

## Once again, Adoor is back with camera and action

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Adoor Gopalakrishnan has returned to the director's seat after an eight-year-long gap. Photo by Syed Shiyaz Mirza/Wikipedia



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**By Gautaman Bhaskaran**

After eight long years, the celebrated Adoor Gopalakrishnan has just shot his 12th film, *Pinneyum (Once Again)*, with two leading Malayalam stars of the day, Dileep and Kavya Madhavan (who was seen in the auteur's 2007 *Naalu Pennungal* or *Four Women* along with Nandita Das). Adoor's last work, *Oru Pennum Randaanum*, hit the screens in 2008.

In a long telephonic chat with me on Monday morning from his regally artistic house in Thiruvananthapuram, Gopalakrishnan said that the shoot had been completed in a record number of 23 days, largely because "I had planned everything to the last, most minute detail...I cannot afford to waste time, because movie production is a very expensive proposition today. It cost me Rs2 lakhs for each day of the shoot. There is nothing called a small-budget film any more..."

As one who had watched Gopalakrishnan shoot his 11th feature, *Oru Pennum Randaanum/A Climate for Crime*, in the scenic backwater landscape of Alappuzha (Alleppey) — I am aware of the kind of discipline that prevails on his set. When Adoor is in command, nobody else speaks, not even the greatest of stars, and I am told that even someone like Mammooty — who acted in three of the directors movies, *Anantaram/Monologue*, *Mathilukal/The Walls* and *Vidheyan/Servile* — did not dare to voice his opinions during filming. Such is the regard for Gopalakrishnan — who is the captain of the ship in every sense of the term.

The renowned Satyajit Ray was also known to be a strict disciplinarian on his sets, having the

day's schedule written and even drawn to the very last point.

Often, Adoor has been described as Ray's successor. However, as much as Gopalakrishnan might have imbibed some of Ray's illustrious qualities of detailing and discipline, Adoor's cinema is no copy of the Bengali master's style. It should not be, as Gopalakrishnan once told me during my long conversations with him when I was penning a biography of his. "If I had blindly copied Ray, he would not have had any regard for my work."

If the styles of the two great Indian masters are different, so too the frequency of movies. Though Ray did suggest that Adoor make at least one film a year, he has not done that, the intervals often varying from a couple of years to several. The last hyphen between Oru Pennum Randaanum and Pinneyum has been no less than eight years — the longest in his career.

Apart from the two main stars, Pinneyum will have some of Adoor regulars like KPAC Lalitha, Indrans, Nedumudi Venu and Vijayaraghavan.

Gopalakrishnan has introduced a new face in his latest work, 20-year-old Meera Nellor — who plays Madhavan's screen daughter. The helmer sounded quite excited about her, and said she had "great potential".

Pinneyum is a love story, but not the kind where a man and a woman would sing and run around trees. "It is a story about love for life. The moment a person stops loving life, it is the end of his or her life. Love is a very powerful emotion, and it is not confined to sexual love or attraction between a man and a woman. Love is like a stream that runs under the surface of the earth," he averred.

Pinneyum is certainly not his first in this genre. I would think his debut feature, Swayamvaram in black and white, that opened in 1972, was a very beautiful romance. It had two of Kerala's top stars, Madhu and Sarada, and the movie was considered way ahead of its time with the two characters in a live-in relationship. Such a union was seen as scandalous and even immoral in the Kerala of the 1970s. But Adoor being a rebel of sorts could not care about such things, and, what is more, the film was the first in southern India (probably in the entire country) to have used syn-sound.

"But I have had to give up this technique," Gopalakrishnan told me. "It is very difficult to control the crowds these days, especially when you have stars on the set. There was a time when people would listen to you if they were asked to keep quiet. But today..."

Gopalakrishnan shot a major part of Pinneyum in a huge bungalow in Thevalkkara, a 40-minute drive from Kollam or Quilon. "Kerala is full of these houses. Nobody wants to live in flats in the State, which is so urbanised that there are no longer any villages. Thevalkkara is no longer the village that it once was. Today, it even has star **HOTELS** 📍. The small corner shops have all grown into big stores," the 70-plus auteur sounded nostalgic.

An autumn release is being planned for Pinneyum, whose post-production work is now on.

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Iraivi

Karthik Subbaraj's Iraivi follows his two earlier films, Jigarthanda and Pizza, where I saw a strong

Quentin Tarantino streak of dark humour and violence at play. In his latest multi-star outing, the director scripts a story of male arrogance — all sozzled up in wine and women. Mercifully, the violence here is more subdued, though the deeds are soaked in blood, provoked by uncontrollable anger.

The provocation for this is the refusal of a producer to release a movie helmed by Arul (S J Surya). After several arguments and fights, he and his brother, Jagan (Bobby Simha), as well

as their childhood friend, Michael (Vijay Sethupathi), plan to rob a temple statute in order to pay off the producer, and get the film. But Arul's perennial drunken bouts come in the way of a settlement that will see the movie's theatrical release.

In a series of strange twists and turns in the plot, drawing us deeper into a messy dark tunnel, the three men destroy one another, and in the process, Michael demolishes the dreams of his young wife, Ponni (Anjali), and their daughter, while Arul ruins his own marital bliss. His wife, essayed by Kamalinee Mukherjee, finally calls it quits.

Iraivi in the end seems like a story gone astray, the lives of several people destroyed by male egoistic rage that seeks solution in blood and gore. There is very little to cheer (the bottles of liquor merely adding to the depression) in the 160-minute work, which, though has some interesting performances by Simha, Surya and Anjali. Sethupathi continues to mumble much in the same way the Hollywood icon, Marlon Brando, once did, and with a music score that refuses to remain in the background, it was often a strain to catch what was being spoken on the screen. The noise of rain in several scenes merely added to my discomfort.

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