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## Conflict Between The Sensuality And Spirituality As Represented In The Novel, 'Othappu: The Scent Of The Other Side'

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### Abstract:

In the Bible, Sensuality is usually listed with other evils that sexual promiscuity and perversion. Also known as lewdness. Sensuality can be defined as devotion to gratifying bodily appetites; free indulgence in casual pleasures. The word sensuality comes from the root word sense, which pertains to our five senses. Sensuality is a total devotion to the gratification of the senses to the exclusion of soul and spirit. Spiritualism is a philosophic doctrine, opposing materialism that claims transcendency of the divine being, the altogether spiritual is character of reality and the value of inwardness of consciousness.

**Key Words:** Sensuality, Spirituality, Celibacy

### Introduction:

'Othappu' is a novel about a nun who renounces the convent. The character Margalitha renounces her life to join the convent. Through a similar act of renunciation, she ceases to be a nun. Margalitha does both. The Malayalam word Othappu means stumble. To cause Othappu others is to cause them stumble or to go astray. The title Othappu translated to English as 'The Scent of the Other Side'. The meaning is to stumble from the straight way of the faith and to turn to evil ways. It is the resultant of scandal when someone chooses to go against the accepted norms of religious and therefore social behaviour in the Catholic community. The conflict of spirituality and sensuality express through the two characters, one is Nun Margalitha and another one is priest Roy Francis Karikkan. They both chose religious vocations from entirely opposite family backgrounds.

### Literature Review:

Sensuality is often listed as one characteristic of those who "will not inherit the kingdom of God." When the Bible speaks of sensuality, it implies a loss of control over one's passion and evil desires. Spirituality is concerned for that which is pure, holistic and opposes to physical or mundane.

Romans 8:4 says, "The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit."

Romans 8:8 says, “Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.”

Jesus was saying that in order to follow Him, we must allow him to kill that old sin nature, which includes sensuality. We can't please both Jesus and our flesh. Jesus is going in the opposite direction of our flesh. So before we can truly follow Christ, we must be willing to die to our old sin nature, which includes sensuality.

### **Content:**

Karikkan, son of Kunjuvareethettan grows up in poverty and social neglect. His father is an innocent person and works hard in the Nair-shop. A sincere and saintly man, who wants his son to become a priest. So, Karikkan enters the world of other, regarding love and service. He finds comfort in the practices of the church and feels a deep attachment to it.

Margalitha, daughter of Channere Varkey Master sacrifices an affluent home, wealth everything that a rich conventional catholic family. Her two elder brothers, John, a Mayor and another one is Paul, a businessman. John and Paul settled with their family. Margalitha comes from well-settled family and becomes a nun in order to serve poor and needy. Aabelamma, is her religious mentor.

The decision to become a nun, the journey or the usage is called “the call of God”. The idea is sown early that to be a nun or a priest, a person should have good worth. A family send a woman to be a nun with great hopes and expectations. That's why it is called God's call. It is as though the person is the family's offering to God to serve Him. It is with the same emotions of marrying off a daughter that they send a daughter of the convent to be Christ's bride, as they call it. The Christian religion, particularly the Catholic faith lays on its ordained ones severe demands on the human capacity for renunciation and sacrifice. Celibacy, Poverty and Humility are the triple vows that Catholic priests and nuns take as they join religious orders and there must be integration between way of living, thinking and feeling. This fear of God and fear of sin held them back from the temptations of teenage. They are caught between two forces called sexuality and spirituality.

The character Margalitha doesn't follow the way of Celibacy. She doesn't stop the natural desires of the body. Her personality itself contains two binaries: the calling of a nun and the calling of her womanhood. Margalitha persisted that she wants to become a nun. It is presented in page no. 54 & 55. The conversation between Margalitha and her father Channere Varkey was taken place when she was child. Her father told her to serve the family and her mother in the household works and joy come through work and service. He also suggested to serve Junction Ayyappan, was a living martyr, his wife Thankamma and his children instead of joining the convent. But Margalitha rejected that by saying, she wanted to escape from wretched selfishness and life of renunciation. Her father replied rationally that “there are many different paths for seeking beauty of life. We could try to find the meaning of life by being a celibate in a convent. Life can also be known through the experience that comprise family life: birth pangs, struggles, burdens, misery, family responsibilities, neighbours, give and take and so on.” But it was interrupted by her mother, “why are you trying to brainwash her? She has received a calling from God.” Then her father concluded his counsel by saying, “what did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are king's palaces. Life in a king's palace: is that what my daughter wants?”

The writer uses a simile to describe her transformation in her desire. When Margalitha and Aabelamma visit Margalitha's house on the communion function of John's son, Margalitha says to Aabelamma that she can't sleep. Aabelamma consoles her by saying, “Listen to your own true self if you want to know what the world's greatest 'right' is.” But Margalitha is not convinced and says, “For days and nights, every moment, I considered and reconsidered.” Here, we can see the changes in the wishes and desires of Margalitha. Margalitha's unconscious desires are expressed through her dreams. She feels her inability to serve the people with spiritual love and care without selfishness. So she renounces her nunhood and returns from the church. But her family condemns her and locks up in the dark room, Irrittumuri (where novel opens with a terrible scene or experience of Margalitha). But later she comes out of the dark room with the help of Rebekka, daughter of Channere's only one sister and wife of Puttukkatan Thomas Vaidyar. After that she moves to another city without any determination. It shows that Margalitha is very optimistic in her views.

But she is later founded by Karikkan on the communion. He takes her to Yohannan Kasseessa's house, who is the bishop of Syrian Church. He and his wife Sara Kochamma well receive them. In the house of Yohannan Kasseessa, the real conflict of spirituality and sensuality take place in the heart of Margalitha and Karikkan. Karikkan's real feelings are expressed through his longing for Margalitha at the corner of his heart. And when Margalitha is refreshing herself, she begins to feel aggrieve with Jesus. She is so religious in her mind but with rational thinking.

Margalitha and Karikkan come closure and love blooms between them without their consciousness. Karikkan is experiencing of becoming one with her. Here, he starts to love her but his love for her is not determined like love of Margalitha for him. Margalitha is positive in her thinking and she knows what she is doing. But it's not same with Karikkan. He is restless and in doubts, conflicts, uncertainties, hesitation and incomplete information. He is not firm in his faith. He is neither believer nor a rationalist. His faith is like a mossy stone, dangerously slippery and unstable at all times. Karikkan is interested in social service and it is represented when Karikkan tries to help the people of municipality. When there was a corpse but Daniel Achen stops him. Karikkan doesn't want to live like senseless and like people of convent. Yet, he is leading a life of priest. Karikkan loves Margalitha, but he has fear of God and the society. He hesitates to say in front of the society and to renounce the priesthood. But Sara Kochamma realized that the bud of life is blooming between them and she opposes that on the background of religion. But Margalitha doesn't shake by the interpretations. Because she is firm in her belief that she wants seek God through her body, means she wants to attain salvation through spending a life like a common woman with desires. She says, "I will seek God through my body". These words of Margalitha shows that she comes out of the conflict that of the sensuality and the spirituality. She is willing to lead a life with the mature elements of sensual and spiritual. So, she accepts the love of Karikkan when he visited her by chance in Pattippunyalan Augustine's hut. Yet, Margalitha fascinates by the selfless service of Augustine. She doesn't change her notion of life, instead, she perfectly knows that she is not able to serve people and poors who are in need with whole heart. Because she fails to serve the suffering woman and her crying child, named Nanu.

But Karikkan is not yet firm in his decision. Because of his unfirm condition, Margalitha becomes a catalyst. Original sin that seduces him and destroys his beliefs and religious aspects. Before that, he is also counselled by Achen Anthony and warned him to not to speak or feel about Margalitha. Daniel Achen is going on some religious work, that's why they want to appointed Karikkan as Vaicar in charge of the Thrissur church. After the avalance of advice, when Karikkan was left off.

It is the conflict of sensual and spiritual goes on goes with the characters Margalitha and Karikkan. After the death of Karikkan's father, Karikkan himself collapses ultimately and he is struggling with the concept of sin. His faith is unstable and that fuelled his fears.

It is Margalitha, who struggles till the end of the novel to survive. When she becomes pregnant, which is known by Rebekka, both Margalitha and Karikkan are not ready to accept. Karikkan felt that like the bitter fruit of sin, his indictment was shaping itself in Margalitha's womb. Karikkan has inferiority complex, fear of God, fear of society. So he fears that he will be whipped for his shameless work that he had done. But he doesn't bother about the life of Margalitha. At the end, he ran away from the life of love and becomes a sweeper in the church and is not known to anyone. He is spending a life of destitute and he is very happy in that work where he is getting solace and serene with washing his sin. After few days, he wrote a letter and in that he says, "my love give me a rose, that I may stick it's thorns deep into my heart and wash away my sins." Ends with question, "Margalitha, won't you accept my heart-truths?" Here, also Karikkan is deceiving himself and he is in doubts. He is not leaving the memories of Margalitha and is not fully accept the way of God. He tries to reach the spirituality, yet with the thoughts of sensuality. But Margalitha realizes the meaning of life and she experienced the different aspects of love.

Karikkan's feelings of isolation, confusions and doubts are expressed through his letter to Margalitha. Karikkan is incapable to do anything and always creates conflicts by himself. He is not bold, firm minded and pessimistic in his views. He is in contrast to the character of Margalitha. Margalitha is self-respective, firm minded, bold and optimistic woman

When Margalitha is in Augustine's hut, Karikkan by chance comes to meet her. He expresses his love towards her again and Margalitha accepts his love with pure heart. But Karikkan stands in need of Margalitha's love, he needs her as the pillar he can lean on. He doesn't come out of his sensual desires, yet, as being a priest. He is very possessive towards her. He asks her, 'where does Augustine slept?' it echoes the dominant nature of male society. He doubts Margalitha, when he was in doubts with himself. This incident echoes the oppression of Rebekka by her husband Puttukkatan Thomas Vaidyar. In her prime, her beauty transcended the world and Puttukkatan Thomas Vaidyar came to seek her hand in marriage. He was famous for curing mental illness with his panacea. Vaidyar married her in his late 30's bewitched her beauty. They were dissimilar in every possible way. The more he understood this gulf, the more he became upset. Further, her aversion to the foul smelling antidote and lack of sentiment towards the doctor made him uneasy. Thus, he concluded that she had secret lover. Not only on the first night, but on every night thereafter, Rebekka neither admitted nor denied having a lover. Rebekka is not readily to perform the role of an ideal wife or justify herself to satisfy the male jealousy of Vaidyar. This infuriates him and establish his doubts on her. Thomas Vaidyar was sucked into a storm of male mistrust. Finally, he succeeds in breaking her will and making her cry by applying his 'vicious potion' into Rebekka's eyes and he shouts, "This'll settle your mad lust!" She tries to flee from that house. Later she returns to the same place as a beautiful wife on Vaidya's insistence. In course she gives birth to two babies but with each birth her beauty increased. Vaidyar grew anxious and unable to carry out his vocation. As their income dwindled, Rebekka started to work with Naastikan George in his drama company. This created gossip among people regarding her virtue. Her assertion of individuality make her an outcast in the society ruled by gender norms. Later she introduced to us as a acquiring holy spirit mother. But she didn't receive any holy spirit from the church. It is the call of God. She acquires by herself. Rebekka, transcended the boundaries of caste and class gets sidelined.

Like, Karikkan asserts his male dominance over Margalitha through a sexual intercourse. He wants to make sure that he still possesses the right over her body. By experiencing the other face of the life, Margalitha's views and feelings come under the stable manner. She becomes idealistic and individualistic. She ignores the rejection and resistance of society. She interprets the role of the soul and body with accepting the materialistic notion of the body and spiritualistic, holiness and eternity of the soul. Sinful or saintly, she accepts her present circumstance. She is in searching of peace of mind and she is doing an experiment with her life. Margalitha is becoming more spiritual because she chooses to walk the path preferred by her heart and to live free from the worries about the body. She is very diplomatic in her thoughts.

### Methodology:

The research study has a qualitative content analysis approach and it's analyzing the conflict between sensuality and spirituality through the two characters, Margalitha, a nun and Roy Francis Karikkan, a priest.

### Result:

- **Male dominance:** A patriarchal society dominates female in all perspectives. This story also reflects male dominance, like Karikkan dominates Margalitha through a sexual intercourse. He wants to assure that he has his right over her body.
- **Triple Vows:** Celibacy, Poverty and Humility are the triple vows that Catholic priests and nuns take as they join religious orders and there must be integration between way of living, thinking and feeling.
- **Mistrust:** This concept reflects through the character, Karikkan, when he doubts Margalitha and questions, "where does Augustine slept?". And, another character is Puttukkatan Thomas Vaidyar, he doubts his wife Rebekka's virtues.
- **Optimistic Nature:** We can see how Margalitha looks at her life positively in all circumstances.
- **Conflict between sensuality and spirituality:** Karikkan is in the state of confusion between his sensual desires and love towards Margalitha and his spiritual beliefs. He doesn't come out of his sensual desires, yet, as being a priest

**Conclusion:**

This is the conflict of the two minds who came with an aim to give selfless and sacrificial service. But they are not get success in the way of nunhood and priesthood. But they are indirectly relating themselves to the God, without any representative of church. Margslitha's final career of mothering her own baby and the orphan, named Nanu, is the author's own faith in the power of selfless love and sacrifice. Poverty, Celibacy and obedience continue to mark their sense of vocation after all the trying phases of falling into Othappu.

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