowest body strata. Any literary work that subverts established power structures by drawing on the chaos and humour of the carnival is referred to as carnivalesque. Under the surface of societal order, it depicts a society where socially irresponsible behaviour flourishes and perpetually threatens to topple things.

In numerous disciplines, including sociology, literature, and communication, carnivalesque theory has been applied as a framework and model for research projects. The use of chaos and humour to subvert social conventions and empower the masses to question established power structures. It is a transient acceptance of a surreal reality that can be freeing and therapeutic, but it can also be exploited. The carnivalesque symbolizes an escape from presumptions, allowing the person to transcend the limiting elements of reality and strengthen community ties. It can, however, also serve as a short-term means of letting out steam for 'unacceptable' behaviour, which eventually serves to emphasize how important the stability and security of the social order are. The carnivalesque is a literary technique that uses chaos and humour to disrupt and release the presumptions of the prevailing style or environment.

Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators. In Carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the Carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated and, strictly speaking, not even performed; its participants live in it, and they live by its laws, as long as those laws are in effect; that is, they live a *carnivalistic life.* Because Carnivalistic life is drawn out of its *usual* rut, it is to some extent, "life turned inside out", "the reverse side of the world. (Bakhtin 122)

Character Quasimodo, the titular "hunchback," wins the title of Pope of Fools in Victor Hugo's well-known novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1833)*. This title is given to the most

hideous participant at the Feast of Fools. Dressed as a Pope and welcomed by the audience, Quasimodo subverts and elevates the status of the medieval idiot, who is usually mocked for his physical infirmity and inferior station. This scenario is representative of the "carnivalesque" style of writing, according to literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin.

According to Bakhtin, the carnival is a type of ceremonial spectacle that permits the suspension of conventional wisdom and hierarchies of power; we see the transformation of monarchs into paupers and vice versa. Any literary work that uses the chaos and humour of a carnival to subvert established power structures is referred to as carnivalesque. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (1963)*, Bakhtin first addresses the carnivalesque; in *Rabelais and His World (1965)*, he elaborates on these concepts. Bakhtin relates this to early modern literature, especially that of François Rabelais, even though he is referring to the ceremonial performances that took place in medieval Europe. Bakhtin also notes that the term "carnival" is ambiguous and that our understanding of what constitutes a carnival has evolved throughout time. Several of the carnival's "fundamental traits" are still present in a "quite clear, though reduced, form," the author claims, despite the fact that some aspects of carnival life have long since disappeared.

Four main categories, the familiar, the carnivalesque mésalliance, the eccentric, and profanation are identified by Bakhtin as constituting the carnival sense of the world. People from diverse classes come together for the carnival, where they may converse freely and in a familiar setting. Anyone can attend, regardless of class or status. Because of socio-hierarchical differences, this promotes social interaction between strangers who would not have otherwise encountered or spoken to one another.

Eccentricity: Everyone at the carnival is free to act in a way that defies accepted social norms, and is frequently encouraged to do so. People can express themselves in whatever way

they like at the carnival, including dressing up, donning masks, and performing in unusual ways. Carnivalesque mésalliances: the carnival gives rise to the union of dualisms that are normally divided, such as the holy and the profane, high and low, and educated and illiterate. Profanation is the temporary removal of persons in positions of authority and the suspension of religious observance. Rather than honouring celestial deities, the carnival permits profanity, blasphemy, and a celebration of the corporeal and worldly.

The name 'Carnivalesque' was coined by Mikhail Bakhtin in the early 1900s. 'Carnivalesque' is the term he used to describe a variety of movements, such as movies, floats, sculptures, paintings, dramas, music, and dance. The Carnival Celebrations are where the name "carnival" originates. Before Lent, people have large-scale street celebrations and wear masks, which are both humorous and frightening, especially in Catholic societies. One of the primary features of carnivals is that usual rules of a specific society are disregarded and don't apply throughout their duration. People are free to do anything they want, even risky or ridiculous things. For instance, burning the enormous Santa Claus at midnight on December 31st is a celebration that delights and amuses everyone, but it is also risky. "Deeply ambivalent is also the image of *fire* in Carnival. It is a fire that simultaneously destroys and renews the world. In European carnivals, there was almost always a special structure (usually a vehicle adorned with all possible sorts of gaudy carnival trash) called, ''hell'' and at the close of the carnival this "hell" was triumphantly set on fire" (Bakhtin 126).

Thus, Bakhtin's notion of the Carnival perfectly explains how the Cochin Carnival received its annual ritual of setting fire to the "Pappanji". While European countries' carnival "hell" fire is set on vehicles with carnival decor, Cochin burns an old man filled with

firecrackers, who is often mistaken as "Santa Claus", but unlike "Santa Claus" who is a Christmas figure, "Pappanji" is the man of New Year, particularly of Cochin.

The traditional meaning and purpose of Carnival have prevailed in the modern world. Carnivalesque, in the words of the philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin, also refers to folk humour. Carnivalesque, in Bakhtin's opinion, creates a distinct form of social space characterized by equality, prosperity, and freedom. The carnivalesque is seen by literary theorist and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin as both a literary style as well as a representation of a historical event. Carnivalesque art, in Bhaktin's opinion, transcends other artistic mediums and literature. According to Bhaktin, the essence is bringing life to the world. There are ritualistic performances, hilarious spoken word pieces, and a variety of harsh language genres. The Carnival has been eternalized in literature.

According to Bakhtin, abandoning one's own culture behind is the best way to completely understand one's culture. Bhaktin also points out it's difference between the carnival culture of the past and the contemporary holiday culture. Bakhtin claims that the carnivalesque is the product of the prevalent patterns seen in societal makeup that are twisted and reversed. Regarding the degree to which flourishing Carnivalesque traditions that mocked authority figures and parodied the conventional wisdom of society, history, destiny, and fate as eternal had an impact on popular culture, Bhaktin formulated a contemporary theory. During Carnival season, even the idiot has the freedom to express his ideas. The intricate customs, comedies, and tragedies that are a feature of carnival, especially the Cochin Carnival, are true to the carnivalesque form in this sense.

Processions, art forms, and plays are among the main features of the carnival, especially the Cochin Carnival. Carnival is a unique event that brings the communities together for celebration. These days, carnival is a significant global festival in several areas of the world. The carnival aspect represents a liberation philosophy from all sorts of oppression. Carnivalesque, according to Mikhail, portrays a different reality. Carnivalesque has been recognized as a part of a larger movement, especially in early modern history. At a carnival, there's also no distinction line separating the audience from the performers. Carnival has an energy that brings society back to life.

A Carnival is never complete. It's a process that is continuing. It is composed of materials. Carnival is mischievous sometimes. It serves a conservative purpose by permitting certain humour. The spirit of regeneration and the ability to break down old forms and create new ones typifies carnival. Additionally, the carnival is marked by festivity, humour, and a lack of seriousness.

The Cochin Carnival has been significantly impacted by various cultures from various nations. In particular, the African, Brazilian, and "Hollywood" and "Bollywood" movie theatre costumes. The contestants' vibrant body paints were mostly inspired by African culture. The singing and dancing audience members take great pleasure in the procession. It's an exciting experience, indeed. Complete "nudity" is prohibited during the carnival. Everyone must abide by this one rule. The exquisitely constructed costumes are either stored away or thrown away once the Cochin Carnival concludes. This represents the start of a new year, the letting go of the past and the acceptance of the future, a symbol of the renaissance.

Chapter 2

The Cochin Carnival

The Fort Kochi Carnival is an event that perfectly captures Kochi's uniqueness and energy. The carnival provides a singular opportunity to immerse oneself in the rich cultural tapestry of the captivating city of Kochi, with its roots in the past and an eye toward the future.

Let's examine an alternative account of how the Cochin Carnival came to exist, complete with its elaborate festivities. The story that is currently being told about the origins of the Cochin Carnival is far less complicated than it actually is. Commemorating the UN Declaration of 1985 as the International Youth Year was its original purpose. By adopting resolution 34/151, the General Assembly of 1979 declared 1985 to be the International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace. The Assembly approved the criteria for additional planning and appropriate follow-up in the domain of youth development in 1985 by passing resolution 40/14.

The rules are noteworthy because they treat youth not as a single demographic group but as a broad category with multiple subsets. They offer recommendations for particular actions to meet the needs of subgroups such as young women, youth from rural and urban areas, and young people with disabilities. When the United Nations System's World Youth Forum met for the first time in Vienna, Austria in 1991, young people there came up with the concept for celebrating an International Youth Day. The United Nations recommended the creation of an International Youth Day, primarily for advertising and financial support to facilitate collaboration between youth organizations and the UN Youth Fund. In 1998, a resolution declaring August 12th as International Youth Day was accepted by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth's inaugural session, which was hosted by the Portuguese government in cooperation with the United Nations. The International Youth Year was proclaimed by the United Nations in the

year 1985. This encouraged the youth of Fort Kochi to participate in the festivities, as did the celebrations of youth everywhere.

Due to a small beach celebration that was started by a few young people in Fort Kochi back then, Kochiites still celebrate this legacy to the fullest every year at the end of the year. The Cochin Carnival, which happened in 1985, was made possible by the Beach Festival, which comprised many cultural events. The previous mayor of Kochi and the initial chairman of the Cochin Carnival, K J Sohan, said that unique names were given to the Festival of October, Fiesta November, and other events. On January 1st, 1985, the Beach Festival culminated with the first-ever Cochin Carnival. When K Karunakaran, the Kerala chief minister at the time, happened to pass through the area, he spotted the festivity. He was astounded to see the level of opulence and majesty in the streets, and upon discovering the carnival, he declared that the government would provide funding to organize the event. The carnival, which started out with the slogan "participation, development, peace, environment, and adventure," has stuck to this motto in theory and practice for the past thirty-five years. The United Nations set out three goals for the International Youth Year in 1935: participation, development, and peace. Cochin Carnival adopted these three objectives as its motto, adding environment and adventure.

Kochi's strong history as a cosmopolitan city made possible such a great cultural event. Chinese, Jewish, Greek, and Arabian tradesmen had established communities in Kochi since the 13th century CE. During the European Age of Discovery, which began with the Portuguese arrival in the early 15th century and ended with the end of the 18th century, Kochi emerged as a major hub for trade and cross-cultural interactions. Kochi was repeatedly colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British in 1795 as a result of the conflict between the kingdoms of Kochi and Malabar and the subsequent changes in alliances and power. The European monoculture

ruled the seafront Fort Kochi, which was directly under the British Madras Presidency. In contrast, the Arab, Jewish, and early Christian traders and trade guilds that inhabited the Mattancherry dockland under the Kochi Maharaja were more inclined toward multicultural fusion. The colonial inhabitants in the post-independence Kochi islands began to disperse; Fort Kochi, which was dominated by the British, turned into a shady Christian town, while cosmopolitan Mattancherry remained a bustling mart with a diverse population and lively activities like sports and music clubs.

There weren't many communal cultural events even back then. The Portuguese custom of yearly festivities likewise ended in the 1970s, with only a few bars in the Christian neighbourhood hosting the unofficial fancy dress contest and Western New Year's Eve celebrations. Then the Beach Festival arrived, completely changing the situation. With the authorities both mute and absent, it was a true post-emergency regrouping of young people. The Indian Prime Minister at the time, Indira Gandhi, declared a state of emergency on June 25, 1976, and detained a number of opposition leaders. The Indira Gandhi administration declared an emergency, citing a breakdown in the nation's law and order as a result of widespread protests by opposition parties accusing the Congress rule of corruption. While some claim that trains operated on schedule under the Emergency, observers and constitutional experts recall the suspension of fundamental rights with horror.

In fact, it was one of the first attempts to highlight Kochi's multilingual, multireligious, and cosmopolitan character. It was intended as a people's festival rather than a religious or colonial celebration. It was a historic moment. The primary draw of the year-round event was its weekly schedule of classical and indigenous music, art and cultural exhibitions, and ethnic sports like swimming, cycling, tug of war, *Kalari, Kuttiyum Kolum,* and *Kolam Kara*.

Kalari: Kerala is where *Kalaripayattu,* one of the world's oldest and most scientific martial arts, originated. Praised as Kerala's pride, it enjoys international recognition and esteem. The first step of the training is to massage the body with oil until it is supple and agile. Other essential elements of the art form are feats like *marichil* (somersault), *ottam* (running), and *chattom* (jumping). Additionally, there are instructions on the use of weapons such as maces, swords, daggers, spears, and bows and arrows. The main objective is the pinnacle of mental and physical synchronization. *Kalaripayattu* also emphasizes specializing in traditional medical methods. *Kalari* is a significant place of religious devotion as well. After finishing the training, one should practice oil massage in order to keep in shape.

Kuttiyum Kolum: Played regularly by kids, not just around *Onam, Kuttiyum Kolum* (boy and cane) is a traditional game. Local names for this game include *Chullum Vadiyum*, *Ettiyum Kolum*, *Chottayum Maniyum, Kottiyum Pullum,* and *Chuttiyum Kolum.* This is a folk game like baseball and cricket. A *kutti* is a tiny stick that is two and a half inches long, while a kol is a stick of wood that is roughly one cubit long (18 inches). The *kutti* is placed in a little hole that has been dug in the earth to start the game. The player is eliminated if they are able to grab the *kutti* without colliding with the ground. The player will set the kol upright on top of the little stick if the *kutti* cannot be captured. The *kutti* has to be thrown from its current location to the pole across from it. To play the first point, the player must get over these two obstacles. Hitting the *kutti* with a stick is the next step in the game. To get the *kutti* to the next pit, it must be hurled as hard as possible.

Kulam Kara: A folk game called *kulam kara* is played by two or more kids. Based on the number of children, draw a circle. Kids should form a circle and stand around it. And a circle leader in the centre. The game is controlled by the leader. Imagine a pond in the inside section of

the circle and land on the outer part. While the leader names the pool land alternately, the kids should leap into the pool and onto the shore in turn. Occasionally, the leader keeps saying "pond" or "land." Children who make the incorrect jump at that point will not be able to continue playing. The child who stays upright till the very end wins.

Lack of funding forced the cancellation of some planned programs, but the closing celebration, "Carnivale Cochin", was a huge success. On January 1, 1985, the day the UN convention was ratified, it was arranged. During the Carnival parade, all Kochi communities presented their cultural history through dance, music, and dramatic displays. Both mainstream and subaltern cultures had a place, and the flawless event was both spectacular and serene. As thousands of people from near and far flocked to the Carnivale, the then-chief minister, K Karunakaran, asked the local authorities to support the event's annual continuation after observing the enthusiastic audience. The government saw this as a means of advancing Kochi's status as a popular domestic and foreign travel destination. It was repackaged and reinterpreted to serve various goals, either directly or indirectly, and it was associated with Kochi's colonial and religious history. All other art and cultural programs were discontinued, leaving only the annual "Carnival Parade".

Figure 1: Beach Festival Procession - The First Cochin Carnival 1985(Azad)
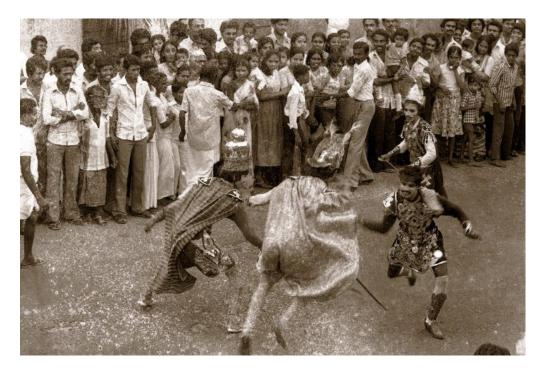

Figure 2: Beach Festival fancy dress- The First Cochin Carnival 1985(Azad)

Thus, it makes sense that Fort Kochi's Carnivalesque Renaissance originated with the coming together of the youth of the 1980s; the government had no role in this endeavor and remained silent. The subversion of power, as proposed by Mikhail Bhaktin, is found here. It was intended to be a people's festival, not a religious event or a commemoration of colonial history. In a nutshell Fort Kochi and Mattancherry represent the ideal of Socialist Secular India, recognizing and indeed embracing the cultural exchanges between different ethnic groups with linguistic and religious diversity, such as Arabs and Jews, or Gujratis and Konkanis. Because of their fraternity and incorporation, each participant reflects their own culture, adding vibrancy and colour to the carnival celebrations.

Cochin Carnival serves as a sort of gathering place for different communities to come together and celebrate their uniqueness. Carnivalesque is defined by this in and of itself. The absence of this oneness of people is the norm in other situations, but The Queen of Arabian Sea is an exception because of Kochi's multi-cultural diaspora. We must keep in mind that the Maharaja of Kochi formerly welcomed Jewish and Konkani refugees, promoted trade with Arab nations, and other actions that contributed to the multiculturalism of this debatable area.

The centerpiece of the Cochin Carnival is the enormous effigy of the elderly man, affectionately called 'Pappanji'. The burning of Pappanhi's effigy, which marks the end of one year and the beginning of a new one, occurs precisely at midnight. By doing this, you are igniting all of your problems and ringing in the New Year with harmony and hope.

Another thrilling aspect of the Cochin Carnival is the spectacular procession, which starts in Fort Kochi and ends at the beach by late at night and features Chenda Melam, traditional dance, music, tableaus, etc. A highlight of Cochin Carnival, Panchavadyam is a traditional art form of Kerala that features the thrilling music made by the harmonious mixing of five

instruments. The enormous banyan tree at Veli Ground is the largest Christmas tree in Asia when it is illuminated and decked up with lights and other ornaments. It is yet another popular Cochin Carnival attraction. During the Cochin Carnival, a plethora of contests and games, including beach volleyball, beach football, boxing, tug of war, beach bike races, cycle races, sea swimming, kayaking, and beach football, are held to keep the visitors entertained. Participation in these competitions is quite enjoyable for the public, and the victors receive attractive rewards. Seeing people of all ages participate enthusiastically in the Cochin Carnival's Fancy Costume Parade is incredibly astonishing and fascinating. Lastly, but just as importantly, these late-night events continue the joyous mood till sunrise.

For the occasion, thousands of people assemble at the seashore at Fort Kochi. To celebrate the start of the New Year, crowds assemble at noon, and at twelve the effigy of Pappanji is set ablaze. There isn't a single reliable account of how this festival got its start. The Portuguese term "pappanji" means "grandfather." Relatives of the Portuguese who ruled Kochi until the start of the 16th century still reside at Fort Kochi.

An effigy of an elderly man dressed in European clothing is created by the organizers of the Pappanji Burning Festival. He carries a walking stick and is dressed in a suit, boots, a cap, and spectacles. His white beard is rather noticeable. Pappanji's effigy is stuffed with crackers. Pappanji and Santa are frequently confused. Santa Claus is not burn anywhere; he is connected with Christmas. Pappanji is a completely new idea that is unique to Kochi and is associated with the New Year. Every class, caste, and religion take pleasure in the Pappanji Burning Festival. Kochi locals who are older claim to have witnessed the burning of Pappanji effigies in various locations throughout Kochi since they were young. The Cochin Carnival organizers have taken the lead in organizing this since 1984

Chapter 3

Cochin Carnival in Films

The Malayalam film industry has also produced a few films that feature elements of the Cochin Carnival. This enables us to examine the Cochin Carnivalesque in greater detail. Two noteworthy films are *RDX (2023)* and *Chotta Mumbai (2007).*

Anwar Rasheed is the director of the 2007 Indian Malayalam action comedy film *Chotta Mumbai* (Transl. Small Mumbai), which was scripted by Benny P. Vasco da Gama, the son of a wrestler named Michael, lives on a street in Fort Kochi, and the movie *Chotta Mumbai (2007)* takes us on a kind of roller coaster journey through his neighbourhood. Small-time goondas Vasco and his gang of five (Chandrappan, Susheelan, Sainu, Basheer, and cousin Tomichchan) are. However, these characters are not all that dangerous.

Since Vasco is the gang's leader, everyone refers to him as "Thala," or "head." Even though Michael, Vasco's father, condemns him frequently, his heart is full of love for him and he has high hopes for Vasco. Meanwhile, a marriage broker presents Vasco with a proposal; the fiancée is Latha, an auto rickshaw worker who happens to be Michael's longtime friend "Pambu" Chackochan's daughter.

Even though Vasco adores Latha, Latha urges him to tell her father that she is considered undesirable because she plans to elope with her boyfriend. However, Chackochan forbids him from voicing any opinions at all. Vasco chooses to assist Latha, but events transpire in a way that makes Latha return to Vasco.Meanwhile, a gang that has been on the run since slashing an honest police officer comes into conflict with Vasco, Michael, Chandrappan, and Latha as they travel in Latha's auto rickshaw. Vasco and his father had witnessed the murder carried out by Satheesan,

the younger brother of Natesan, a suspended Circle Inspector with a long criminal past. The rest of the plot is comprised of what comes next.

We are familiar with that a particular sort of motivation appears during the Carnival. The protagonist, "Thala" is presented as a young man who, despite his many familial and financial difficulties, possesses unrivalled strength, confidence, and leadership qualities. Despite all the obstacles life throws at them, he and his group of pals feel free. Their perspective on Kochi's New Year's Celebrations provides them with this independence and inspiration. As the new year gets underway, they are prepared to let go of everything from the past and fully accept the difficulties and new endeavours that lie ahead. While the average person continues to be fearful wondering what lies ahead for them, the men of Chotta Mumbai, the men of Carnivalesque dominance, keep their cool and stay euphoric while savouring the occasion.

Another feature of Carnivalesque here is the human social structure that goes beyond the boundaries of the current social structure. Although the main character of the movie's name is "Vasco da Gama", he is nicknamed and called with much love and respect by his fellow gang mates as "Thala" which literally means "Head". We can clearly see the topsy-turvy of social structure if we look from a conventional perspective, when a young jobless man who earned nothing but the hatred of his father for his irresponsible behaviour towards the family and his way of life, is greatly praised and feared by his friends, fellowmen and women. This is essentially the mood of Carnival. To welcome, embrace and share joy with everyone regardless of their social status. All conventional unwritten norms of society simply stand cancelled during Carnival, particularly Cochin Carnival, upending the social hierarchy that permits the "low" to momentarily transform into the "high".

We have discussed before about the fancy dress celebration of Carnival. For a short while, everyone would dress up as someone they were not for the rest of the year. And in the movie, *Chotta Mumbai (2007)*, we find "*Thala*" dressing up in pink bellbottom pants and shirt resembling a rock star from the 1970s. Everyone dressing up as something they would never be otherwise at the carnival is a spectacular sight for the eyes. One of the most frequent and impressive street celebrations throughout the Cochin Carnival is fancy dress. What matters the most is that the movie's entire plot has carnivalesque notions, and the climax quite approximately ends with the spectacle of the Cochin Carnival.

The film *RDX (2023)* is another noteworthy film that highlights the Cochin Carnival events, daily life, and carnivalesque characteristics of the youth of Fort Cochin. *RDX*: Also referred to as Robert Dony Xavier, this 2023 Indian Malayalam action thriller features a first-time filmmaker, Nahas Hidayath, and is produced by Weekend Blockbusters under Sophia Paul's banner. Alongside Lal, Babu Antony, Mahima Nambiar, Aima Rosmy Sebastian, Maala Parvathi, and Baiju in supporting parts, the film stars Shane Nigam, Antony Varghese, and Neeraj Madhav in the title roles. The story of the movie centres on Robert, his brother Dony, and Xavier as they seek revenge on a gang for abusing their family.

1997–1998: Xavier, Robert and his older brother Dony are great friends who train in boxing and karate under the guidance of Antony Aashaan, who also happens to be a friend of Dony's father Philip and Robert. The constant fighting between Robert, Dony, and Xavier is a source of stress for both families. Robert gets into a brawl with Jaison, a resident of his girlfriend Mini's neighbourhood, at the Cochin carnival after he interfered with Mini'*s* dancing performance. Jaison's legs are broken and everyone is beaten by Robert, Dony, and Xavier. During the fight, Robert by mistake ignites a massive fire, putting an end to the carnival as a

whole. Fearing about Robert's safety from Jaison, Philip sends him to Bangalore. What follows makes up the remainder of the story. As was discussed in previous chapters, one of the key features of carnivals is that, during the time of the event, everyday conventions are rejected or ignored. People are generally allowed to do whatever they choose to do, including dangerous or ridiculous things. Despite the fact that violence is illegal and subject to court and police orders, people who are excited about carnival-like events often forget these customs for a short while and therefore they act too promptly without thinking about the consequences of their actions.

The fictitious character Robert, who unintentionally starts a fire that ends the entire Carnival, serves as a latent warning about the dangers of burning the massive Pappanji at midnight on December 31st, during the Cochin Carnival celebrations, in which over five lakh people took part in the last year.

Conclusion

There is a lot of excitement in the air when people gather at Fort Kochi on New Year's Eve to take part in the colorful festivities. The Cochin Carnival is a celebration of all people, not only Kochi locals. The Cochin Carnival is a vibrant, joyful, peaceful, and loving celebration that is sure to make you smile. On New Year's Eve, thousands of people fervently gather at Fort Kochi to celebrate the start of a new year by setting fire to the enormous statue of an elderly man known as Pappanji. The burning of this enormous 35-foot Pappanji, which towers over the gathering like a skyscraper, represents the arrival of harmony and hope. Every year in the final two weeks of December, Fort Kochi celebrates its major event, the Cochin Carnival, which is organized by the District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC), Ernakulam. This magnificent celebration kicks out with the Ceremony of Peace at the War Memorial and the Carnival Flag being raised in Vasco da Gama Square. This port city decorates everything in white paper to greet the New Year, making it look like a stunning Christian bride. Festive vibes are enhanced by noteworthy events such as fairs, cultural performances, cuisine festivals, bike and cycle races, rallies, beach football, arts and games, and more.

In addition to all of these captivating programs, Pappanji adds even more splendor and allure to the occasion. On December 31, this statue of the elderly guy is set ablaze at exactly 0:00. This is followed by a huge party that lasts till morning and include music and dancing. A wonderful way to start the New Year is with a procession that includes music, drumming, colorful costumes, traditional acts, and elephants in captivity.

Fort Kochi's hybrid heritage is reflected in the culture of Cochin Carnival. Its roots are deeply ingrained in British and Portuguese rule. The Cochin Carnival owes its origins to the Portuguese New Year festivities of the colonial era. The Carnival was designed during the

International Year of the Youth, with the themes of "Participation," "Development," "Peace," "Adventure," and "Environment" serving as inspiration. The Cochin Carnival in Kerala is a visual spectacular that is eagerly anticipated by both tourists and residents alike. It leaves a lasting impression on everyone who attends.

The Cochin Carnival is indeed a precious gem of Kerala's tourism treasures. The unity of the people and blend of cultural diversity combined with the festive cheer, represent the beauty of Secular India. The Cochin Carnival New Year celebrations is visited every year by huge numbers of people from outside the state, who come specifically to witness this spectacle. Rooted in the rich history and culture of Fort Cochin and the Cochin Carnival, the festival is a big crowd puller for the tourists who visits Kerala. Unique events like various beach activities, and competitions lasting till the final day of the procession to the burning of the old uncle, "Pappanji" mark the passing of the year.

It is interesting how the behaviour and perspectives of the people in the region are also greatly influenced by the Carnivalesque nature of the celebrations. Fort Cochin is known for its cool and carefree youth who has no fear for future, but enjoys every moment living in their present. It is understood, they got this mindset from the Annual Carnival celebrations which is centered around burning of "Pappanji" which is the symbol of "Hell" fire of the past, or in other words, letting-go of the past. Thus, they do not look behind, but rather look forward for new challenges and endeavours the New year has got to offer for them. They have already tasted true freedom during the last week of every year, with the topsy-turvy of traditional norms and dressing up as their favourite identity which they are usually not the rest of the year.

Mikhail Bhaktin's Carnivalesque thesis is, hence the most appropriate tool to analyze the Cochin Carnival celebrations. Mikhail Bhaktin's knowledge of the European and early Catholic

carnivals, in comparison with the modern Cochin Carnival, easily suggests the Portuguese colonialist presence in its history. It is important to remember that, Carnival is not a stagnant process rooted in one history alone but, is subject to evolution in the coming years of Cochin Carnival Celebrations as well.

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