Caramel (Sukkar Banat)

In Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, five women regularly meet in a beauty salon, chat, and open secrets to each other. In this beautiful but politically unstable city, Layale, Nesrin, Jamale, and Roma, in their world full of colorful, intense emotions where generations are intertwined, talk openly about men, sexuality, and motherhood between haircuts and waxing sessions. This film is directed by Nadine Labaki, as her first feature film announced for Oscar nominee in 2008.

Caramel (Sukkar Banat) is the first feature of Lebanese director Nadine Labaki. The movie starts with an overlook of a small beauty salon that smells sweet of hot caramel is the place of work for four ordinary Beirut women. Each of them dreams of love and happiness, but the reality of Lebanon is quite harsh. So Nesrin has big problems before the wedding itself. It would seem that family happiness is already almost in her hands, but a grave "sin" separates the girl from her desired marriage. She is no longer a virgin. If her fiancé and relatives find out about his - not to avoid shame. Roma, on the contrary, is not in a hurry to get married and she like girls. She dresses and behaves like a young man and once falls in love with a client of a beauty salon. Layale is also in love, but her chosen one is a married man. He is burdened by such love and tries to avoid meetings with Layale. Moreover, the divorced single mother Yamal has long crossed out men from her life and now dreams of becoming an actress.

Attitudes and conversations in the film revolve around love, sex, man, and marriage. There is also a fear of old age, community perception of a girl who has lost her virginity, and a woman's fear of the unknown. The film contains stereotypical characters, and the theme revolves around four women working in a hairdressing salon, with other cosmetic supplements and the most famous of the excess hair removal. They use the wax made of sugar, lemon, and water, which in Lebanon is called caramel, to remove hair, and this name intentionally selected as a movie title.

"Caramel" is heading in a flat horizontal path, in sub-threads lacking the fundamental pillar on which the story is based. Director pushes events and personalities to face themselves and society boldly. There is a confrontation that reveals the false foundations of the prevailing culture, but it seemed as if referring from far to the wound without approaching or try to open it. The film is filled with simple dialogues and attitudes made to highlight the stereotypical life of women and their participation in the search for happiness and liberation regardless of their religious beliefs.

There is one character who discovers her transgender tendencies after getting to know another girl looking for herself away from the restrictions and requirements of marriage. There is another character, who is worried due to aging and fearful if she gets old, maybe her man leaves her. The heroine Layla, who is in love with a married man, whom she used to meets in his car after telegraphic phone calls. He uses to spend his time with her and then resume his life with his wife. She is very preoccupied with the idea of ​​seeing that wife, whom the unknown lover cannot give up. And the idea of ​​being so driven behind a man, who cannot resolve his matter towards her and treats her as an instrument of abstract pleasure.

Caramel is a serious film, and we did not find a comedy that makes us laugh as was rumored in the movie, but we saw a lot of digressions and prolongation especially in the scenes in which the old lady shows "Lily," during which her approaches were repeated to the point of boredom. The director seems touching a number of issues concerning the status of women in a "backward" society, but she fears to approach them in a real and severe way, so she suffices only with crusts and rapid transit patterns, because she does not tell us, technically, who is responsible for underdevelopment, and who is responsible for submission. Subordination: the subordination of women to men, and the failure of both, and suppress everyone. The hero or male character in this film is a traffic officer, who mocks the ridicule when the girls inside the barbershop mess with his face, change his features, and remove the traditional Arab male symbol (mustache).

 However, there is some spontaneity in the film as a result of a good knowledge of Baki in the environment, but the film suffers from the absence of a strong "plot" that connect characters and positions. And push them forward, and make the spectator more interested, you can close your eyes for some time and then return to continue as if nothing Happen or occur. Labaki much focused on the character, i.e. "Layal," the owner of the hairdressing salon, who loves is the most critical and most pressing problem, which makes her tearful the depressed.

"Caramel" is certainly not a breakthrough from the conquests of the Lebanese cinema, but a simple first work or "exercise" in directing the film may yield a better film in the future. The film provides a more vibrant scenario, not only based on personal impressions but dive into the depths of reality. This film can be related to the scholarly literature what we have read in this course for example the concept of gender, sexuality, religion, society and orientalism. It portrays the problem faced by women in Middle east at the name of religion or society.