

**Ambivalences and Negotiations:
The Question of Gender in K. G. George's Films**

Thesis submitted to the
University of Calicut
for the Award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
English Language and Literature

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Declaration

I, Chithra P. S., hereby declare that this thesis titled **Ambivalences and Negotiations: The Question of Gender in K. G. George's Films**, submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature, is the original and bona fide work of research carried out by me at the Department of English, Sree Kerala Varma College, Thrissur under the supervision of Dr. Preetha M. M. and it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

Thrissur

Chithra P. S.

27 November 2017

Certificate

This is to certify that this thesis titled **Ambivalences and Negotiations: The Question of Gender in K. G. George's Films**, submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature, is the original and bona fide work of research carried out by Chithra P. S. at the Department of English, Sree Kerala Varma College, Thrissur, under my guidance and supervision.

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27 November 2017

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A Note on Documentation

This thesis strictly follows the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, seventh edition, for the purpose of documentation. Translations appearing in this thesis are my own, unless and until specified, since most of the secondary sources are in the Malayalam language without any English translations.

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Introduction

The notion of gender can be understood to be referring to the cultural assumptions and practices that govern the social construction of men, women and their social relations. The concept gains much of its force through a contrast with a conception of sex as the biological formation of the body. Thus, femininity and masculinity as forms of gender are the outcome of the cultural regulation of behaviours that are regarded as socially appropriate to a given sex. Given that gender is held to be a matter of culture rather than 'nature', so it is always a matter of how men and women are represented. (Barker 73)

Studies and debates on sexual politics among the literati in diverse academic fields have come up with variegated explanations and definitions on the two important related concepts: sex and gender. Now it is widely accepted that the former points to the biological distinctness existing in man and woman, whereas the latter is a purely social, historical and cultural construct conferred upon these individuals by the society, based upon a set of accepted pattern of behaviour which in turn creates the notions of masculinity and femininity.

From a historical perspective, unto the second half of the twentieth century, a majority of the studies, in the area of gender, concentrated on issues pertaining to women, and this can be attributed mainly to two reasons. The first one is that men and masculinity have always been considered to be monolithic as well as universal and the second reason is based on the notion of power relations wherein, since man forms the dominating group

and woman the dominated one, men and masculinity becomes a seemingly unproblematic area and its study would tantamount to much ado about nothing.

Rapid advancements in science and technology which occurred in the second half of the twentieth century brought with it significant changes, which made the life of human beings quite different and distinct from that of the previous centuries, thereby necessitating a thorough interrogation of the transformation in the gender roles. In congruity with this, the conventionally perceived idea of masculinity is so far considered as, “holding male values and following male behavioural norms... . Male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, master, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure, and a considerable amount of toughness in mind and body” (qtd. in Carrigan 562). This idea starts getting questioned and analysed, especially in the area of cultural studies, where the notions of masculinity and femininity are not perceived as essential traits of subjects, but rather are treated as foci of representation.

The present study emanates from the intersection of two lines of thought, one being the multi dimensional studies on men and masculinities which is an important aspect in the spectrum of inquiry on gender and the second being its representation in the recent art form, cinema. More precisely, the current study is centred on the representation, ambivalences and negotiations of men and masculinities in the select films of K. G. George, a renowned and veteran Malayalam film director. This thesis is schematised into six chapters, preceded by an introduction, and followed by a conclusion and select bibliography.

The first chapter entitled K. G. George: The Filmmaker introduces George, talks about how he gradually ascends the ladder of success emerging as an influential and iconic film director and it also presents his valuable contribution to the new genre of films, the middle cinema. The chapter begins with the definition of cinema, the youngest art form and as it progresses, an attempt to trace the origin, growth and development of this art is made. Alongside, how cinema has achieved the status of an art form is being explained here. A brief introduction on the emergence of cinema the world over with a reference to Indian cinema and special emphasis on Malayalam cinema forms a part of this chapter since the current study predominantly focusses on Malayalam cinema.

The second chapter, (Dis)Locating the Self: Subverting the Man/Woman Dichotomy, provides the theoretical basis and methodological framework for this present research. It maps the trajectory of the origin and growth of diverse issues which form a part and parcel of the whole gamut of studies related to men and masculinities. Besides this, a deep analysis of the question of gender in general, with special reference to Kerala is undertaken in this chapter.

The remaining four chapters are mainly a textual analysis of the select films of George and in each chapter the many-sided aspects associated with men and masculinities have been scrutinised and examined with reference to the primary sources. Man and Private Life, which constitutes the third chapter of this thesis, is a discourse on the meaning of the term family. Simultaneously, the patterns of relationships existing between human beings in a family are being discussed in order to appreciate the gaps existing between man and woman with reference to George's two films, *Mattoral* and *Adaminte Variyellu*.

Chapter four, Man and Public Life, deals with the role men play in the public domain and how they exercise their patriarchal power and authority. *Yavanika*, *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback*, and *Mela* are the three films in question which have been chosen to analyse this aspect since each of these represent a unique issue faced by the male protagonists.

Man and Madness, the penultimate chapter, begins with a brief account of how the concept of madness has been used as a major theme in literary works and then proceeds to give a bird's-eye view of how films have adopted this theme to represent the minds of insane protagonists. The male protagonists of *Swapnadanam* and *Irakal* who are depicted as mentally unsound form the subject matter of analysis in this chapter.

The sixth and the final chapter, Man and Society, brings forth the relationship of men with the society in which they live in and the inter relationship among themselves. In this background, a critique of the male protagonists in *Kolangal* and *Ulkadal* is attempted here.

The thesis ends with a conclusion that answers the questions which were initially proposed in this research and also sums up how the masculine identity faces challenges and how it negotiates with the changing situations in its public and private life when the normative femininity undergoes a cataclysmic change, emphasising the fact that men and masculinities are not monolithic, as widely believed, but rather are fluid, changing as the contexts change.

Chapter 1

K. G. George: The Filmmaker

What is Cinema? Cinema is a unique creation where heterogeneous elements like bright and dark visuals, sound, colour, language, music, and movement are technologically juxtaposed into spectacles, thereby making it a special entity. This art form, the youngest and the most recent of all, uses pictures in motion, thus differentiating it from all the other existing forms. Akin to the functions of other art forms, this latest art form is rather elaborately utilised for propaganda, entertainment, pleasure and for the portrayal of reality in the society, paving the way for the formation of different genres in cinema like narratives, gangsters, westerns, documentaries, musicals, and the like.

Human beings are endowed with dexterity and creative capabilities, enabling them to conceive creations which can be called pieces of art. Arnold Hauser opines that, “‘art’ is the most applicable and obvious term to use to describe the kinds of cultural products - paintings on dwelling walls, pots and all other decorative, functional or ‘magical’ images or artifacts - made by human beings”(Harris xxii). Art, which originated in the Paleolithic Age, has always been interpreted, evaluated, and defined from a historical, social, political, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural perspective, making it a crucial area and providing ample scope for critical study. One of the important questions which arise is whether art has any special purpose and as a corollary it becomes highly relevant to contemplate on the intention of creating the art form, whether it is drawing, painting, sculpture, photograph or very recently film, during various evolutionary stages in history. Studies on the history of art show that nature and life were closely associated with art in the Old Stone Age. The uniqueness of the art of a Paleolithic painter was that

it projected a direct and unmediated visual impression that was unhampered by the rational cropping, nipping, and limitations, implying that the naturalistic style was followed, where the style connoted the contemporary ideology of the society that was prevailing. It accomplished a very practical function during that period since the picture signified some of the activities performed by them in the daily course of their lives and was not perceived as a decorative object to be kept in the drawing room for pleasure and prestige.

The transition from the Old Stone Age or Paleolithic Age to the New Stone Age or Neolithic Age brought with it a change in the style of art and instead of the imitative works produced in the Paleolithic Age, the Neolithic Age witnessed the schematic representation of objects:

Instead of representations true to nature, with loving and patient care devoted to the details of the object, from now on we find everywhere schematic and conventional signs, indicating rather than reproducing the object, like hieroglyphs. Instead of the concreteness of actual living experience, art now tries to hold fast the idea, the concept, the inner substance of things - to create symbols rather than likenesses of the object. (Hauser 1: 3)

The possession of material things like land, domestication of animals, production of food and the like marked the shift from simple hunting and food gathering to a more complex system of living which progressively led to the formation of a society with different strata in it. The change from Paleolithic monism to Neolithic animism indicated the beginning of intellectualisation in the works of art.

As the New Stone Age ended, a new way of life emerged which laid emphasis on production than mere consumption, cooperation among people than individualism and the development of craftsmanship that influenced the creation of art in the ancient Oriental world resulting in the production of some of the most exalted works during this time by the priests and princes who were the artists and the temples and palaces being the abode of these art works. These artistic pieces of works were not created for any aesthetic purpose and there was little scope for reforms and innovations in the artistic realm since they were primarily used as a tool of competition between the creators, the kings, and the priests, which facilitated the accession of their fame and *éclat* and moreover there was a minimal access of these artistic accomplishments to the public at large since these adorned the walls of the palaces and the temples. Amenhotep IV, a pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty of Egypt, a key figure having a colossal influence not only on art but also on religion and responsible for remarkable innovations during his time, was exceedingly successful in imparting a love for truth, a new sense and sensitivity in art, which resulted in the manifestation of art with new ideas, themes, common events and happenings. Till the development of art in Greece, the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Assyrian and Cretan arts had a unique place in history. Art in Greece including literature, painting, and sculpture tried to uphold the ideas and values of the aristocracy. The vase of Aristonothos created in 700 BC is considered as the first signed visual art in existence:

The Greeks were the first people to complete this transition from the instrumental to the 'autonomous' form of activity, whether in science, art

or morality. Before them there was no free enquiry, no theoretical research, no rational knowledge and no art as we understand art - as an activity whose creations may always be considered and enjoyed as pure forms. This abandonment of the old view that art is only valuable and intelligible as a weapon in the struggle for life, in favour of a new attitude which treats it as mere play of line and colour, mere rhythm and harmony, mere imitation or interpretation of reality-this is the most tremendous change that has ever occurred in the whole history of art. (Hauser 1: 36)

There was a shift from Greece, eastwards, during the Hellenistic era as far as artistic developments were concerned. With the dawn of the Roman Empire, the Hellenistic art was replaced gradually by the Roman art in which sculpture and painting gained prominence and became the leading art forms. Art in the Middle Age is broadly classified into Christian art, Migration Period art, Byzantine art, Romanesque art, and Gothic art. The renaissance art which flourished during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, marked a revival of classical learning, a new individualistic awareness of man, and an increased sensibility of nature. Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael are some of the eminent personalities of this period and with the fall of the Roman Empire, Renaissance art came to an end.

The eighteenth century witnessed the demise of the courtly art and the emergence of the bourgeois taste in European art. The coalescing of the upper class with the aristocracy resulted in the creation of a new social order. The rise of the middle class in the society led to a change in the social structure, thus redefining the function of art. Art's status changed:

art becomes more human, more accessible, more unassuming - it is no longer intended for demigods and supermen, but for ordinary mortals, for weak, sensual, pleasure seeking individuals. It no longer expresses grandeur and power but the beauty and grace of life, and no longer wants to impress and overwhelm but to charm and please. (Hauser 3: 11)

The nineteenth century, which was marked by skepticism and agnosticism, saw the development of low art that was perceived as a passive surrender to life as opposed to the high art prevalent in the earlier decades and by the turn of the century, art had started representing works of the common people. The definition of art and the usage of the study of art history underwent a significant change starting from the period of the Second World War.

Cinema, though comparatively recent in origin and the youngest in age among all the art forms, has become the most socially accepted one in the contemporary age. The flexibility in the depiction of plots, representation of protagonists, use of time and space in a most impressive manner, and the mixed as well as fluid spatial temporal relationship has made cinema the preferential art form of the modern times. Cinema which originated in an inchoate form in the late nineteenth century has the distinction of existing as a technology, in addition to being an art form for more than a century and has ascended to unprecedented levels to become the most influential and the greatest piece of artistic work today. The increased demand for this form of entertainment resulted in the construction of permanent venues, which were called picture palaces in Britain and nickelodeons in the USA, where people flocked together to view this new amazing means of recreation and enjoyment. Though cinema originated in megalopolis like New York,

London, and Paris, the growth of cinema was very much explicit in the United States which became the main hub of cinema production and distribution in the world.

“Meanwhile, in the United States itself, the centre of film-making had gravitated westwards, to Hollywood, and it was films from the new Hollywood studios that flooded on to the world's film markets in the years after the First World War - and have done so ever since” (Smith 3). The narrative pattern, the technological invention, the star system and the transnational hiring of artists and technicians from Europe and other parts of the world, undoubtedly, made Hollywood come into the limelight and get recognised as the centre of cinema.

The prerequisites for the transition from still photography to motion pictures were a considerable diminution in exposure time of several orders of magnitude which enabled the capture of live action concurrently and spontaneously, and the application of series photography which was successfully accomplished by the British American photographer Eadweard Muybridge in the 1870s. In the subsequent decades, Thomas Alva Edison of the United States, with the help of a group of technicians, invented the Kinetoscope and the Kinetograph in 1893 and in 1895 the Lumiere brothers' of France projected films using their Cinematographe thus begetting a wonder in the minds who were wonted to watching still images so far and paving the way for the widespread use of this technology the world over. During this span of time, which is commonly referred to as the novelty period, the films gained popularity as self contained vaudeville attractions. They were being perceived by the people as animated photographs or living pictures and it was these pictures in motion that captivated the spectators rather than the story, the narrative pattern or the production technique used therein.

Initially, the cinema lasted only for a minute or so comprising of moving snapshots, by 1905 it had become about 10 minutes long and by 1910 an hour long full length feature films narrating complex stories with change of camera positions and scenes had emerged, thus signifying a gradual transition from being a mere novelty to a well established industry. The period from 1890 to 1910 set the standard and laid the foundation for the Hollywood era of cinema and is generally referred to as the Pre-Hollywood age. To begin with, notions of production and distribution were hitherto unknown to the film makers who concentrated entirely in creating the moving pictures and they held the exclusive rights to sell or rent these films which they had created. The concept of a film director in the modern sense, as responsible for all aspects of a film, emerged in The Biograph Company in 1903. This emergence coupled with changes in the filmic text brought about a gargantuan change in cinema production.

From 1903, till almost 1907, the existing capitalist system of industry had a profound influence on the film industry and as a result, production, distribution, and exhibition of cinema became compartmentalised. During this time, the technicalities involved in making the cinema were also rather rudimentary with the camera being kept stationary most of the time and long shots being taken which included the principal object and its immediate surroundings. These early film makers were not much concerned about the continuity of shots or the narrative style, but rather were concerned with the single individual shot. The period from 1902 to 1907 saw multi-shot films gain dominance and *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) directed by Georges Méliès is a fine example of one such multi-shot film which made the Star Film company world famous. Moving on, film makers started employing more sophisticated techniques and Edwin S. Porter from the

United States was one such film maker who can be lauded for using novel techniques like continuity editing which resulted in the creation of the film, *The Life of an American Fireman* (1903). The cinematic techniques, especially the editing styles and narrative integration which were being used by the film makers, enhanced the visual pleasure of the viewers and though these films were silent, the exhibitors often gave the interpretations and also interspersed it with music to add a novel appeal. As far as film distribution was concerned, the prevalence of multi-shot films brought about significant transformation in the distribution process with the establishment of film exchanges which would buy films from manufacturers and rent them out to exhibitors, thus benefiting the film makers. The pre-World War I American cinema saw the use of multi reel films which ran for 40 minutes or longer and these came to be known as feature films. These feature films gained widespread reception with more and more middle class people beginning to come and watch them, thus making it profitable for the distributors, motivating the producers to provide high technical quality and the exhibitors to provide comfortable and luxuriant theatres. Subsequently, the popularity of nickelodeons started waning and the Hollywood studio system started gaining popularity.

In Europe the pre-World War I, film industry was dominated by France and by the year 1907-08 the French film industry had matured to become an industry of its own. The decline of Méliès coupled with the industrialisation achieved in France, enabled the Pathé Frères Company to dominate the entire European film industry. The two French companies, Pathé and Gaumont Pictures, the only rival to the former, controlled the pre-World War I motion picture industry in Europe and most of the films exported to Britain during this time happened to be from France.

During this decade, French films were based on contemporary subject matters and the French standardised these films by using narrative story line. By 1911, multi reeled feature films made their debut, a good example being Capellani's series of melodramas. Pathé and other film companies tried to produce more films albeit with restricted availability of materials, since the World War I and the invasion of the French film industry by Americans and Italians had caused the industry to dwindle by taking its toll. An immense change was observed during the period between 1915 and 1918, which saw a manifold increase in the production of psychological films and a reduction in the production of comic films and historical films. Moving down the time line, by the 1920s, most of the reputable production centres like Pathé and Gaumont had reduced production considerably, paving the way for small production companies to come into existence in which film makers like Renoir, Feyder and Gance joined. During this same period, the production of French films had petered down considerably making them far lesser in number than their American and German counterparts, which compelled the French film makers to rake in collaborations with international companies, predominantly German.

Till about 1907, the Italian film industry faced a crisis like situation which was mainly attributable to the growing French influence and to countermand this, the Italian film production companies made all out efforts to explore areas that had been untouched heretofore by Pathé or Gaumont and tried to produce realistic films during this time. In spite of being a rather late entrant in making contributions to world cinema, the Italian film industry proved its mettle in a very short span of time and by 1908 had made rapid advancements which enabled it to compete with France and the USA, so much so that Italy became another important country in the history of world cinema and moved on to

become very influential by 1910, a case in point being *Quo Vadis?* (Enrico Guazzoni 1912) that brought Italian cinema into the world market.

By 1914, led by the interest and initiative of a group of entrepreneurs, a stable production system was established which enabled the Italian film industry to produce full length feature films earlier than in other countries and these films began to be used to educate the people on moral and religious grounds. These full length feature films served as a catalyst for the transformation of viewership from the working class to the middle class, resulting in a decline in the creation of historical, documentary, and comedy genres of films which had been prominent till 1914 and “[c]onversely, there was a sharp increase in grandiose productions, which aimed to develop what were held to be the highest of ideals, such as the promotion of the nationalist spirit or of religious values” (Usai 127). Owing to the First World War and the American domination in the sector, the Italian film industry witnessed a degrowth and the subsequent rescue attempt, after the World War I, became a futile one.

In the post World War I era, by 1925, Hollywood had become the hub of film production and it had a recondite effect on cinema across the world:

America, by contrast, came out of the war with a massive and relatively healthy domestic market, and an aggressive and well-oiled studio system. Moderately sensitive to the needs of the foreign market, and armed with an international infrastructure of shipping, banking, and film offices, the US industry was in a position to enjoy the post-war shift in the balance of power. (Uricchio 70)

To counter this American hegemony, the production companies in Europe, endeavoured to form a large cooperative market with the sole aim of fostering their own films and the movement called Film Europe was one such effort. However, The Great Depression which originated in the USA and spread its tentacles to other industrialised parts of the globe including Europe and the introduction of sound in the film industry, that triggered substantial interest in viewing a movie in ones own language, limited the success of Film Europe and by the 1930s, this notion faded away.

The aftermath of war which initiated social agitation, political anarchy, and epidemics had a great impact on Europe's life as well as its film industry and shook the entire continent, especially France, Germany, and Italy. Only the German film industry was insulated to some extent against these vagaries. During the pre-war time, Germany lagged behind in film production and mainly depended on imported films. In order to avoid the spread of anti German spirit during the war time, which most of the imported films tried to propagate, the Universum Film AG, marketed as UFA, was created. The German film industry established its presence in the world cinema with the production of the expressionist film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) in which the director, Robert Wiene, uses the settings to depict the tortured mind of the protagonist. During the 1920s the German Expressionist movement reached its zenith; Fritz Lang and F. F. Murnau being the other notable directors belonging to this movement.

Not mentioning the contribution of Soviet Union, while tracing the history of the origin of world cinema, will leave large lacunae since the USSR has also been a significant benefactor in its growth. After the commencement of World War I, due to an embargo in place, there was a restriction in importing foreign films into Russia and the

Tsarist government began encouraging the domestic production of films. It was Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks, who used cinema as a medium to unify the public and who recognised the power of this medium as a tool to propagate and to communicate effectively. Some of the famed Russians who have enriched the film industry with their astonishingly great contributions are Lev Kuleshov, known for the Kuleshov method and his disciples Eisenstein and Pudovkin for the montage technique which has evolved into a perfect method to create meaningful shots and to aptly convey the sense as well as the connotation.

Some of the reputed directors of the post-World War I period, who have made colossal contributions to American cinema, thereby helping it to achieve a status of a national industry, include Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, D.W. Griffith, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. With the introduction of the tremendously relevant aspects of sound and colour during the pre-World War II period, considered as the start of Hollywood's Golden Age, the motion picture industry was at a crossroads, leading to its vigorous growth and between the late 1927 and 1929 a majority of the American film business houses converted almost all the studios to support this technological innovation. Equipping the studios and theatres with a sound system was a rather expensive proposition and initially there were a lot of teething problems which were essentially technical in nature, a predominant one being the image and sound synchronisation issue. However, over time, with the advancement of technologies and adoption of post synchronisation, the industry overcame these bottlenecks. As a corollary to this technological development of introduction of sound, with new techniques being adopted, the industry diversified into varied genres like horror, fantasy, musicals, gangster,

comedies and the like. Some of the present day world famous studios like MGM, Fox and Warner Brothers, having their own distinct production styles, not only originated but also ruled the roost during this time and during the period spanning from 1930 to 1945, successfully produced almost 7500 films, one of the most noteworthy one being *Citizen Kane* (1941) directed by Orson Welles which is famous for its theme and technique. During this time, the government also collaborated with the film industry to propagate their ideologies, resulting in the production of documentaries to aid the government and military agencies; this was in addition to the commercial films which the industry was producing. The years between 1942 and 1945 can be considered to be one of the stable and lucrative periods in Hollywood's history.

The period immediately succeeding the World War II is a point in time when decisive changes having far reaching implications and ramifications occurred in the world film arena making it a very significant period, since it was during this time that radical changes and novel innovations took place in the conception and representation of themes and techniques in cinema worldwide. The Hollywood film industry experienced a setback, attributable to post-war disillusionment and the federal antitrust suit, known as the Paramount case, filed against the five major and three minor studios, which in turn made the industry produce more realistic documentary type films rather than expensive genre films. The emergence of television also started posing a threat to the film industry. Along with the USA, the repercussions of World War II were felt in the European countries and the Soviet Union as well. In Italy, this period witnessed the emergence of Neorealism which was the first movement to oppose Hollywood's conventional narrative cinema and it marked the beginning of location shooting, use of non professional actors

and post synchronisation of sound. Though this movement had a short life and existed only till the 1950s, during its existence, it gave birth to prominent Italian figures including Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini, and Vittorio De Sica and a second generation of directors such as Federico Fellini and Michelangelo Antonioni. The New Wave movement based on the theoretical writings of Alexandre Astruc and Andre Bazin dawned in France during the post-war period and Francoise Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer were the notable directors of this time. This movement was also against the classic Hollywood tradition and the main contribution of New Wave was that it helped French cinema leap into the top spot by 1990, besides making France the leading centre in modern and post-modern film theory.

So far, this chapter talks about how cinema as an art form established itself, about the growth of film worldwide, how relevant cinema has been since its inception and also the transformation it underwent over time. The next part of this chapter provides a factual description of how cinema spread to India in general, Kerala in particular and also describes how the films of the famous Malayalam director K. G. George are different from the film creations of other directors, thus making his films important, worthy of study and providing a scope to become the subject matter of this research.

India, known for its ethnological diversity, is a melting pot of races, resulting in a multilingual population and heralding an Indian film industry which is rich and unique with ample leeway for producing films in various languages. Undergoing a gradual metamorphosis from the silent era to talkies, Indian cinema has been successful in emerging as an industry which is throbbing with activity and commanding a global recognition in the contemporary competitive world. Indians first got a taste of this

twentieth century wonder when Maurice Sestier, an envoy of Lumiere brothers, landed on the shores of India in 1896 and filmed the first motion picture in the then Bombay's Watson's hotel which received an overwhelming approval of the people.

Buoyed up with this grand success, more and more foreigners started coming to India with their films and lots of film exhibitions started being organised, making cinema popular in India. The credit for making the first Indian documentary film goes to H. R. Bhatvadekar who successfully captured a wrestling match held in Mumbai on a film reel and sent it to London for further processing. Hiralal Sen is another towering personality who contributed immensely to the growth and development of Indian cinema. In 1897, he got a chance to witness Professor Stevens' film exhibition in the Star Theatre in Kolkata which made him get attracted to the fascinating world of films. Soon afterwards, he put in a lot of effort to comprehend the nuances and subtleties of the profession, bought and brought a bioscope to Calcutta (Kolkata) from London and along with his brothers established the Royal Bioscope Company which presented its first exhibition on 4 April 1898. In spite of the fact that Hiralal had to import the film reels, he can be credited with being the first Indian to produce an hour long film in contrast to the foreign films being screened in India which were just ten to twenty minutes long. J. F. Madan, whose contribution to the Indian film industry is also noteworthy, became associated with the industry from 1902 onwards after he founded the Elphinstone Bioscope Company which started showing films especially bought from the French Pathé Company. He upped the ante and became successful in establishing three theatres in Calcutta (Kolkata) which gained prominence and aided in the rapid growth of his film business after World War I. He utilised the services of directors from abroad and most of his films, which were based

on mythological stories, turned out to be popular both in India and abroad, *Bilwamangal* (1919) being his first feature film in Bengali. Throughout the history of Indian cinema, “in various ways and to varying degrees, India’s rich literary tradition, especially its mythological and devotional work, have provided film makers with an unlimited source of material and so guaranteed popular appeal for their works” (Hood 2).

In the pantheon of Indian film personalities, Dada Saheb Phalke stood tall, is known as the father of Indian cinema and his film, *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), is considered to be the first Indian cinema in the silent era belonging to the mythological genre. Phalke started his career as a photographer and the movie, *Life of Christ* (1910), influenced, motivated, and gave him the impetus to enter the film industry. The need for a professional camera, processing and printing equipments, fuelled by his keen interest in films, made him undertake a journey to England in 1912 to procure them. In 1918, he became the partner of Hindustan Film Company and directed his first film *Sree Krishna Janma* (1918). In his career, spanning a period of about three decades, he holds the distinction of directing films of several genres like documentaries, mythological and animation films; *Sethubandhan* (1932) being his last silent film and *Gangavataran* (1937) being his first film with sound and the last film which he ever directed in his lifetime. The doyen of Indian film industry, Dada Saheb Phalke, passed away in 1944 but he still adorns a unique place and to commemorate his outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema, the Government of India instated the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 1969 which is the highest and most prestigious award in Indian cinema.

Fatma Begum, another legendary figure in the world of Indian Cinema, began her career as a theatre artist. She was the first woman to direct a film - *Bulbul-e-Paristan* (1926). During a period when the presence of women actors in the film industry was negligible and men played the women roles, Fatma was one of the very few who chose this profession, went on to make her debut in Ardeshir Irani's silent film *Veer Abhimanyu* (1922) as an actress and established herself as a superstar, thus ascending the throne of success. In 1926, she founded the film production company Fatma, which subsequently became Victoria-Fatma Films in 1928. Fatma, by then had become a conspicuous personality in the film world and eventually bequeathed her talent and assets to her daughter Zubeida who also became a film actress.

The introduction of sound in world cinema had its reverberations in India too, making the early Indian film makers jump on the bandwagon and use this new technology. The first Indian talkie *Alam Ara*, directed by the multifaceted personality Ardeshir Irani, the notable writer, director, actor, cinematographer, producer, and distributor, was released on 14 March 1931. On the one hand, after the introduction of sound, language became a barrier for the existing actors, since they found it difficult to use the local language, an example being Master Vithal, the hero of *Alam Ara*, who faced difficulty in pronouncing Hindi and was forced to confine himself to the realm of Marathi Films, whereas on the other, it brought in an opportunity and acted as a catalyst to spur the growth of a new generation of film actors who were linguistically more competent than their erstwhile counterparts. Production of sound films in large numbers in various Indian languages commenced from the 1930s.

In the post-silent era of Indian cinema, an important name which comes to the mind is that of P.C. Barua, director, screenwriter, and actor. He had a relatively short life span, but is credited with directing about twenty five films, acting in twelve films and was a script writer of five films, during this period. *Aparadhi* (1931), *Devdas* (1935), *Mukti* (1937) and *Adhikar* (1938) are some of his well known films. Another renowned actor, director, and producer of this period was V. Shantaram who deserves commendation for using film as a medium to depict the social changes and also to expose the problems of the common man. During his stint in the Maharashtra Film Company, he got a break as an actor to act in the film *Surekha Haran* (1921). In 1927, he directed his first film, *Netaji Palkar*, that proved to be a resounding success and soon after that, he established his own company, Prabhat Film Company, which successfully produced many films including the first Marathi talkie *Ayodhyache Raja* (1932).

Post Independent India saw a tremendous change in almost all spheres of the film industry, however considerable differences between the thematic representation of content in the pre and post independence films were not observed explicitly. In independent India, the government officially set up a body in 1948 to produce and distribute documentaries and named it the Films Division and this period also witnessed the emergence of Bombay (now Mumbai) as the film hub of India. Many renowned studios began to be closed down and a new set of studios under the ownership of actors, like R. K. Studios established in 1948 and owned by Raj Kapoor, came into existence. Organised by the Films Division, the First International Film Festival of India held in 1952 in Mumbai played a commendable role in the evolution of Indian cinema and the exhibition of films like *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) and *Rashomon* (1950) in this film festival

provided the opportunity for the directors like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen to get a glimpse of the various aspects of cinema which were hitherto unknown to them, thereby enabling them to direct films which became a resounding success. Another milestone in the history of Indian cinema was the introduction of the National Film Awards by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India in 1953 to recognise the best Indian film(s).

During the 1950s, the films of Satyajit Ray, Bimal Roy, and Chetan Anand which were screened abroad, made a lasting impression on the audience and this impact helped Indian films secure a place in the world cinema. Satyajit Ray, born in Kolkata to a prominent literary family, was drawn to the world of films at a young age and went to Santiniketan for his higher studies. His primary interest had always been fine arts and while he was in London for three months, he watched almost one hundred films and was greatly influenced by Italian Neorealism. Jean Renoir visited Kolkata for the shooting of *The River* in 1949 and Ray helped Renoir in finding out some suitable locations for shooting Renoir's film. It was after this interaction with Renoir that Ray produced his widely acclaimed film, *Pather Panchali* (1955) which was based on the Bengali literary work of Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay. This film which secured many awards like, Best Human Document at the 1956 Cannes Film Festival, Diploma of Merit in Edinburgh, and Vatican Award in Rome, catapulted him into an elite club of the world's renowned directors. *Pather Panchali* along with *Aparajito* (1956) and *Apur Sansar* (1959), which Satyajit Ray produced subsequently, known as the Apu Trilogy, are world classics, continue to remain as great works and be recognised among the best films of all times even to this day in the annals of Indian cinema. Due to the diligent, earnest and sustained

effort of Ray during the 50s, Indian cinema started getting recognition worldwide. Complementing the efforts of Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, and Mrinal Sen were successful in comprehending the new thematic and technical avenues, thus giving a new dimension and a fresh lease of life to Indian Cinema.

Indian cinema is an amalgamation of cinemas from various linguistic regions of the country and Malayalam cinema forms an important and relevant part of this composite. A historical analysis comprising of a consolidated study of the history of Malayalam cinema will be quite efficacious in appreciating the motive behind the selection of the films of K. G. George for this research and the following section is an attempt to highlight the growth, developments, and the various thematic and technological changes that enveloped this journey through time.

Paul Vincent is considered to be the pioneer who was instrumental in starting a film exhibition in South India. In 1906, he visited Kerala on the invitation of some people from Kozhikode, Kerala who happened to witness his film exhibition in Chennai and had been profoundly impressed by it. However, Jose Kattookkaran, a native of Thrissur who established The Royal Exhibition Bioscope Company is regarded as the father of film exhibition in Kerala. With the advent of electricity, he founded the Jose Electrical Bioscope theatre in 1913 and is also accredited as the first Malayali to screen films out of the state.

Like elsewhere, Malayalam cinema also originated as an itinerant form of variety recreation and was abounding in diversity. The history of Malayalam cinema can be divided into different phases; silent era from the period of conception to the early 1930s, the late 1930s to the late 1950s, a transitional phase extending from the 1960s to the

1990s and the era of the new generation films from 2000 onwards. *Vigathakumaran* (1928) directed by the father of Malayalam cinema, J. C. Daniel is the first Malayalam cinema which has been subjected to a close examination by the critics. This film, however, faced stiff opposition from the public, especially the upper-caste Hindus because the cast included a converted dalit woman playing the role of the Nair heroine. The first talkie in Malayalam, *Balan* (1938) directed by S. Nottani and produced by T. R. Sundaram, who were not Malayalis, turned out to be a success and this successful endeavour provided the impetus to other non-Malayalis, especially Tamilians, to produce more and more Malayalam movies. S. Nottani discussed the theme of the second Malayalam talkie with Alleppey Vincent, an inevitable figure in the industry, resulting in the birth of *Jnanambika* (1940) which was produced by another non-Malayali, Annamalai Chettiar.

A Malayali poet and critic, Rama Varma Appan Thampuran was an early cognoscente who also studied about the technical aspects of film production from T. R. Sundaram and other producers of that period. He penned down a novel titled *Bhootharayar* which was a combination of horror and comedy and he felt that this novel contained all the elements suitable for a popular film. In order to fulfill his desire to make this film, he formed the film production company Kerala Cine Tone in 1939. Due to a variety of reasons, he could not complete this project, his dream remained an unaccomplished one and the first film to be shot in Kerala became a non-starter. After the failure of Appan Thampuran, for the next couple of years, there was a cessation of activity in the industry and it faced a lull because of several factors including the poor reputation which the people associated with the film industry had in the state and the

financial distress which existed in this sector, so much so that many of the actors who came from acting in theatre went back and some of them even decided to put an end to acting as a career. *Nirmala* (1948) was produced by P. J. Cheriyan who is recognised as the first successful Malayali film producer. However, this film made him plunge into a great debt and this happened to be the first and the last film which he ever produced.

The setting up of Udaya studio in 1947 by Kunchako and K. V. Koshy in Alleppey can be considered to be a significant event in the Malayalam film industry since it was the first film production studio of Kerala. *Vellinakshatram* (1949) was the first film and this film along with the other films produced in this studio was released under the banner of K & K Productions. In 1950, K & K Productions produced *Nalla Thanka* which proved to be a great success, helping Kunchako and Koshy financially and aiding them to establish themselves in the industry.

Unlike the previous decades, the 1950s saw a burgeoning film industry and another noticeable trend witnessed during this period was the shift of the story line of films from the erstwhile traditional film making approach of adapting plots from mythological stories to the more realistic issues and problems like untouchability, social stigma, and caste discrimination faced by the common populace. Some of the films of this period which are worthy of notice are *Chandrika* (1950) directed by V. S. Raghavan, *Prasanna* (1950) directed by Sri Ramalu Naidu, *Sasidharan* (1950) and *Chechi* (1950) directed by T. Janaki Ram, *Suhruthu* (1951) directed by Joseph Pallipadan, *Yachakan* (1951) directed by R. Velappan Nair, *Vanamala* (1951) directed by G. Viswanath, *Kerala Kesari* (1951) directed by V. Krishnan, *Alphonsa* (1952) directed by O. J. Thottan, *Genova* (1953) directed by F. Nagoor, *Lokaneethi* (1953) directed by R. Velappan Nair,

Thiramala (1953) directed by Vimal Kumar, *Neelakkuyil* (1954) directed by Ramu Karyat and P. Bhaskaran, *Kalam Marunnu* (1955) directed by R. Velappan Nair, *Newspaper Boy* (1955) directed by P. Ramdas, *Rarichan Enna Pouran* (1956) directed by P. Bhaskaran, *Randidangazhi* (1958) directed by P. Subramaniam and *Chathurangam* (1959) directed by J. D. Thottan. P. Subramaniam established the Merryland Studio in 1951 which was the second studio to flourish in Kerala and along with its predecessor Udaya studio catered to the growing needs of the film industry. The evergreen hero Prem Nazir and the renowned actor Sathyan made acting their profession during this decade and contributed their mite to the development of the industry.

The film *Neelakkuyil* (1954), jointly directed by P. Bhaskaran and Ramu Kariat, bagging the National Film Award and the All India Certificate of Merit, became a turning point in the Malayalam film industry because it was instrumental in making Malayalam films popular nation wide. P. Bhaskaran's film *Rarichan Enna Pauran* (1956) was the second film produced by T. K. Pareekutty and similar to *Neelakkuyil*, this film was also based on the distressed and discontented life of the multitude. By the second half of the 1950s, there was a radical change in the themes, more and more films began to be based on the day to day life of the ordinary man and the names of the films also started to be modified suitably to reflect this inherent aspect. Over a period of time, this trend paved the way for a realistic depiction of society as very aptly seen in *Newspaper Boy* (1955) directed by P. Ramdas and produced by a group of students.

The early film makers were not very much cognizant of the cinematic language, technological scope and the myriad options and opportunities which cinema was capable of providing and for them cinema script was just an extension of the script of a drama.

According to them, what had been performed on stage was drama and what had been shot by a movie camera became the film. It was much later, only in the next decade, that the film makers began to cogitate about the technical nuances and subsequently the knowledge pertaining to technicalities like shots and cuts came to be used but there was no appreciable change as far as the structure of cinema was concerned.

Compared to the past, the decade of the 60s was a productive period for the Malayalam film industry. Till the beginning of this decade, a majority of the films did not appeal to the audience and the reason attributable to these very disappointing theatrical runs was the use of Tamil formulae in Malayalam films, the only exceptions being the ones which depicted societal reality on the silver screen. When cinema started being used as a medium to narrate the lives of the commonality, more and more movie makers started to ruminate on the possibility of adapting literary works as a plot for their films and this new approach paid rich dividends since it got widespread applause from the audience. *Kandam Becha Kottu* (1961) directed by T. R. Sundaram ushered in the era of colour films in Malayalam cinema and this was another significant development of this decade in the history of Malayalam film industry since it brought about an end to black and white films. This decade, a rich one for the industry, is generally referred to as the golden period with several well known literary works becoming the basis for filmic adaptations and some of the well known directors of the filmic world like K. S. Sethumadhavan, Ramu Kariat and P. Bhaskaran stepping into the limelight.

K.S. Sethumadhavan can be regarded as the pioneer of making films from literary works and he is credited with directing several movies by adapting novels, short stories and dramas. He took to the world of films like fish to water and *Jnanasundari* (1961) was

the first movie in Malayalam directed by him. For all practical purposes, he can be aptly referred to as the ‘director of writers’ and the works of most of the important and influential writers of the time including P. Kesavadev, Malayattoor Ramakrishnan, Muttathu Varkey, M. T. Vasudevan Nair, K. T. Muhammed, Thoppil Bhasi, Thakazhy, Parapurathu, S. K. Pottekkat, Vaikom Mohammed Basheer, and Pamman became a part of his oeuvre. His first literary adaptation was *Omanakuttan* (1964) which was based on one of the short stories of Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai narrates the story of two families involved in an exchange marriage. However, he rose to fame in 1965 with his film *Odayil Ninnu* (1965) which was a filmic adaptation of the novel by the same name authored by the prolific writer P. Kesavadev.

Chemmeen (1965), the most celebrated film of this decade, directed by Ramu Kariat and adapted from the novel of the same name written by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai was admired for its technological innovativeness and bagged prestigious national and international awards like the National Film Award, Indian President's Gold Medal and awards at the Chicago and Cannes International Film Festivals, thereby putting Malayalam cinema in the world cinematic map. Some of his other noteworthy films include *Mudiyanaya Puthran* (1961), *Moodupadam* (1963), and *Ezhu Rathrikal* (1968).

P. Bhaskaran, a poet, lyricist, and a director was indeed a multifaceted personality and contributed to Malayalam cinema by directing well known films like *Iruttinte Athmavu* (1967), an adaptation of M. T. Vasudevan Nair’s story of the same name, which was the first low-budget Malayalam film, thereby proving to be a new and major landmark in film production. This film received the National Film Award and P. Bhaskaran was awarded the J. C. Daniel Award, instituted by the Government of Kerala,

for his overwhelming and valuable contributions to the field of Malayalam cinema and some of his finest directorial ventures include *Adyakiranangal* (1964), *Anweshichu Kandethiyilla* (1967), *Pareeksha* (1967), and *Mooladhanam* (1969).

The use of stories from *Vadakkan Pattukal* (Northern Ballads), songs which eulogise the adventures of valiant men and women who are adept in a form of martial arts in Kerala called Kalaripayattu, as the central theme of films of this decade, is another innovation worthy of remark and notice. These songs are sung in North Malabar in Kerala and their main content is the heroic exploits and family feuds of the famous heroes including Aromal Chekavar, Thacholi Othenan, Chandu, Aromal Unni and Unniyarcha. *Unniyarcha* (1961) directed by Kunchacko, *Thacholi Othenan* (1964) directed by S. S. Rajan, *Palattu Koman* (1962) directed by Kunchacko are some of the famous films based on *Vadakkan Pattukal*.

Malayalam cinema of the 1970s and the 1980s developed a new sensibility and sensitivity, enabling it to portray socio-political issues and deal with thematic issues like the lives of working class people, the question of gender and identity, and problems of the individual in particular like psychological anomalies. Eminent directors like the great trio of the 70s, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, G. Aravindan, and John Abraham together with M. T. Vasudevan Nair, P. Padmarajan and K. G. George, to name a few, on account of their individualistic and unique direction style, took centre stage in these decades, making this period of time very noteworthy in terms of the far-reaching and all-inclusive growth of the Malayalam film industry. To a large extent, Malayalam cinema of this period was influenced by the Film Society headed by Adoor Gopalakrishnan, thereby introducing a novel film culture in Kerala and this can be reckoned as one of the important

developments of this period. This Film Society was responsible for screening Italian Neo Realist, French New Wave and Bengali films in Kerala, thus bringing the world classics to the home of the Malayali viewers.

Adoor Gopalakrishnan, with his directorial skills, made extraordinary contributions during the 1970s due to which Malayalam cinema reached new heights and his film *Swayamvaram* (1972), in which the protagonists' dreams and illusions of a happy and insouciant life are shattered as a consequence of the harsh realities of life, can be considered as the first film following a unique cinematic language. As a student of the Pune Film Institute, Adoor had a good exposure to world classics which made him acquire considerable knowledge, thereby honing his skills in taking long shots, editing scenes, and other cinematic technicalities, culminating in the emergence of a new genre called New Wave cinema, which set a precedent for the future films of the times to come. His deep understanding of cinema juxtaposed with his uncanny ability to make fine distinctions led him to conclude that the arrangement of visuals is far more important than mere dialogues in order for a film to be savoured by the viewers. Innocence of the commons of the village and the beauty of the country side are all very well expressed in his films and his films are not merely based on love, quarrel, and death but rather their genesis lies in universal themes which are nothing but a central motif pertaining to the condition of human beings and also a generality of life dealing with fundamental human matters typical to humanity.

Adoor is recognised for directing several groundbreaking and award winning films, each of which enriched Malayalam cinema and provided the inspiration and motivation to other directors to perceive and direct films in a way hitherto unknown. His

second film *Kodiyettam* (1977) depicts the transformation of a simpleton into a responsible and mature individual and *Elipathayam* (1981) is a film portraying the decline of the feudal system and how the protagonist is unable to cope up with the changes happening in the society. His other films with a touch of realism include *Mukhamukam* (1984), *Anantharam* (1987), *Mathilukal* (1989), *Vidheyan* (1993), *Kathapurushan* (1995) and *Nizhalkoothu* (2002). Adoor skillfully makes his protagonists an incarnation of social issues and in this process, makes himself very successful in bringing forth the societal realities by making sure that his films remain as a food for thought in the minds of the audience well after they leave the theatre, examples being Unni in *Elipathayam* and Patelar in *Vidheyan*. In Adoor's perspective, the essence of cinema lies in the actual and undistorted depiction of the harmonious bonding among people as well as the man versus society conflict and it is this approach of his that has enabled him to succeed phenomenally as a director for which he and his films have been bestowed with several prestigious national and international honours and awards including the Padma Vibhushan and Padma Sri.

The emergency of the 1970s, which can be regarded as one of the uncertain periods in Indian history, found its reverberations in Malayalam cinema too and this period witnessed the birth of some films which are political in nature, especially those directed by G. Aravindan, another important Malayalam director and a doyen of parallel cinema in Kerala. The themes of these films revolved around the conflicts in the psyche of youth, had a considerable influence on the middle class cinephiles of the state and opened up a new path illuminating the intellectual faculties of the bourgeois society, thus bringing the confusions and conflicts hidden deep inside their minds to the forefront.

Aravindan was not a product of any film institute, but rather derived his knowledge from keen observation of practical life and his films and documentaries, in addition to being realistic, were deeply influenced by Italian Neorealism. His directorial style is characterised by commencement of shooting without a formal screenplay, since according to him, screenplay serves only as a guideline on which the future course of action may be based.

Aravindan's films were unique, thereby broadening the range of perception of Malayalam cinema and he won several Film Awards for this achievement. His first award winning film *Uttarayanam* (1974) delineates the story of a job-seeking young man in Kerala amidst the struggle for independence in India. *Kanchana Sita* (1977), which recounts the Uttara Kanda in the epic Ramayana from a feminist point of view; *Thampu* (1978), more of a documentary type film describing the life of circus performers; *Esthappan* (1980), a fusion of the Biblical story and the life of Esthappan a common man, which won him the Kerala State Film Award for the best film and director; *Pokkuveyil* (1981), another recipient of the State Film Award for best director, which is a brilliant depiction of a young artist who loses his mental balance owing to the grief caused by the death of his father; *Chidambaram* (1985), the winner of both the National and State Film Awards, which focusses on the life of three people elaborating upon the complex relationship between men and women, are some of his other well known films. It can be noted that Aravindan's films touch upon a diverse variety of themes, all of them very natural and down to earth realities and highlight what modernism means to Malayalam cinema.

John Abraham, a graduate from the Pune Film institute, is another stalwart and avant-garde director who successfully directed thematically and technically sound films which had a tremendous impact on Malayalam cinema. His films, though a few in number, predominantly portrayed the crisis and the imbroglio of the middle class people. His first feature film *Vidyarthikale Ithile Ithile* (1972) is about the initiative of a group of school boys to collect money in order to repair the statue of their school's founder which they accidentally break during a football match. *Agraharathil Kazhuthai* (1977), a Tamil film directed by him, revealing the hypocrisy of Brahmin life in a satirical manner, earned him laurels and won him the award for the best feature film in Tamil at the National Film Awards for this endeavour. Through the film *Cheriyachante Kroorakrithyangal* (1979), which won the special Jury Award at the State Film Awards, Abraham launches a scathing attack on the feudal system prevalent in Kerala and very ingeniously portrays the quandary of the middle class through the character Cheriyaachan. *Amma Ariyan* (1986), the only film from South India to secure a place in the British Film Institute's Top 10 Indian Films List, is a movie in which the protagonist, Purushan, undertakes a journey to inform the mother of the deceased about the death of her only son Hari. During this journey, Purushan meets Hari's friends and acquaintances who recollect their association with Hari vividly and narrate the different experiences which they have had and through this narrative technique John Abraham very successfully presents the socio-political conditions including the troubles and turmoil prevalent in the then society. John Abraham tries to transform all his life experiences, he has gathered through his wanderings and relationships, to an artistic experience in the form of films permeated

with profound human characteristics and qualities, which in one sense is concerned with the notion that being free and human are quite difficult in a society full of anarchy.

Expectations and dreams of independent India which did not fructify and the split of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) can be considered as some of the prominent reasons which led to the growth of the naxalite movement in Kerala. Malayalam cinema of the 1970s very subtly and ingeniously portrayed this revolutionary aspect of state politics and this viewpoint has been the subject matter for critical analysis by the intelligentsia. C. S. Venkiteswaran corroborates that emergency, naxalism, existentialism and hippyism were some of the major themes that were being highlighted in the cinema of the 70s. “Malayalam cinema, transcending its cultural and geographic space, marked out its place on the world map in the 1980s - and did not look back thereafter” (Baruah 25). As a consequence of the influx of new wave cinema, the decade of the 1980s witnessed a gradual but definite change in the narrative and technological aspects of mainstream cinema and the films of Fazil, I. V. Sasi, Balachandra Menon, K. G. George, P. Padmarajan, Bharathan and Lohitdas came into the limelight. The cinemas of the 80s revolved around themes like sex, violence, issues of adolescent love affairs and filial relationships, man missing, unemployment and poverty in ancestral homes, and provided a chance to analyse the class and caste distinctions prevalent in the Kerala state during that time. *Mukhamugam* (Adoor, 1984), *Alicinte Answashanam* (T. V. Chandran, 1988), *Piravi* (Shaji N. Karun, 1989) portray the disappearance of the persona and how this leads to an emotional imbalance in the society and the family. The missing of heroes in the above mentioned films try to elucidate the cause of the confusions and turmoil in the society thereby giving a clear-cut picture of the prevalent socio-political situation and

making the study of these films all the more important. These films try to highlight the fact that only the men folk are capable of indulging in politics, a subject matter to be kept away from the purview of women, since they being too emotional are inept at understanding its nuances and also that men, unlike women, possess a public self along with a private one.

Economic conditions of the middle class people, issues concerning the caste system and question of gender were other important themes which formed the basis of the films of the 1980s. Most of the films of this period tried to incorporate the casteist aspect and economic condition of the middle class. *Thoovanathumbikal* (1987) is a classic film which highlights the middle-class quandary as a result of various socio political issues and conflicts between the land owner and the cultivator of the land which arose when the Land Reforms Act of Kerala sounded the death knell to the existing semi-feudal agrarian system. Comedy films as a genre, got immense popularity during this decade and several directors including Sathyan Anthikad, Balachandra Menon and Priyadarsan of the slapstick comedy fame were quite successful in their endeavours and established their position in the industry. Other prominent directors of this phase were I. V. Sasi and Fazil who had based their movies on themes including contemporary politics, misuse of power, and malpractice in the government sectors.

Upon the perusal of the chronicles of Malayalam cinema, one can interpret that the decade of the 1990s was a period of liberalisation, globalisation and technological innovations. Giving a fillip to the viewing pleasure, the introduction of satellite television gave the viewers an opportunity to get acquainted with visuals from the nook and corner of the world. Comedy and soft porn which were the latest entrants to the basket of film

genres already existing, provided a new avenue for gratification to the viewers and started drawing huge crowds due to their popularity. At this point of time, Malayalam cinema was at a crossroads since it was making an all out effort to retain its place and space in the globalised context.

The first decade of the new millennium witnessed the rise of a new type of films known as the new generation films and concurrently a group of directors evolved who made these films on a shoestring budget but managed to portray the contemporary complexities in its entirety. *Bhavam* (Satish Menon, 2002), *Margam* (Rajiv Vijayaraghavan, 2003) and *Sancharam* (Ligy Pullappally, 2004) are some of the films which made a bold attempt to voice out the new ideas and themes in the parallel film stream, whereas the mainstream cinema was enriched by the films of directors like Roshan Andrews, Blessy and Lal Jose to name a few. Young directors who were experts in technologies and digital tools came to the forefront and they directed films which came to be known as the multiplex wave among a certain section of the critics. Even though the influences of the global and national trends were visible in these films, they still continued to be rooted in the Malayaliness and lifestyle of Kerala. During this period, there was a perfect blend of both art films like *Chitrasoothram* (Vipin Vijay, 2010) *Akam* (Shalini Nair, 2013), *Manjadikuru* (Anjali Menon, 2012), *Aadimadhyantham* (Sherry, 2011) and new mainstream commercial films like *Chappa Kurisu* (Anwar Rasheed, 2011), *Salt n Pepper* (Aashiq Abu, 2011), *22 Female Kottayam* (Aashiq Abu, 2012), *Traffic* (Rajesh Pillai, 2011), *Adaminte Makan Abu* (Salim Ahmed, 2011), *T D Dasan VI Standard* (Mohan Raghavan, 2010), *Melvilasam* (Madhav Ramdas, 2011), and *Ee Adutha Kaalathu* (Arun Kumar Aravind, 2012).

Upon an exegesis of the historiography of Malayalam cinema, it is observed that a division of cinema into art (*kala*), middle (*madhyavarthi*) and commercial (*kachavada*) cinema occurred somewhere during the 1970s. Till this time there was no such classification and the most important ramification of this categorisation was the rise of middle cinema as an extension of art cinema and having the elements of commercial cinema in it:

The genre of movies called madhyavarthi cinema was ubiquitously staged as a genre of quality, in-between films which defied some of the cinematic conventions of both Malayalam kachavada (commercial) and kala (art) cinemas and self-consciously indulged in new film practices, carefully developed through principles of adaptations and refusal. (B. Menon 105)

The major exponents of the middle cinema are K. G. George, Bharathan, and P. Padmarajan; the hallmark of their movies being the predominance of the variations of the classic themes like man-woman relationship, violence and love juxtaposed with the use of a rather unique cinematic language to convey these themes. These films belonging to this unknown hitherto discourse are heterogeneous, different and enigmatic in their treatment of themes. “The movement’s active elements were always articulated as ‘negotiations’ constituted through a set of ‘refusals’ and ‘adaptations’ from ‘commercial’ and ‘art’ cinema practices” (107). Middle cinema was renowned for having its own poetics and politics and the challenge which this new genre of cinema had to face was that it had to address a group of audience who were adept in both art and commercial film traditions.

All genres of cinema, whether it is art, the newly born middle or commercial, revolve around art value and audience, which are deemed to be the two most important and inevitable factors. Middle cinema incorporates many of the features of commercial films like music, romance and the like which were avoided by the art films and at the same time rejects the representation of stereotypical heroes as in commercial cinema:

The poetics of middle cinema was thus based on a struggle between two poles - an attempt, on one hand, to make films that would appeal to the discursive construct of 'audience' and, on the other hand, the desire to create an art which would reflect the reality of its time and place and display its cinematographic specificities and conventions of language, to assert the authority of art in its own sphere. ... Further these movies were thematically and formally tuned towards a family- viewing experience, the spectatorial relations established through the same exhibition patterns as those of commercial cinema. (B. Menon 108)

Middle cinema is a category where the films have the seriousness and loftiness of art films coupled with the entertainment elements of commercial cinema and hence can neither be considered as art films nor as commercial ones in totality:

Amongst extant historiographies of regional cinemas of India, the Malayalam context currently constitutes one of the most consolidated of histories, its trajectory tracing divisions into epochs with clearly delineated borders. The broader categories of *Kala* (art) cinema, *Kachavada* (commercial) cinema and *madhyavarthi* (middle) cinema conveniently correspond to significant political economies in the broader history of the

place. The canonisation of particular films as benchmarks in Malayalam film history serves as the inevitable by-product of such master narratives about Malayalam cinema history. Similar trends are discernable in other cinema histories: in the French context, the stylistic divisions into poetic realism, *cinema du qualite*, new wave, historical retrospectives, and the *cinema du look*, seem similarly over-determined through the master narratives of political history. Yet scholars are now beginning to break from ossified trends and to explore neglected eras and previously discounted film works. In this new scene of recovering histories, K.G. George emerges as an interesting auteur. (B. Menon 105)

K. G. George, whom the critics consider as one of the maestros of middle cinema, has been very successful in creating films which are a perfect fusion of these two aspects, are technically and thematically quite serious and also have the unique distinction of not losing their relevance even to this day. The issues he deals with in his films are not of a single decade alone but of all decades and the success of his films are mainly attributable to his craftsmanship, skill and thorough knowledge of the use of techniques like editing which he manipulates innovatively and uniquely to create the effect of his choice.

During K. G. George's education in the Pune Film Institute, he got opportunities to savour the classics of the world, which in turn had a profound influence on the films he directed subsequently and made him one of the few directors who were capable of representing the nuances and subtleties of human life:

Inspired by the post-war New Wave European Cinema, he gave a new dimension to the Malayalam cinematic narrative of the 70s and 80s. In his

films, George has successfully presented a panoramic view of the subtle issues like identity crisis, uncertainties of life, self-doubt, meaning and purpose of life both in men and women. (P. S. 972)

It was in his films that, for the first time, we encounter issues specific to mass entertainment, the circus in *Mela* (1980); the film in *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback* (1983); the theatre in *Yavanika* (1982) and specific to people in the service sector, *Adaminte Variyellu* (1983), *Mattoral* (1988) and *Ulkadal*(1979). His craftsmanship in portraying the psychology of the characters in a unique manner in *Swapnadanam* (1975) and *Irakal* (1986) is truly praiseworthy since no other directors in Malayalam cinema have ever accomplished such a feat.

His peerless directorial skills in employing dream sequences, his portrayal of the pernicious combination of violence and mental illness, his genius in incorporating mass media like theatre, film and circus into his films, his dexterity in dealing with the question of gender in the representation of both men and women, his precision in expressing familial problems like the supremacy of the patriarch, and the lack of love in the family, all bear testimony to the fact that he is indeed one of the greatest directors of all times who has been very successful in depicting the life of the ordinary man at large.

Chapter 2

(Dis)Locating the Self: Subverting the Man/Woman Dichotomy

Among multifarious constituents ordaining the nature of social relations, capital and power are two of the very conspicuous and influential decisive factors having a direct influence on the social, historical, political and economic realms in a society. Circulation of capital forms the backbone of the entire social system and according to Karl Marx, “capital is not a thing, but a process” (Harvey 262). His magnum opus *Capital* (1867) and his deliberations on money, commodity, labour, and capitalism provide the basis for an inquiry into the economic maxims governing the mode of production in a capitalist society and also analyse the appositeness among the economic terms value, commodity, capital, and labour. Human beings are entangled in the complex and complicated world of capital and their life is somewhat determined by the amount of capital they possess. The “transformative dynamism of capital” (13) is the driving force that enables the world to move on thus defining the relationships among the individuals.

Labour is a vital desideratum to make the flow of capital possible. Human labour power is the basic pillar of a society. The concept of labour power gains relevance when there is a circulation of money and commodity in a society. The repercussion of the very fact that human labour is fluid in nature is explicitly visible in a society especially in the formulation of gender relations. In this circumstance, the role played by the individual is more important than the individual him/herself. The circulation of money is necessary for the economic stability of a society. An individual possessing capital, which includes money, enjoys a certain degree of power in a capitalist society. Money being the measure

of value and the medium of circulation is primarily instrumental in changing this social power to the private power of the concerned individual.

Throughout the centuries, change in the nature of labour has been responsible for the transformation of the economic system in a society. This chapter investigates how the alteration in the nature of production, economy, and labour power is accountable for a paradigm shift in the social and gender relations observed during the second half of the twentieth century. Economic growth in the modern times invariably has given rise to an industrial world creating a world order starkly different from the bygone centuries. In the eighteenth century, which is also known as the Age of Enlightenment and the period of the Industrial Revolution, variations in the nature of labour coupled with the change in the knowledge and belief of people contributed to the transition in economic behaviour. Conjointly, culture and ideology influence and have a great impact in the growth of the economic system.

A historical analysis concedes that the nature of labour has undergone a sea change over a period of time and its prominence emerged during the era of industrial revolution when the division of labour became obvious. Industrial revolution indeed has a wide spread and profound effect in the entire world of humanity. In order to decipher the challenges faced by mankind, trends in the increase in wealth, use of technological improvements which led to inventions, gender relations and the entire modern world in its totality, a thorough study with Industrial Revolution in the background turns out to be very relevant and also is inevitable. The Industrial Revolution, which witnessed its first seeds sprouting in the soil of Britain, shook the economic order of not only Britain but also the other world economies. It also had an intense reverberation on the gender

relations especially the man/woman dichotomy. Economic restructuring was not isolated to the British economy alone but rather its consequence was felt in many other parts of the globe as well. In order to comprehend the gravity of the shift which the Industrial Revolution and consequently the organisation of the labour force have caused the world over, a contrastive study of the pre-industrial, industrial and the post-industrial world is desirable.

An analysis of the history of the organisation of work and the composition of the work force through the centuries conveys an idea about the change that occurred in the nature of labour and how it impacts the economic system of a society thereby placing the gender relations in an arguable state. For human beings to meet their primary needs like food, clothing and shelter, work, which does not merely imply the use of tools, is expedient. Over a period of time, work gets modified by the technological advancements which is a continuous and ongoing process. The nature and type of work decide and have a direct bearing on the political, social, economical, and cultural spheres in a society. The history of civilisation reveals that the organisation of work and the social structure prevalent are mutually related and the evolution in the work processes seen from the pre-industrial through the industrial to the post-industrial periods have been remarkable.

When and how the society adopted a proper work culture is unascertained and nothing is specifically known about the origin of work force. It may have originated even before the evolution of Homo sapiens. An advanced brain system, aid of tools and a proper division of labour, helped human beings start conquering nature and establishing their supremacy over other creatures. It can be assumed that a suitable work culture may have originated at this juncture.

An in-depth examination of the metamorphosis of the work process makes us conclude that during the ancient times, the nature of work was relatively simple. It included simplistic tasks like gathering food, child care and providing shelter for oneself. The concept of the division of labour came into being when some people showed more skill in performing particular tasks like hunting. Since the population of the prehistoric people was less, the division of labour was not explicitly compartmentalised except in the case of grazing, hunting and subsequently in agriculture. Factors like age and sex played an important role in the distribution and categorisation of the labour. The senile section of the society was not robust enough to forage or hunt and so they remained at home and performed the household chores, whereas the younger ones explored more active and adventurous works. Similarly, works which demanded more physical agility and strength, such as hunting, were performed by men and tasks such as child rearing, food gathering, and cooking by women. This distinction of the segregation of labour was primarily based on physical differences and among the prehistoric tribes there was no division of labour according to the class structure. Almost all groups of tribes worked together and cooperated for fulfilling their principal goal which was gathering food. There existed a simple organisation of work, usually the chief of the tribe being the head of the group.

With the growth of pottery, textiles, agriculture, and metallurgy, a more complex system of work administration developed. The improvements in the skilled workmanship and the invention of tools increased the productivity of the labour force over time and this continued for the next couple of millennia till the commencement of mechanisation and industrialisation during the eighteenth century. Mass labour became notable with the advent of hydraulic civilisation. The irrigation process resulted in an abundance of food

supply which prompted a large number of people to start migrating to greener pastures because they were no longer geographically constrained to live in the place where food was available. The ramification of this migration was that large scale organisation of work, emanation of social classes, and specialisation in various skills like pottery, weaving, and medicine came into existence. When the economic system became complex, record keeping became exceedingly difficult thus paving the way for the birth of a technique of writing. Along with the writing system, the class hierarchy came into being with each class having a unique duty to perform. This social hierarchical structure which existed in the past is pictorially represented in the following pyramid diagram:

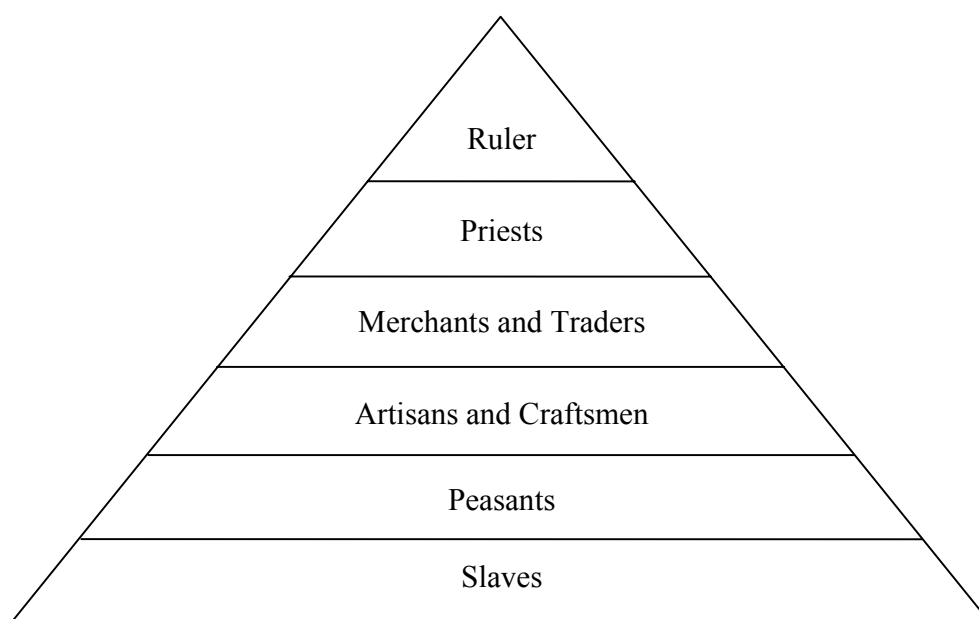


Fig. 1. The Social Hierarchical Structure

From the above class structure, there emerged set patterns of occupations, thus leading to the formation of certain characteristic features in the work setup like certain tasks becoming hereditary in nature. The division of labour on the basis of sex was in vogue

during the ancient Greek and Roman Empires where the cultivation in the estates led to the creation of new groups of workers like tenants and craftsmen.

The rapid development of the economy and the burgeoning growth of markets triggered the mass production of items in many workshops. In the beginning, the craftsmen used to travel from one place to another as per the requirements of their clients, but this trend slowly started waning with the development of market centres when craftsmen of a particular guild gathered together at that particular centre and worked there. A highly structured work pattern could be seen in mining and metallurgy and the labour force here comprised largely of slaves. This kind of systematic organisation began to decline as the Roman Empire disintegrated thereby leading to the disappearance of specialised markets.

A transition from human labour to machine labour occurred during the Middle Ages and in this period, the nature and division of labour was determined by the class and social structure prevalent. “Growth in the scale of commerce during the Middle Ages was coupled with advances in technology. Both these phenomena helped transform the nature of work. Of central importance were the applications of wind power and waterpower; these marked the beginning of the replacement of human labour by machine power” (Kranzberg 5). The use of water mills in the tenth century, the fulling process in the thirteenth century, and the metal-mining industry indicate how technology changed the nature of work thereby causing a change in the world order. The first instance of a hierarchy in labour can be seen in the mining and metallurgy industries of the Middle Ages. One of the major results of the innovations in technology during the medieval period is the eventual rise of the middle class or bourgeois. The desire for more and more

goods by this class led to more consumption thereby calling for more production which in turn fuelled a demand for more labour.

In most parts of Europe, the early modern period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries witnessed an increase in the development of industries, marked cultural shifts and expansion of literacy. The change from Medieval Catholicism to Protestantism, the Newtonian theories and scientific revolution after the Restoration, led the people, especially the upper echelons of the society, to perceive the world in a new dimension. The appearance of a high wage and cheap energy economy also contributed to the increase in various inventions and discoveries. The prime reasons which propelled this change were:

(1) the growth of wealth, derived partly from the influx of precious metals from the New World but also from developments in commerce, banking, and the very concept of money, (2) the growth of markets, (3) the introduction of new products, and (4) the development of new technologies. These helped increase the scale of manufacturing industries throughout Europe, which in turn prompted changes in the organization of work. (Kranzberg 6)

The beginning of the eighteenth century marked the rise of the factory system replacing the domestic system. This novel system which arose during the course of the Industrial Revolution embraced new technologies which enabled power-driven machineries to draw power from water and wind sources.

The Industrial Revolution is a turning point in the history of labour and work organisation because it brings about a gargantuan change both historically and radically

impacting the social life of the common man. Industrial Revolution in fact marked a great epoch in the course of the life of humanity and since it originated in Britain, Britain happened to be the greatest power during those times. This radical turn, relying on the power of machines, replaced the skilled manpower. From now onwards, the productivity of the factory depended more on the systematic organisation of labour than the skill of the workers. In the earlier system, workers had been autonomous craftsmen who enjoyed freedom with regard to their working hours and were also the owners of their own tools. In contrast, in the factory system, the privileges to own the tools, set the working hours, decide the location of work, and set down the working conditions rested with the employer. In the new system, workers gained new skills and the association with their tasks changed; earlier they were craftsmen working with hand tools and subsequently they became machine operators who came under the authority of the respective factory owners. This new revolution changed the mindset of the people, building more confidence in them to use resources optimally, leading to mass production of goods and commodities:

The development of mass production transformed the organization of work in three important ways. First, tasks were minutely subdivided and performed by unskilled or semiskilled workers, because much of the skill was built into the machine. Second, growth in the size of manufacturing concerns necessitated the formation of a hierarchy of supervisors and managers. Third, the increasing complexity of operations encouraged employment of managerial-level employees who specialised in such areas as accounting, engineering, ... (Kranzberg 8)

The Industrial Revolution brought about several major technological, socio-economical and cultural changes in the industrial and non-industrial spheres. Some of the technological changes comprised of the usage of iron ore to produce steel, application of fuels like coal and petroleum to produce electricity, use of motive power in steam engine and the internal combustion engine, and fabrication of new machineries like the spinning jenny and the power loom. These optimised production at the cost of lesser man power. The progress in non-industrial spheres included provisioning of food for a larger population due to improvements in agriculture, wider distribution of wealth in the society caused by sweeping economic changes, rising international trade and development of towns and cities.

Broadly the Industrial Revolution can be divided into two stages. The first stage encompassing the period from 1760 to 1830 was largely limited to Britain. Very soon the continental business men allured the Britons by opening up new profitable opportunities in their countries. As a result, Belgium became the first nation to be transformed economically among the European countries. Other European countries including France were slow to be a part of the Industrial Revolution due to various reasons including economic and political ones. During this period people started consuming novel food stuff like potatoes and there was a considerable decrease in epidemics thereby increasing the living standards and resulting in a population boom. This sudden increase in the population gave a fillip to consumerism and necessitated the second generation of peasants, artisans and businessmen to look for alternate sources of income. The nineteenth and the twentieth centuries marked the second stage of the Industrial Revolution. During this time, the utilisation of both natural and man-made resources,

development of machineries and the invention of computers further transformed the conditions and nature of work.

This chapter traces the history of how labour evolved from the pre-industrial till the current times and also makes an attempt to correlate the economic changes caused by this gradual progressive change with the transformation this evolution has brought about in the social and gender relations. The Industrial Revolution is very much imbued in the psyche of the people and this chapter takes the help of the conceptualisation of this fact in order to explain the economic transformation and the resultant changes in the gender relations that happened in Britain thereby affecting the entire world.

The division of labour is indispensable for high productivity. Due to an exponential growth in population, there was insufficient agricultural work in the villages leading to diminishing wages for the worker which in turn triggered a migration to cities and towns in search of better job opportunities which was the key to satisfy their ever increasing desire to have a better quality of life. Change in tastes spurred consumer demand which became one of the many factors responsible for industrialisation. “The idea that changing taste, or consumer preference, was one of the main motors behind a growth in demand for industrial goods is one of the more seductive explanations for the Industrial Revolution” (More 79). Changes in desires create a social transformation. According to the deterministic theory of social change, it is the prevalent circumstances and factors which reveal the intended direction of change. Karl Marx influenced by Hegel’s metaphysical idealism, in his theory of economic determinism, expresses the view that the corporeal conditions of life are the governing factors of social change.

Studies show that consumerism is largely a result of change in the tastes and needs of the urban-middle class rather than the lower class. If the change of taste occurs with a corresponding increase in disposable income then the gratification becomes instant. But when the increase in income is not commensurate with the desire then the question of how to gain gratification by meeting the desire arises. The consumption preference is primarily due to a wish for novelty, to possess new goods and improve the standard of living. During the eighteenth century, newspapers carried advertisements to popularise new products and the characters in many of the novels written during this time talk about fashion. The development of these kinds of marketing techniques based on advertisements became quite important and affected the life of the people by raising new hopes, aspirations, and anxieties. This was a critical juncture where there was no marked increase in the wages but still the demand for new goods encouraged the people to work hard and earn more.

The poor workers in the lower strata of society worked for mere wages and were mainly concerned with meeting their primary needs of food, clothing and shelter. The rest of the time they occupied themselves in leisure activities. The question as to who the avid consumers were, arises? The probability that the poor were ardent consumers is in fact low because their prime objective was to make ends meet. Of course they had some desires which gave the thrust to set aside some of their leisure time to do more work and earn more. However, their earning potential was severely constrained due to several restrictions:

For the poor, knowledge of and access to new goods were still limited.

There were also physical constraints on consumerism: the small size of

most workers' houses, combined with the need to bring up numerous children and to do paid work in domestic dwellings, must have put limits on the ability to acquire material goods... This was because income levels for all the poor remained low, however hard they worked. (More 82)

By analysing the consumer behaviour over time one gets to understand the historical trend of this aspect. The early historical records of consumer patterns explicate the taste of the upper class alone and exclude the consumption desire of the middle class. The latter part of the eighteenth century witnessed a yearning for new goods and products among the people. The tendency of the consumers to buy goods and services and the corresponding economic development has an influence on the society. The transformation in the nature of consumer desire had a great impact on the British economy at the time of the Industrial Revolution.

The development of man and woman as consumers is rather significant for the understanding of the economic and thereby the social structure of any society. A close analysis of the historical development of consumer behaviour points out that there is a structured progression to what is called consumer desire. A fine example that highlights the desire aspect of the consumer in the eighteenth century was the possession of the pocket-watch which became a status symbol, so much so that even ordinary working class people yearned to own it. This trend observed in the history of consumerism can be considered as the commencement of man and woman becoming consumers. The important catechisms to be considered at this point are:

are individuals active, creative agents in consumption, or are their choices in fact highly structured, if not wholly determined, by external forces?

Should we focus our attention primarily on the putative agent, the consumer, or on the social, economic, cultural, and political forces (producers, merchants, laws, cultural traditions, religious beliefs, etc.) that constrain and direct the consumer? (de Vries 4)

The nature of consumption of the people before the nineteenth century could be perceived to be more or less the result of their fascination for a particular object. But an in-depth inquiry makes one arrive at the conclusion that these very consumers who were responsible for modernity, were now, in the wake of modernity, caught in a quagmire. Earlier, the consumer behaviour was thought of to be purely a part of an economic event. Subsequently, the powerful factors like the influence of capitalists, fashion elites and the directives of the state which stood as a barrier between true and false needs of the consumers paved the way for the cultural interpretation of consumer behaviour. This cultural implication directly celebrated the free will of the consumer, which in fact led to a change in the life style and adoption of new ways of life, where consumers' demands and desires impressed upon the household and the familial structure. It can aptly be said that in order to comprehend the prevailing socio-economic circumstances, an idea about the household is necessary or rather, they are two sides of the same coin. Some of the important determinants of household wealth are income and stock of goods. Daniel Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) writes about the different strata of consumers, those who cannot provide for themselves, those who squander too much and those who belong to the middle section. Lorna Weatherill is of the opinion that consumer behaviour is interlinked to social and economic background. The quantum of wealth and the social position are important aspects to be taken into account to help understand consumer

behaviour. From the seventeenth century onwards, in order to study the political, economic and social changes in the society, it became imperative to include the middle class comprising of lesser gentry, merchants, farmers, and the like.

During the last two or three hundred years, the development of consumerism has remarkably changed human life and experience. The increasing purchasing power of the people made the historians distinguish between two very crucial terms: necessity and luxury. Necessity encompasses the basic needs of human beings, whereas the term luxury generally implies possession of an item which is not mandatory for living. But what is more important is the cultural implication of the term luxury which implies the position and rank one adorns in the society. It is quite interesting to note that luxuries and necessities change geographically, socially, economically and culturally and it is equally intriguing to study how they affect the social and gender relations and their capability to produce conflicts in the stereotypical work and gender patterns. In the seventeenth century, luxuries containing heterogeneous elements came into the picture especially in the urban societies and these luxuries strove to deliver comfort and pleasure.

Competition among the different classes and the mobility of the masses can be conceded to be reasons for the spread of goods among the people. There was a mass exodus from the countryside to the cities and towns during the Industrial Revolution. This caused the towns to become densely populated and the countryside sparsely populated. The towns played an important role in moulding the tastes and desires of the people. Town households became indulgent and goods like curtains, china vessels and the like became important things in them. The Industrial Revolution was responsible to change the very structure of the family. Joint families prevalent in the countryside started giving

way to nuclear families in the urban agglomerations. Households in Europe started becoming autonomous and private affective domains. There emerged non-kinship institutions like schools, business organisations, and trade unions to look after the public affairs. Even the European Marriage System was in support of nuclear families. The newly married couples began setting up new households rather than becoming an extendable part of their existing families. In order to become successful in setting up a new household, both men and women commenced working from their teens itself doing various jobs including working as apprentices. This type of system provided women a certain amount of freedom and opportunity to be the head of the family:

In summary, the Western family has long been a “weak” family. It had and has – a public as well as a private aspect; its members participated as individuals in the public sphere, and it had the autonomy to respond to altered market conditions and act on the consumer aspirations of its members. It was, and remains, an active agent in history. (de Vries 19)

Thus the household and the individual are important in determining the consumer desire.

The change in the family structure had a direct influence on the socio-economic makeup of the society during the eighteenth century. Due to a change in the consumer behaviour, a new kind of demand structure originated which was responsible for transforming the consumer status from a passive to an active one:

The new consumer behavior required important changes in daily life – in how people lived and worked within their families – and this suggests that innovation rather than emulation will have been the more important agent. Innovation in this context can best be understood by linking fashion and

taste not to a higher social order but to, for lack of a better word, modernity. (de Vries 52)

Gender and consumerism are inter-related. Besides previous gender relationships, consumerism which is subjected to change, varies from society to society based on previous societal and cultural structures.

The consumption, desire and nature of work have changed the kind of relationship between man and woman. During the Industrial Revolution men started migrating to cities to work and earn money. Women who remained at home taking care of household chores were excluded from the labour force and were confined to the domestic sphere alone. This trend laid the basis for affirming the notion that man is the bread winner of the family which corroborated the patriarchal system. In contrast, during the pre-industrial period, both men and women worked and division of labour was present. The perception that man is the wage earner as well as the bread winner of the family, and hence is superior, was not there. During this period, the notion of task sharing was quite common wherein jobs like hay making, harrowing, hoeing, planting and spreading manure were often performed by women whereas men used to do the more strenuous works like ploughing and the like. From the time of the Industrial Revolution, when men started being looked upon as the bread winner and were granted a superior status, the perception towards women in the psyche of the public underwent a profound shift and they began to be considered as weak by nature thereby relegating them to a subordinate position. The physical constitution of the fairer sex was considered to be inferior, they were deemed to have lesser strength and were thought of to be delicate when compared to their male counterparts. This apparent disparity was applied to a woman's mental makeup

and led people to erroneously conclude that women were lacking mental strength and authority. It was fallaciously taken for granted by the then existing society that physical and mental capabilities of men and women were directly correlated and mutually related.

The Industrial Revolution was very crucial in reconfiguring a new kind of family and a new socio-economic relationship in the man-woman dichotomy. In the society, the type of work which women were capable of doing became equivocal. What women did, and their contributions to the workforce, were influenced by their domestic roles and their relationship with the family members and were by and large in conjunction with what the norms in the society were. The ideological state apparatus coupled with the obligations to family like child bearing and rearing and the marriage system cemented women's roles to that of subordinate ones which resulted in the subjugation of their intellectual capacity and competence together with their ability to do work. The household works done by the women were considered as unproductive work by virtue of the fact that it did not yield any wages and it did not contribute to the economic growth of the domestic and social establishment. This specifically created a hierarchy between men and women.

Mechanisation, technological development, and the factory system were instrumental in moving the labour centre from within the familial domain in the private sphere to factories in the public sphere. In the factory system the division of labour was based on power, status and other qualities stereotypically associated with men. The skill of the person also gained importance in this setup. The economic changes which occurred with the advent of technological advancements had an unpropitious effect on women's productivity and had an adverse effect in determining women's position in the society. At this crossroad, a lot of thoughts have been poured into and a critical analysis of the

external conditions of the society like the economic and social structure has been done, but an attempt to examine the change in the psyche of both men and women and the effect this transformation had on the individuality of men has not been delved into.

The absence of men due to military conscription, their migration to cities as a result of the expansion of market and the like provided an opportunity for women to enter into the workforce as substitutes for men's work in the eighteenth century. With the development of rural industries like spinning and other cottage industries, women were in demand, were hired suitably and started being remunerated in the form of wages. Even though there was a large demand-supply gap in labour with demand outstripping supply, wages of women remained abysmally low. The working atmosphere of women was not very conducive. The division of labour which was gender based and the domination of men because of the patriarchal system in vogue restricted the autarky of women. The latent notion was that women were not adept in performing jobs away from home which were confined to specific working hours due to their responsibilities towards their families in performing the domestic duties.

The split between the private and public spheres widened in the nineteenth century. The work environment of both the men and women were largely defined by the social morality and the concept of home during this time. The eighteenth century ideology together with the industrial and economic changes created a notion of womanhood which was confined to the private sphere of household and domesticity in the nineteenth century as well. It also reasserted the idea that women be protected in homes and the virile, vibrant and dynamic men be active in the public domain. The question of gender became very prominent in the nineteenth century as the bourgeois

world assigned social roles to men and women purely on the basis of gender. Thus the family was the private sphere and women were entrusted with the duty of moulding the young generation and men went out to earn money. The concept of men as the breadwinner and women as the homemaker got re-emphasised by the nineteenth century. The participation of women in agriculture was reduced considerably from around 1850 onwards. In most parts of Europe, when dairying became more mechanised and centralised, women lost their chance and men occupied their positions and a kind of masculinisation happened in the dairy industry. The nineteenth century witnessed a lot of changes in the industrial, commercial and public spheres. Over time, women's work in the rural agricultural society extended to the urban industries also with the same prevalent rules and perception. This period was marked by the emergence of centralised mechanical production and a stringent division of labour in the factories. One classic example for the centralised mechanisation was the textile mill industry where women were largely employed.

Due to the impact of the two major world wars and the ensuing political changes which the world witnessed, the scope of work in the twentieth century shifted from a rural and industrial background to tertiary sectors which employed white collar labour. Statistics show that in the first half of the twentieth century, the two great wars occupied the men folk which resulted in increased women's participation in the labour force. There was an acute shortage of labour and this prompted the employers to formulate flexible timings and provide part time job opportunities for women. From 1901 onwards the labour force started witnessing a change in the industrial structure. The development of industries like engineering, automobiles and the like caused the decline of other

industries like textiles. One of the important changes in this period was the rapid growth of the service sector due to increase in the standards of education and health.

“Nevertheless the internationally observed increasing demand for services associated with a rising per capita income, allied with the higher capital-labor ratio in production industries, has resulted in a shift towards service employment that has been particularly marked in the post-World War II period” (Thomson and Hunter 92). Some other notable changes were the substantial swap of women for men in industries and considerable number of women seeking employment in the service industries. Thus, the growth and popularity of soft labour paved the way for women to enter into the public domain possessing a status which is equal to that of men. The emergence of informatisation in the second half of the twentieth century again provided a setback to the very notion of stereotyped masculinity which in turn changed the nature of productive labour to a great extent. The labour power of mass factory workers was replaced by intellectual, immaterial and communicative labour power. In short, with the information revolution, there was a shift from hard labour to soft skills, which required a new notion of being human without the gender constructs. Moreover, the emergence of the concept of the new woman poses as a challenge to men and their authority in both the private and the public spheres. In the contemporary period, debates among the intelligentsia based on the concept of gender have become very prominent. The interaction between man and woman has become very important and has led many activists and theorists to probe deep into the issues women face in various walks of life due to this. Though the concept of man as the breadwinner originates in Europe, it was unknown in India until the 1950s.

The society in which we live in is discriminatory in nature, in terms of gender, and this in turn, confers upon man, the status of the self or subject and upon woman that of the other or object. The most prudent approach, which is being used, in order to have a clear cut idea about the self and the other, is a structuralist one wherein, using the idea of binary opposition it is possible to explain how the meanings get constructed through contrasting concepts and also how the idea of difference becomes the pivotal force around which this dichotomy revolves around. “According to structuralism, the human mind perceives difference most readily in terms of opposites, which structuralists call binary oppositions: two ideas, directly opposed, each of which we understand by means of its opposition to the other” (Tyson 213). The existence of binaries brings forth the underlying meanings and the dominant ideologies of the culture, society and the world at large that are hidden in the works of art. The self/other dichotomy helps to define “oneself by designating a person as ‘other’ by placing them outside or in opposition to a norm” (Gamble 266). The dichotomy of self and other is a complex one and the theorists in various branches of studies like literature, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and the like have used this in a variety of ways to interpret various literary and visual texts. In feminist theories, the self/other dichotomy holds up the gender hierarchy in which, normally, the man is considered to be the superior one and the woman is considered to be inferior to him.

Theorists of feminism, psychoanalysis and postcolonialism appropriate this dichotomy according to their needs in order to explain the themes and ideas in their own ways and all of them have shown that the relationship between the self and the other is a

problematic one, always engaged in a conflict where the, 'other' threatens the very existence of the self.

Based on the theoretical ideas of the self/other advocated by Simone de Beauvoir, this research analyses the gender relationships in terms of the self/other dichotomy, which in turn leads to the critical investigation of the relationship between man and woman. Her famous statement, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir 273) puts forward the revolutionary and controversial conception that the positioning of women as the 'other' in gender relations is not inherent but rather is one that has been created by the patriarchal system:

The category of the Other, she argues, is fundamental in the formation of all human subjectivity, since our sense of Self can be produced only in opposition to something which is not-self. But men have claimed the category of Self or Subject exclusively for themselves, and relegated woman to the status of eternal Other. The category 'woman' has thus no substance, being merely a projection of male fantasies (the 'myth of the eternal feminine') and fears... Woman will exist for herself: she will be a Subject as man is a Subject, an Other for him only so far as he is for her. (Thornham 29)

The urge that women should obtain freedom from the domination of the patriarchal system, get equality and not be subordinated by the superior sex, have invariably led theorists to study and ponder deep into the existing patriarchal system, men and masculinity, thereby making it possible to form a theoretical basis for men's studies.

Though arbitrary in origin, masculinity is often considered as the ideology of ideologies and there are a large number of studies on men and masculinity across the world:

In terms of exploring men and masculinities, this [indeterminacy of meanings] means that the living of sexual/gender categories and divisions is more contradictory, fragmented, shifting and ambivalent than the dominant public definitions of these categories suggest. Sex/gender practices can be seen as being shaped by and shaping the processes of colonization, of racism, of class hegemony, of male domination, of heterosexism, of homophobia and other forms of oppression. In short, masculinity can be viewed as crucial points of intersection of different forms of power, stratification, desire and subjective identity formation. (Haywood and Ghail 5)

The term gender which can be interchangeably used to signify both masculinity and femininity has become one of the most widely used and problematic term in the academic lexicon recently because it is now being used to explain both gender roles and gender identity. “According to the sixth edition of Dr Samuel Johnson’s *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1785), *gender* could refer either to the grammatical practice of classifying nouns as masculine, feminine or neuter; or it could mean ‘a sex’. Similarly, the verb ‘to gender’ meant to produce, to beget, to breed, or to copulate,…” (Glover and Kaplan xi). The modern use of the word gender also continues to bear the traces of the older meaning and its grammatical function. By the nineteenth century, a distinct change in the perception of the usage of the words sex and gender was observed and there

occurred a discursive explosion around the very concept of sex and gender. This explosion does not signify that this term sex started being used in a wide and explicit manner but rather it refers to the fact that sex and sexuality entered into the spheres of modern life. The conventional pattern of deciding one's sex using the biological aspects has given way to determining one's sex and sexuality based on one's own tastes and desires. Sexologists also emphasise this fact that sexuality and sexual identity are rather independent of biological features and are more oriented towards the desires, attitudes, impulses, tastes and mental make up of the individual concerned. However, the functioning and analysis of sexual behaviour, aberrations and perversions are apparently not simple and straight forward as normally perceived, but are in fact highly complex and complicated.

Even though sexology and psychoanalysis are different branches of studies, they share several perspectives in common and both study human nature through their sexual instincts, thus making their overlapping inevitable and it is at this juncture that the concept of gender comes into the picture. Renowned psychoanalyst and anthropologist Robert J. Stoller, taking a cue from Freud, distinguishes the terms sex and gender in his *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity* (1968) thus:

Gender is a term that has psychological or cultural rather than biological connotations. If the proper terms for sex are "male" and "female," the corresponding terms for gender are "masculine" and "feminine"; these latter may be quite independent of (biological) sex. Gender is the amount of masculinity or femininity found in a person, and, obviously, while there are mixtures of both in many humans, the normal male has a

preponderance of masculinity and the normal female a preponderance of femininity. (9)

Even though, when the term gender started being referred to as a social and cultural construct is not certain, this term was being used in sexology even during the 1960s.

In academic circles, gender studies generally tends to refer to any inquiry dealing predominantly with women's issues and this branch of study often gets equated with the studies on women even though there is a vast difference between the two and in fact the latter can be considered to be a subset of the former. With the spread of feminism, gay and lesbian theories, the study of the construction of masculinity got further impetus in countries like the USA, Britain, and Australia. In a world where rapid transformations are occurring at both the global and local level, it has become important to explore, rethink and re-examine the changing nature of men and masculinity. It is in this broader theoretical framework that men and masculinity is being analysed in this research.

Studies on the relationship between masculinity and gender started in the West sometime around the 1970s with the formation of the men's liberation movement, albeit in its preliminary form, when feminism was at its peak and this led to the critical and controversial deliberations on the change of male sex roles. The notion of sex role came into existence during the nineteenth century after plenty of debates on sexual differences. The concept of role can be applied to the study of gender in two ways, one being that the role is perceived as unique to a specific situation and the second being that of a sex role wherein specific behavioural patterns are ascribed to one's sex in general. The latter approach necessitates the presence of two sex roles, that of the male and that of the female and in this framework, masculinity and femininity are quite comfortably

explained as two internalised sex roles in individuals which can be considered to be the product of socialisation. When the normative sex roles are affected by the changing nature of society, it is quite natural that resistance will be exhibited and this is what precisely develops the scope for the study of both masculinity and femininity in detail. With the advancement of feminist studies, sex role research also has gained more momentum with researches being conducted on how women internalise their sex role as a subordinate one to that of men. This feminist trend among the academicians in the West paved the way for the formation of the men's liberation movement in the 1970s whose main objective was to critically engage in the problems and troubles faced by men, parallel and very similar to that of the feminist movements. The early exponents of this movement including R.W. Connell and the like concentrated more on the empirical study of the man/woman relationships. In order to understand the comprehensive working of a society, other than feminist studies, masculinity studies are also equally important.

The study of masculinity and the background for its theoretical assumptions has its origin in the field of medical science, when Freud started his clinical practice using psychotherapy:

Freud's early work coincided with a ferment in the European intelligentsia that produced modernist literature, avant-garde painting and music, radical social ideas, spirited feminist and socialist movements, and the first homosexual rights movement. Freud was sufficiently open to this ferment to question - as his clinical practice levered him away from professional orthodoxy - almost everything European culture had taken for granted about gender.

This is what makes his work the starting-point of modern thought about masculinity, though most later masculinity researchers have known little and cared less about the detail of his ideas. It was Freud, more than anyone else, who let the cat out of the bag. He disrupted the apparently natural object 'masculinity', and made an enquiry into its composition both possible and, in a sense, necessary. (Connell, *Masculinities* 8)

From Freudian times, psychoanalysis has been one of the tools that is being used for the analysis of gender, which includes both masculinity and femininity. MacKinnon opines that:

One particular understanding of masculine and feminine for Freud was as metaphors for 'active' and 'passive' respectively...The 'symbolic order' for (Lacan) is one in which, for example, the separateness of I, 'you', 'he/she/it' is recognised. Until that recognition, language is impossible. Both male and female infants need to progress psychologically to that order to become socialised and to be able to use language. (6)

Masculinity studies are used both in applied research and in the intellectual fields and the development of discursive approaches to the study of masculinity as a result of the poststructuralism and postmodernism indeed provide a new dimension that masculinity is not a stable thing but it changes and adopts suitable subject positions from its wide cultural repertoire:

In the course of the twentieth century there have been three main projects for a science of masculinity. One was based in the clinical knowledge acquired by therapists, and its leading ideas came from Freudian theory.

The second was based in social psychology and centred on the enormously popular idea of 'sex role'. The third involves recent developments in anthropology, history and sociology. (Connell, *Masculinities* 7)

During the 1970s and 80s, studies on masculinity were based solely on experiment and observation rather than theory and involved the study of the behavioural pattern of boys in schools, men at work places, athletic careers and the like. It has become imperative to study masculinity as a part of gender relations because gender studies have become more obvious in the second half of the twentieth century. This century has witnessed innovative changes in the organisation of work and in the field of education. The growth of feminism and women's studies as a separate branch of study to deal with women's issues and the increasing participation of women in different walks of life necessitated an investigation of what is called men's issues through a new branch of knowledge christened men's studies, which encompassed both masculinity and femininity under the large umbrella term gender. Masculinity, in itself carries hidden power relations and, one of the areas of research where men and masculinity has been discussed frequently is sexual violence. Considering that it will be beneficial to study the different forms of masculinity which may vary according to the geographic location and/or strata of the society, studies have been done from this perspective also, instead of concentrating on a mere descriptive study that deals with definite settings and problems. To put it succinctly, men and masculinity is an area, offering plenty of dimensions for researchers to conduct research, be it theoretical, empirical or a combination of both, on various masculine issues and further, the ethnographic construction of masculinity varies from place to place thus making the studies on masculinity an inevitable one.

Richard Collier had an interest in studying masculinity and criminology, Howard Buchbinder was interested in studying masculine representation and psychology, Lynne Segal's curiosity caught the attention of studying the connection between economic inequality and changing masculinity, whereas Bob Pease made an attempt to study the connection between postmodernity and masculinity, and in this manner, various theorists have approached masculinity from different perspectives. In fact, the studies on men and masculinities cannot be an isolated one and it is very much inter connected with feminism, gender studies and power where the power in question is the one which is now being challenged in the wake of postmodernism which arose in the second half of the twentieth century. This period witnessed a tremendous change in many fields of knowledge including literature, music, literary theory, and philosophy, to name a few, preparing the way for a transition into the postmodern period as far as these areas are concerned. The main features of this period are its emphasis on concepts like multiplicity, individualism, rejection of grand narratives, rejection of the progress of society in a linear fashion and rejection of universalism. "Postmodernism, whose main focus is on instability and multiplicity, increases the already clearly discernible tendency to question the social norm of masculinity" (MacKinnon 11).

With this comprehension, concepts and notions, which were hitherto considered monolithic, unchangeable and universal in nature, change and tend to start becoming perceived as contingent. In the postmodernist context, the studies on men and masculinity leads to the understanding of the crucial and critical fact that masculinity is not a single entity, but rather possesses multiple facets, which makes one conclude that it will be more apt to talk about, 'masculinities', in its plural sense, instead of, 'masculinity'.

In Arthur Brittan's view point:

we cannot talk of masculinity, only masculinities ... it seems to me that any account of masculinity must begin with its place in the general discussion of gender. Since gender does not exist outside history and culture, this means that both masculinity and femininity are continuously subject to a process of reinterpretation. (1)

The prevalent patriarchal structure in the society works on the belief that male domination is natural and it tries to compel women to accept this as common, ordinary, and unavoidable. There are several theories which give a detailed explanation of the notion of masculine identity, the major being socialization theory, masculine crisis theory and the reality construction model. In this research, I am using the masculine crisis theory which helps to support my thesis statement that men negotiate their identities as the social set up changes and further, I am relying on the reality construction model to support the fact that gender is perceived as a construct. "Masculine crisis theory is founded on the observation that both men and women deviate from the master gender stereotypes of their society. Indeed, this version seems to suggest that the gender identity is tentative and fragile, especially in the case of men" (Brittan 25).

When talking about masculinities in the postmodern era, it is relevant to mention in detail, the different types of masculinities that have been proposed by the theorists and since gender relations play a major role in the composition of the social structure, it is important to study and understand the dynamic relationship among different types of masculinities. The burgeoning growth of research on men and masculinities in different branches of knowledge resulted in the emergence of a new concept termed hegemonic

masculinity put forward by R.W. Connell. He derives the concept of hegemony from Antonio Gramsci and defines hegemonic masculinity as, “‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable” (Connell, *Masculinities* 76). In a society, where an inherent power relationship exists between masculinities and femininities, the concept of hegemonic masculinity plays a significant role in theorising men and masculinities. It also helps to show how men use power as a weapon to assert and establish themselves as superior to women and patriarchy is its manifestation.

The practice of hegemonic masculinity tries to unravel the answer to the question why men and masculinities try to dominate women and other forms of gender identities. “Hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. The interplay with different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works” (Connell, *Gender* 183).

Hegemony, in gender relations, indicates the prolonged superiority of one group of people over others over a given period of time. The Gramscian term hegemony which is used in the context of class relations has been adopted to analyse the sex roles in gender studies. Hegemony is a kind of social ascendancy or domination or power acquired by the working of various societal forces. Hegemonic masculinity conveys what enables men to sustain their power and the underlying principle of this concept is rule by consent; consent among the people in the society. Hegemonic masculinity has been questioned and critiqued by different branches of knowledge, like poststructuralism, at

different levels and most of the criticisms have been against the dominant nature of masculinity and its underlying concept which is blurred and uncertain.

The reverberation of the studies on men and masculinities in the West could also be felt in the once colonised and third world countries like India. Here, the studies on gender began with the investigation of problems related to women in the domestic and public spheres. Compared to feminist studies, very limited research has been conducted in the area of men and masculinities in India:

One of the difficulties with studying masculinity in India is its invisibility in public discourse. Masculinity is defined in part by its absence from everyday commentary; the apparently taken for granted nature of masculinity and masculine styles is precisely what gives dominant visions of masculinity such power to shape understandings of social order. (Craig and Harriss 118)

During the colonial period, the British conceived Indian men as weak, delicate, soft and superstitious as contrasted to the energetic, vigorous, sensible, and intelligent white men and simultaneously, the Indian men tried to formulate a respectable masculinity in their public life. In fact, postcolonial India has witnessed different types of masculinities along with the hegemonic type. “What is particularly striking about postcolonial India is the continued importance of certain types of traditional, patrimonial masculinity, undergirded by men’s control over land ownership, formal sector jobs, and political power” (Craig and Harriss 117). Postcolonial India witnessed a crisis among men due to a variety of reasons:

This may be changing, however, and one important emerging question in India concerns the degree to which there might be a ‘crisis of masculinity’ occurring in the country. There are good reasons to suspect that this might be the case. Poor-quality education, rising unemployment, and increasingly intense competition among a large population of young men for female partners is sometimes creating social problems. Youth violence, alcoholism, and suicide are becoming features of contemporary Indian youth masculinities, and young women often complain that the rise of a large disenchanted male youth population increases their vulnerability to sexual violence. (Craig and Harriss 118)

In India, the initial contributors in the field of men’s studies are Ashis Nandy, Sanjay Srivastva, Caroline Osella and Filippo Osella, and Rohit Dasgupta to name a few. Their primary concern was to analyse the social, historical and cultural formation of masculinity in the Indian context. “In the last few years there have been a few book length studies on various aspects of Indian masculinity which have used interdisciplinary approaches to the subject” (Dasgupta and Gokulsing 6).

Kerala has a unique and rich socio-cultural heritage. During the time of India’s independence, Kerala, just like most of the other states, had a discriminatory social structure and a poor economic structure. However, in the post-independence period, there was a remarkable change and the state made rapid progress, soon becoming a model for other states to emulate. The origin of the social justice movements in the nineteenth century, the ideological cohesion among the masses and the establishment of a deep sense of democracy can be thought of as the three major reasons which made this happen.

Under the influence of various social, political and cultural changes, especially during the period from the 1940s to the 1990s, Kerala society saw the emergence of a new social order which was its stepping stone to modernity.

Before India's independence, the present day Kerala was trifurcated into three regions: the Travancore and Cochin regions known as the Princely States under the British India and the Malabar region which became a part of British India's Madras Presidency after Tippu Sultan surrendered it to the British in the eighteenth century. The pre-independence period witnessed freedom struggles gaining momentum in all the three regions. Travancore and Cochin were ruled by the kings and the dewans, who were the representatives of the British government and were appointed by the British to assist the kings in the day to day affairs.

In Travancore, a group of radicals quit from the State Congress and formed the communist group with P. Krishna Pillai as their leader. The formation of the communist group, the growth of agricultural and industrial workers under the aegis of the communists, and the Punnapara-Vayalar strike were the important events in the political history of Kerala. In 1941, Malabar witnessed the Kayyur agitation in Kasargode which was a revolt by the peasants and which later on turned out to be an anti-imperialistic struggle against the British authority. The Kerala society, which was primarily feudalistic in nature, witnessed revolts by the working class. Along with this, there were various initiations to eradicate untouchability and the joint family system witnessed a crumbling. All these have been some of the important causes for the social changes in the state. The state of Kerala was formed in the year 1956 and before this, the Travancore and Cochin regions merged into one whereas Malabar continued to be under the Madras Presidency.

During the interim period between the year of independence and the formation of the state, migration of Keralites to foreign countries like Malaysia started. However, this it did not have a direct impact on the economic and social setup of the state.

The newly born state witnessed its first election in the year 1957 and subsequently the communist party came to power. The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill and the Education Bill were two important legislations passed by this state government. However, there was a stiff resistance from the opposition party, since according to them the sole intention of these bills was to encourage some vested interests. A few months later the Government of India decided to exercise the power of the president and abolished the ministry after imposing President's rule in the state.

The above mentioned events in the political landscape of Kerala shaped the politics of the state. With the influence of modernity, the state saw changes in gender politics from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. This period witnessed the Channar revolt which was initiated by the lower caste women in order to have the freedom to cover their breasts, which was the exclusive privilege of the upper caste women of those times. This event can be considered to be one of the first initiatives from a gender perspective. The introduction of English education and the contribution by Christian missionaries also had its impact on the society.

The decades of the 1970s and the 80s have a significant importance in the history of Kerala's development and it can be considered as a transition period during which both, cultural and political awakening have occurred. During the early 1970s, there was a substantial increase in the price of black gold, due to which the West Asian countries including the Arab states witnessed large scale changes in industrial production:

The price hike of oil in 1973 and the consequent earnings of large revenue had accelerated a process of industrialization and social change in the west Asia countries necessitating the services of large number of foreign workers. Large number of workers began to migrate to the west Asia from India since then. The migration which started with a few thousands per year during the mid-1970s assumed large proportions during 1980s and 1990s. (Prakash 3209)

Economically, a change occurred when remittances from the gulf countries started coming into Kerala and consequentially the life style and the quality of life improved for its residents. “Since the mid-1970s, the factor which had the greatest impact on regional economy, especially on labour market, consumption, savings, investment, poverty, income distribution and economic growth, has been the Gulf migration and migrant remittances” (Prakash 3209).

It was during this period, that the state saw a growth in the tertiary sectors like commerce, communication, education and banking which demands soft skills rather than physical or manual labour and as a result of this more and more women entered into the public sphere. In the 1980s, many social movements dealing with issues related to the marginalised sections including women emerged, and as a result of these movements, people belonging to the tribal sections, women and other marginalised sections of the society came into the limelight.

The presence of the marginalised sections in the mainstream social and political arena, coupled with the economic prosperity of the state due to the gulf boom greatly transformed the purchasing power of the people, especially that of the women in Kerala

society. This change in the nature of consumption among the people in general is responsible for the construction of new identities and deconstruction of existing identities:

...in the context of India, an understanding of the dynamic relationship among youth, consumption, and globalization requires an interrogation of the conditions under which young people engage new spaces of consumption. These conditions are profoundly shaped by colonialist and nationalist categories such as “tradition/modernity” and “public/private” which structure the ways in which young men and women negotiate new consumer identities and spaces. (Lukose 915)

By the second half of the twentieth century, consumerism crept its way into and became deeply enrooted in the life of both men and women in Kerala thus having a direct impact on their lives.

There has been a gradual and steady change in the concept of the public and private spheres in Kerala from the late nineteenth century onwards and this can be attributed to the emergence of the notion of gender and the improved status of women in the society at large. As J. Devika in her article, “Imagining Women’s Social Space in Early Modern Keralam” succinctly puts it, “One undisputedly significant development of the late nineteenth century in Keralam was the emergence of an English-educated class which began to review the existent social order, ideas and institutions in sharply critical terms” (6). In early Kerala, the public domain was gendered and women voiced out their opinions and feelings in women’s groups like *streesamajams* and through women’s

magazines. In this society, the distinction between the private and the public domains was not static and the boundaries often did not get demarcated.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, women in Kerala started entering the public domain as teachers and nurses since these jobs were in high demand and women with their naturally inherent traits like patience, love and affection were thought to be the most suited for these. During the 1940s and 50s, intellectuals began to conceive a different perception about the roles of women in the domestic and the public sphere:

Subsequently, the space of the modern family and the sexual contract itself were sought to be redrawn. First, the family was no longer accepted to be a watertight space entirely removed from civil society, and organised primarily by gender-difference. Several autobiographies of prominent leftist and rationalist intellectuals and activists testify to this. In these works, the modern family is a centre of discussion and debate on social issues, no longer closed to the public world, but separate from it in that it involved reproductive and sexual activities besides. Wife and husband were bound by not so much the complementary sexual exchange but by a rational intellectual 'contract' and equal participation in public matters. Yet this did not mean that the gendered division of labour within the home was entirely done away with. (Devika, "Imagining" 24)

Along with a very few other Indian states, Kerala had followed the matrilineal system, where family ancestry is based on maternal lines, and polyandry was prevalent. As a result of modernity, the society witnessed a spate of reformations which restricted the sexuality and the power of women in the private sphere and in due course of time the

customs like *sambandham* which had created anxieties and concerns among the reformers, ceased to exist:

The rise of missionary activity with a concomitant dissemination of Victorian notions of morality, and the spread of education instilled a sense of shame in the reformers and writers of this period in what they felt was licentious codes of conduct on the part of their women in the matrilineal tradition. The system faced economic, moral and ethical objections from the coloniser as well as the native colonised. Thus modernity heralded itself with the clarion call of family reform resulting in the systematic effacement of matriliney in the early part of the twentieth century in favor of more respectable practices of monogamy, patriliney and patrilocality, all consolidated under a reformulated patriarchy. The ‘barbaric,’ sexually promiscuous nature of women became a symbol of ‘ineffectiveness’ and even ‘effeminacy’ of men in the matrilineal system. It was a requirement of progress that such ‘women’ had to be civilised through education and co opted to function under regimes of state control in the new model of the nuclear bourgeois family. (Pillai 104)

Thus, as a result of modernity, the societal system changed, with the patriarchal system gradually gaining inroads and becoming deep rooted over a period of time.

The shift from matriliney to patriliney in the Kerala society as well as the patriarchal use of power and control have been well depicted in the Malayalam films and have been some of the popular themes which have been well appreciated by and have gone down well among the viewers. Upon a close analysis of the storylines of the films till the 1950s

one can easily arrive at the conjecture that the major themes around which most of these movies revolved around were the devotion and loyalty of women towards their husbands, the virtuousness of women, and a high regard for men in their families. When one looks at these films from a broader perspective, one can get the feeling that there was indeed an inherent tendency to constrain women in the male dominated familial structure, thereby reestablishing the fact that the fairer sex was conceived to be an object to be protected and as an instrument to provide sexual gratification. Furthermore, their role in the public sphere was strictly monitored and restricted by the patriarchy. The decades of the 1970s and the 80s saw the emergence of art cinema and middle cinema in the Malayalam film industry. The viewers of these films got a new perspective about the gender relations prevailing in the society, especially the crisis of masculinity. To sum up, the formation of a consumerist society, the entry of Malayali women into many walks of public life, and the resultant psychological and social crisis that masculinity faced during this time, all indeed became the subject matter of the films during this time.

Even though K.G. George adorns an important status in the realm of Malayalam cinema, it is rather regrettable that only a very few academic studies have been conducted keeping his films as the central theme. *Yavanika* and *Adaminte Variyellu* are the two films which gained popularity among the critics for their emphasis on mass culture and gender politics. Among the handful of studies which have been done, the feminine aspect has been given prominence taking into account that the women characters in the films from K. G. George's oeuvre have been endowed with female subjectivity. However, in his films, there exists a masculine aspect as well which has so far remained inconspicuous and consequently has not been a subject matter of research.

Based on the broad theoretical and conceptual framework outlined in this chapter, the proposed research answers the following catechisms with a special focus on the films of K. G. George: Is masculinity a socio-historic construct? Should masculinity be the only productive force? Is the public sphere dominated only by men? Do men have to safeguard their authority? How and why men assert their power? Do men apprehend something? When the notion of hegemonic masculinity is broken, do hegemonic men suffer any identity crisis? How men try to overcome this identity crisis if any? Further, in accordance with theorists like R. W. Connell who have defined different types of masculinities such as hegemonic, complicit, marginalised, and subordinate masculinities, and in line with my research, I would like to introduce the term ‘transacting masculinities’, in order to convey the negotiations which men perform as a result of the ambivalences and confusions encountered by them in their lives.

In order to derive maximum efficacy, the methodology used in this research is segmented into three components, each of which are structured in such a manner that they are independent entities, but at the same time act as a rung to correlate the aspects of the next segment with that of the previous one.

The first segment, ‘positioning’, involves placing men and masculinities in the universal structuralist dichotomy and applying the concept of masculinities in the postmodern sense in line with the argument that gender is a social and historical construct. In order to elucidate the subject matter of this research, a set of inter-related research questions have been formulated and appropriate answers, that satisfy, in detail, the corresponding questions asked, have been arrived at using the conceptual tools of

psychoanalysis, Foucault's notion of discourse, feminist ideas on patriarchy, and Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity.

The next segment christened 'application', explains the various aspects of masculinities such as power, sexuality, violence, aggressiveness, and madness taking pertinent insights and inputs from the relevant theories mentioned above. In the subsequent step, using the primary source, the select films of George, as a means, a detailed study has been undertaken to fathom how these traits become a cause for the confusions arising in the minds of men, the consequential crises which they encounter and finally the negotiations in their life.

'Synthesis', which is the final segment of the methodology, helps to understand the power relations between men and women by combining the earlier two segments and eventually leads to the concluding part of the thesis where the answers to the research questions and the manner in which negotiation takes place in the lives of men are discussed in detail.

Chapter 3

Man and Private Life

In gender studies, it becomes quite essential to study the pattern of relationships existing among the members of a family over a period of time and the structural transformations occurring thereby, because human beings, by virtue of being social animals, are associated and interlinked with the notion of family life. The relentless multifarious socio-political and economic changes taking place in a society are quite significant in the sense that they have a direct bearing, both explicitly as well as implicitly, on the various aspects of family life:

Among all the changes going on today, none are more important than those happening in our personal lives – in sexuality, relationships, marriage and the family. There is a global revolution going on in how we think of ourselves and how we form ties and connections with others. It is a revolution advancing unevenly in different regions and cultures, with many resistances. (Giddens 55)

Though the definition for family is varied across the countries, the most common definition that the feminists prefer to use is:

the patriarchal, Westernised, middle- to upper-class nuclear family. Indeed, it is this family form – two heterosexual married adults and their children – that most social commentators and politicians take as the “natural” and “best” form, relegating other family forms as “broken” or inferior. It is precisely this isolated family unit that many feminists argue is the most oppressive for women. (Budig 417)

The functioning of a family is indeed a complex one because it subtly merges and blends the relationship among the members present, with the work, economy, and politics within it. Over a period of time, the traditional system in which the family functions as an independent socio-economic unit and the traditional method of conception and perception of family has undergone a sea change.

The dawn of the information age in the twentieth century brought about a gargantuan change as far as the notion of marriage is concerned and the traditional school of thought which regarded marriage as sacred and as an institution forming the basis of a family gradually became thwarted and has led to a scenario where, now, most of the theoreticians talk about the sole individual and his/her personal gain and satisfaction instead of talking about the family as a whole. This attitude indeed creates turmoil and troubles in the agency of family and gives rise to the necessity of individual negotiations which become mandatory, noteworthy, inevitable, and popular in this scenario.

As feminist movements gained traction in the Western countries, the concept of family, life, and role of women in the family have been interrogated in-depth in order to understand how women have been perceived by men. The different schools of feminist thoughts, such as liberal, radical, and Marxist, all consider family as an institution that has been controlled by patriarchy and ruled by men to oppress women in variegated manners.

Liberal feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft and the like argue that the incarceration of women, mostly the upper and middle class ones, in the roles of daughters, wives, and mothers, restrict them from thinking rationally and logically, thereby preventing them from becoming complete human beings with a rational ability to

think and act. Even though these women had received elementary education and were trained in music, painting, and in playing instruments, they were considered as ornamental pieces responsible for looking after the family. She is of the opinion that improving the education of these women will have a cascading effect, in the sense that, it will improve their capacity to think rationally, which in turn will help them to become better wives and mothers, thereby enabling them to lead a harmonious life. They highlight the need for equality between women and men, but fail to account for the role which men are supposed to play in the family system, thereby overburdening the fairer sex because she is now expected to do work both in the public and the private spheres without any division of labour between the man and the wife as far as the household chores are concerned.

Radical feminists argue that the source of men's power in the family mainly lies in biology and heterosexuality and they also opine that the family system is an oppressive system as far as women are concerned and the two ways by which men control women are, "(1) through men's exploitation of women's domestic labor (housework and childcare) and (2) through men's control of women's sexuality and reproduction" (Budig 423). These are very important and relevant contributions of radical feminists which can be used to analyse the power play of men in the domestic sphere and which will help to answer questions such as, how, and by using what methods, do men control the bodies of women and also how men construct the sexuality of women to cater to their self interests and sexual desires.

Marxist feminism, on the other hand, propounds another aspect and brings in the concept of free labour provided by the women in their individual capacities as daughters,

wives, and mothers so that the capitalist society can effectively utilise this unpaid labour. They argue that the oppression of women will culminate with the emergence of communism where women will also become a part of the productive society and will start getting paid for their work.

In the traditional family setup, a wide gap and difference was starkly visible as far as gender equality and freedom were concerned, with the fairer sex being considered as an object to be possessed having no individuality and identity. Human sexuality also played a major part in the traditional family set up and the main purpose of sexuality was viewed as reproduction and maintaining the family heritage and name. Lack of freedom among women is visible here also, a case in point being Victorian England, wherein men were free to enjoy multiple relationships but women had no such freedom. A typical nuclear family setup in India and elsewhere comprises of the father, usually the breadwinner, the mother, usually a homemaker, living together with their children. However, with more and more women getting educated and becoming a part of the public sphere, the notion that house and family are women's focal point and responsibility, began to change, albeit slowly, so much so that by the second half of the twentieth century, it started impacting men's role and position in the family.

The traditional familial structure which was essentially patriarchal has bestowed enormous rights and privileges to men and is even now quite prevalent in the Indian societies. When and where does patriarchy originate is not specifically established, however anthropologists opine that a relatively egalitarian society was prevalent among the prehistoric humans and the period of social and technological advancements in the

society such as domestication, agriculture, and industrialisation must have been the time from which the patriarchal social system could have developed.

The matriarchal system was prevalent in the pre-patriarchal period, and around the decade of the 1980s, branches of knowledge like Primatology, Mythology, and Anthropology began to ponder deep into the existence of women authority in ancient cultures. The change from matriarchy to patriarchy can be largely attributed to the emergence of labour division in the society:

According to the division of labour within the family at that time, it was the man's part to obtain food and the instruments of labour necessary for the purpose. He therefore also owned the instruments of labour, and in the event of husband and wife separating, he took them with him, just as she retained her household goods. Therefore, according to the social custom of the time, the man was also the owner of the new source of subsistence, the cattle, and later of the new instruments of labour, the slaves. (Engels 85)

Thus, the ownership of private property and the formation of classes contribute to the supremacy of patriarchy.

The male domination in the household and his superiority in private life have been questioned and interrogated by feminists the world over, which eventually leads to show that it is certainly dangerous to neglect the study of how men behave at home, because the private world of men is not simply about observing and analysing the practices of men and how these are accomplished, but rather it encompasses a larger realm including the interplay of power relations and sexuality:

Certainly, there is all this and more to that which we understand constitutes the 'private' of the public-private dualism. But there is also the apparent 'inner' world of the male, the points of (inter)subjectivity, the ambiguities of the self, and the emotional depths to the masculine subject, all of which we need to have some purchase on: that is, if we are to have an understanding of men and masculinity beyond that which presents itself as both material and illusory. The emotional labours of men, their intimacies, sexualities, relationships - all that is private in the personal, individual sense - require unpacking and illuminating. (Whitehead 149)

Recent studies on men and masculinities, which are typically two pronged, try to analyse men's life and role in the public sphere on one hand and simultaneously try to fathom how men associate themselves in private life as fathers, husbands, and sons with an emphasis on truth, intimacy, and emotion in these relationships. In the rapidly evolving family structure, women are no longer ready to accept the passive role thrust upon them by the patriarchy and men who have been attuned to an authoritative position plunge into a deep crisis thereby necessitating a drastic change in their approach, from being a patriarch to being a negotiator in the family. Men and their relationships with other family members, including their wives and children, are quite crucial for analysis in situations where the private life of the man is perceived to be problematic and many notable sociologists including Victor Seidler opine that the very subjectivity of men is at stake when it comes to their emotional life:

There is a commonly held view in many societies that 'men cannot do' relationships as effectively as women. That is, men are seen to lack the

emotional tools, empathy, sensitivity, (self)-understanding, indeed maturity, necessary to enable a committed relationship on equal terms with loved ones and friends. In sum, masculinity may be useful for hunting, competition and climbing the career ladder, but it falls short when it comes to facilitating and enabling the emotional labour required to sustain a relationship. (Whitehead 156)

Women, breaking the age-old shackles, have started coming out of the four walls of the house, have started exercising their economic, social and political freedom, hitherto unknown earlier, making them stronger and stronger and these perceptual transformations, coupled with their entry into the public space, indeed proposes ample challenges to the other sex. These new turn of events can be considered as a double edged sword as far as men are concerned, because on the one hand, these are being a cause of umpteen psychological anxieties and psychical vulnerabilities among men, including the fear of being rejected, leading to an imbalance in their emotional state and on the other, it has led to a situation where they are finding it exceedingly difficult to express and expose their apprehension, angst, and the stress building up within themselves with no vent to let off the steam:

Men have grown up to identify with the public world of work. We have learned to be independent and self-sufficient. We have learned to go it alone and to do without the help of others. We have learned to identify with our work, even when it is not a matter of finding personal fulfilment but simply earning a wage... Often there is little that prepares us for relationships, for in learning to be self-sufficient we learn to do without

others. Often our very sense of male identity is sustained through our capacity for not needing the help of others. (Seidler 1)

In a menage, intimacy, truth and the concept of pure relationship is of utmost importance and these come into existence only when the members of this formally recognised group of people, christened a family, are unequivocally satisfied in the relationship, which is both mutual and reciprocal. This association, coupled with affinity, assumes some kind of permanence, as can be seen in the case of the traditional marriage system, however with the change in the psyche of women, this propinquity seems to be diminishing because the relationship is not being taken as seriously as it should be and these are precisely what is subtly portrayed in the films *Mattoral* and *Adaminte Variyellu*. Thus far, thrust has not been laid on the fundamental elements of a relationship like intimacy, trust, and emotions which have been omitted as mere secondary factors in men's life, however a deep and thorough exploration of these facets reveal the manifold complicated and different aspects of the relationship existing between men and these factors and further, it becomes imperative to view these under the rubric of the changing flux of social relations instead of as intrinsic to men in isolation.

The relationship between the man and the woman and their recognition for each other in a family, play a decisive role in the formation of self among the individuals in the context of family life and it is here that the locution of the term recognition is vital because there exist at least three very different senses in which this term can be described; the first one being a kind of intellectual comprehension, the second one being a kind of recognition or rather identification of someone and the third sense being taking cognizance of someone's position, achievements or rights and as a matter of fact, it is in

the hindmost sense that the term recognition gets frequently and largely used in the philosophical and political thought. In fact, most of the philosophers and theorists who have inquired on the concept of recognition opine that, in order to understand and determine who an individual is and to comprehend the value attached to oneself, recognition is necessary.

Johann Fichte says that the, 'I' or the pure consciousness should propose itself as an individual which is capable of being recognised as a free individual and further, according to him, an individual's idea of being a free individual depends on mutual recognition (Breazeale 147). Hegel, who had been influenced by Fichte, developed his concept of self consciousness, which was contradictory to Descartes' mind-body dualistic approach and puts forward a reliable generality that an inter-subjective conception of selfhood is possible through the concept of recognition. "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (Hegel 111). The idea of the struggle for recognition of self consciousness is perceptibly explained by Hegel in his essay, "Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage". Putting forward the above concept in a simplified manner implies that, for comprehending one's self as a free individual, one needs recognition from the other.

The theory of recognition tries to ascertain the philosophical implication of the manner a person tends to perceive people and the impressions that s/he forms of them which is highly dependent on the inherent cognitive or perceptual powers of the mind and to some extent biased because the perception and the impression created is precisely the way s/he wants it to be, becoming the fundamental cause of self-centredness since the

subject begins to analyse the sensory inputs solely from her/his own viewpoint. The Master-Slave Dialectic, used to delineate the growth and the evolution of human culture, is an influential idea of Hegel, appearing early in phenomenology, which advocates that, initially a being, termed the self, which could be either an idea, individual or culture, upon venturing out, comes across other inhabitants also having independent self-consciousness and contradictory viewpoints, thus giving rise to a potential state of discord and the scope to establish a master-slave relationship with the other self-consciousness at this juncture. Before the Master-Slave Dialectic, even though the other self-consciousness were seen as different from the beings themselves, the fact that the beings did not want to tolerate the difference existing between them and the other beings led to a continuous tendency on the part of the beings to remake the others in the image of themselves with the sole objective of diminishing or erasing the otherness, leading to a situation where the self no longer needs to encounter the other, because there doesn't exist one, but rather, has simply become the extension of the self and this conquest, being a continuous process, becomes redundant, meaningless, and endless.

In contrast, Hegel's other is the one which possesses self-consciousness of its own and according to him, one self-consciousness encountering another self-consciousness is quite important because it is at this juncture that it becomes imperative for the self to acknowledge the independence and autonomy of the other and recognise its subjecthood, bringing forth an ideal relationship into existence between the two human beings (Hegel 112). This ideal scenario ceases to come into existence because the issue of preponderance comes into play, leading to a confrontational approach being adopted by both the individuals in the quest to yearn the recognition of the other and in this strife for

gaining independence and autonomy, each self-consciousness tries to negate the other self-consciousness by beginning to perceive the other as an object of negation and fights tooth and nail to prevent it from being autonomous. Expressed in a different way, what is implied is that, freedom of the self is achievable only by subjecting it to a certain degree of risk arising out of the quarrel for domination where one desires recognition without being amenable to recognise the other and this becomes essentially the crux of the matter which makes Hegel point out that the foundation for relationship among people is the desire for individual recognition. The struggle for recognition culminates at the point when the one, who prefers a life than no life at all, succumbs, becomes the slave and this precisely becomes the starting point of his/her servitude on the one hand, and serves as a harbinger of the recognition which the master can expect to get from the slave, on the other. However, the stark reality is that, this recognition which the master gets, cannot be construed to be the true recognition because the self recognising the master is not an autonomous one and hence is in violation of the criterion which necessitates that, in order for the recognition to be true, the recognising self must be independent and autonomous, thus rendering this sort of a recognition of the master by the slave to be worthless, making Hegel, in turn postulate that the relationship of domination in fact leads to a vicious circle wherein the effect of recognition becomes a cause of one's own destruction.

Mattoral (1988) by K. G. George, based on the novel by C. V. Balakrishnan and very brilliantly modified by the screenplay writers who happen to be the same duo – George and Balakrishnan, is one such film which brings forth to the lime light the complex and complicated marital life of a man and his wife. George is quite successful in

realistically portraying the turmoil and troubles existing in the seemingly calm and satisfied family life of Kaimal (Karamana Janardhanan) and Susheela (Seema) and the theme is very highly relevant, both spatially and temporally. Without too much of a dramatic development, a complex plot or structure, George, to begin with, depicts the story of a man whose wife elopes with another person leaving the man along with his children alone in the house and subsequently portrays the life he leads after his wife runs away from him, the situations he encounters in life after this incident including the ways he adopts to overcome the crisis. “The director carefully and meticulously portrays how the protagonist encounters the situation, how he subsequently confronts the world, how he evaluates himself and his wife, and how he looks after his children who have lost their mother” (Shanmugadas 24). In the film, George, on one hand, by presenting the life of two different couples, Kaimal and Susheela, Balan (Mammootty) and Veni (Urvashi) picks the brain of the viewers and makes them ponder over the justification of the prevailing familial structure including the man-woman relationship in a family life, whereas on the other, by presenting the life of the third couple, Thomas (Jagathy) and Rosamma, displays to a good advantage, the fact that during every adverse circumstance there will be seemingly close associates who shed crocodile tears but are not really concerned since they will laugh at the back of the afflicted.

For the sake of analysis, it is prudent to split the entire film into two, with the two phases in the life of Kaimal as the bases. The first phase describes him as a family-man, a serious and authoritative husband and father in the house, who leads a very systematic life, and also as a very strict and straight forward officer in the office. The second phase

describes his life after his wife recklessly abandons him and starts living with Giri, a car mechanic running a workshop not very far away.

The film opens with a panoramic view of the multitude of daily routine activities being performed at the dawn of a new day in a typical housing colony; people returning from the temple, the milkman and newspaper boy doing their jobs of distributing the milk packets and newspapers respectively, some of the persons getting ready to go to their offices and it also shows the arrival of Kaimal's servant at his residence. The servant opens the gate, picks up the newspaper lying on the ground, keeps it in the verandah and proceeds to the backyard of the house and in this same scene, the viewers are shown the car parked in the car shed for a short while in a medium close up shot and this is one of the techniques employed by the director whereby he attempts to make the viewers envisage that this car instead of being a mere vehicle, is going to act as an instrument which changes the life of the protagonist.

The entire movie revolves around Kaimal who is portrayed in his private life as a conventional patriarchal husband, a sort of an introvert very involved in his own affairs, not having many close acquaintances, and a bibliophile, on one hand, and in his public life as a strict and serious government officer holding the position of deputy director in the Public Relations Department, on the other. To begin with, a lengthy scene, which is typically male dominated and patriarchal in nature captures the morning routine in the main protagonist, Kaimal's house and he is introduced to the viewers in a medium close up shot as he looks at himself in the mirror during shaving, after which he moves over to the front verandah, picks up the newspaper and begins reading it. Next, the viewers get to see his two children having breakfast and Susheela handing over a pot of tea to the

servant in the kitchen, who brings and serves it to the children and here, her indifferent facial expression, very aptly captured, conveys perceptibly that she is quite disinterested with her mundane chores. A long shot shows the children leaving for school and Kaimal watching them going when he is cleaning his car and then the camera moves to a medium close up shot to explicate the care and passion with which he cleans his car, signifying how obsessed he is with this possession of his.

The very next scene shows him sitting at the dining table having breakfast when Susheela comes and serves him a cup of tea quite disinterestedly without even a glance at Kaimal and when he looks in direction of the kitchen she is no longer there since she has already retreated back hurriedly and this is yet another section of the film where the director gives an opportunity to the viewers to extrapolate the growing resentment between the husband and the wife. Kaimal gets ready to leave for his office and offers a passing glance at Susheela without exchanging any pleasantries signifying the degree of emotional attachment he has with his wife and as things would have it, in spite of repeated attempts in his race against time, his car would not start up, fuelling his indignation.

Throughout the entire film, the characteristic feature of Kaimal's innate disposition is shown as irritable which becomes grossly accentuated especially when the result of an action is not as per his intentions and he is portrayed as an individual who is preoccupied greatly with himself and his work to such a great degree that he seems to be unaware of the presence of even his spouse, leave alone her wishes and anxieties, leading to a ever widening emotional detachment and gap. This is very evident right from the beginning of the film itself and manifest in the conversation which transpired between the

duo when the car does not start, since her statement that he could go by an auto and inform the car mechanic on the way to repair the car, elicited a monosyllabic response. This sort of a response meted out by a husband to his wife clearly suggests that his mental makeup does not permit him to accept unilateral suggestions which he probably considers to be beneath his dignity and from this incident, an inherent patriarchal superiority and authority extended by the so called superior gender over the inferior one in society can also be deciphered.

He is represented as a misfit in the public sphere where others see him as a strict as well as a prejudiced man. His arrogance and haughtiness extend and spill over to his official life as reflected by the mannerisms exhibited by him in office and which is starkly visible in the incident when he scornfully glances at the peon who, seeing him reach the office in an auto, had merely enquired whether his car was not working on that particular day. The last thing he wants is somebody interfering in his personal affairs, which makes him very uncomfortable and George, very subtly brings out this predicament through the expression wrought on Kaimal's face and the posture in which he is seated. Rendered helpless against his overpowering emotions he summons the peon at once and sharply reprimands him saying that, "you mind your business in the office" (*Mattoral*).

At home too his authoritarianism is evident, be it in his relationship with his children or that with his wife and this is portrayed in the scene when he stares at his son who is playing cricket outside the house with friends and this action of the father is sufficient for the son to make him afraid and to make him run inside the house. When Kaimal enters his bedroom to change his dress, he expects Susheela to come and give

him the clothes to change assuming that it is her duty to do so. But, Susheela, who is rather fed up with the same monotonous life she is forced to spend with an emotionless husband for years together and her already traumatic life in the house, even though not obviously visible by her conduct, which gets further aggravated by Kaimal's behaviour and actions, has become sort of estranged and serves Kaimal out of compulsion rather than choice.

Throughout the film, Kaimal seldom smiles except in a few instances and this could be because he feels that having a smile on the face may adversely affect his capacity to enforce his power and also reduce the intensity of his authoritarianism. In one of the scenes, he asks Susheela whether his car has been repaired by the mechanic and upon getting a reply in the affirmative, tries to start the vehicle. When the engine purred to life, his happiness knew no bounds and this is one of the few instances where the viewers get to see a smile on the protagonist's physiognomy. Kaimal's friends circle is not a large one and Balan, a writer and a voracious reader, is one of the few acquaintances with whom he has a pleasant relationship. He is a bibliophile, exhibits the characteristics of an introvert and once in a while likes to go out to enjoy the gentle breeze of the cold waves. From Susheela's point of view, their family life is missing the zest in it because Kaimal is not a very romantic soul and the viewers get to infer this from the scene when the couple makes a sojourn to the beach after getting their car repaired. At the beach, instead of sitting alongside, Susheela sits a few steps behind Kaimal and when he reminisces and talks to her about their first visit to the beach, she pays negligible attention and instead her vision drifts away and gets focussed on a young couple walking and enjoying themselves on the sandy beach. The director's genius conveys the fact

explicitly that there is indeed something lacking in the familial life of this matched pair and leaves it to the wisdom of the viewer to figure out the cause of this vacuum, whether it is the male chauvinist nature and arrogance of Kaimal, lack of sexuality, lack of recognition, lack of freedom or a malefic concoction of all these individual factors put together.

The cloistered life which Kaimal prefers to lead, coupled with the fact that he seldom prefers to break his routine makes him an individual who would rather not entertain guests. Given the fact that he is a high-ranking government official, people approach him to make recommendations in his individual capacity, but he categorically turns down such requests and this is seen in the case of Thomas and his wife Rosamma who come to Kaimal's house requesting for a recommendation for Rosamma. Kaimal is a self-conscious individual who does not like to be obliged to any person and it is this attitude of his which makes him not get bothered about what others may think of him if he refuses to accede to their requests.

In the remaining part of the film, the viewers come to know more of Kaimal's character through Balan. On one particular day, Kaimal receives a letter from his intimate friend Balan informing Kaimal that Balan along with his wife Veni will be relocating to Trivandrum in the following weekend and plan to settle down near Kaimal's house. Upon reaching Trivandrum, Balan and Veni visit Kaimal and during the course of the conversation mention that their luggage will be delayed by one more day. Spontaneously, Susheela offers that they are more than welcome to spend the night in their house and even though as per Kaimal's inherent nature, the viewers would have expected him to repeal the offer made by his wife, he acts contradistinctly, the plausible explanation being

that this offer was being made to Balan. It is worthwhile to note that this offer to stay was impulsively forthcoming from Susheela, but not from Kaimal and here again the director very subtly portrays the temperamental differences existing between Kaimal and Susheela. On that particular night, Kaimal and Balan engage in long conversations reminiscing their past and during the course of this friendly *tête-à-tête* when Balan reminds him of one Sreekumari Amma, Kaimal laughs out aloud saying those were the good old days. From this particular scene, the viewers get an impression that Kaimal's past had been quite normal, however the director does not elucidate how Kaimal became a changed man as he is now and leaves it to the viewers to ratiocinate:

The beginning of the film itself provides an indication that as a husband and as a father he is not a tender hearted person. His face is always suffused with seriousness which is more than what is necessary. What makes him such a serious person? The background or any psychological reason for this behaviour is not being presented. (Shanmugadas 25)

There may or may not be any reasons for the present harshness and seriousness of Kaimal, which may have been acquired by him during the course of his transformation from a bachelor to a family man or upon his acquiring a high office, but whatever be the case, it remains concealed and the director does not make any attempt to reveal the same. "Though he does not abuse his wife and children directly, he is a male chauvinist and a disciplinarian. In office too he is a strict authoritarian. The role of a father, husband and officer which bestows power on him wipes out the smile from his face. He is unable to laugh and play freely while holding these positions" (Shanmugadas 25).

Kaimal's highly conventional conservative nature is perceptibly depicted by the director during his visit to Balan's house. When Balan offers a cup of tea to Kaimal, he enquires about Veni and upon getting the response that she has got a new job, Kaimal becomes perplexed, which can be clearly seen wrought on his face, and he inquires why she should go for a job:

BALAN. Sir, please come.

KAIMAL. It's been a while since we last met.

BALAN. I have been busy doing some translation work. A drama of Soyinka. Please sit.

KAIMAL. (Pleasantly to Balan) Sit. It is very hot.

BALAN. Yes, it is very hot this time.

KAIMAL. Year on year, the heat is increasing with no respite in sight.

BALAN. I will make tea for you

KAIMAL. Where is Veni?

BALAN. Oh! I forgot to tell you that. She has got a new job.

KAIMAL. What job?

BALAN. The job is in an advertising company. The company has not yet started. It is scheduled to open next week. The preliminary works are going on now.

KAIMAL. Who is the owner?

BALAN. One of my friends, Mahesh. I am not sure whether you know him.

KAIMAL. No, I don't know him. (*Mattoral*)

Kaimal asks for a glass of cold water because he does not want to trouble Balan and when Balan goes to the dining room to fetch water, Kaimal follows him and says:

KAIMAL. But Balan, why are you allowing Veni to go for a job?

BALAN. I thought she should not get bored sitting idle at home. What to do here? (*Mattoral*)

From this conversation it becomes amply clear that Kaimal is a husband with a traditional bent of mind who prefers that women in general and his wife in particular should not go for a job, earn money and be independent, but rather perceives women as objects who cook, feed, and do various other household chores.

Meanwhile Veni comes along with her boss Mahesh, who had offered to drop her back at home, and thereafter Balan introduces him to Kaimal. In this backdrop one gets to see George's directorial skills when Kaimal shifts a bit away from Veni when he sensed that she was standing too close to him and this incident once again reminds the viewers of Kaimal's conservative nature. One can extrapolate this to reason out that this very same lack of proximity which Susheela may be experiencing could be one of the reasons for her dissatisfaction and alienation from Kaimal.

This film of George does not show the earlier phases in the married life of the couple whose ten to fifteen years of wedded life have passed by, but with a clever play of words and actions by the protagonists, makes the viewers interpret that their married life bygone has been the cause of growing frustration leading to trauma especially for the lady of the house, however, what it does show is the consequence of the tribulation and the life which follows this catastrophe.

Susheela's perspective towards life is quite different from that of Kaimal in the sense that being educated she wishes to be gainfully employed and it is here that the director interjects the feminist ideal of the new woman. This attitude of hers gets revealed during her conversation with Veni during dinner when Veni and Balan spend the night at their residence:

SUSHEELA. If you get a job, then that will be good.

VENI. We don't have to sit alone at home. Apart from that, we will have some earnings of our own.

SUSHEELA. I used to think many times that if I had a job (it would be nice). But Unni's father does not like it. Earlier I used to mention (this to him).

VENI. Balettan is different. He tells me that whatever job is possible for me to do, I am free to do it. According to him, women are not slaves. He is a peculiar person. He has given me the freedom to choose my own path and I am doing that. (*Mattoral*)

When Kaimal and Balan enter the dining room to have dinner, Susheela exhibiting the characteristics of an obedient wife gets up and starts serving food to Kaimal which is in contrast to the action of Veni who continues to be seated without bothering to get up and serve dinner to Balan. This particular part of the film can be interpreted as a sort of submission of the wife to the power and position of the husband in a typical patriarchal society.

If one examines whether the different predicaments in which the two women are in mirror similarity, one gets to conclude that there is indeed one, and that is the

aspiration for both of them to be independent. In Susheela's case, she has been denied the freedom to go for a job and be independent, but in Veni's case such restraints have not been imposed on her because of her liberal minded husband Balan. The plight of Veni and Susheela are very well contrasted in the words of Veni when she comes to borrow some money from Susheela:

VENI. I cannot think of sitting confined in the house like you. Just like a museum piece. What a bore it is!

SUSHEELA. Veni you are lucky. You are flying (like a bird).

VENI. Yes, I have got wings. I like to fly. Please help me by giving some money. It is to buy some new clothes. This new job demands fashionable clothes. I thought not to ask Balettan. I will pay it back as soon as I get my salary.

SUSHEELA. I don't have money with me. (*Mattoral*)

In this conversation, Veni's independence to make decisions, including financial ones, and Susheela's dependence on Kaimal for everything is highlighted.

The uneasiness caused due to the stifling formality of her family life reaches its zenith when Kaimal does not take Susheela to the inaugural ceremony of Mahesh's new company. A day before his company's inauguration, Mahesh, accompanied by Balan, visits Kaimal in his office, hands over the invitation and requests him to grace the occasion along with his family. Kaimal becomes very happy and deciding to inform Susheela then itself, dials her number, but does not get a response from the other end even after two attempts, thereby igniting his ire which is quite evident from his face.

In a bid to cover up his anger in front of his guests, he mentions to them that he will inform her later on. As if to take revenge on Susheela for this mistake of hers of not picking up the telephone, he decides not to take her to the inaugural ceremony and instead, leaves for the same along with his two children alone.

In the course of the film, Veni talks to Susheela about women's independence and the fact that women need their own earnings. During another interaction, a stark realisation dawns on Susheela that she is financially dependent on her husband and on another occasion when she overhears the intimate talk between Balan and Veni, she realises that she is actually yearning for a happy sexual life. Each and every interaction between Susheela and Veni makes the former cogitate and probe deep into her pathetic and a kind of incarcerated life. And the resultant feeling is precisely what leads to desperation yearning to assert her individuality and also sows the seeds of revenge. What is quite surprising, shocking, and unbelievable is the way chosen by the quiet and unassuming Susheela to express her frustration and anger since the modus operandi is counter to the prevalent norms in the society and this shatters Kaimal. This action of Susheela eloping with Giri, the car mechanic, leaving behind Kaimal and her two children, is indeed a very strong, bold, and daring step from the usually calm and composed Susheela and springs up an element of shocking surprise among the audience.

When Kaimal returns from the office, as usual, he expects Susheela to give him his clothes to change and when she does not turn up, brimming with anger, he takes his clothes himself, changes and goes to the kitchen in search of his wife. He calls out her name aloud and his daughter Rajani informs him that she is not there and also that the front door was open when they returned from school. Clueless as to where she might

have gone and his mind in a state of bewilderment, he asks the children to go and search for her in the neighbourhood and when the children return with the news that she is nowhere to be seen, he seeks refuge in Balan, his sole friend, and rushes to his house:

KAIMAL. Balan.

BALAN. What happened?

KAIMAL. Susheela is not there in the house.

BALAN. Where did she go?

KAIMAL. Hmm...

BALAN. She will be there somewhere in the neighbourhood. Did you inquire sir?

KAIMAL. She has not gone anywhere.

BALAN. To the cinema?

KAIMAL. No chance.

BALAN. Then (Pause). I will also come. I will just inform Veni.

KAIMAL. Balan, don't tell this to Veni. (*Mattoral*)

From the moment, Kaimal apprehends that Susheela is missing, the viewers get to see a Kaimal with a starkly different personality, a strict, emotionless and short-tempered man transmogrified into a Kaimal who is mentally shattered, albeit not apparently visible to the society at large. His mental agony gets significantly compounded when Raju, a messenger, whom Susheela sends, comes and breaks the news that she has made the home of Giri, located in Pookkaran Theruvu, her new home. On further interrogation by Balan, the messenger adds that Susheela herself has sent him to convey this fact to Kaimal because she feels that lack of this information will make Kaimal and her children

afflicted with sorrow. The director, in this scene, conveys that Susheela has been plagued diabolically to such an extent that it has now become a herculean task to get detached from Kaimal or her children and even after she leaves the house, their thoughts keep haunting her.

To ascertain the veracity of the messenger's statements, Balan decides to go with Raju to meet Susheela in Pookkaran Theruvu and upon reaching there, he observes that unlike the area in which their houses are located, this is not a residential area and his observation is corroborated by the statement made by Raju's mother when she advises Balan to take back Susheela from this place if possible. Regrettably, Balan's meeting with Susheela is not fruitful and in spite of his best efforts in trying to persuade her to return back by mentioning that both her children Rajani and Unni are waiting at home yearning to see their mother and also that even now it is not too late to return home, Susheela remains steadfast in her decision and requests Balan to leave the place immediately.

Balan returns to Kaimal's house with a heavy heart and no words to tell Kaimal and his children, then returns to his home lamenting on the state of affairs in Kaimal's family and subsequently he reveals the cataclysmic sequence of events to Veni. The director makes these successive events culminate at this turning point, thus triggering a thought process in the minds of the viewers regarding how Kaimal will introspect himself. This in turn creates a curiosity as to how he will move on with his life, since this is quite a serious problem a man can encounter, as it directly questions various issues pertaining to his masculinity like sexuality, personality and the like.

In the remaining part of the movie, the audience get to see a different Kaimal who looks after his children, manages the household and the office works effectively, all by himself. As days pass by, the society conjures up different interpretations to his life; for some he has become a laughing stock and for others, who regularly see him going to his office and bringing back his children from school as if nothing has happened in his life, he is a thick skinned person.

This societal outlook is very evident from the words of Mahesh in the scene when Balan comes to meet Veni in Mahesh's office to tell her that they have to go to Kaimal's house to console him and in reply Mahesh says that he saw Kaimal driving to office as usual insinuating that Kaimal needs no consolation. In Mahesh's viewpoint, the main problem in the life of Susheela is the lack of sexual gratification which a boorish and insensitive person like Kaimal is unable to provide when she actually needs a strong man capable of satisfying her desires, but as a matter of fact, this perspective of Mahesh is farcical since he only has a superficial knowledge about the nature of Kaimal, whereas Balan who has interacted much more with Kaimal and has understood his essential character and qualities that make Kaimal what he is, has a completely different stand and says that Kaimal is actually a very good man.

In the light of the current exigency, Kaimal starts becoming more concerned about his children, which, for the children, is a new face of their father that they have not seen thus far, and this is explicitly shown in the scene where he leaves his office early in order to pick them up from school. When Kaimal and his children reach home, the neighbours stare at them showing a complete lack of sympathy and concern towards them and instead mock at their present condition. The sarcasm of the neighbours is very well

portrayed in the characters of Thomas and Rosamma when they come to Kaimal's house in the pretext of sympathising with him but their ulterior motive is to gather news from him and subsequently ridicule him for the current quandary he has put himself into:

BALAN. I thought they [Thomas and Rosamma] will sit here for some more time.

KAIMAL. Hmm...

BALAN. As Sartre says, 'other people are hell'.

KAIMAL. Hmm... That is true. Most of the people like to see other people's sadness, troubles and insult.

(Meanwhile Rajani comes and tells him that Rajamma is going, to which Kaimal accords his consent).

KAIMAL. Now, people have got a topic for gossiping. Because of the incapability and inefficiency of the husband, the wife has eloped with someone else. What is the use of having a good job with a respectable and high position? (*Mattoral*)

In the best interest of his family, he feels that there is ample scope for this present familial condition to have a significant negative bearing on his son and daughter, and in order to mitigate the risks, he carefully chalks out plans for their future. In one of his conversations with Balan he mentions that once the children's exams are over, he is planning to send them over to his native village where his mother lives so that the children can continue their education there. As far as Kaimal's future is concerned, he is not very sure about it and this is revealed when Balan asks whether he will return after admitting the children in the new school in his native village. In the next scene, the

viewers get to see Kaimal having an open and free conversation with Balan, sharing a drink with him, reminiscing about the past when his ex-military uncle serves him drinks for the first time and his resolve not to consume alcohol after marriage lest it should cause a dent in the conjugal relationship and this is where George has made an exquisite attempt to expound the adage, *Homo proponit, sed Deus disponit* (Man proposes, God disposes). The demeanor of Susheela becomes the cause of a paradigm shift in Kaimal's thought process and perception towards life and this in turn makes him start assessing himself as well as his current position in the society.

Post elopement, thus far, the narrative of the film revolves around Kaimal's life, sympathises with him and stigmatises Susheela whereas it is Veni alone who empathises with Susheela thinking about her plight and in fact Veni is the only person who mentions to her husband that it is imperative to think about Susheela's present life with Giri, whether it has turned out to be better than her past one or worse. Even though what Susheela has done is unacceptable and not in accordance with the norms of the society, the majority have not bothered to delve deep into the mindset of Susheela, because of the prejudiced patriarchal mindset deep-rooted in the society. Veni is depicted as a liberal woman who yearns for her own freedom and identity. She can be considered to be an apt person who has the capacity to very well understand the sufferings experienced by Susheela, since both women share the same ideologies. In the next scene, the viewers get a feel of Giri's life after Susheela has started living with him and when Balan comes to meet Giri, from Giri's words it is quite evident that Giri has started getting bored with his new life with Susheela and in fact has started feeling her to be a burden on him. He confesses to Balan that he has run away from his house at the age of ten, has not yet

returned and adds that he is not a person suited to lead a family life since he does not know how to express his love and affection towards anyone. From these words of Giri, it is very doubtful whether Susheela's expectations will be met and whether she will get from Giri, what she finds lacking in Kaimal.

After his interaction with Giri, Balan comes to meet Susheela and to his utter consternation, he finds that all her hopes of a better life has been shattered into smithereens when she laments that her plight will never change and she will never get salvation from the unglamorous grind of everyday life. These dispirited words of hers convey very blatantly that happiness in her new life with Giri has been elusive so far due to which she has started repenting on her past actions. The director, through this scene, makes the viewers get a feel of the reality when they realise that this action of hers, which was filled with hope, never fructified since its sequel has been a mere change of confinement from the four walls of one dwelling to that of another. Balan makes an attempt to console her by pointing out that to err is human; to forgive, divine and persuades her to join Kaimal, but unfortunately fails in his endeavour because Susheela remains steadfast.

Change in Kaimal's attitude and character is augmented after he sends his children to his native place. He meets Balan in the library, says that he is free, suggests that they go for an outing and makes a trip to the beach where he opens up his mind freely than ever before and philosophises that probably the greatest curse that can befall a person is one of loneliness and it is neither hunger nor anything else. He continues his monologue saying that at this juncture he has started learning new things. He starts becoming timorous and the very same Kaimal who used to sit in his portico every

morning with pride, reading the newspaper, gradually gets the feeling that his ability to face his neighbours is diminishing, withdraws more and more to himself and begins to become sequestered.

The complex fusion of events in the life of an individual in a society has a direct bearing on his psyche and these events form the basis on which the people co-acting with the individual in his personal and public life interact with him and this interaction could be either positive or negative depending on the nature of events. This aspect is presented by the director with incisiveness and ingenuity in the scene when Kaimal scolds a junior in the office and the immediate interpretation of this act of Kaimal is that Kaimal is venting out his personal frustration in the office and taking revenge on his office staff. The fact that strictness has been his innate disposition and is not an outcome of the turn of events in his personal life is not understood or maybe even conveniently forgotten by the staff in his office, as is the normal characteristic feature of any society. Kaimal quickly realises that, owing to the present conditions being what they are, he should act with utmost restraint, since all his actions will be directly correlated to his wife's action of elopement and this thought arising out of the force of circumstances, makes him change his innate nature and acts as a stimulus for his becoming a reclusive individual seeking extreme degrees of isolation and confinement. One day, when Kaimal sees Susheela while he is returning from office, there develops a desire in his faculty of consciousness and thought to see her and this is a point where the director creates a curiosity in the minds of the viewers as to what he is upto. He asks Balan the route to her new house and after having some drinks with Balan, he pulls out a dagger mentioning to him that the purpose of purchasing this stabbing instrument is to put an end to the life of

Susheela and in this scene the director shows the raging wrath of the protagonist. Balan, fearing the worst, makes a desperate bid to prevent a catastrophe by explicating that he should carefully weigh the aftermath of such a decision, since outright it will orphan his children, but Kaimal, adamantly refuses to budge from his stand. With this pre-planned desideratum, he sets out for Susheela's place and upon reaching there, he sees her going out and hiring an auto. Kaimal follows her but loses her in the traffic and thus his bid to murder her is foiled. In a subsequent meeting with Balan, the viewers get to see a metamorphosed Kaimal who feels sympathetic towards Susheela, probably by looking at the substandard locale in which she is living coupled with the looks afflicted with sorrow visible on her face and he remarks to Balan despondently that she is actually a naive and simple-minded person and killing her tantamounts to killing an innocent lamb. In response to this remark, Balan poses a question to Kaimal by asking him that in the event of Susheela returning to him, whether he is in a position to accept her and the response elicited to this question is a counter interrogatory statement where Kaimal asks Balan whether Susheela will come back to him.

As days pass by, Susheela fathoms her standing and role as far as Giri is concerned and realises that she has condescended from the status of a wife to that of a mistress after being a witness to the incident when Giri brings another woman to his room for his carnal gratification, thus conveying to the viewers that her conditions is, slowly but surely, turning from bad to worse. One day, unable to bear the mental distress any longer, she sends a message to Balan through Raju expressing her desire to meet him and on the very next day, Balan comes to meet Susheela with a lot of hope in him. Susheela was so deep in the doldrums that she felt she had nothing to convey to Balan,

but nevertheless the only feeling she conveys to him is that she does not have any aspirations left in life except to see him. Balan consoles her and tries to provide solace to her tormented psyche by apprising her of Kaimal's intentions of bringing her back into his life and continues by saying that she should be ready by six o' clock that evening, at which time he will arrive in a taxi so that they can proceed to the beach for the reunion with the mighty ocean standing as witness. In the final scene, the viewers see Kaimal getting ready and accompanied by Balan going to the beach. He takes his dagger with him and this action of his instills a sense of doubt in the minds of the audience as to what role a dagger could play in an occasion of reunion of two souls. Balan goes to bring Susheela and upon reaching the beach, they are unable to see Kaimal in sight. They search for him frantically and finally locate the dead body of Kaimal who has stabbed himself with his dagger. In the closing scene, the audience gets to see Susheela, overwhelmed by the action of her husband, trying to commit suicide by drowning in the sea and Balan saving her life.

The movie culminates with the suicide of Kaimal and this is indeed an unusual, shocking and thought provoking climax which only world class directors like George can give to their audience. Susheela's action of leaving her husband and children to live with another man can be considered as a revolutionary step a woman takes in the Indian context. During the course of her life in Giri's house, at one point she starts getting the feeling that she has merely changed her physical location from one prison to that of another and that the same existential problem which she experienced earlier continues to haunt her here as well. This observation makes one conclude that Susheela is unsatisfied in both the houses, is unable to find happiness and that her plight continues to remain the

same in both the dwellings, and it also makes one ponder over a rather important question as to what is it that both Kaimal and Giri fail to provide Susheela.

One can make an attempt to apply Hegel's theory to the relationship existing between Kaimal and Susheela, and one can draw analogies between Hegel's master and Kaimal and between Hegel's slave and Susheela, because, as in Hegel's theory, Kaimal, like Hegel's master, gets his recognition from a self (Susheela) which is not independent. As long as the relationship of domination stays without any impediments, Kaimal (Hegel's master) continues to enjoy the supremacy, but when Susheela (Hegel's slave) repudiates her family, Kaimal, who has a patriarchal mindset, finds it difficult to accept her deed and decides to put an end to his life which bears a mark of shame, indicating that when the heteronormal relationship is severed it leads to the destruction of the master (Kaimal).

On a close analysis, one gets to see that it is Kaimal who is very much afflicted by Susheela's action and though he pretends to be normal and also pretends to lead his life as usual, from his actions, which varies from wanting to murder his wife at some point of time, to feeling that she is innocent at others, it becomes amply evident that his mind has become a battlefield of various contradictory and confusing emotions, since, after all actions speak louder than words.

Towards the end of the film, through his extraordinary direction, the director makes the viewers start getting a feeling that Kaimal is a broad minded person who will accept Susheela back into his life in spite of the grave injustice done by her towards him and this feeling is corroborated by the fact that even Balan hopes so. However the climax is startling because the reality shown is the suicide of Kaimal and this action of his

precisely gives an insight to the audience that Kaimal is also one among many men who has imbibed and has been ensnared in the net of conventional notion of masculinity which has control, power, and domination ingrained within it. Although Kaimal may have wanted to accept Susheela in his unconscious state of mind, he is not able to accept her in the conscious state, leading to a dichotomy within the same self. The current state of affairs in his family has already rendered him to be a sort of social outcast and if he now accepts Susheela, who has lived with another man, it will only add fuel to the fire since questions about his personal integrity and ontology as a man in the society will be raised and this is exactly what happens in the mind of a typical patriarchal man when the woman in the family asserts her freedom and independence in a manner contravening the existing norms in a society.

Adaminte Variyellu is George's yet another very meaningful and thought-provoking film which explores the undercurrents in the familial life of two families belonging to two different strata of the society. Like his film *Mattoral*, here too, the seemingly normal, happy, and unblemished family life is being unravelled to expose the dissatisfaction and troubles in the family. The deployment of patriarchal force through domestic violence on three women and their response to this patriarchal domination is the main theme of the film around which it revolves.

Violence towards women in the family circumstances has been used as a tool by men to control women and the two main protagonists in this film, Mammachan and Gopi, employ this tool in two different ways. This film explicitly portrays the issues pertaining to women and critics have read it as a feminist movie as well as deliberated on the woman aspects dealt with here. However, I would like to focus on a different

viewpoint and am making an attempt to explore how dominant masculinity deals with the changing circumstances in the family life and how men exercise their power through violence to sustain their authority in the family.

The film commences with a title song and marvelously conveys the important role which women play in a family, society and the nation as a whole and the opening scene shows young women, youth, adults and aged women engaged in various activities, thereby establishing the fact that women are no longer confined to their houses and have started becoming a part of the public sphere. “Set in the city of Thiruvananthapuram, with clear references to its urban location in the title shots itself, the film tells stories of three women from different strata of society” (B. Menon 113).

The next shot is a long shot in which the viewers get to see employees coming out of a government office, a typical scene during the end of a working day in a metropolis and then the focus shifts on two women going to the bus stop, one woman boarding the auto and the other, Vasanthi (Suhasini) crossing the road and waiting in the bus stop for the bus to arrive. Subsequently, a crowded bus arrives and unable to get into it, she continues her wait and in the meantime she gets to see an old lady about to be hit by a car and the driver of the car admonishing her. Alice (Srividya), a very rich and well dressed woman is seated inside the car and as soon as she reaches her residence, her servant Ammini (Surya) opens the door for her and the other servants get ready to bring her belongings inside and to make her a cup of tea. Typical troubles of a middle class working woman and the luxurious life of an upper class woman are presented alongside each other so that the disparity existing between the two life styles are well appreciated and George employs this technique throughout the film by presenting the life of an upper

class homemaker, middle class working woman and a lower class dalit woman sequentially.

The film oscillates between the lives of two families having no connection, apart from the fact that both are living in the same city. The events and incidents happening in the film revolve around the life of three women characters, but equally important are the two men characters presented in the film who are mainly responsible for whatever happens in the life of these three women. George very brilliantly portrays how these two men exhibit aggressive behaviour in their familial life to assert their superiority and it is intriguing and novel to see how abusive behaviour is portrayed in different ways by these two men.

Mammachan (Bharat Gopi) is a well known, influential and affluent business man belonging to an upper class Christian family and his family comprises of his wife, Alice and his two school going children, Nisha and Tony. To the viewers, they are presented as a well settled and rich family with Mammachan having many contacts with high ranking officials and politicians. The mise-en-scene shows the luxurious life of Mammachan and Alice very aptly. In their family, there is no dearth of materialistic possessions including a palatial mansion with enough servants to do all the household chores, but the relationship among the members of the family, especially between Mammachan and Alice is not a pure and cordial one and the discordant note in their life is explicitly portrayed from the beginning itself. Mammachan is depicted as a pure business-minded, emotionless, and selfish personality who does not care for anybody and his sole aim in life is to make money which takes precedence over everything else and bogged down by

the rat race to accumulate wealth, he neither bothers to understand his wife's mentality nor his children's likes and dislikes.

In the very first scene where Mammachan appears, the viewers get to see that it is evening time and Mammachan accompanied by the MLA Purushothaman Nair and a contractor Hasan Koya enters his residence to discuss about a new project. From this scene itself, one starts getting an idea of Mammachan's business acumen, looking at the way he deals and negotiates with Hasan Koya. While having dinner, Purushothaman Nair remarks that without the help of Alice, Mammachan would not have acquired this high status as well as position and this remark makes it amply evident that Mammachan has used Alice to get what he wants.

In this film, Mammachan is presented as a very arrogant and cruel person who spends most of his time concentrating on his work, whether it be day or night and as a result, his spouse Alice loses interest in her marital life and finds solace in her relationship with Jose (Mammootty) a well known architect who is designing the plan for an auditorium in the ladies club. She desperately tries to fight the feeling of overwhelming loneliness by spending a majority of her time in the ladies club and by consuming liquor. Her situation is so bad that her dependency rests on sleeping pills even to get a sound sleep at night. Her relationship with her children is neither cordial nor loving. She seldom spends time with her son Tony who is studying in a reputed school and staying in the hostel or even with her daughter Nisha who is a day-scholar and she fails to provide the warmth and affection a mother is supposed to give to her children. This rather strange behaviour and her aimlessness in life can all be attributed to the attitude, behaviour, and treatment meted out to her by her spouse Mammachan.

Mammachan's patriarchal nature is evident from his conversation with Tony when Tony says that he wants to study in the same school where Nisha studies and be a day-scholar just like his sibling:

MAMMACHAN. How did you come?

TONY. By bus.

MAMMACHAN. If you had informed, I would have sent the car.

TONY. Bus is more comfortable than car.

MAMMACHAN. They have gone to the church. How are your studies?

TONY. Hmm...

MAMMACHAN. Come and sit. How is the food in the hostel?

TONY. It is not good. (I am) fed up with it.

MAMMACHAN. I will talk to the warden.

TONY. Next year I will study in some school here. It is boring there.

There is no entertainment there.

MAMMACHAN. You are going to the school to study and not for entertainment. It is a good school and to study there is prestigious.

TONY. Then please send Nisha there father.

MAMMACHAN. Why should Nisha be sent there? You should study and become a respectable man. What is the use of Nisha studying in that school? Whether she studies or not someone will marry her. It is you who should look after father's business. Father suffered a lot to study even till the eighth or ninth standard. You can study as much as you want. (*Adaminte Variyellu*)

Through this dialogue, the director makes the viewers aware of another aspect of Mammachan's family through a complex interplay of relationships. The siblings are attached to each other even though they lack physical proximity, whereas the parents are mentally apart in spite of the fact that they are living in close proximity to each other. In the above dialogue, from Mammachan's tone, words, and mannerisms it can be noted that he is more concerned about the material comforts in the hostel. He fails to realise that children need parental kindness much more than material comforts and further it can be extrapolated that his son will also quite likely imbibe these same qualities from his father and will accord more importance to material comforts than to familial relationships.

After Alice and Nisha return from the church, Tony starts speaking to Nisha, neglecting his mother and subsequently, when Alice tries to pick up a conversation with Tony, the response she elicits is very strange and the viewers can feel that the normal mother-son relationship is absent in this family. Tony and Nisha plan to go for a movie and they request their parents to accompany them and for a change both of them agree. When getting ready, Alice remarks to Mammachan that she has lost interest in all these things and Mammachan replies that it is for the children that they are going and not for themselves, indicating that he is also not very interested. Finally, all four of them get ready and then soon after, Mammachan gets a call informing him that there is some labour problem in the estate, after which the father tells his son that he will be unable to accompany them and that they should proceed for the film with their mother. Then, Mammachan asks Alice to take the children to the film, but she also backs out mentioning that she has another commitment in the ladies club and finally the children also drop the movie plan and the whole plan fizzles out. Tony reacts to this by

mentioning to his sister that no one loves anyone else in this house of theirs and this clearly shows the lack of love between the different members of the family which hampers the smooth functioning of the household. The children affected by the loveless situation in the family start seeking love from other sources outside the family and Nisha's elopement with a college student is a pointer towards that. Mammachan blames Alice for this act of Nisha and rebukes Alice saying that being the mother of the child, she should know how to bring up the children. This act of his indicates that he considers it the duty of the woman to look after the family and groom the children, failing which, it is quite certain that the children will go astray, thereby severing the common thread that binds the kindred together. In this scene, the director once again highlights the elements of patriarchy which unequivocally thrusts the responsibility of bringing up the children on the fairer sex and in the event of any deviation from the established norms they are singularly blamed.

Mammachan's domineeringness and general notion of masculinity that sanctions tyranny is very explicitly depicted by the director in the illicit relationship existing between Mammachan and Ammini, the servant in his house, which is further exalted when George, through his directorial skills, portrays that all the while this improper relationship exists right under Alice's nose. Ammini has been a part of Mammachan's household since she was a child of 10 years and all the while she has been serving them loyally and to behave in such a fashion with her shows the obnoxious level to which Mammachan had condescended. In spite of a vivid knowledge of the transgressive deeds of her spouse, Alice chooses to remain docile which could be due to her contempt

towards her husband and in her quest to seek out her own way to get some gratification, she gets attracted to Jose.

As far as Mammachan is concerned, his relationship with Ammini is purely for carnal gratification without any emotional attachment and he continues with the association without caring for anything and neglecting even the repercussions this will have on his family. Minimal trust and intimacy exist between the husband and the wife and the situation becomes aggravated when everyone in the house comes to know that Ammini is pregnant. Alice is quite sure that Mammachan is responsible for Ammini's conception and Alice's contempt and sarcasm is clearly evident from her ensuing conversation with him:

ALICE. Are you not feeling well? During those pleasurable moments, you should have thought about the consequences.

MAMMACHAN. Speak softly. We will do something about it.

ALICE. What are you planning to do? Are you planning to keep her here?

(Mammachan closes the door).

ALICE. From whom are you trying to hide by closing the door?

Everybody knows about your nature.

MAMMACHAN. Don't talk too much. I don't need your advice in this matter.

ALICE. I know that. You tread on your own path. You will not hesitate to hurt anyone for your pleasure and for the sake of money you will not hesitate to sell anyone, irrespective of whether it is your wife or not. She should not be here by tomorrow morning. Think about the

children. In which backwater is her dead body expected to show up?

(Adaminte Variyellu)

The above dialogue, very skillfully not only shows the sadness, anger, and contempt of Alice but also the despicable character of Mammachan and this is another one of the occasions where the viewers get to appreciate the genius of George since he has been able to successfully employ the dictum, brevity is the soul of wit.

Right from the beginning, Mammachan has indulged in activities which are purely detrimental to relationships within a family and for his personal gain he does not even hesitate to sell his wife to different men, which is probably the worst thing one can do to one's wife. After marriage, a woman starts living with her spouse with a lot of expectations, the foremost being that the husband will protect her chastity, but in Alice's case something very different has happened. She has been denied value to her identity, has been exploited, and also has been used as a commodity. Fraught with disgust, Alice puts Mammachan through a series of catechisms which shakes the very roots of her husband's integrity and identity as a father, because she asks him whether he is sure about his paternity and whether Tony and Nisha are indeed his own children or not, and that they could be anyone's children since he has taken her to different resorts and made her sleep with other men in return of favours from them and this makes him speechless in front of her. But at the same time, there is not even an iota of remorse in Mammachan for the treatment he has meted out to Alice and Ammini.

The insensitive and uncaring relationship existing between Mammachan and Alice leads her to Jose, but this also turns out to be a fleeting one, since not before long she comes to apprehend that Jose has lost interest in her. Struck by the fact that Jose also

does not love her, she prepares to leave Jose's office and in the meantime, Mammachan enters Jose's office room and reminding him that Alice is his wife, threatens Jose to beware. Mammachan feels that being a man, he can have any number of relationships with other women and that his wife is his property to use and to be utilised. He has no scruples in using her and selling her to others, but his wife is not supposed to enjoy similar privileges and she is bound not to have a relationship with any other man except him. This implicitly conveys that the freedom of a woman is curtailed to a very great extent and the only identity which she is allowed to possess is that of the wife of a particular man and once again, the director brings to light the superiority feeling ingrained in the thinking of a patriarch which is deleterious to womankind as a whole.

Left with no other option, Alice decides to seek divorce from Mammachan and return to her house, but as things would have it, she faces a failure in this front also because her parents are unwilling to accept her back and instead expound that the house of her husband is her house and this is reasserted by the priest of the church who declares that as per the religious scriptures, the rightful place of a wife is with her husband. Another plausible reason, though not explicit, could be that both Mammachan's in-laws and the priest feel that, in the event a divorce materialises, it will have an adverse impact on the reputation of Mammachan and will also be a drain on his resources and hence they vehemently oppose this proposal at the cost of Alice, which once again serves as a pointer to the supreme status of a male in the society. Yet another reason for her divorce not materialising could be that Mammachan has forewarned the concerned parties not to act in any manner which will prove to be detrimental against his interests and if this indeed is the case, then it would not be wrong to conclude that Mammachan has been

quite successful in manipulating the institutions like religion, marriage and family, through his money and power, to act in his best interest, and to make everything seem alright outwardly, no matter what the turmoil inside the house. Whatever be the case, in the end, it is Alice who gets caught in a vice-like grip and is forced to bear the brunt of her husband's misconduct and with no other avenues for recourse open, she goes back to live with Mammachan in his house and subsequently puts an end to her existence by consuming an overdose of sleeping pills.

Alice is a representative figure, a microcosm of the entire universe of upper class wealthy women who undergo suppression and oppression leading to depression and who, in spite of all the luxuries and comforts, have only loneliness and aloofness as their companions. On the other hand, Mammachan is a representative figure of a section of men who, being patriarchs to the core, restrict the movements of their spouses, deny self respect or recognition to them and with the help of external agencies try to confine them in the family and private space.

Domestic violence based on gender, which includes wife beating, rape, and sexual abuse is quite widespread in the Indian patriarchal society and George presents the concept of masculine arrogance and feminine subjugation in the familial system through the character Gopi (Venu Nagavalli) who belongs to a middle class family and works in a newspaper office as a journalist. His family includes his wife Vasanthi who is a government employee, a small son who is studying in the lower primary class and his mother who tries to assert her superiority after her husband's demise. After his father's death, he becomes a full time drunkard, gives up his job and starts abusing Vasanthi.

Even though Vasanthi is having a good stable job and is financially independent, she endures the physical and mental torture by her husband and mother-in-law respectively without complaining or resisting, hoping that normalcy will return by itself in her life:

Vasanthi is perhaps representing the middle class woman who enters the service class after much struggle and ends up caught between home and work, and in the late 1970s awakens to the fact that neither the work place nor the home was a cohesive, transformative space as promised or envisaged. This narrative constructs the modern woman as facing a series of limited options - between the world of work or throwing herself into family and living through others. (B. Menon 116)

The director presents Vasanthi as a typical Indian family woman who loves and serves her husband and his family, in return for a happy and peaceful married life. At one point of time her suffering had reached its zenith and she reveals the story of her life, afflicted with sorrow and suffering, to her mother who pays a visit to her house on a Sunday. She mentions to her that she is fed up with the physical and verbal abuse inflicted upon her by Gopi and his mother and adds that this started from the very next day after the death of her father-in-law (who also happened to be her maternal uncle):

KAMALAMMA. There is no diminution in his habitual drinking. Right?

VASANTHI. No. In fact it has only increased and he starts (drinking) from morning itself.

KAMALAMMA. There is no one to be afraid of. Right?

VASANTHI. It seems he has quit his job in the newspaper office.

KAMALAMMA. Pray to god that he should change for the better. What else to do?

VASANTHI. I am fed up with the beatings and the abuses. I am only living for Unni. All these started the very next day after uncle's (father-in-law) death. (*Adaminte Variyellu*)

Both, Vasanthi and Kamalamma invite Gopi to have lunch with them, but he does not pay any heed to their invitation and instead goes out of the house. When Kamalamma admonishes him to let go of his drinking habit, he scornfully talks back to his aunt who happens to be his mother-in-law too and this highlights his gruff as well as ungracious mannerisms.

Alice's luxurious lifestyle and Vasanthi's austere one are very finely blended by George and the viewers get to appreciate this when they see Alice travelling by car in contrast to Vasanthi who is one among the crowd waiting for the next bus, or the umpteen servants present in Alice's residence leaving her with no work to do in contrast to Vasanthi who has to single-handedly manage all the chores in her household in the absence of any servants. A dissimilarity in similarity is apparent if the lives of the two protagonists, Mammachan and Gopi, are scrutinised. The similarity being that both of them are apathetic towards their respective families and the dissimilarity being that the former focusses on his business in order to amass wealth, whereas the latter focusses on swindling away all the hard earned earnings of his spouse which could be either because of an inferiority complex within him or may be because of an escapist tendency which makes him feel that there is no need for him to work as long as his wife is earning to sustain him and the family.

The director introduces Gopi to the viewers as a drunkard in the scene when he returns home inebriated and in the same scene he shows Vasanthi as a typical Indian homemaker who waits for her husband, even till midnight, to receive him and serve him food, thus projecting her as one who follows the Indian custom of serving one's husband first and eating one's meal only after her husband has finished his. To the viewers, Gopi appears as one who is thoroughly dissatisfied with his present job in the press and also as one who does not reciprocate the feelings of his wife and this is evident from the scene when during dinner, instead of conversing pleasantly with his wife who has waited for him so long without even having dinner herself, he keeps on talking about his anger against his boss and then gets up and leaves the dinner table leaving Vasanthi alone who is forced to have dinner all by herself. Vasanthi has no one at home to speak freely to and her only consolation is her colleague and bosom friend Devi with whom she has no inhibitions in revealing her mind.

Gopi is presented as an irresponsible and confused man who finds it difficult to work as per the instructions of his boss and as a person who desires freedom in both his professional and personal life. It is a combination of these factors which makes him quit his job in the press. Given the fact that there is none at home to control him, he does things according to his whims and fancies and his arrogant nature coupled with his increased drinking habit start affecting the familial life of Vasanthi to a significant extent. Unable to cope with the stress and strain of house hold work, office work, and the physical and mental torture, Vasanthi starts getting afflicted mentally and begins to see day dreams in which her deceased father-in-law comes and speaks to her. Soon the situation becomes worse and she starts assuming the role of her father-in-law, the

powerful ruler of the house, in her real life and this is the point where she turns into a mental wreck and is finally taken to a mental asylum for treatment. Through this scene, in which a woman starts donning the role of a paternal figure because she gets to feel that only a strong paternal figure can set right the aberrations in a family which she had failed to do, George, a very highly skilled director, very thoughtfully shows patriarchy's role, its implicit strength and position in the life of a man or woman alike or in other words he projects how patriarchy influences the life of both men and women to a very great extent. "Meanwhile, men's violence towards women may be explained through their own childhood experiences, and, in particular, their attempts to assert an 'exaggerated masculinity' as compensation for their fears of femininity" (Hearn, *Violences* 22).

The above quote is very apt in explaining the reasons for Gopi's violent acts towards his wife Vasanthi since he has been born and brought up in a family where his father used to be a powerful figure exercising complete authority over his family, including his wife and son, which is shown to the viewers in one of Vasanthi's hallucinations. In the case of Gopi, he does not have a good job and when comparing himself to Vasanthi, feels that he is inferior to her and coupled with the fact that he has imbibed the authoritarian nature of his father, he starts asserting his power in a negative way in order to make sure that his wife always remains suppressed and never starts asserting her independence. To put it differently, the domestic violence in Vasanthi's family can be attributed to Gopi's frustration, stress and his financial dependence on his wife.

One afternoon, Vasanthi takes half day leave from the office due to headache and returns home and as soon as she reaches home, Gopi asks her the reason for her headache

and without any concern he forces her to have sex with him which can be termed as marital rape which forms a part of domestic violence. When Vasanthi refuses saying that she is not well, he beats her and misbehaves with her, all under the influence of alcohol. This incident indicates that men readily resort to various methods of violence when their desire is not met and left with no other alternatives to accomplish their goal, they use violence as a negotiation tool. In the patriarchal system, a man being violent is accepted as his way of life without too much fuss and furore and in a majority of the families, the violent actions of men against their wives are taken for granted as part of a normal routine.

From childhood onwards, men imbibe the notion of manliness and masculine identity which they employ in the future to assert their power over women. The concept of power relation is ingrained in the psyche of men and it is precisely this feeling that enables them to think that it is quite natural to let loose violence on women especially in a family where the stereotypical idea of the man as the head of the family is prevalent:

Men's identity usually includes an acceptance of that basic power relation. To do so is a relatively simple way of affirming a sense of, first, being a boy and then being a man. Thus a common aspect of men's identity is a taken-for-granted acceptance of that power, just as it is also likely to involve an acceptance of being a boy, then a man. The psychological and social identity called 'man' says and shows power relations. It is identical. An important aspect of men's power and sense of power is the use, potential use or threat of violence. And men's violence remains a major and pressing problem. (Hearn, *Violences* 4)

In sociological studies, the resource theory is one of the fundamental theories used to elucidate domestic violence, according to which a person having more economic, social, and personal resources has potentially more power, thus diminishing the need to assert this power openly and/or forcefully. Whereas on the other hand, there is a higher chance that an individual lacking in any or all of these parameters, including education, respectable societal status, and earnings, will resort to violent conduct in order to counterpoise the deficiency in resource(s) and to sustain his authority. An in depth analysis of men's violence towards women, which could be either distinctly expressed or otherwise, as portrayed by George, implicitly in Mammachan's case and explicitly in Gopi's case, indicates that it is quite rampant, especially in the domestic sphere and that men use it as a kind of strategy to assert their power over the second sex:

... it is now well known that violence in the home is commonplace, that women are its usual victims and men its usual perpetrators. It is also known that the family is filled with many different forms of violence and aggression, including physical, sexual and emotional, and that violence is perpetrated on young and old alike. (Dobash 1-2)

Among the three women presented in the film, who are victims of exploitation by men, only Ammini, the dalit woman, could withstand the patriarchal torment, whereas both Alice, the upper class wealthy woman and Vasanthi, the middle class working woman, fail to break the shackles that patriarchy has clamped on them and succumb by committing suicide and becoming mentally ill respectively. Towards the end of the film, the viewers get to see that Ammini delivers a baby whom she abandons in an orphanage and subsequently she is taken to a rescue home. The closing shot of this film has often

been identified as a surrealistic one that breaks the stereotypical depiction of women in a cinematic narration and shows Ammini prompting the inmates to stop their work, rushing past the camera and the crew, including the director, towards the gate, opening it and running out liberated.

Men's lack of concern towards familial duties and responsibilities and their attitude that their realm is the public sphere create a lot of confusions in the minds of women whose realm is generally accepted as the private sphere, that is their home. "It is precisely this 'home' which is rendered as the most oppressive modern 'Malayali' institutions in the second wave of feminism in Kerala" (B. Menon 116)

The male protagonists in the films, *Mattoral* and *Adaminte Variyellu* use their male chauvinistic attitude with patriarchal backup to control and/or exploit women in the domestic sphere and to prevent them from attaining freedom of thought, expression, and identity. An endeavour to understand the crises, conflicts, and confusions which men may face in their domestic life needs to be seriously made because it involves issues like trauma, fear, lack of trust, and loss of freedom, authority, and power in men.

Chapter 4

Man and Public Life

The ideology of separate spheres which is also recognised as the domestic–public dichotomy is essentially an ideology that strives to define and ordain sequestered domains for both women and men individually. However, men in the public sphere, undoubtedly, are a much more discussed lot mainly because men attain their manliness and masculinity by the position and status they hold in the public realm. In such a scenario, along with a study of men in the private sphere, critiquing men and masculinities in the public arena becomes all the more relevant so that the ways and the means in which men present themselves in the public sphere are fathomed more keenly. Jeff Hearn elucidates public domains as, “the term ‘public domains’ I mean all that happens in public, and not domestically, not in private; that which happens in organizations, militaries, public workplaces, factories, offices, churches, and other corporate institutions, and in the street and other widely visible open spaces” (*Men* 1).

During the second half of the twentieth century, a lot of research has been conducted by several feminists and pro-feminists regarding the issues of men and their interconnections with the other members of the society, both within the family and outside. This invariably leads to the conclusion that, “the public sphere is, by any definition, a powerful one; being the malestream-informed historical vehicle, space and catalyst for determining and conditioning patriarchal relations and the gender order” (Whitehead 114).

From time immemorial, men have been working in the public domain and now women have also started gaining a foothold in this area which had remained uncharted

waters for them hitherto, and it is in this context that a study about how the superior sex deals with this ever changing circumstance becomes quite compelling. The private and public life of men are two sides of the same coin, but in order to perform a successful analysis of these two aspects of the same personality, different sets of factors need to be anatomised. Whereas on the one hand, the study of elemental factors including truth, intimacy, pure relationships, recognition, power relationships, and superiority over wives can assess the private life of a man, in order to assess his public life, one would need to examine whether the subject in question is associated with the concept of heroism, notion of men as builders of empires, and notion of men as workers in organisations where the dominance of men is prevalent either explicitly or implicitly.

Till the entry of women into the public domain, the role, behaviour, engagement, working and relationship of men were considered to be non-problematic, an extension of mere personal traits and did not warrant much attention. But, the inclusion of women has changed the landscape and now it has become mandatory as well as very relevant to analyse the change in the behavioural pattern and approach of men in the public domain, which in turn leads to theorising and problematising the very concept of public domain. Since then, the role of men in the public domain has been criticised from the feminist, psychoanalytical, and the sociological perspectives thereby placing the question of gender roles at the centre of inquiry.

The distinction between the public and private spheres has been dealt upon and discussed from the time of Plato and Aristotle itself and it has been a topic of discussion in various branches of knowledge like Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Most of these studies explain the rationale behind keeping women a part of the private sphere alone as

preserving their inherent purity and goodness, while men, by virtue of their domination in the public sphere, provided the social norms. In early times, a subordinate position was accorded to women:

In *The Politics*, Aristotle (1962) placed women alongside children and slaves. He believed that women needed a certain amount of coercion to maintain their inherent goodness and purity within the private domain. Meanwhile men provided the social norm through their domination of the public domain of 'politics'. The dichotomy continues in the liberal political tradition of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and David Hume. For example, Locke promotes the distinction between reason and passion, knowledge and desire, mind and body, so reproducing the public-private division, (Hearn, *Men* 23)

With the dawn of the Age of Enlightenment, the progressive power of the public domain and the men in it were identified and the belief that only men were capable of bringing forth changes in the society gained traction. Historical changes like the change from traditional to modern, are highly gendered and most of the progressive social theorists do not find the incipience of public domains as problematic because they are congenial and congruous with the norms of masculinity. "The optimistic progressive, whether Weberian or Marxian, sees the change to the increasing domination of the public domain as operating under the rules of the public domain—rational, bureaucratic, bourgeois, revolutionary, and usually 'male'"(Hearn, *Men* 25).

There is yet another group of social theorists who analyse the importance of public domain in its relation to and association with the private and personal lives of men

and these theorists reduce men to a psychological entity. The transcending nature of the public domain and the men in this domain can be considered to be political and this discursive transformation of the public-private division is not merely the shifting of a boundary, but rather refers to problematising the very public-private divide.

The feminist theorists on their part have adopted and appropriated the concept of gender relations with reference to the public domain and have analysed the interrelations of women therein. They have tried to bring forth issues related to men in the public-private domain which the malestream theorists have not done so far:

There are several reasons for feminist concern with the issues of the relationship of the private domains and the public domains. One is summed up in the phrase, 'the personal is political'. Indeed, there are all sorts of ways in which what is personal or private is potentially political or public. Then there is the related argument that the movement of women's experiences, problems, and struggles from the private to the public domains is a vital part of the process and progress of women's liberation. This can be seen most obviously in the way that problems that were seen as private, outside the law, or 'had no name', such as men's domestic violence to women and young people, may become public(ized) at particular historical times. It is partly for this reason that the boundaries between the public and the private domains are especially important practically, politically, and theoretically for all interested in gender construction. (Hearn, *Men* 32)

Some of the major questions encountered by the feminist theorists regarding the public-private dichotomy are the ways in which the private and public spheres are gendered, whether it is getting changed and its relationship with patriarchy. The ideological critique of the public and private domains also helps to analyse the relationship of men and women in these realms and makes one conclude that the underlying and governing principle of the public-private divide is the power relations in a discourse. In the light of the above, patriarchy, with the support of power, has had a direct impact on various bases like the concept of sexuality, economy, and the issue of class. Some feminists of the 1970s tried to deconstruct the patriarchy that had been considered as a single entity so far and started talking about multiple patriarchies in the public and private domains like capitalistic patriarchy, public patriarchy, and private patriarchy. These different types of patriarchies are very much relevant in order to understand the concepts of masculinities in public domains and in gender relations. In capitalist patriarchy, men are of prime importance predominantly because of their involvement in labour production and here the divide between public and private is implicit. Public patriarchy is the existence of patriarchy with reference to the public domain. It is often characterised by the change in the nature of the oppression towards women and:

[c]hanges in the form of public patriarchies and in the oppression of women therein necessarily mean changes in oppression by men. And changes in oppression by men necessarily mean changes in men, or at least in some men. A focus on public patriarchies thus also produces a case for the examination of masculinities. Such masculinities in public

patriarchies may themselves be public or private, hegemonic or non-hegemonic. (Hearn, *Men* 52)

From the gender point of view, it is imperative to address the various organisations in the public domain and the men who are a part of these organisations. In various social groupings, the demarcation and division between the public and private domains clearly exist and in this division it is observed that in the public domain there is comparatively more movement and access than in the private domain. The basis of supremacy of men in the public domain can be viewed as an extension of their supremacy in the private domain. The term, 'public' attains different meanings and associations in different contexts and both the public and private domains can be viewed in four different levels, spatial- temporal level, organisational level, interactional level, and on the level of selves. All these observations lead to the understanding and experiencing of masculinities, whether it be public or private, as an association with or in relation with the experience of becoming a man and as always, engaged in constant interrogation with changing social relations which include social institutions like the state, the notion of heterosexuality, and the pattern of economy prevalent in the society.

One of the main ways in which men in the public domain cope with the increasing women participation is by way of sexual harassment towards them. Men, because of their inherent nature of aggressiveness, notion of hegemonic masculinity, power supremacy and physical superiority, take it for granted that sexual harassment will weaken women and stunt their growth in the public domain. The entry of women into the work scenario in the new millennium has become a common factor and the sexual harassment of women in the workplace has got represented in the popular literature from the twentieth century

onwards and has become a topic for wide discussion. “Many of these feminist writers have used the concept of patriarchy to delineate the recurrent and pervasive nature of men’s workplace power” (Collinson and Hearn 63).

Man’s sexuality and subjectivity in the work place, which is usually associated with his power, complicate his behaviour in the public domain, and thus reveal the complexity of power relations. This assertion of power in the work place invariably leads to the creation of various identities which are adopted by men and the process of building up these multiple identities is often marked by ambiguity, stress, strain, anxiety, and doubt. Similar to all other identities, masculine identities are also composed, constructed, mediated, and reconstructed through different associations in the society and various aspects like unemployment, adoption of new technologies and the like interrogate and examine these gender identities in detail.

With increasing instances of sexual harassment in the work place, it has become inevitable to understand the nature of men’s sexuality and this in turn has opened up a broad area of study:

Analysis of sexual harassment raises a number of paradoxical questions for men and men’s sexualities. On the one hand, sexual harassment is usually an instance or a commentary on men’s sexualities; on the other, sexual harassment is often understandable as about violence, power, authority, labor-power, protection of space and wage levels, economic discrimination, rather than just sexuality in any kind of isolation.

(Collinson and Hearn 64)

K.G. George's *Yaavnika*, *Lekhayude Maranamam Oru Flashback* and *Mela* are three important films which show the intricacies and complexities of man-woman relationship in the public sphere through the life of the male protagonists. The first two films portray the assertion of male power whereas the last one shows the self destruction of the male protagonist because he is unable to assert his male power.

Generally, in everyday life, in various workplaces, some of the men assert their power, authority, and their dominant nature and this is unconditionally accepted without any questioning by the remaining members of the organisation. Ayyappan, the villainous hero in the film *Yavanika* is one such person who is seen wielding such power. Conceived as a thriller movie, each and every scene in the film creates suspense in the minds of the viewers and undoubtedly this is one of the films that has been discussed widely by the intelligentsia. This movie is indeed an extraordinary one, given the fact that the main hero is an artist, a tabla player. "In the usual auteur-centred and formalist film criticism in Malayalam, *Yavanika* is considered as George's best work. Narrated as a thriller, *Yavanika* is also a psychological exploration of character and dramatic conflict" (B. Menon 110).

In fact, George, many a time treads the untrodden path in order to provide some novelty and uniqueness in the selection of characters and themes for his films, thus making his films a thought provoking visual treat for the viewers most of the times. In his autobiography, George remarks that when he was a student in the Pune Film Institute, there was a burning desire in him to direct a film based on the lives of drama actors so that he will get an opportunity to present the lives of these actors realistically. *Yavanika*

which means curtain in English, is that film of George in which this desire of his gets fulfilled.

Starting from a very superficial level and moving on to an in-depth coverage, the movie deals with the life of theatricals in a theatre group named Bhavana Theatres and the very first scene shows the troupe in their camp preparing themselves and getting ready to go for a performance. In the next shot, the director very ingeniously, through the conversation between the owner of the troupe Vakkachan (Thilakan) and the manager Chellappan (Srinivasan), throws light on how popular this art form, which is collaborative in nature and uses performers, is in the Kerala society and also highlights the challenges and hardships involved here. Theatre, as a performance art has a great influence in the realm of creativity and this genre witnessed a gradual and steady growth in the state of Kerala. The theatre actor's change over from reality to fiction when he is off stage and on stage respectively is so very intricately interwoven in the film that the move from one situation to another happens seamlessly in the eyes of the viewers.

Unlike his other films, George employs a different narrative technique in this film wherein the presence of the hero is felt through his absence because from the beginning itself, the protagonist is absent from the narrative space and the audience gets to know the details about him only through a series of flashbacks. George mentions in his autobiography that several viewers, after watching *Yavanika*, have asked him whether he had been influenced by Akira Kurosawa's eponymous film *Rashomon* which also employs several flashback sequences to which he responds that it is not *Rashomon*, but rather *Citizen Kane* by Orson Welles which had influenced him. The technique of

employing flashback sequences by George to reveal the nature of the character Ayyappan has been used by other directors like John Abraham, in his film *Amma Ariyan*.

The other important filmic characters are the dramatis personae Joseph Kollappilly (Venu Nagavalli) and Rohini (Jalaja). The viewers get to see that the drama troupe is ready to leave their camp for their next performance and they are seen waiting for their colleague Kollappilly. In the next shot, Kollappilly is seen getting down from an auto and rushing towards the drama company owned bus which is about to depart and upon enquiry by one of the co-artists about the reason for his delay, Kollappilly answers that he had misplaced the key of his box and that he had gone to the town to get a new one. This apparently silly excuse turns out to be quite significant as the audience get to realise as the narrative progresses. After departing from the camp, the bus containing the actors in the troupe goes to the house of the heroine, Rohini. Not finding Ayyappan the tabalist along with Rohini, Vakkachan enquires from her about his whereabouts because Rohini and Ayyappan were staying together. The disinterested answer in the negative which he elicits from Rohini creates a tension in his mind because Ayyappan is a key player in the troupe and it also tends to bring in an element of curiosity in the minds of the viewers as to what has happened to Ayyappan. Thus, from the beginning itself, an element of suspense is injected into the film by George.

In his autobiography, George writes about how he conceives the main character Ayyappan:

The credit of conceptualisation of the character Ayyappan in *Yavanika* goes to my production manager, Lathif. When he came to know that I am working on a film which is based on a theatre troupe, he shared all his

experiences, which he has had with various theatre troupes and artists, with me. During this interaction, he cited reference to one tabalist Alleppey Usman, by name, who had been associated with many theatre troupes and went missing one day under mysterious circumstances. That was the last, people knew about him. I was quite fascinated with this story and this is where the seeds of *Yavanika*, a suspenseful narration dealing with the finer aspects of the theatrical world, the ruthless life of an artist and his ruinous end, were sown. (George, *Flashback* 66-7)

In the subsequent scenes, the director presents a character revelation of Ayyappan through a narrative maze in the voices of the other co-artists revealing their individual experiences. The viewers get their first cue about Ayyappan's nature from Varunan (Jagathy), an actor in the troupe, who enunciates that quite likely Ayyappan will be in the toddy shop which brings forth the actuality that Ayyappan is a drunkard. Vakkachan gets piqued and wonders aloud how a tabalist will be able to deliver optimally under the influence of excessive alcohol. Varunan allays Vakkachan's fears by remarking that given the nature of his superior tabla playing skills, whether Ayyappan is in an inebriated condition or otherwise, is quite inconsequential. This is another instance where the audience get to know a little more about Ayyappan, specifically that he is a tabla maestro. The group then proceeds to the toddy shop, the most probable rendezvous of Ayyappan, but to the utter dismay and surprise of Vakkachan and the other members of the troupe, fail to find his presence there. Upon reaching the place of performance, the artists, especially the backstage crew comprising of the singers become disheartened and crestfallen because they feel that without the tabla in the background, their vocal efforts

will only yield suboptimal results, highlighting the fact that Ayyappan is one of the members of the group whose presence is absolutely necessary. Amidst this prevailing state of disorder in the troupe, the drama opens with a song which very aptly recognises the dichotomy in life like man/woman, public/private, and presence/absence. This sets the tone not only for the ensuing drama, but also for their future life, which is, as a matter of fact, the theme of the cinematic narrative as well.

The scene in the drama immediately succeeding the song depicts an affluent family in which the parents of Sridevi, who are about to leave for the temple, summon their daughter. In the filmic narrative, Rohini is portrayed as a very quiet person with introverted traits, whereas as a persona in the drama, she plays the role of Sridevi who is a bold character having negligible hesitation in disobeying her parents. When the play is being staged, Rohini finds it a bit difficult to concentrate on acting and the most plausible reason which crops up in the minds of her fellow artists and the viewers for this abnormal absent-minded behaviour of this thoroughbred artist is that the thought of Ayyappan being missing is weighing on her mind, but the reality, which the director chooses to divulge during the climax of the film, is quite different.

The main subject matter in the first couple of scenes in the movie is Ayyappan going missing and the consequences arising thereupon which includes the major psychological quandary the members of the theatre troupe are in, how it downplays the morale of the artists and also how the quality of the drama goes for a toss. Seeing that Ayyappan has not returned so far and in order to mitigate future problems, Vakkachan arranges for another tabalist in time for their next performance. Most of the artists are hopeful that Ayyappan will return very soon, but their hopes and expectations are belied.

After the completion of the performance, on the same night, the troupe prepares to return back to their camp. En route, Vakkachan, knowing that there is nobody else in Rohini's residence, asks her whether she would prefer to come with them to the camp or whether she would like to get dropped at her residence. In reply, Rohini addresses her colleague Rajamma and asks her whether she would like to accompany Rohini to her house, to which Rajamma concedes. This action of Rohini can be construed to be a sort of an automatic reaction due to a fear of the unknown lurking in her consciousness:

(Inside Ayyappan's house at night. Rohini enters the house, switches on the light and the light engulfs the room).

ROHINI. (To Rajamma). You please sit here.

(Rohini keeps her bag in the corner of the room. Rajamma sits on the cot and takes things out of her bag and keeps them on the cot).

RAJAMMA. (To herself). He should have remembered that a woman is living with him. At least he should have informed her where he is going. (To Rohini). Didn't he tell you anything Rohini? All men are like this only Rohini. (Sighing). My husband deserted me on the fourth day after my marriage taking away all my jewellery. Almost seven years have passed by since then and he has not returned so far. Cruel man. (After some time). You should not have entered into such a relationship, Rohini.

ROHINI. It happened so. (*Yavanika*)

When fifteen days pass by and nobody has even the slightest clue about Ayyappan's whereabouts, pressure from the troupe artists starts mounting on Vakkachan

to file a missing person complaint in the police station and ultimately seeing no other option in sight, he does so. Very soon, a missing person advertisement along with Ayyappan's photo gets published in the local newspaper and it is here, that for the first time, the viewers get to see how his face looks like.

Jacob Eerali (Mammootty), crime branch inspector, is the police officer who has been entrusted with Ayyappan's case and in the subsequent scene, the viewers get to see him discussing the finer aspects of this case with his wife Moli:

(One night inside a room in Jacob's house. Moli, crime branch inspector Jacob's wife, is perusing the photos of Ayyappan and inspector Jacob, sitting on his chair, is examining the investigation report of the case).

MOLI. (Looking at the photo) Face of a drunkard.

JACOB. A criminal's as well.

MOLI. He is a famous artist. Right?

JACOB. Many of the artists are criminals too.

MOLI. Whatever it is, he has a strange face.

JACOB. There is something unusual in the report too. (*Yavanika*)

Ayyappan's childhood days were not quite normal and after the demise of his parents he ran away from home when he was a teenager. He married a woman in Lucknow and has a child born out of this wedlock. After spending about fifteen years in exile, he returned to his native place and married another woman Ammini who bore him a son, Vishnu (Asokan). From the dialogue transpiring between Jacob and Moli as well as the investigation report, a somewhat clear picture of Ayyappan's personality emerges in

front of the audience and in this indirect manner, George, very ingeniously, presents details about the tabalist.

Ayyappan is least bothered about his wife and child, as is evident from the perspective of Ammini and Vishnu, and in fact, the attitude of Vishnu towards his father is that of anger and contempt. The father fails to command the desired love and respect from his son because the father neglects his son and does not provide the much needed care, love and affection which a father is supposed to provide to his child and this in turn boomerangs on him because Vishnu starts vehemently protesting against Ayyappan. Leading an abnormal family life and shirking all familial responsibilities, Ayyappan, who remains intoxicated most of the time, takes refuge in Vakkachan's rehearsal camp. On one occasion, Ammini comes to Vakkachan's camp in search of Ayyappan, to ask him some money for her expenses. But Ayyappan who squanders all his money in buying liquor has nothing to give, and instead he drags her out from the office room and beats her severely in front of the other artists. Shocked by this savagely action of Ayyappan, his fellow troupe members try to intervene and prevent him from thrashing the visibly petrified Ammini, but he defied their action averring that it is not their business to interfere in his family life which blatantly exhibits his audacity and arrogance. Ayyappan's orderless life, promiscuous life, and his alcoholic nature are some of the negative habits which he possesses and the only positive aspect seen in his life is that he is a very skilled tabla player. Vakkachan and the other troupe artists regard Ayyappan's unique tabla playing skills to be *sui generis* and thus he is considered to be a very important part of the group. But at the same time, he possesses qualities of vice and wickedness which make him very unpopular among the artists in the troupe.

George introduces the protagonist Ayyappan in flesh and blood to the audience, somewhere in the middle of the film, through a flashback where he is seen completely engrossed playing his favourite membranophone percussion instrument. He demonstrates ethically dubious workplace behaviour which is grossly unacceptable. Irrespective of whether she is a co-artist or not, he considers women as objects to be utilised in order to satiate his carnal desires, and the viewers get to see this aspect of Ayyappan in the scene where he tries to molest Lalita, a fellow artist. Abhorring such a despicable demeanor, Vakkachan decides to part ways with Ayyappan and informs him that he will not be in a position to accommodate him in the rehearsal camp any more for want of good conduct from him. Ayyappan being a person who does not like his self respect and dignity to be questioned by anyone, and brimming with confidence that with his extraordinary tabla playing skills it will be child's play for him to find a job in some other theatre troupe, leaves Vakkachan's camp after giving him a piece of his mind.

The director very skillfully continues using third person flashback to present further incidents which happen in the life of Ayyappan ultimately leading to his murder. On being interrogated by inspector Jacob Eerali, Vakkachan says that, a few days after leaving the camp, Ayyappan returns with a plea that he has overcome his alcohol addiction, has completely relinquished it and hence Vakkachan should take him back since he has been unable to find a suitable opening for himself in any other theatre or dance troupe. Some days pass by with normalcy prevailing in the camp and then suddenly crisis befalls Vakkachan's troupe when one of the female actors decides to leave the troupe because of her marriage. This causes a shortage of one artiste in the troupe and everybody in the camp becomes tensed since the day of the performance is not

too far away. In this time of exigency, Ayyappan offers his help and says that he will bring a substitute artiste.

Ayyappan's contemptible bent of mind is shown to the viewers in the next incident when he lures a hapless young woman, Rohini, in the pretext of providing succour to her and her family and then exploits her for his own sensual gratification. On one of the previous occasions he had played tabla for Rohini's dance performance and this is the first time he had got acquainted with her. His carnal desire arouses and he meets Rohini in the dressing room, congratulates her and inquires about her whereabouts. Later on, he pays a visit to her house, befriends her mother, Bhavani, and instills a lot of hope in her, promising a bright future for Rohini, thus creating an impression of a genuine well wisher of their family and slyly masquerading his villainy in a brilliant manner. Oblivious of his ulterior motives and compelled by poverty, the mother and daughter duo fall an easy prey to Ayyappan's wicked intentions and the mother sends Rohini along with him to become a member of his drama troupe, when, he donning the garb of a protector and a well-wisher of Rohini's family, reaches her home where she is living with her ailing mother and two younger sisters conveying the news to them about the vacancy of an artiste in his drama company:

AYYAPPAN. (Vakkachan's theatre troupe is) one of the biggest theatre troupes in Kerala with at least three hundred bookings every year. You will get good remuneration also. One actress in the troupe is getting married (and leaving) and it is Rohini's luck (that this opportunity has arisen).

BHAVANI. We know that you will not share information which is of no use to us. That is why I am agreeing to send Rohini with you.

(Looking inside). Aren't you ready?

(The voice of Rohini is heard: Just coming mother).

AYYAPPAN. (Looking at Sumati, Rohini's sister). You are also there in the list Sumati. I have not forgotten you.

(Rohini, with a small packet in her hand, comes to the verandah.

Ayyappan goes outside and the others follow him).

BHAVANI. (To Ayyappan). Son, we hear a lot about theatre troupes. (In a negative sense)

AYYAPPAN. (Suddenly turns) That is not true. These are statements spoken by envious people. (To Rohini). Come, let us go.

BHAVANI. (Controlling her sadness) she is our only treasure and hope. I am sending her with you as I will send with her father. Please look after her. (*Yavanika*)

The rest of the film is the narration by Rohini about how the obdurate Ayyappan breaks this trust and belief, her phenomenal rise as a main artist in Vakkachan's theatre troupe, her personal destruction as a woman and her pathetic end as a murderer. After bringing Rohini to the rehearsal camp, from the very first day itself, Ayyappan starts exercising his masculine dominion over her and this action of his, makes the viewers, just like the troupers, doubt the veracity and genuineness of his intentions.

In the camp, Vakkachan, liking Rohini's histrionic skills admits her in his troupe. Next, Ayyappan conjures up a cunning plan, exploiting Rohini's poverty, to extract some

money from Vakkachan for meeting his needs. Without the knowledge of Rohini, Ayyappan informs Vakkachan that Rohini needs some money in order to buy some costumes since she does not have any and also that she has to send some money home and citing these pretexts, he gets five hundred rupees from Vakkachan. Instead of utilising the entire amount of money for which it was supposed to be used, he buys just a single saree for Rohini and spends the remaining buying alcohol for himself.

Vakkachan offers that Rohini can make the rehearsal camp her home just like the other actors, but Ayyappan denies this proposal saying that some people in the troupe are of a questionable character and that he does not want to take any chances lest his worst fears come true, since Rohini's mother has entrusted her daughter to him with utmost confidence. Saying these words, he asks Rohini to come with him and believing him to be a good person, she accompanies him after the rehearsal. Upon reaching his house and seeing the house without any occupants, Rohini inquires about the inhabitants of his house to which he replies that his wife and son who have gone out, will return by evening or by the next day. Even though Rohini is not fully convinced with his reply, she is forced to believe that what he told her is correct and true.

Rohini gets to know of a different kind of Ayyappan when she sees him return, with dinner for her, in a completely intoxicated condition and this makes her feel more and more uneasy and makes her start suspecting his 'good' and 'noble' intentions. With her mind in turmoil due to apprehension and dread, she somehow manages to start having her dinner and in the midst of it, Ayyappan, who is seated in the adjacent room, summons her to bring the glass which is kept on the table. Seeing him in a complete drunken state, Rohini latches all the doors and windows of her room except for one door which she is

unable to fasten since the latch has been removed. That dreadful and absolutely appalling night Ayyappan raping her is a fait accompli and he had successfully accomplished his desire, whereas for Rohini, the worst that she had anticipated had befallen on her that night. This episode exemplifies and candidly affirms that the remorseless Ayyappan, in order to satisfy his desires, will not hesitate go to any extreme and will not hesitate to play any role even if it means exploiting the belief and faith that another innocent may have placed on him.

On the following day, the disgusted Rohini mentions to Ayyappan that she would like to go back to her home and that she no longer wants to be a member of this drama troupe. His cruelty reaches its zenith when he, assuming unconditional authority tells her that she will not be allowed to leave the troupe and also threatens her by saying that if she makes any attempt to leave, then he will destroy her whole family including her sisters within no time. Rohini, apprehensive about her sisters' future, decides to continue living with Ayyappan and she confesses to Jacob Eerali that left with no choice and becoming a victim of blackmail, she obeyed him blindly.

In the next few scenes, George reveals the circumstances which lead to Ayyappan's murder and this is undoubtedly the most crucial and unexpected twist in the film. He exploits Rohini not only sexually, but also financially by looting whatever little money she earns and she is subjected to continuous ill treatment in his hands. The mental and physical affliction of Rohini reaches its climax when Ayyappan takes away the gold earring, which she has purchased for her sister.

Rohini's wrath and damnation, which had so far been hidden in her subconscious, gets the better of her and erupts on that eventful night. Ayyappan returns to his dwelling

fully drunk and there ensues a verbal duel between Rohini and him. This culminates when Rohini, in a fit of rage, takes a broken alcohol bottle and stabs him, killing him on the spot, thus heaving a sigh of relief that she has put an end to a tormentor who may have ruined many other lives like hers. After a few seconds, when she came to her senses, she realises that she has committed a horrible crime and with the help of Kollappilly destroys the dead body. What is noteworthy here is the technique which George uses to unravel the secrets in the mind of Rohini, who reveals the truth about Ayyappan's murder by fumbling on the stage while the play is being staged. Her soul has become troubled to such a great degree that instead of uttering the dialogue in the normal course of the play, she blurts out that she is the one who has committed the murder and that nobody else should be punished for what she has done:

In the field of arts, artists enjoy unconditional freedom as well as independence and this has been observed by Gustave Flaubert way back in the nineteenth century itself: That is why I love Art. There, at least, everything is freedom, in this world of fictions. There one is satisfied, does everything, is both a king and his subjects, active and passive, victim and priest. No limits; humanity is for you a puppet with bells you make ring at the end of his sentence like a buffoon with a kick. (qtd. in Stallabrass 134)

The society at large, including the artists themselves, consider the artists to be holding a special position which is somewhat different from that of the ordinary folk and this viewpoint is echoed by the American scholar Ruby Rich in her article, "Dissed and Disconnected: Notes on Present Ills and Future Dreams":

Unlike other professions the arts occupy a special, anomalous position in our society. Practitioners aren't licensed. Its members are entirely self-declared and self-anointed, lacking any visible signs of status or ordination, devoid of licenses or union cards. The field lacks even the most minimal forms of regulation. (235)

Ayyappan can be considered to be a true embodiment of such an artist who uses, or rather exploits, his freedom and status as an artist and as a man in the society. There seems to be a striking semblance between the character Ayyappan and the Italian painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, who also led a bizarre and notorious life style, and it is possible that George has drawn inspiration from this real life artist in carving out the character of the protagonist, Ayyappan.

Another highly acclaimed and controversial film directed by George is *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback* (1983). It elucidates the inherent exploitation behind the screen, the resultant psychological trauma, suffering, and dilemma of women, who aspire to make their career in the film industry. It was one of the most debated films when it was released in the year 1983 because of its thematic resemblance with the real life occurrence of suicide of the Malayalam film actress Sobha in 1981. George himself mentions in his autobiography that the demise of Sobha had a bearing on him when directing this movie. The flawless and intact screenplay written by the director himself accompanied by the dialogues written by S. L. Puram Sadanandan make the film a resounding success.

The main theme of the film is the cause of death of the popular film artist Lekha (Nalini). She had committed suicide on 06 September 1980 and the first shot shows her

body lying in repose and people including film personalities paying their last tributes. The film has been divided into four sections with clear cut demarcations, each of them dealing with a specific time span in the life of Lekha indicating in detail the ups and downs in her family life and career, all narrated in flashback, as the name of the film itself signifies.

The period spanning from July to October 1977, which comprises the second section in the film depicts the gradual transformation of an innocent virgin village lass Lekha, to an experienced sex worker practicing in the streets of Kodambakkam, Chennai, at a first glance, and at a deeper level, it highlights the male supremacy and exploitation of women in the public domain. Lekha whose real name is Santhamma comes to Chennai from Kerala along with her parents with a lot of hope and aspirations of becoming a film star in search of one Mr. Kurup who had visited them in their house in Kerala and introduced himself as a person having contacts with people in the film industry. George has very intelligently employed the technique of flashback within flashback in the scene where Mr. Kurup visits the house of Lekha, interacts with all of them and provides instructions that they should reach the People's Lodge situated in Chennai to proceed further in the matter of Lekha making her career in the film industry. Upon reaching Chennai, the father starts inquiring about Mr. Kurup but fails to make any headway in locating the gentleman. Not quite happy with the tardy progress made by her husband, Lekha's mother, Vishalakshy (Subha) herself embarks on the attempt to locate Kurup. More than Lekha or her father, it is Vishalakshy who possesses a greater zeal that her daughter should become a film star and it is this desire of hers which makes her start searching for Kurup with renewed vigour after the failed attempt of her husband. Very

soon she meets Sahadevan, an actor, who had accompanied Kurup during one of the visits to their residence:

VISHALAKSHY. Good morning sir. Hope you recognise me. Some time back you had come to my house along with Kurup.

SAHADEVAN. Oh yes. Please pardon me. I could not recognise you immediately. Please be seated. Why did you come?

VISHALAKSHY. Kurup had told me that if we come to Madras (Chennai), he will help to get a chance to act in a film.

SAHADEVAN. Do you want to act at this age?

VISHALAKSHY. It is not for me. It is for my daughter Santhamma. Both she and her father are in the lodge. I came searching for Kurup. Where is he staying?

SAHADEVAN. You cannot go to the place where he is staying now.

VISHALAKSHY. Why is it so?

SAHADEVAN. He is not my close friend. Some time ago we had met by chance and he had forced me to accompany him when visiting your house. He is in jail now.

VISHALAKSHY. (Shockingly). In jail?

SAHADEVAN. He is an agent of a sex racket and was caught by the police.

VISHALAKSHY. Oh god!

SAHADEVAN. Anyway, good that you did not fall into his clutches.

VISHALAKSHY. What will we do now?

SAHADEVAN. Nothing to think. It is better you go back to your native place. (*Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback*)

In spite of being aware of these circumstances, Vishalakshy is somewhat hesitant to go back and expresses this thought of hers to Sahadevan who subsequently advises her to meet different directors in order to fulfill their ambition. In this endeavour of theirs, to gain entry into the world of cinema, they start experiencing the cruelties and exploitations which women face in the public sphere. This bold and candid approach of George in showing the plight of women who reach this mesmerising place called Kodambakkam, considered to be the Hollywood of South India, is remarkable.

Being unacquainted with the industry, they are unaware of the prevalent practices which calls for being a subservient woman at the disposition of the men in this field offering sexual favours to them. Even though Lekha, at the behest of her mother, does not succumb to these circumstantial pressures initially, but as time passes by, greed gets the better of the mother, and she offers little resistance when her daughter is made a part of the sex racket. Lekha and her mother meet different producers and directors in search of a role, but in spite of their best efforts they do not meet with any success. It is during one such meeting that they come across Paul Raj (Nedumudi Venu) who is working as an assistant director and this encounter with him becomes a turning point in Lekha's life.

Paul Raj is not as straightforward as he claims himself to be, but rather is a person with ulterior motives and this aspect of his has been very clearly portrayed by George in the association and interaction of Paul Raj with Lekha and her parents. He inveigles Lekha by giving her false hopes, mentioning to her that she will be the heroine of his next film and that they will tie the knot on the very day this film is released. The naive village

girl Lekha believing his words, gradually falls into his clutches and in due course of time he leads her to his room where she loses her virginity. He suggests that an aspiring young artist will become successful if there is a positive review about her in a film magazine and in order to proceed along these lines, he introduces Mr. Kottooran, the famous film journalist, to Santhamma and it is Kottooran who christens her Lekha. Next, Paul Raj arranges a rented house for them in Kodambakkam and explains to them that most women yearning to become an actress come and live here and following his instructions, Lekha and her family relocate to this new place from their lodge. Lekha's father starts feeling something fishy about this whole affair and he returns to his village whereas Lekha and her mother continue to live in Chennai. Just like many of the other women who stay in Kodambakkam cherishing the desire of becoming an actress some day, Lekha being no exception, starts earning money by becoming a prostitute.

The period spanning from March to August 1978 saw the rise of Lekha from an extra artist to that of a leading actress and it is during this same period that she gets to meet and interact with good people like Ansari (P.A. Lathif) who is a production manager and Pushpa, the cabaret dancer. It takes almost two years for Lekha to get a small but good and noticeable role in a film. This is another turning point in her life and slowly but steadily, with the help of Ansari who recommends her name to other producers, starts ascending the steps of glory, fame and success and very soon she gets a chance to act in a commercial film, that too as the heroine of Prem Sagar.

The period of her life from May to September 1980, which the viewers get to see in the last section of the film, brings about a significant change in her career as well as personal life. Just like her meeting with Ansari opens up a new chapter in her life, her

meeting with a renowned director of art films, Suresh Babu (Bharat Gopi), makes her reach new heights as far as her career goes and at the same time becomes the cause of her tragic death as far as her personal life is concerned. Through her bosom friend Pushpa, Lekha comes to know that Suresh Babu is interested in meeting her in connection with his next film. During her meeting with him, he mentions to her that he is fully aware of the initial hardships and lifestyle which a young woman striving to enter the film industry has to undergo and believes that since Lekha will not be an exception and would have endured similar trying circumstances, she will be a good fit as the heroine for his next film since its theme also runs on similar lines:

SURESH BABU. I have seen your photos, but have not seen you acting in any film. Do not feel sad, I do not watch Malayalam movies because they are not worth watching. Do you have any difference of opinion? I also make Malayalam movies, but different ones. I do not know whether you understand, leave it. Shall I order anything to drink?

LEKHA. No sir.

SURESH BABU. Alright. I am in need of an actress for a new movie which I am going to direct. I have already seen many but none of them are up to the mark. Then, I remembered you, Lekha. When I came to know that you are Pushpa's friend, I asked her to bring you to me. Yes okay. I like you. This face was there in my mind.

(Pushpa comes in between and asks him how is Lekha, Suresh Babu replies that she is apt. Pushpa conveys her best wishes to Lekha on being selected by Suresh Babu for his next film)

SURESH BABU. When did you reach Madras?

LEKHA. It is almost two years now.

SURESH BABU. Good. So you will have no difficulty in understanding the character in my film. I do not have to teach you what grief is. I know the initial period and life which women, who come to Madras aspiring to act in films, have to go through and I think you will not be an exception. (*Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback*)

When Lekha decides to act in the new film, her mother is not quite happy and she calls up Prem Sagar seeking his advice. However, Lekha decides that, irrespective of Prem Sagar's opinion, she is not going to budge from her decision and it is this instance which shows Lekha asserting her individuality and identity as an actor, for the first time.

The new settings, experiences and methods of direction attract Lekha and this novel exposure injects a new life into her. She goes ahead and puts her best foot forward when acting in Suresh Babu's film *Oru Vesayude Katha* and wins the national award for the best actress, adding a feather in her cap. During their stay in Ooty, in connection with the shooting of the film, they get to know each other better and this in turn strengthens the bond between Suresh Babu and Lekha. During one of their morning walks, he reveals that his marriage was a compromise and that his wife is not capable of understanding the mind of an artist. The apparent incompatibility between Suresh Babu and his wife, Lekha's admiration for his directorial skills, Suresh Babu's revelation to Lekha about the feeling of closeness towards her, all lead Lekha to a dreamy world where she starts thinking and feeling that Suresh Babu will be her saviour and protector from her monotonous and loveless life devoid of any identity. Her expectations are high and it is

quite likely that she does not need money from him, but as she reveals to Pushpa, she feels that he will be able to give her the love and affection which have been denied to her from her own kith and kin.

Lekha, leaving her house as well as her parents and carrying all her possessions with her, comes to stay with Suresh Babu. Considering him to be the person who will be able to pacify her mental turmoil, expresses her anxieties and fears to him guilelessly just like an innocent child does to its parents:

LEKHA. I used to see that particular dream on almost all the nights. A big hand with wings carries me and soars high in the sky. When I am flying in the midst of the clouds, I get to feel that I am weightless, I start feeling that I no longer need the hand which is carrying me and I break free from those shackles. Soon afterwards, like a piece of wood, I fall down and shatter into smithereens after hitting the rocks. Then, from these rocks thousands of hands rise, pound each other and I wake up hearing that sound. When I wake up, I feel suffocated and then cry a lot... (sobbing). Nobody has loved me. This is the first time I am experiencing what it is to be loved. Will you be with me always? My house is like hell. If I continue to stay there, I will become mad. I want to escape from there. Will you save me?

SURESH BABU. I will try. Let us see. (*Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback*)

Through the above dialogue, the director very clearly shows the degree of insecurity and confusion in Lekha's mind, to the audience.

Lekha's decision to come and stay with Suresh Babu can be construed as the assertion of her freedom and an escape from a life devoid of love, but Suresh Babu's reaction is not reciprocal, leaves him in a predicament, and in fact creates a sort of disarray and dilemma in his mind which becomes precariously suspended between the thought of being a married man on one hand and the thought of leading a live-in relationship with Lekha on the other. George's directorial skills once again come to the forefront in the scene where he ingeniously and lucidly presents this current conflicting mental state of Lekha and Suresh Babu, through an interview which both of them give to a group of journalists. The former faces the volley of questions pleasantly and remarks that they are a wedded couple, whereas the latter faces them with tension, confusion and anxiety writ large on the countenance and mentions about the existence of just an informal living arrangement where the two of them are living together as friends.

After Lekha comes and starts living with Suresh Babu, there is a marked change in his behaviour, attitudes and actions and he starts behaving like a conventional man with a traditional bent of mind. Lekha's future course of life culminating in her suicide can be considered as the direct fallout of Suresh Babu's hypocrisy:

(One morning his wife Geetha (Sarada) and her son reach the house where Suresh Babu and Lekha are staying. Lekha gets up from bed hearing the sound of the calling bell. She opens the door and sees a woman and a child).

GEETHA. Lekha?

LEKHA. Yes. Who are you?

GEETHA. I will tell you. Can I enter the house?

(They enter the house. The child looks around).

SON. Where is my father, mother?

GEETHA. He is here. It is not yet time for him to get up.

(Lekha understands who they are, keeps quiet and moves a few steps backwards).

GEETHA. Please stay there. You have understood who I am. Right?

(Lekha tries to go inside to call Suresh Babu).

GEETHA. Please stay there. Do not call him right now. He does not like to be woken up early. Meanwhile, I want to tell you something. We will sit down and talk. Please sit.

(Lekha continues to stand).

GEETHA. I know you will not be able to sit in front of me. Do not worry. There is no one who has never made a mistake. I know the drawbacks of an artist and I also know that I am not suitable to be his wife. But still, after marriage, a woman becomes a wife and if a man and his wife stay together, the wife will deliver a baby and become a mother. I am such a mother. I become weak when my son enquires about his father. You have not yet seen what life is. You have started acting by the time you got to know what life is. You have already lost your connection with reality.

(Suresh Babu enters).

SURESH BABU. Geetha, why did you come here?

GEETHA. Where else should I go?

(His son runs to him).

SON. Come father, we will go home.

SURESH BABU. I will come, son.

(Lekha goes inside followed by Suresh Babu. Then he gets ready and leaves for his home with his wife and son leaving Lekha all alone).

(Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback)

After some time Suresh Babu returns and the following dialogue ensues between them:

SURESH BABU. I thought you might have gone for the shooting. Why did you not go? Some of my files are here. (Lekha is sobbing. Suresh Babu comes near her bed and sits on a chair). You are a fool. I have to go with my wife and child when they come and call me. Right? Don't worry. I will come as and when I get time. You need not disclose this to anybody.

LEKHA. Only as per your convenience?

SURESH BABU. I have already told you that this is only an adjustment. It is your fault that you have taken it (this relationship) seriously.

LEKHA. Were you not serious?

SURESH BABU. See, I love you. But I cannot marry you leaving my wife. Marriage is a serious issue.

LEKHA. Then, I am no one to you. Right?

SURESH BABU. You...

LEKHA. Mistress. Right?

SURESH BABU. You call it whatever name you want. It is not possible for me to explain everything to you. You will not understand it. I will come on Sunday.

LEKHA. For what?

SURESH BABU. Should I not come? Then no need. I have not forced anyone to do anything. You did everything according to your wish. If you are feeling distressed now, you may go back home. According to me, I will consider this as an aborted adventure. Lekha, I don't have the time to be here. You think and take a decision. We will meet again.

(Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback)

Uttering these words, he leaves the house leaving Lekha in utter consternation. His attitude and reply, which is undoubtedly within the accepted social and familial norms, leaves Lekha in the doldrums without any place in his life. Deeply traumatised, unable to come to terms with the appalling predicament she has landed in and knowing fully well that she will be unable to secure a legitimate place in his life, she takes the extreme step and ends her life by committing suicide.

The dramatic turn of events serves as an eye-opener for Lekha and she starts realising how trivial her role is in Suresh Babu's life and also how trifling she is to him. All the high esteem and admiration which she has for him, crumbles within no time when his hypocritical attitude becomes evident and this makes her feel demeaned. Suresh Babu's action of turning his back on Lekha and rejoining his family, without a second thought or an iota of remorse, makes her conclude that the statements made by him during various interactions with her, mentioning that he is a different person, that he is a

lover of exotic places, that he perceives life differently and likes to live a different kind of life, that he is one who enjoys the freedom of an artist and finally that he is a person who does not want to compromise his life as an artist for his family, misrepresent his intentions, and were made with the sole objective of justifying his feigned emotions. George presents Suresh Babu, “as a pseudo intellectual without any individuality of his own and as a hypocrite who considers himself to be a great artist” (Venu 54) and through this character, the director has been very successful in explicating the nature of a specific category of men in the public sphere using the medium of cinema.

The next film which has been analysed in this chapter is *Mela* (1980), in which the director narrates the life story of a dwarf, and shows the crises and perplexities he faces and the manner in which he negotiates these circumstances.

Since time immemorial, the mind/body dichotomy has been a controversial area of interrogation and inquiry in several branches of knowledge including social sciences and René Descartes, in the seventeenth century, with his illustration that mind and body are really two different entities, propagated the concept of mind-body dualism. Descartes’ famous dictum, ‘I think therefore I am’ is considered to be one of the most important steps which distinguish the human mind and the human body and consider them to be two discrete and distinct things with independent existence. His theoretical and philosophical inquiries paid attention to the conceptualisation of mind which is endowed with the capability of thinking rationally and logically. Reading Descartes, whose notion of dualism shook the entire Western philosophical world, Ian Burkitt opines that, “people experience and understand themselves in two different ways: first, as bodies occupying a specific location in space and time, and, secondly, as persons or selves who are

associated with the processes of thinking” (8). Bodily changes do not affect the thinking process, but on the other hand, once the thinking ability of a person ceases due to some accident or any other cause, his body will be considered as a living dead body capable of doing nothing productive and this embodies the importance and superiority of the mind over the body. In his book *Meditations*, Descartes conceives body as:

But about the body itself, on the other hand, I had no doubts, but I thought I distinctly knew its nature, which, if I had attempted to describe how I conceived it in my mind, I would have explained as follows: by body I mean everything that is capable of being bounded by some shape, of existing in a definite place, of filling a space in such a way as to exclude the presence of any other body within it; of being perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste, or smell, and also of being moved in various ways, not indeed by itself, but by some other thing by which it is touched; for to have the power of moving itself, and also of perceiving by the senses or thinking, I judged could in no way belong to the nature of body; rather, I was puzzled by the fact that such capacities were found in certain bodies.

(19)

In his “Second Meditations”, he considers himself as a thinking subject and feels that, “I am, I exist, this is certain. But for how long? Certainly only for as long as I am thinking; for perhaps if I were to cease from all thinking it might also come to pass that I might immediately cease altogether to exist” (19).

A human body cannot be considered as a mere medium capable of giving a definite form and shape to a human being but rather it is embedded in a symbolic

structure having a far greater significance, where the meaning of the body can be interpreted as and ascribed to the functioning of psychological, social, political, gender, and power relations. In other words, a human body is not just mere flesh and blood, but rather can be a productive body, a communication body and a thinking body as the situation warrants, thereby making it a social and natural construct. “What will be explored here is the notion that the body is made active by social relations because it is brought into being and mobilized by its positioning in the interweaving networks of human interdependence” (Burkitt 7).

Till the twentieth century, the notion of mind as the seat of rational thinking was prevalent, especially in the branch of psychological cognitivism and studies had been focussing only on the rational thinking of the mind rather than the concept of the body and its role in the sociological and psychological studies had not been taken into account very seriously. Subsequently, there was a gargantuan effort put in by most of the social scientists to rework and reconstitute the Cartesian division of mind and body and as Ian Burkitt succinctly puts it, “the ‘mind’ is an effect of bodily action in the world and of becoming a person from the recognition of one's position in a diverse network of social relations” (12).

Being a social animal, human beings are constantly entwined in the flux of life which is progressing in a myriad of dimensions. The notion of humans possessing the capability of understanding through the use of thought, intelligence, and observation cannot be considered as existing a priori. Human beings cannot be excluded from social relations and according to Norbert Elias, “all the three basic coordinates of human life: the shaping and the position of the individual within the social structure, the social

structure itself and the relation of social human beings to events in the nonhuman world” (97) play, influence, and affect human life in multiple ways. In the ecosystem, of which *Homo sapiens* form an integral part, social relations are indeed heterogeneous, fragile and flexible and this is one of the factors responsible for the creation of new identities, anxieties and confusions in humans. The idea that human beings are a part of the society, automatically brings into the forefront that body is not only a biological but also a social phenomenon. Chris Shilling opines that, “the body is not only affected by social relations but forms a basis for and enters into the construction of social relations” (173). It is in this backdrop that I would like to contextualise the human body which is in a fluid state having a constant interaction with the social, political, and historical scenario prevalent at that point of time and to study how, “the mind can be reconceptualized as an emergent effect of a body active within the social, historical and biological dimensions of space and time” (Burkitt 15). During the past three centuries, the concept of body and that of the mind have been a subject matter of scrutiny and various view points regarding these concepts have been put forward by the literati. Descartes’ conception of human body as an automaton which is nothing more than mere flesh and blood and the mind as the instrument through which we identify ourselves has led many theoreticians in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences like Ilyankov, Foucault, Bhaktin to put forward their opinions about what the body meant to them.

The mind-body dualism in the Western philosophical tradition provides ample scope for perceiving the body in different ways, such as a body which is active, body as an object, and as a thinking body which considers the body as a subject. In fact, when we think of the body, it is relevant to understand how the grotesque medieval body has been

transmuted to the modern disciplined body. As far as the representation of body by Bakhtin is concerned, “the material body appears in exaggerated form, and can be linked to the festive world of giants, monsters, dwarfs and fools” (Burkitt 46). The grotesque image of the material body is construed to be a positive one and is not viewed as the body of a single person but rather as a universal body open to the world.

Gradually, during the late Renaissance period, the body became more privatised as well as individualised and all the drinking, eating, laughing, rejoicing, sexual life, and giving birth became confined to private chambers and rooms after losing their symbolic nature and significance which was evident during the carnivals. The eighteenth and nineteenth century with its pre-romanticism and romanticism tried to revive the grotesque body but in a different way that expressed a subjective and individualistic outlook of a man whose interior is emotive, “with hidden and unfathomable inner depths” (Burkitt 49) heralding the notion of the modern man where the body could be perceived as an object of the mind standing at a distance and the mind as one which is entrapped in this body. The thoughts in such a closed body were also restricted to more of a private space, thus leading to the formation of certain norms so that individuals may conduct themselves in the society. It is these norms, that enable the individual to regulate his/her behaviour and it is through various institutions like family, educational institutions, asylums, hospitals, prisons, and even one’s own culture, in a broader perspective, that this kind of normalisation takes place.

Discipline and Punish (1975) by Michel Foucault is one such significant work which describes his perceptions of the body. “One of Foucault’s major achievements has been his ability to isolate and conceptualize the way in which body has become an

essential component for the operation of power relations in modern society” (Dreyfus 112). Foucault defines bio-history as “the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another” (1:143) and here it is the body which serves as the vital connecting axis between life and history. The human body is formed in these movements of life and upon a scrutiny of this remark, one can interpret this to mean that there is a constant interrelationship between human life, other forms of life and the environment. Thus, in order to understand the nature of the body the study of bio-history becomes imperative and this further leads to the Mellor and Shilling’s concept which recognises the human body as a re-formed one shaped by the social influences of each generation. Bio-history does not approve the basic split between the mind and the body and this dualism gained wide popularity throughout the centuries only as a result of the power relations which existed in the society. According to Foucault, power is not something which can be possessed, held, obtained or lost but rather, it is an ever-changing relation and the concept of bio-power which he promulgates is nothing but a form of power which can be exercised on human bodies to regulate and discipline them, thus making them a kind of machine which is trained to do activities by rote (Burkitt 18). Thus, all the dichotomies which are found in the contemporary western philosophy like mind/body, private/public, spiritual/material, subject/object can be considered to be the outcome of this armoured and divided body:

According to Francis Barker, while the self becomes expressed in discourse, the body is excluded as an expressive being; instead, it becomes the object rather than the subject of discourse. Through those discourses, as Foucault suggested - discourses of medicine, of wealth and populations,

economics and sexuality - the body becomes regulated and disciplined, the subject of various relations of power. (Burkitt 58)

Another aspect which comes to light in the wake of modernity is the emergence of a closed body which emphasises on the body's surfaces, as opposed to the emphasis laid on the openings in the grotesque body and this closed body considers itself as a communicative body possessing the ability to simultaneously express and conceal itself. Among many other philosophers who have presented their theoretical and philosophical ruminations on the body as a thinking body and as an active body, Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu are quite noteworthy. It can be noted that a fusion of both ontological and epistemological realms can be obtained through an active body having the powers of transformation and such a body, which is entangled in the realm of power relations and interconnections in a society, is responsible for determining an individual's, identity, subjectivity, and sexuality.

Against this theoretical backdrop, the current section is an attempt to analyse, interpret and unravel the role of the male body in gender relations with a special emphasis on how this male body, a biologically constructed aspect, correlates with masculinity, a socially constructed aspect. Further this section probes into how the concept of normative masculinity is problematised in a highly power centric and dominating society.

Cultural, geographical, temporal and spatial aspects play a significant role in determining and delimiting the notion of masculinity. Invariably, masculinity is often perceived and associated with certain macho qualities like strength, courage, physique, rationality, practicality, and logic and as a corollary, it is taken for granted that

masculinity and the male body are intertwined. It is the physical features of the male body, which men flaunt, that often tend to endow them with a kind of power, hegemony and dominion over women. Also, the role of culture in ascribing meaning to the male body and the construction of the normative male body are so very relevant that, upon the deviation from normalcy, it leads to the generation of anxieties, confusions and an identity crisis in men.

Masculinity is not one unified and coherent attribute and the male body which is just one aspect of it, “appears to be the most natural element of masculinity: after all, almost all men have a penis, testicles, facial hair, an Adam's apple, a prostate, and the Y chromosome” (Reeser 91). Now the question arises as to how, irrespective of the above mentioned biological features, the male body can be considered to be an unstable, fluid, and constructive entity and to decipher what meaning(s) a male body can disseminate. The male body's masculinity and its ontological existence are not only determined by the fact that a body has a penis, but also its relationship with the culture in which it has been placed and hence it becomes very relevant to perceive the male body from the point of view of power, gender performativity and dialogic relationship.

According to Mosse, it is during the eighteenth and the nineteenth century that the notion of a new stereotypical masculinity emerged, got systematised in the wake of the modern age and considered the human body as important (5). The popularity of visual culture during the second half of the eighteenth century was responsible, to a major extent, for popularising the modern stereotypical masculine notion and, “Stereotyping meant that men and women were homogenized, considered not as individuals but as types. The fact that stereotyping depended upon unchanging mental images meant that

there was no room for individual variations” (6). Though the society and its structure vary from place to place, the male stereotype possesses certain features which are common to all societies. The notion of normative appearance and a certain advisable comportment are defined and men are supposed to possess these in order to be recognised as ideal men, irrespective of the society they live in. During the middle ages, chivalry and male honour were considered to be important as far as masculinity is concerned, however this undergoes a change during the modern age because the physical appearance and posture of a man also become quite important in establishing the masculine stereotype. As a consequence of this, physical appearance gains importance and the entire male body can be viewed as a source of virility, strength, and courage which are properly articulated through the physical appearance of a man. With reference to K. G. George’s film *Mela* (1980), this section tries to give a detailed account of how the body, especially the male body, has been treated in a different manner and where these perceptions lead us to.

Mela, a filmic adaptation of a story written by Sreedharan Chembadu, directed by K. G. George and produced by Siddarthan, Sydu Muhammad and Prabhakaran is a rare, unique and unparalleled film from the oeuvre of George’s films because he makes a real dwarf as the protagonist of the film and is in fact a perfect case in point for the study of masculinity since it highlights the negotiations of a man with dwarfism. The entire movie revolves around the events occurring in the life of the dwarf, Govindan (Raghu) and George in his autobiography opines that, “through the dwarf protagonist Raghu, the so far accepted heroic notions have been deconstructed and rewritten. *Mela* could portray the life and love of such people, who have been marginalised by the society in a different manner” (*Flashback* 59).

The film can be broadly divided into two parts, wherein the first part showcases his return to his native village, on leave, after almost twelve years and his marriage with a beautiful girl in the village whereas the second part concentrates on his return back to the circus troupe which is located in a city and the post-marital crisis which he experiences. The opening scene shows a close up of a board game and then a group of youngsters sitting in the verandah of a house playing the game which could be construed as an indicator showing the high level of unemployment of men prevalent in the society during that time. Subsequently, a postman comes with a telegram and inquires the house of Nani Amma. During the 1980s, telegrams served as a telecommunication mode to convey urgent messages especially that of death and when the postman comes to the village with a telegram, it triggers the inquisitiveness of the village folk. Finding it difficult to understand the location of Nani Amma's house as provided by the youngsters, the postman requests one of them, Balan (Srinivasan), to deliver the telegram to the recipient and with a little bit of hesitancy, the youngster accedes to the request. The genius of George is projected anew, since through this very simple incident he conveys a very profound philosophical truth that ultimately everyone is afraid of the debt to nature. To maintain the gravity of the current situation, the director employs an ingenious technique where he shows the viewers that, Balan, instead of handing over the telegram directly to Nani Amma, sends a boy to search for her and in the meantime, he himself starts making inquiries as to whether any of her kin is living in the city. Getting a response in the affirmative from a passerby who mentions that her son is working in a circus company in the city, he becomes almost certain that the worst has befallen her son Govindan. As soon as the information about the telegram reaches the ears of Nani Amma, she spontaneously

starts lamenting and here is where the director captures, to the benefit of the viewers, the innate simplicity of the village folk. Soon, one among the crowd acts logically and advises that Balan should read the telegram, however, language becomes an impediment and Balan and others in the group are unable to read the contents since the matter is written in English. Gopalan master becomes the natural choice of the group since he is conversant in English and as soon as he reads out the contents, the mood which had thus far been sombre, turns into one of jubilation within no time, when the contents reveal that Govindan is arriving on the coming Friday. In this manner, George, very skillfully, allows tension to ebb and flow among the viewers by leveraging the negative sentiments associated with a telegram.

Govindan becomes the talk of the village and in the next scene the director presents the information about him, to the audience, through the conversations, among the natives who have gathered in a teashop run by Aandi, that ruminate on what might be Govindan's present position. It is from these conversations among the villagers that the viewers are apprised of the fact that Govindan has left his native place almost twelve years back. The villagers hypothesise that Govindan might have earned a considerable amount of money by working in the circus company for all these years. In the midst of all this excitement, his arrival is keenly awaited.

Unlike a majority of the films, where the physical presence of the protagonist is revealed to the viewers in the beginning itself, here, the director uses a novel approach of indirectly introducing the central character initially and presenting him at a later stage. The camera focussing on a steel trunk with the name G. Vinde, circus artist, painted on

the right bottom of a black steel trunk, being carried by Nanu, a helper in Aandi's tea shop, foreshadows the arrival of the hero.

The naive villager Govindan returns to his village transformed into a perfect gentleman with an anglicised name, donning a two piece suit, wearing sunglasses, and carrying a radio in his hand. He gives an opportunity to the villagers to get a glimpse of some of the luxuries one can acquire by working and living in a city and within no time he becomes a reputable person in the village. As he walks through the road, the villagers are eager to meet this alluring young man possessing new gadgets, having an exposure to big cities, and who is superior to them in terms of money and in the meantime Aandi approaches him and starts a conversation with his old friend by offering him a cup of tea. As soon as Govindan reaches his house, he distributes toffees to all those who have gathered there to meet him, offers a cigarette to Balan, and gives a ten rupee tip to Nanu and all these actions of his make him the person that everyone talks about, within a short span of time. In an informal chat which happens at Aandi's tea shop, one of the villagers describes with awe, the number of things present in Govindan's trunk including the ten sovereign gold chain which he possesses. Gradually, Govindan earns the respect and affection of the majority of the villagers and he starts being considered as a saviour who has the potential to solve the problems of unemployment by recruiting men from the village to the circus.

The extent to which people love Govindan, the heroic aura about him in the minds of the villagers and his standing among the village folks are quite evident from the reception which he gets in Aandi's shop when he goes there in search of Nanu. Upon seeing Govindan, Aandi immediately rushes and offers a chair to him and soon after

makes him a cup of special tea. In the meantime, Balan and his other friends reach the tea shop and when Govindan offers this special tea to Balan, Aandi vehemently opposes this action of Govindan's saying that the cup of special tea is specially made for Govindan and as a reply, Balan mentions indignantly that this world is only a place for the rich and not for the poor. The reactions of a section of the society towards two individuals, Balan, who is a normally built man but with no job or earnings and Govindan who has a job and money, but does not possess normal masculine attributes are being very cleverly compared and contrasted by the director. There is a considerable contrast between the subjectivity of Govindan in the circus troupe and in his native village as can be observed from the fact that in the former place, he is considered to be just a clown whom people give little value or respect, whereas his position in the village is starkly different because of his wealth and exposure to different parts of the country.

As a responsible son, he gives new clothes to his mother and shows his photo album containing his photographs in the circus, which he considers as very precious, and explains his heroic deeds in each photo to his mother with passion. With affection, he tells her that she is the mother of master clown G. Vinde and that there is no need for her to do laundry for money anymore. Out of concern for her son, his mother asks him whether he is indulging in risky and dangerous activities in order to make the audience laugh, and to that he replies that his very appearance makes people laugh.

Govindan's affluence and mentality to help others are seen when he helps an old lady in the village with some money and also helps Sarada, Balan's sister, who comes to Govindan's house to borrow some money on the behest of her mother. Knowing that Govindan has the capacity to give money and also knowing that he will not refuse money

for a well deserving cause, the villagers, including Balan, approach Govindan for a donation for conducting the festival in the local temple, and Govindan readily obliges. These generous actions of his further raise his position in the villagers' mind. Govindan's heroism reaches its zenith when he starts capturing the attention of the villagers, including Balan, Nanu, and Aandi, by performing small magical tricks like creating a cigarette from smoke and by taking their photographs using his camera. "Govindan spends his vacation as a hero in his village. He roams around the village with his transistor radio, taking photos of the villagers and showing small magic to them" (Venu 31).

Contrary to the men folk, the women in the village are not very much impressed by Govindan and they are very reluctant to consider him as a hero and this attitude of women is explicitly shown in the scene where the women folk, who are washing clothes in the river make fun of him when Govindan goes to catch fish in the river with Nanu. The only exception is Ammini, who talks in favour of Govindan by commenting that there is nothing to laugh about him except that he is a bit short and this attitude of hers could be because she prefers wealth over looks. In the scene where Govindan takes the photos of Aandi, his wife, his daughter, and Nanu, the viewers get to see the difficulties which a short man has to face, in practical life, due to his short physique. Till this point of time, Govindan had never considered this aspect as a disadvantage for him, but he starts pondering about his physical stature when his mother, wishing to see her son getting married, moots the idea of marriage. Even though Govindan is a bit confused and reluctant to get married, his mother infuses confidence in him by citing an example from their own neighbourhood itself:

NANI AMMA. Do you know how old you are?

GOVINDAN. I forgot that.

NANI AMMA. You have crossed twenty seven.

GOVINDAN. I thought I would have crossed forty.

NANI AMMA. You consider whatever I tell as a joke. Please listen to what I say. There should be some one to cook and wash for you.

GOVINDAN. You are here for that. Right? And when you are not there, I will do it by myself.

NANI AMMA. Son, do you understand what I said?

GOVINDAN. Yes, I understood.

NANI AMMA. Then stop joking and tell me (consent for marriage).

GOVINDAN. Will any girl like to marry me?

NANI AMMA. Why not? Don't any short men get married? Do you know the well known goldsmith in Vadakkemuri? He is shorter than you. His wife is taller than him and they have four or five well built and normal children... There will be many girls ready to marry you.

(Mela)

Nani Amma informs Govindan that she has requested Ammini to find a suitable girl for him from the village itself. Ammini earnestly starts inquiring for a suitable alliance for Govindan and to begin with, she approaches Aandi and his wife to talk about this matter. Initially, they are not quite inclined to marry off their daughter to a dwarf, but Ammini persuades them saying that this is the best alliance their daughter Suhasini can get and this is the point in the film where the first traces of Govindan's masculinity being

questioned is visible. In the meantime, Govindan's meeting with Sarada in his house ignites a desire in him for her and he bribes Ammini to obtain Sarada's consent at any cost. At first, Sarada rejects the proposal, but later upon Ammini's persuasion, she concedes, and Govindan marries Sarada as per his yearning. Govindan's marriage with Sarada can be seen as an end of one phase and a turning point in his life.

George presents a new turn of events in the life of Govindan and Sarada after marriage when he takes her to the city and he also presents the various challenges which they encounter in their life and how these affect their personal life. Upon the arrival in the circus tent, the very first interaction of Govindan with one of the workers there shatters the heroic image of Govindan which Sarada has in her mind. Govindan calls one of the workers in the tent to help him carry his luggage, but the response of the person is very insulting and he does not obey Govindan's words. Here, it is shown that the male body of Govindan enters a different discourse and the dialogic relationship between the body and the surroundings creates a kind of confusion and dilemma in the mind of Sarada because she finds that the perception of a dwarf in the circus tent is very different from that in her village. As a part of the circus troupe, she experiences the wonders and excitement of circus life on the one hand, but also gets a taste of the varied nature of people, especially the virtues and vices of men, on the other. The only close friend of Govindan is Vijayan (Mammooty) and he is introduced to the viewers as a motorcycle rider in the circus, one of the jobs filled with perils and one which provides ample scope for the expression of masculinity in its complete sense.

The life of Sarada in the circus tent is entirely different from the one she was leading in the village and she slowly starts realising that Govindan is viewed as a comic

figure by the public. She also realises that there is a fundamental difference in the outlook towards Govindan in the village and in the city because in the village people looked at his money as well as possessions and considered him to be a heroic figure, whereas in the city, he is a small fish in a big pond due to which, the very same person is considered to be insignificant and incapable of doing much. Govindan's helplessness due to his short stature is explicitly shown in the scene when he is unable to protect himself and Sarada when they are attacked by two well built men while coming back from the market after buying utensils and provisions to cook in their tent. By chance, Vijayan happens to pass by that way and rescues them from these attackers. It is after this incident that Vijayan starts emerging as a hero in the mind of Sarada, one who has the capacity to perform dangerous acts as a part of his profession and as one who is capable of protecting herself and her husband. Because of this incident, Sarada starts perceiving masculinity in a different way, that it is not mere money or material wealth alone that makes a perfect man, but rather the capacity to protect is also quintessential. A dwarf is perceived by the society at large as a laughable character and the viewers get to see this aspect in the incident when Govindan, Sarada and Vijayan go to a hotel after watching a movie and when Govindan bumps into a waiter, both of them fall down and everyone present there, including Sarada and Vijayan, laugh at him. This hurts Govindan's sentiments and on that night Govindan and Sarada engage in the following dialogue:

GOVINDAN. Are you not well?

SARADA. I have no problem.

GOVINDAN. Then why are you not speaking anything?

SARADA. What is there to speak?

GOVINDAN. Did you like the film which we saw today?

SARADA. Don't mistake me if I tell you something. When you go out why can't you be careful? People are laughing at you when they see your actions.

GOVINDAN. Oh, people will laugh at my very sight and they will laugh more if something happens to me. Like others, you also laughed today. Right? It is nobody's fault. Saru, I don't feel anything when others laugh at me but when you laugh at me, I feel something. (*Mela*)

This, in fact, can be considered as the beginning of the confusions and troubles that engulf Govindan's life.

The life and the daily routine in the circus tent create a kind of boredom in Sarada which makes her lose interest in circus life and she starts talking to Vijayan very frequently whom she considers a good man to interact with. The presence of Vijayan in Govindan's tent, in the absence of Govindan, gives scope for people like Rameshan, the unscrupulous manager, to manipulate stories about Sarada and Vijayan and very soon, rumours about their relationship start floating in the circus tent. Rameshan along with his friends tease Govindan and this indirectly questions Govindan's capacity to lead a normal family life. Govindan starts suspecting that Sarada has a relationship with Vijayan and slowly starts feeling that she is getting separated from him. Govindan loses faith in his good friend Vijayan and his wife Sarada and gets the hunch that they are deceiving him, which in turn creates a lot of frustration in him. A gradual change is observed in Sarada's behaviour as well. She begins to experience a sort of awkwardness and hesitance to go out of the circus tent with Govindan because of his physique which she feels is

inadequate to save both of them in the event of an attack from mischief mongers and also because she does not want to face the mockery by the people any more.

A rude remark from his boss, which has a direct bearing on his body structure, makes Govindan feel very dejected and makes him realise the important role which the concept of a normal male body plays in the life of an individual in a society and this is explicit in the following scene. One day, when Govindan returns to his tent, he sees Vijayan coming out of it and when he enters it, he sees Sarada in tears. Upon asking the reason for her distress, she informs that Rameshan tried to misbehave with her and that Vijayan saved her. Govindan complains about Rameshan to his boss and when Rameshan is summoned by the boss, he presents an entirely different picture of the incident blaming Sarada and Vijayan for the misdeed. This leads to further problems in the tent and the boss summons Govindan to tell him that these types of issues have not been encountered by him so far in his tent. He further says that he had foreseen these issues the very moment Sarada reached the tent and remarks that events like marriages are suitable only for a normal man and will not work out in the case of people like Govindan, who is a dwarf.

In order to make life smooth and trouble free for all concerned, Vijayan decides to leave the circus company, but upon knowing his decision, Govindan objects and tells that instead of Vijayan, it is rather he who should quit and substantiates by telling that since there are enough clowns in the circus, his absence will not make any difference, whereas Vijayan is an important player who cannot be substituted so easily. The decision of Govindan to leave the circus is a symbolic one because he has decided to depart from this world and move on to another one where power relations and discrimination of any kind,

including that on the basis of body, does not exist. He requests Vijayan to come to the beach where they had gone together and enjoyed themselves during the beginning of their friendship. Govindan reaches there with Sarada and sees that Vijayan was already there waiting for them. Then Govindan asks Vijayan to explain the friendship existing between them to Sarada and he starts walking towards the cliff. A short while later, when Vijayan and Sarada see him standing on the cliff, Govindan waves his hand and jumps into the sea leaving this world forever. Govindan's decision to commit suicide can be read as his revenge on the whole world which fails to accommodate people like him in the mainstream of masculine notions. As far as Vijayan and Sarada are concerned, even if they decide to live together, they cannot do so peacefully because the suicide of Govindan will haunt them in their future life. Govindan's feeling that he and his body structure are not in accordance with the notion of stereotypical masculinity is the main cause of distress and doubt in his life and when he compares himself with others who possess a normal physical body, anxieties and confusions arise in him and he feels that he is marginalised. Thus, the concept and role of the body plays a vital role in the construction of masculinity and in the formation of social and gender relations, and failure to match with the stereotypical masculine body creates problems in men's life, Govindan being one such case in point.

In the light of the above mentioned films, a comparative investigation of the three main characters, Ayyappan, Suresh Babu and Govindan, stands as a testimony to the ingeniousness and originality of the directorial skills of George and in this way, he tries to cinematically deal with important and weighty questions pertaining to men and masculinities.

Chapter 5

Man and Madness

Among the many experiences which one lives through, the most tragic and terrifying is, undoubtedly, losing control of one's own mind because with this, the world in which one lives, starts being perceived in a completely different manner thereby forcing one to undertake distressing, discomforting, and somber journeys through the unknown and untrodden path to places bereft of any hope. Human beings are endowed with the unique capacity of getting acclimatised to and actualising living circumstances which they consider optimal, leading to a situation where both desirable and un-desirable outcomes emerge in the process. In these varied living conditions and the various situations in which their life progresses, experiencing a plethora of negative emotions including anger, stress, strain, and anxiety becomes inevitable, and the interplay of these, in different degrees, leads some persons to behave in a strange way which is not in conformity with the accepted societal norms. This abnormal behavioural pattern which can be called as a psychic disorder, in the broad sense of the term, has invariably caught the attention of clinical practitioners and it has also crept its way into the so-called themes in literary works.

Madness can be considered to be a type of psychic disorder and when it comes to talking about madness, irrespective of whether it is being referred to in the medical sense or in the literary sense, it is a dynamic term circumscribing a broad area of meanings and having scope for a wide range of interpretations irrespective of whether it is clinical or literary. Lillian Feder in his book *Madness in Literature* defines, "...madness as a state in which unconscious processes predominate over conscious ones to the extent that they

control them and determine perceptions of and responses to experience that, judged by prevailing standards of logical thought and relevant emotion, are confused and inappropriate” (5).

The scope of the present chapter is limited to the analysis of the concept of madness in works of art including literature in general and cinema in particular. Here, an attempt is made to map the trajectory of how madness which is being used as a theme in literary works started being used as a theme in cinema as well. When it is used in literature, madness can broadly have three connotations:

To date, literary madness has been used as a critical device in three ways:

1) the "mad" writer; 2) the "mad" characters of writers; and 3) the critical method by which psychological terms from the field of medical madness are applied to literary madness. Each approach has some validity in literary application, (Rieger 5)

The first viewpoint, which has been proposed by the writers like Plato, who belong to the classical period, perceives an artist as a ‘mad’ person whose creative genius can be primarily attributed to his or her madness; some of the prominent examples being Nathaniel Lee, Jonathan Swift, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, and Sylvia Plath.

The second characteristic presentation style in which madness is portrayed in literary works is through the creation of ‘mad’ characters by the writers themselves and this itself can be divided into three subtypes. The first subtype involves the creation of a scenario where the protagonist becomes mentally unstable in due course of time as the story progresses and this transition of the protagonist from normal to abnormal becomes food for thought as far as the writer is concerned and also provides him with an

opportunity to probe deep into the conditions which are responsible for this degradation of the character's mental state, a case in point being the character Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The second type of characters, created by the writers, are the ones who fail to adjust with the rules and norms of society which they feel are oppressive as well as suppressive and succumbing to these pressures, either become truly insane or else pretend to be one. Edgar in *King Lear* is a classic example of this type of a character who pretends to be insane. Characters of the third type, experience a kind of rootlessness, lack of identity and purpose in life which can be directly correlated with the interference and the influence of society on them resulting in a situation where they become somewhat alienated from the human community as in the case of Emma in *Madame Bovary*.

The third method in which madness can be represented in literary works is as follows:

Psychological terminology can be borrowed from Freud, Jung, Horney or other modern theorists, or may be from actual descriptions, such as those from the DSM-III categories. Literature and psychology are complementary disciplines, for each contributes to an understanding of personality. As such, studying the specialized topic of "madness in literature" might actually contribute to our knowledge of human behavior. (Rieger 9)

Many a time, madness is used as a device in the narrative structure, but as a matter of fact, its scope is not limited to that of simply being a narrative device because it possesses the wherewithal to probe deep into and touch upon various issues, be it social, psychological or the formation and conception of selfhood. Arts, including literature and

films employ the theme of madness because it serves as a tool to critique societal aspects in the context of the representation of man and woman, and in the context of reality and its constructs. Also, the representation of the behaviour and the working of the mental faculty of the mentally ill individuals, through the medium of varied forms of artistic creations, help the common folk, who normally do not get much chance to mingle with such sort of people, gain insight into these aspects. Thus, it becomes compelling to analyse the constitutive relation of art with madness, which culture has excluded as an abnormal pattern of behaviour, all this while.

Madness has been depicted in myths and legends since the ancient times and this serves as an indicator to the fact that man himself has been quite fascinated and involved in understanding the functioning of his own mind and his psychic experiences.

“The treatment of madness in literature reflects human ambivalence towards the mind itself; madness comprising its strangest manifestations, is also familiar, a fascinating and repellent exposure of the structures of dream and fantasy, of irrational fears and bizarre desires ordinarily hidden from the world and the conscious self” (Feder 4).

Madness being a complex area, involving the study of a group of interrelated ideas, a single theoretical exploration will not suffice, if one intends to understand its nuances and various dimensions. This is where a comprehensive approach, adopting psychoanalytical theories and the theories of Michel Foucault, is desirable so that justice will be done to the study. Michel Foucault is one of the prominent theorists who has made valuable and lasting contributions to the studies of mental illness, crime and punishment, the role of judiciary and other normalisation techniques to deal with abnormal people. In his seminal work, *History of Madness* (2006) gives a detailed

account of the concept of madness commencing from the ancient age onwards and in its introductory chapter, Jean Khalfa opines that:

When comparing the conceptions of madness prevailing in different civilisations, Foucault realised that there could be a history of madness itself, in other words that it was a ‘phenomenon of civilisation, as variable, as floating as any other phenomenon of culture’ and, as a consequence, that ‘curing the mad is not the only possible reaction to the phenomenon of madness’... Foucault does not look at madness from the point of view of the classical historian of a scientific discipline, here psychiatry, who would trace the development of a science from inchoate early notions towards its modern, rational state. Rather he is interested in decisions, limits and exclusions which took place at particular points in time and indicate shifts in the way certain phenomena were experienced. (xiv- xv)

In *History of Madness*, Foucault identifies three distinct periods and analyses the connection and relationship between madness and reason in each of these:

First, the Renaissance when the conversation between reason and madness which dominated in the Middle Ages is subtly transformed into a reflection on wisdom; then the radical separation of reason and madness in what he calls the Classical Age, that is, roughly, the seventeenth century and a large part of the eighteenth, when most of the social institutions of confinement are created – a period he calls tragic because it stages a contradiction without any hope of a reconciliation; and finally the modern experience of madness where madness is now perceived as factual or

positive, an object of science, as a disease or a series of diseases, a period which starts at the end of the eighteenth century and which, Foucault indicates, has already been transformed in some respects by a new, literary experience of madness, obvious in late romantic works (Nerval) and in some of the avant-garde of the twentieth century (Roussel, Artaud). (xv-xvi)

The period from 1800 till the present saw the psychiatric discourse becoming hegemonic and this has played a great role in defining and understanding the modern and postmodern self. Even though the terms madness and mental illness are akin to each other, conveying more or less the same idea, the latter term is commonly used because of its preferred usage in the branch of medicine called psychiatry which, instead of being solely concerned with curing the abnormal individual, also protects the society from the dangers meted out by these type of people.

In *Abnormal* (1999), Foucault traces, “the emergence of an abnormal individual in the nineteenth century” (Davidson xvii) and according to him the individual to be corrected, who has been placed within the framework of the family and the other institutions linked to it, is one of the basic figures that constitute the realm of the abnormal which is controlled and guided by the concept of power in the society (xx). Foucault, observes that it is possible for the juridical and psychiatric discourses to come together in order to establish a system of punishment as well as correction and he further speaks of a new power which is quite different from the psychiatric and judicial power; the power of normalisation which separates the crime from the criminal and the disease from the diseased (xix).

Film, even from its silent days in the 1920s, has proven to be an art form particularly suitable for handling intimate psychological subjects. It is a medium of observation, the almost clinical recording of human behavior, with every nuance of expression and gesture enhanced in the close-up. As a highly controlled flow of images, film is uniquely able to reflect the flux of mental and emotional experience. And madness, which raises basic questions about the nature of these experiences, has been a very popular subject for filmmakers. (Fleming and Manvell 49)

From the early stages of Malayalam cinema, the Malayalam film directors, have been successful in portraying social issues like identity crises, anxieties, dilemmas, and confusions using mentally aberrant male and female protagonists as tools and some of the prominent films woven around the central theme of madness are *Anantaram* (1987) and *Elipathayam* (1981) by Adoor, and *Thaniyavarthanam* (1987) by Sibi Malayil in which the male hero becomes a victim of mental illness of varying natures. In *Anantaram*, the protagonist Ajayan's (Asokan) reason for mental illness is the loneliness, isolation and rejection he experiences in his life which is compounded by the fact that he is an orphan. The lack of a mother's love in his childhood is the primary cause for his insecurity and aberration and he sees this love in his step brother's wife, but ultimately fails to distinguish between fact, fantasy, reality, and dream, making him a mental wreck. In *Elipathayam*, the protagonist Unni (Karamana Janardhanan) becomes a paranoiac due to his inability to cope up with the changing societal situations and at the end of the film he is left alone without any company except his paranoia. The film *Thaniyavarthanam* is based on the belief that a curse has befallen the hero's ancestral house, according to

which a male member of the family from each generation will become mad. Balan (Mammooty) is a school teacher who lives in a joint family leading a peaceful life. His uncle becomes mad and as soon as he dies, the question of whether Balan or his brother Gopi (Mukesh) will become the next victim of the curse, arises in the family. Even though Balan does not really become mad, he starts doubting himself because of the peculiar approach of the other people including his kith and kin towards him. Finally, unable to bear the thought of the consequences which her son will have to face if the society brands him as mentally unsound, his own mother poisons him to death. Some of the notable films in which women have been portrayed as insane are *Novemberinte Nashtam* (1982) and *Manichithrathazhu* (1993). The heroine of *Novemnerinte Nashtam* becomes demented when she is deceived by her lover whereas in *Manichitrathazhu*, Ganga (Sobhana) is portrayed as one having a dual personality after being possessed by the spirit of a deceased dancer.

Swapnadanam (1976) and *Irakal* (1985) are best rated films which form a part of George's filmic canon and the unique manner in which he has treated the theme of madness in these films is exceptionally noteworthy. *Swapnadanam* characterises the abnormal life, caused by the lack of love and sexuality, of the male protagonist.

Human beings tend to fall mentally ill and using psychoanalysis, propounded by Sigmund Freud, it is possible to decipher and diagnose the underlying psychiatric anomaly. He gives a detailed account of sexuality, neurosis and dream work in individuals, which in fact paves the way for many psychoanalysts to further probe deep into the unconscious mind and its manifestations in the conscious one. It is he, who postulates that the extensive range of human behaviours and actions can be clearly

explained through the mental processes and states which are hidden. This proposal indeed has provided an insight to the way in which neurotic symptoms as a behavioural pattern, like obsessive behaviour, slip of the tongue, and dreams, can be explained, which, for many centuries were thought of by practitioners and theorists as inexplicable. The normal state of mental health tends to get distorted when something upsets the happy state of mind, which can be due to a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, lack of sexuality and/or changes in the external world like the loss of a thing or that of a loved one and in some individuals, when the intensity of distortion exceeds the tolerance level, madness tends to manifest itself in him or her.

Sexuality is often regarded as a complex phenomenon involving powerful feelings that influence the social life and behavioural patterns of human beings. “One important feature of the present interest in sexuality is its linkage with a parallel concern with questions of family, kinship and household organization” (Hamilton viii). Sexuality plays a tangible and evident social role in moulding the private lives of human beings and since the time of Freud, it has been a central area of investigation and interrogation as far as psychoanalysis is concerned. The interpretation of Malayalam films from a psychological point of view, many a time, gives rise to questions on sexuality which becomes a prominent topic of interrogation, especially with the emergence of the notion of gender as a construct. In this background, I am making an attempt to analyse how the protagonist in *Swapnadanam* conducts himself in society with reference to Freud’s statement, “if the *vita sexualis* [sexual life] is normal, there can be no neurosis [medical term for mental disorder]” (Sharpe and Faulkner 37).

George's *Swapnadanam* is one of the best films in cinematic history which studies the working of the unconscious mind and how it gets manifested in the conscious mental faculty. Even though, on the face of it, the story line, which narrates the life of a recently married couple, seems to be quite simple, the theme and the narrative technique get more and more complicated as the film progresses. Upon a close analysis of the film, one can appreciate that this film actually deals with several layers of themes, the lack of harmony in the family life of a newly married couple, Gopinathan (Dr. Mohandas), a doctor by profession, and his wife Sumitra (Rani Chandra), the discordant life gradually leading to the unravelling of the protagonist's mind, happenings in his life and the way he negotiates with the reality in the end.

The film begins with a rather unusual scene where, "the back portion of a person's head lying on his stomach on a river bank, tightly grasping the grains of sand is shown. He raises his head slowly and is seen getting up with sand on his face. He stares at the deserted place around him for a moment and starts walking slowly." (Venu 16). Seeing this, undoubtedly, a curiosity tends to develop in the minds of the viewers as to who this person is, what has made him lie down on the sand and finally where is he walking to. The shot progresses from medium close up to a long shot where this person is shown walking insouciantly, apparently without any aim or destination and on the screen, the words mentioning that this man has disappeared from the northern district of Kerala on one morning in the month of September in 1974 appear. His whereabouts are unknown for a couple of weeks and suddenly he reappears in the city of Chennai. He is shown as a homeless man wandering through the streets of Chennai during day and spending the night sitting in the verandah of the closed shops by the roadside.

One day he reaches a hospital saying that he has stomach pain. Dr. Ramachandran examines him and does not notice anything wrong with his stomach. However, he feels that this man could be mentally deranged and refers this case to his psychiatrist colleague, Dr. Venu. The attending nurse briefs Dr. Venu that he has been admitted in the hospital for stomach pain and that he has not spoken anything about who he is or about his whereabouts for the past one week. Dr. Venu scrutinises his medical report and reads out his name as Parameswaran and it is from this instance that the viewers come to know that this man has got admitted in the hospital under this name. Dr. Venu asks him where he is coming from and even though his initial reaction is that of complete silence, after repeated interrogation he replies that he is from Ernakulam. The doctor probes further asking him how long he has been in Chennai and whether he is married or not. The patient replies quite disinterestedly that he reached Chennai several days back and that he is single.

In the next scene, the psychiatric ward, where Parameswaran is now admitted, is shown. He is now placed under the treatment of a senior doctor, Dr. Isaac Thomas who is Dr. Venu's superior. Dr. Isaac examines Parameswaran and as a part of the treatment, starts talking to him in a very friendly manner inquiring whether he likes this place and suggests that it will be better if he trims his overgrown hair. Subsequently Dr. Isaac discusses this case with Dr. Venu and the two doctors feel that some more observation and study are required for a couple of more days before they can decide on the future course of treatment. Dr. Isaac does not believe that what Parameswaran has told to be fully true and he also doubts Parameswaran's details as per the existing medical records in the hospital. Further, since there is no organic disorder in the patient, this case is more

complicated than expected in the view of these doctors. It is in this very same hospital that Parameswaran's past, his true identity, and the problems he faces in his life get disclosed to the viewers in a series of gripping scenes which form the heart of the movie *Swapnadanam*. Dr. Venu prescribes certain psychological tests and after the patient undergoes these tests, Dr. Isaac studies the report and concludes that Parameswaran is suffering from a mental ailment which is very much curable by analysing the past of the patient and this is precisely where the challenge lies because the hospital, by virtue of not knowing any of the patient's relatives, has to get the information about his past from the patient himself.

In the majority of films, a person who is thought to be or is mentally unsound is brought to the treatment centre or hospital for diagnosis and treatment only during the latter part of the film. However, with Georges's superb directorial skills, this film has been presented in a different way, in the sense that, the opening of the film itself shows the mentally unstable protagonist undergoing a course of treatment and the cause for his instability and the other aspects pertaining to him, all become known during the treatment procedure only. Another characteristic feature of this film is the realistic portrayal of the troubles which a mental patient has to undergo and the methods of treatments employed to cure a mental illness.

After mutual discussion, the doctors decide to conduct a narco analysis test on the patient in an attempt to find out about his past. A narco analysis test is conducted on a person who may have the tendency to suppress the truth when he is in a state of complete consciousness. The test involves asking a series of questions to the person after injecting a special chemical which makes the subject semi-conscious and relaxed. His responses

along with the questions posed are recorded and played back to him once the effect of the chemical wanes away after a pre-determined period of time. As the test gets underway, the first revelation which the patient makes is that his actual name is Gopinathan Nair. Next, Dr. Isaac asks him what his profession is and he replies that he is a doctor who practices in a place near Kollam. During this time, the audience is shown a stethoscope lying on a table. When the patient says something in response to the doctor's question, the viewers are simultaneously shown a relevant scene and in this manner the director makes sure that the viewers get to appreciate fully what the corresponding thoughts are in the mind of the psychiatric patient.

The doctor subsequently asks the patient about the location of his house and the doctor elicits a reply that his house is in Trivandrum and the viewers are shown a scene where the patient's mother is seen sitting in the portico of the house. The following question about his marriage can be construed to be the crucial one since it highlights the central problem of the protagonist and the director very precisely conveys the underlying issue to the audience with a single shot flashback:

(Gopi and Sumitra are in their bedroom. Gopi is about to leave the room.

Sumitra is standing in the room coving her nakedness using a blanket).

SUMITRA. (Angrily). Then go. Wherever you want you go.

(Gopi comes outside the room without looking at Sumitra).

(Swapnadanam)

Suspecting that Gopi's marriage is in the doldrums, the doctor determines that it would be prudent to deep probe this aspect of his life. Gopi, on his part, reveals to the

doctor that he is a married man and it is almost one year after his marriage. Dr. Isaac asks whether his married life was a happy one and he says:

GOPI. Happy, happy ... (In a confused and doubtful manner).

DOCTOR. Tell me, did you like this marriage

GOPI. Yes, but ... but... (*Swapnadanam*)

He continues, saying that his spouse, Sumitra, is his maternal uncle's daughter and that they tied the nuptial knot in December 1973.

George narrates the rest of Gopi's story through a flashback by taking the narrative account back in time. Gopi and Sumitra belong to two different strata of the society. On the one hand, Gopi is born and brought up in a poor family and in fact it is Sumitra's father who helps him financially to complete his education, whereas on the other hand, Sumitra's family background is starkly different and she has been born and brought up in the midst of wealth and luxury. Her father likes Gopi and it is already pre-decided that Gopi and Sumitra will be married. Apart from the social status, the mindsets of the newlyweds are also quite different. Gopi is an introvert and a workaholic, whereas Sumitra is a happy-go-lucky person accustomed to living a luxurious life in a city. It is in this situation that the marriage of Gopi and Sumitra takes place. The discordance between the husband and the wife, marred their married life right from the beginning itself and over time, instead of narrowing down, the gap widened so immensely that it led to Gopi losing his mental stability and becoming insane. The well thought of sequence of events carefully put in place, coupled with the world class directorial skills of George, makes the depiction so very realistic that this film deserves to be called a gem of a film and undoubtedly is a thought-provoking treat for the film viewers.

On the day following their marriage, Sumitra's family members and Gopi are seen sitting around the dining table having breakfast and talking to one another. During his conversation with Gopi, Sumitra's father mentions to him that he wants to gift him a car the following year and in the meantime he should learn car driving. It is possible that Gopi's father-in-law loves him and is offering this out of his genuine affection for his son-in-law, but be that as it may, Gopi pays scant attention to his words and is not interested in the conversation too. Looking at this instantaneous reaction of Gopi, it may not be wrong to think that such words are actually doing more harm than good as far as the relationship between Gopi and Sumitra goes, because it is highly plausible that these words are triggering an inferiority complex in the protagonist's mind. Not seeing his daughter at the dining table, her father calls her and asks whether she has become ready to go to her husband's house. Sumitra, knowing that Gopi's house, which is in a village, lacks the comforts she is used to, expresses her dislike by asking her father whether it is alright if she goes after two more days. Her father admonishes her and tells her that she must leave on that day itself because Gopi's mother is waiting for them.

The next scene shows Gopi and his wife travelling in a car to his house. The viewers get to read from Sumitra's explicit facial expression that she is not very happy to go to Gopi's house and probably does not want to stay there for a long time. After reaching his house, as if as an excuse to escape from his house, she asks him when they will go for their honeymoon. Gopi, for whom his mother and his work are more important than their honeymoon trip, somewhat disinterestedly tells her that he only has three days leave. His answer disappoints Sumitra, but in order to raise her spirits, he

informs her that after reaching his place of work, he will take her for a honeymoon trip and in the meantime will take her for a walk to a hilltop in his village.

With a lot of zeal, Gopi takes Sumitra to the hilltop, which he says, en route, was his favourite haunt during the times when he was free. As a matter of fact, this throws light on his character, that he is basically an introvert; a person who does not have many friends with whom he can share his feelings and anxieties, and a person who prefers to seclude himself. Sumitra, on the other hand, being one having a diametrically opposite nature, does not consider this walk in the lap of nature to be a romantic one and instead starts wondering why he is taking her there because she finds nothing interesting. On the hilltop he advises her to talk freely to everyone in the house, including his mother, without any inhibitions whatsoever. He says that there may be many things which she may not like, but it is in the best interest of both of them that she takes these things in stride so that all can lead a happy and peaceful life. He further goes on to mention that his mother loves her very much and that she has been eagerly waiting for this day of their marriage from the day of Sumitra's birth onwards. Sumitra responds that she is aware of all these aspects and that she has behaved as a responsible lady so far and it is in fact Gopi who seems to have forgotten everything; the latter remark being a subtle hint to remind Gopi about his love affair when he was in college. Sumitra does not approve of this love affair and looks at him with contempt for this action of his. Gopi confesses that he is a weak minded person and overcome by emotions, he was unable to reject the love shown towards him. This statement from Gopi himself indicates that unlike other men, he is not a very strong man. Finally, just before they begin returning back home from the hilltop Sumitra kisses Gopi on his forehead and this act of hers instills hope in the

viewers that everything will be alright and they will lead a happy married life. However, the story takes a twist at this juncture and Gopi's love affair which haunts him even after his marriage and Sumitra's persistent doubt about his extra marital relationship create havoc in their lives ending up in Gopi becoming mentally ill.

After a short stay for a few days in Gopi's house, the couple reaches the town where Gopi works. They directly go to Sumitra's college friend Rosie's (Mallika Sukumaran) house where they are planning to stay in the ground floor on rent. Rosie is working as a college lecturer, is unmarried and stays with her brother Mohan (M.G. Soman) in a palatial bungalow which is quite near Gopi's workplace. Sumitra is quite happy to meet Rosie and stay in her house. Rosie and her brother's life style is also a luxurious one and since both these young women are of the same wave length, Sumitra finds Rosie to be a good company for her. Rosie conveys to Sumitra that her father came the previous day and purchased a lot of vessels and furnishings for their new house, which he felt would be necessary for them to start their married life. Sumitra's father, being fully aware of the comforts in which his daughter has been brought up and becoming a bit concerned about whether she will face any difficulties in setting up her family, decides to send a servant Kalyani Amma (Prema Menon) within a week's time to help his daughter.

Life starts normally for Gopi and Sumitra and with Rosie around, Sumitra gets a kind of consolation and relief which she wants. Gopi, being a workaholic and unmindful of his young bride at home, starts concentrating more on his profession and spends most of the time with his patients. Being an extrovert and modern in her outlook, Sumitra has certain pre-conceived notions about how her life as well as husband should be and the

fact that Gopi is not raising up to her expectations coupled with the monotonous life which she is being subjected to, becomes a cause for her frustration which soon gets the better of her.

In due course of time, Sumitra once again reminds her husband about their honeymoon trip to Kovalam for which she has been waiting so very eagerly. Gopi, being a more realistic person and one who understands the value of money, asks her whether there is really a need to undertake this trip. Finally, Gopi, in order to satisfy Sumitra, agrees, and both of them go to Kovalam for their honeymoon. But, unfortunately, the trip to Kovalam does not turn out to be as happy as it should have been. Gopi's disinterest annoys Sumitra and since they had not done any pre-planning like booking a room and the like, they end up spending time searching for a good hotel. Sumitra starts blaming Gopi for not booking the hotel room early and by the time they find a suitable hotel room, Sumitra loses her interest in this whole affair. She thinks Gopi's laziness is because of the lack of love towards her, she assumes that he has come for this honeymoon trip just to fulfill some responsibility of his and finally she vents out her frustration by saying that he still loves the earlier woman who had come in his life and that his love for Sumitra is merely superficial:

(Inside the hotel room).

GOPI. What are you thinking?

SUMITRA. We will go back tomorrow itself.

GOPI. Why? It was you who were so adamant. (That we come for this honeymoon trip).

SUMITRA. Gopi is not interested (in this honeymoon trip). Right?

GOPI. Your interest is my interest.

SUMITRA. You talk like this just to make me happy. I know that. This is like taking a revenge on me. It is because of me that you did not get what you had desired. A revenge for that.

GOPI. See, taking revenge is not in my blood. I do not hurt anybody intentionally. If there is any drawback in my behaviour, do not take it seriously. And, do not think that I cannot love you because I loved someone else during my college days. (*Swapnadanam*)

The viewers get to see that on the seashore, Sumitra is walking and Gopi is just mechanically following her. From this, it becomes quite clear that both of them are in their own individual worlds. After a short time, Gopi lies down on the sand and starts dreaming of his lover and in the following shot, Sumitra is seen sitting alone watching the playful waves of the ocean. Sumitra's doubt, sadness and confusion keep her aloof mentally from Gopi and their stay in Kovalam is not at all a happy one. In this scene, George delineates how separated they are mentally, even though they are together physically. In the hotel room, Gopi consumes alcoholic drinks and even though Sumitra does not specifically dislike people who drink, she feels appalled because she gets the feeling that Gopi is trying to escape from her by drinking. Though Gopi yearns to be a father, Sumitra does not plan to have children immediately and this becomes another serious bone of contention in the life of this young couple. Subsequent to this trip, explicit changes in the mindset of Gopi are noticed. He starts dreaming about his college lover constantly and gradually he starts losing control over his mind.

One day Sumitra's father pays a visit to their house and Sumitra becomes very happy. She complains to her father that Gopi has no interest in going out anywhere even for shopping. Her father, who is fully aware of the earning capacity of his son-in-law and his daughter's nature, puts two and two together and assuming that Gopi's reluctance to go out with Sumitra is financial distress, asks Gopi whether he needs any financial assistance. This offer hurts Gopi's self respect and pride and he rejects the offer outright mentioning that he has enough money to support his family. Gradually, in order to escape from the monotony, Sumitra starts spending time with Rosie and Mohan playing cards and going out more and more with them. She starts neglecting her husband and instead delegates the maid, Kalyani Amma to serve Gopi. Gopi starts withdrawing more and more which is quite evident during the party hosted by Mohan celebrating his business achievement. Along with Gopi and Sumitra, the engineer Mr. Menon and his wife are all invited on this occasion. As the party progresses, Mohan compels Sumitra to consume alcohol. Gopi, completely lost in oblivion and unmindful of the happenings simply dozes off and does not even make any attempt to prevent Mohan and it is Rosie who stops Mohan from forcing Sumitra to have drinks. His mannerisms and actions are all clear pointers to the reliable generality that he is completely disinterested to be a part of this company.

The rift between Gopi and his wife further deepens when his mother comes on a sojourn to their house during the time when Kalyani Amma is away on leave for ten days. Gopi, a fatherless child, has been brought up by his mother with complete dedication and care and he also reciprocates by being an obedient and very much attached son. For him, there is no body else in whom he could confide because he always felt that his mother

was the only person who was capable of understanding things from his perspective. It is solely for his mother's happiness and to ensure that the words given by his mother to his uncle are not broken, that he marries Sumitra. During the night, Gopi spends time with his mother, talking and catching up on all the happenings in his village. Sumitra, with nothing much to contribute to this conversation between a mother and her son, gets bored very soon and says that she is feeling sleepy. Gopi asks her to retire for the day and he continues the tête-à-tête with his mother.

Gopi's mother notices that Sumitra is not showing the kind of love and affection which a wife would normally show to her husband, sees that Gopi is deliberately trying to avoid his wife by coming home late and in short she senses that their family life is not so smooth as it should be. In an attempt to straighten out the affairs in her son's home, she coaxes her daughter-in-law to take care of Gopi by serving him good and tasty food and assures her that once she starts doing so, he will automatically start coming home on time. His mother enquires whether Sumitra is in the family way and Gopi replies that she does not want to be a mother soon and hence is taking tablets to prevent pregnancy:

MOTHER. The very moment I entered, I could feel that there is something lacking in this house. Tell me the truth; have both of you been truly loving each other?

GOPI. That is just a feeling in your mind.

MOTHER. It is not a mere feeling. You may talk something while keeping something else in your mind, but your mother has the capacity to understand what is there in your mind even though you do not tell it explicitly. But she will not understand that. She was born and brought

up in different circumstances. You should adjust accordingly.

(Swapnadanam)

She also advises her son to forget everything about the past including his love affair in the college with Kamalam (Sonia Isaac Thomas) because she feels that Gopi is not able to love Sumitra because of his love for Kamalam. With a dual objective of consoling her son and substantiating her earlier statement, she informs him that Kamalam has got a job and is now well settled in Madras (Present day Chennai). Sumitra sees a marked change in Gopi's behaviour when his mother is around and Sumitra starts getting a feeling that her husband accords more importance and priority in his life to his mother rather than his wife. She conveys this feeling of hers to Gopi frankly and overhearing this conversation of theirs, Gopi's mother, feeling that it is not right to continue staying in her son's house, decides to leave.

Without any reconciliation in sight, Sumitra leaves Gopi and goes to her father's house after the incident where both of them quarrel and Gopi leaves the house and returns late at night in an inebriated condition. During every quarrel, be it petty or otherwise, Sumitra keeps mentioning about Gopi's earlier relationship with another woman. This, without any doubt, affects his psychological well-being, because even if he wants to forget the episode, he is unable to do so, with every reference made by Sumitra triggering a fresh wave of thoughts in his mental faculty. This is an error which Sumitra keeps committing time and again, and even though she feels that this action of hers will help improve the relationship between the couple, it has an exactly opposite effect and instead of improving, the relationship keeps deteriorating.

Due to a worsening mental state, Gopi's dependency on alcoholic drinks goes up significantly and also he starts dreaming more frequently. There is a marked change in the nature of his dreams as well. Earlier his dreams were about his lover, but now he starts seeing more dangerous and fearful dreams like Sumitra's dead body lying in a mortuary and Sumitra attempting suicide by jumping into the sea. Besieged by negative thoughts and emotions, Gopi now starts doubting Sumitra's relation with Mohan.

After two days, Sumitra's father brings Sumitra back to Gopi and feeling that there is something which is disturbing his son-in-law, enquires whether Gopi has any financial problem and Gopi replies that there is no such problem. Her father also mentions that he requires a break from his work and advises that they go to Kanyakumari for a week to rejuvenate themselves. However, Gopi is in no mood to hear to her father and replying that he is not in a position to take any leave, goes away from the room.

In the night after drinking more than usual, he falls asleep and in the middle of the night is haunted by a terrible nightmare. Shell-shocked, he gets up crying and Sumitra, who is sleeping in the next room, rushes to his side to console him. He apologetically tells her that he has no grudge against her whatsoever but only pure and unadulterated love and that he feels guilty whenever he sees her. He confesses to her that his mind gets out of his control and however hard he tries to bring it back into control, it slips off. For a brief time period he feels that everything has become alright and both Gopi and Sumitra become very happy, but regrettably, it turns out to be an illusion in Gopi's failing mental health. One night when the man and wife are in bed, Gopi receives a telephone call, shortly after midnight, from the hospital and even though Sumitra tries her level best to prevent him from going at such an odd hour of the night, Gopi does not heed to what his

wife says and putting duty before family, proceeds to his workplace. Thoroughly upset with this sort of behaviour, neither Sumitra opens the door for him, nor does she allow Kalyani Amma to do so, when he returns back. Gopi becomes a shattered soul and decides to leave his family and home for good and on that very same fateful night, he leaves the place riding his scooter without any destination in mind and finally falls on the seashore. He gets up and walks through the sand, staring at the waves pounding the shore and then ebbing. Subsequently, he becomes a victim of hallucination and sees all his near and dear ones including Sumitra, her father, his mother, Rosie, Mohan, and others wearing a black robe approaching him slowly as if to engulf him. Unable to bear the trauma, he falls on his stomach with his face buried in sand. This is exactly the scene which is shown to the viewers at the opening of the film and George, using his superb directorial skills completes the full circle so skillfully using flashback.

With Gopi narrating his past in detail, the whole picture becomes crystal clear to the doctors and they deduce that the whole purpose of Gopi reaching Madras (present day Chennai) is to pursue his dream of meeting his beloved Kamalam. Further, Dr. Venu tells Dr. Isaac that he very well knows the woman whom Gopi loved and that it is none other than his own wife. Dr. Venu breaks this news to Kamalam and informs her that it is doubtful whether Gopi will identify her at this point of time, because now he is Parameswaran who is hiding all his painful past in a shell and only if he is successful in coming out of that shell, will he become the normal Gopi. Dr. Venu feels that it will be now reasonable to focus on how to make Gopi forget his past, come out of his self made shell and become his normal self once again. He takes Kamalam to Dr. Isaac and here Kamalam divulges all that happened in their college days.

George presents the story of the love relationship between Gopi and Kamalam through Kamalam's flashback. Gopi is an introvert and a studious student. Kamalam and Gopi are friends and soon their friendship blossoms into love. When Gopi discloses his love affair to his mother, she reproves it and reminds him of their obligation. George's directorial and script writing genius comes to the forefront in the following dialogue where Gopi expresses his genuine and passionate love to his sweetheart in very powerful overtones:

KAMALAM. How is your mother?

GOPI. Fine. I informed mother about you.

KAMALAM. What did she say?

GOPI. When your letter came, she asked whose letter was it. Then I told her about you. After that I felt like there was no need of mentioning about you to her.

KAMALAM. Why?

GOPI. She scolded me a lot and cried a lot. At last she told that I am a thankless person ...

KAMALAM. I feel guilty.

GOPI. I should feel guilty. I have tortured you knowingly.

KAMALAM. I am going.

GOPI. We will talk something else.

KAMALAM. If there is nothing to expect, then why talk?

GOPI. See, the most meaningful moments in my life, which I felt, are the moments when you sit near me and if I lose that ... (*Swapnadanam*)

Knowing that Gopi is deeply in love with Kamalam, Gopi's mother comes to meet her and requests her to move away from Gopi's life. Kamalam, a very much cultured girl, heeds to the request and parts way with Gopi. Gopi too, never bothers her again and their love relationship thus ends. Dr. Isaac, after carefully evaluating all the known facts, pronounces that Gopi changing his identity and becoming Parameswaran is a kind of escapism in order to get away from the torturous and unbearable family life existing in reality. It is not uncommon that weak minded persons like Gopi choose this route in order to deal with and overcome their existential crisis. He further says that even though outwardly Gopi has donned the garb of Parameswaran, inwardly, in his heart of hearts, Kamalam still exists and that is specifically the reason why he has reached Madras.

Once Kamalam concludes her narration, Dr. Isaac summons Gopi to his chamber. At the first instance, Gopi is unable to identify Kamalam and seeing this, the doctor, in order to stimulate his cognition, hands over an old photograph to Gopi. Gopi stares at the photograph for sometime and then all of a sudden the old faces including his mother's, Sumitra's and her father's come to his mind and he regains normalcy.

In the next scene, the viewers get to see Sumitra's father bringing Gopi to his house. Gopi's mother, Sumitra, and Kalyani Amma are all there waiting for him and as soon as Gopi's mother sees him, she asks him with concern as to what happened to him and where has he been all these days. Gopi does not utter a single word in reply to any of these questions asked by his mother and instead proceeds to enter his house. Just before entering, he sees his scooter parked in front, gazes at it for a few moments, and then unexpectedly, to the surprise of everyone present, starts it and rides away.

The main reasons for the instability of his mind are the love for his lover Kamalam, the discordant relationship with his wife, and his complete obedience to his mother. In his conscious mind he is trying to love Sumitra but in his unconscious mind he still loves Kamalam. He is haunted by the thought of discarding Kamalam for the sake of his mother and his indebtedness to his uncle, Sumitra's father. He may not have become mentally ill if Sumitra had tried to understand him and if she had been a bit more patient, loving, and caring, things would have been different. We can see that it is Sumitra who behaves violently and arrogantly to Gopi. The lack of sexual love, happiness, and satisfaction, as in Freudian terms, make Gopi mentally ill.

Even though in both *Irakal* and *Swapnadanam*, the plot of the film is woven around the theme of madness, upon a close examination, one gets to see that there is a considerable difference between them, as the former is a cinematic representation of the state of criminal madness in the protagonist, whereas the latter is not. Historical testimony shows that the tendency to perpetrate acts of a criminal nature is directly connected with the deviant condition of the mind and that is why the demarcation between madness and crime is obscure making the existent relationship between the two quite complex. It has been quite common in early Hollywood films to depict those with criminal tendencies as physically grotesque in the form of monsters, but with the dawn of the twentieth century, this approach changed and the criminal acts of the protagonist, the tortured and confused individual who resorts to crime in order to negotiate his position in the society as well as the meaning of his existence, were being explained using psychological tools.

Crimes committed by an individual can be broadly classified into violent and non-violent crimes and in *Irakal*, the protagonist is shown as a psychopath committing violent crimes. It is quite difficult to give a precise definition for the term, 'violence' because its meaning changes with contexts and the people involved:

We must also recognize that everyone perceives and understands violence in their own way, based on their individual history and the context of their current life. Many people only use the term in reference to physical acts of aggression and harm, while others include emotional or psychological acts as well. For some, violence refers solely to human-perpetrated acts, while for others it includes other destructive natural forces such as tornadoes, storms, earthquakes, and hurricanes. (Alvarez and Bachman 6)

Generally it is considered that an act of violence is a result of behavioural problems and abnormal intentions. However, in order to understand its nuances an in depth probe of the mind of the perpetrator should be attempted so that it becomes possible to understand the various conflicting tendencies therein. "Violence, then, can be regarded as both intersubjective and context-dependent - as the behavioral bridge that inexorably links two or more people, but whose meaning and significance may vary both within and between subjects" (Hatty 53).

Power, strength, force, authority, and violence are key words in relevant branches of knowledge and are interrelated as well as associated with one another in the sense that it is possible, with a clever interplay of these words, to depict the ways and means by which one human being or a group of them rule others. Hanna Arendt in *On Violence* explicates the significance of these key words, explains the instrumental character of

violence, associates violence with strength and uses the means-end analytical approach to elucidate the various means of performing a certain act of violence and also the culmination of this act (4). Though Arendt uses the term violence in a politically loaded context and in the war front the usage of this approach is not limited to war only and it is very well possible to extrapolate this to the area of gender studies as well.

Violence, power, gender, identity and masculinity are often considered to be closely associated with each other and in this context, some of the relevant catechisms which intrigue a researcher include, how are violence and gender associated with each other, why do men commit acts of violence, why is it important to focus on men committing acts of violence, and what are the different types of violence. In contemporary gender studies, when talking about men and masculinities, it becomes imperative to focus and explore these aspects in order to analyse how men deploy violence as a tool to express their troubled self and also to understand the ramifications of such violent acts. Many times, it is taken for granted that the prevailing patriarchal society and the hierarchical superiority which men are conferred upon therein, automatically bestow upon them a certain degree of power to exercise their control over others, which in certain cases, leads them to commit acts of violence that could be in various forms and there are many theories which explore as well as investigate this relationship between violence and masculinity.

The earlier comprehension about the self, its surroundings, society, and in a broader sense about the world was greatly shaped by principles of the enlightenment fabric of the eighteenth century. The enlightenment principles consider human beings to be a modern self having the ability to think and use reasoning power, thereby creating an

autonomous, stable, independent and coherent self. Reason is often associated with masculine subjectivity and anything that deviates from it, be it in the form of madness or confused thought is considered to be deviant from the hetero normal masculinity. Many theoreticians like Hobbes and Freud argue that reason emerge from a masculine self only. “The modern self is concerned with the preservation of autonomy not only as a personal goal, but also as a manifestation of the self’s allegiance to the order-imposing, self-determining spirit of modernity” (Hatty 10).

With the emergence of postmodernism, the autonomous self loses its centrality and its independent nature, gets placed in a state of flux and undergoes continuous change, thereby getting constructed, deconstructed, and finally reconstructed. This situation necessitates positioning masculine subjectivity at the centre of inquiry, thereby speaking about the relationship between violence and masculinity which cause men resorting to violent acts by asserting their power springing from their identity crisis in the postmodern era. In this scenario, it becomes quite relevant to understand and analyse violence in the post modern world and the influences which the ideological state apparatuses like school, family, and religion have on the individual, with a special emphasis on social, political, historical, and cultural aspects and also from a gendered perspective, thereby going beyond the scope of examining the interrelationship existing between violence and the individual self. The above thoughts about violence in multifarious contexts clearly indicate that violence is not one dimensional and unilateral, but is multidimensional in nature making it all the more important. Many times, violence plays a significant role in determining the inter and intra personal relationships existing in

the lives of people and is represented in mass media as one of the major themes, film being one such media which represents violence in its varied forms.

The Malayalam film *Irakal* by K. G. George is a rare and complex film in the sense that it amalgamates three serious issues, madness, crime, and violence in one single film, very brilliantly. In this film, the protagonist is a violent psychopath who kills people and due to this reason, *Irakal* is considered to be a slasher movie which is in itself a subgenre of horror films. K. B. Venu observes that, “The director is analysing the violent mind of a Malayali through the perspective of a young man who understands the language of violence only” (71).

Unlike George’s *Swapnadanam*, Adoor’s *Anantaram* and Sibi Malayil’s *Thaniyavarthanam*, this film portrays criminal madness using the tool of violence. George’s craftsmanship is amply visible in the way he very adeptly and brilliantly uses the same theme of madness in two different manners in his films *Swapnadanam* and *Irakal*; the former portraying madness as a mental aberration and the latter portraying madness with a criminal mindset.

In *Irakal*, through the story of a rich Christian rubber baron Mathews (Tilakan) and his family living in the Travancore region, the director shows the reasons which make the protagonists exhibit various degrees of violence in their private and public lives. Upon probing deeper, one gets to fathom that this film is actually a deep analysis of the psychology of men. The protagonist Palakunnel Baby (Ganesh Kumar) and the other male characters committing acts of violence can be interpreted as negotiating their own identity crisis in the public and private domains and the viewers get to see that this film is

a combination of varied acts of violence, each having different intensities and performed by different characters.

The superb directorial skills of George once again come to the forefront as seen from the fact that the director has been able to convey the idea, of how violence can be used to depict the identity crisis of an individual, vociferously with substantial gravity, but at the same time without depicting any apparent bloodshed which one gets to see in war films or other horror films, and this is one of the aspects which makes this film unprecedented. In many of the films which use violence as their theme, this form of abuse is commonly associated with men who use it as a strategy to let loose their power over the weak, however George uses violence very differently and uniquely in the sense that in this film the very same theme is employed to depict the crisis of a teenager, who, in his later years goes on to become a psychopath.

The mise-en-scene in the beginning sets the tone for the film which begins with a scene showing Baby sitting in a room engulfed in darkness preparing for ragging the new comers to the hostel. He makes a hangman's noose with a red nylon rope and ties it around his waist, then he pierces his finger with a compass letting blood ooze out from his finger, puts a bloody dot in the centre of the forehead on a photo hanging on the wall and after all these actions leaves the room.

Baby is the leader of a gang of students and these seniors wake up the juniors of one room in the hostel, take them to the play ground in front and begin ragging them. The juniors are first asked by Baby and his friends to unclothe themselves and any of them who show even the slightest resistance are forced by the seniors to obey their orders. One of the juniors, Gopan does not act in accordance with the orders of the senior boys and he

refuses to get up from bed and go outside for the ragging session at midnight. This catches the attention of Baby and Baby starts talking to Gopan in a rough manner. One of Baby's friends intervene and try to convince Gopan that during this ragging period these are normal activities in the college hostel and that he should become a part of it instead of trying to oppose it. Next, all these juniors are asked to drink a bitter liquid which the seniors call as *Kaipuneeru* (bitter liquid) which is actually urine. The juniors refuse to consume this and when Gopan prevents the seniors including Baby from exercising their authority, a commotion ensues which finally wakes up the warden of the hostel. The warden's interference helps all the juniors but one, to escape from this menace of ragging. Baby, unable to come to terms with the fact that a junior had the audacity to oppose him, catches hold of Gopan, drags him to a nearby place and almost murders him by strangling him with the very noose which he had fabricated. He does not stop there and goes ahead to make a scar on the nearly dead body's face and puts the body under a tap of running water so that water can fall on the face. This extreme act of violence clearly shows that an instinctively criminal mentality of an alarming degree is present in the mind of the teenager, and the director, through these well thought of sequence of events, in the name of ragging and the unusual manner of preparing for it, makes the audience get a feel of the protagonist's mind which is infested with sadism, barbarism, and ruthlessness in aggressive proportions.

In order to pacify the heightened emotions of the viewers, the next scene captures nature's pristine glory by showing beautiful greenery on the following day's morning when Baby, concerned about the repercussions of his attempted homicidal actions of the previous night, is seen in a bus en route to his home. Baby reaches his house by afternoon

and then the viewers are introduced to Baby's father, Mathews (Thilakan), a well known rich man in his place, an arrogant and authoritarian estate owner and a family man who exercises control over the entire family comprising of his wife, three sons, and a daughter. Anian Pillai (Innocent) helps him in account related matters whereas his two elder sons Koshy (P. C. George) and Sunny (Sukumaran) help him take care of his estates. Baby is his third son and his daughter is Annie (Srividya) who is married off to a respectable person, Andrews (Nedumudi Venu). When Baby reaches home, Mathews is seen talking to Anian Pillai about his business related matters and upon seeing Baby he casually asks him why he has come home, to which his son replies disinterestedly that there is no class in the college. The sitting posture of Mathews and the tone of his voice show the power as well as authority he commands in his house and without paying much heed to his son's reply, he continues his business discussion. The manner in which Mathews negotiates with the representatives of labour unions and lays down the labour issue to rest by bribing the leaders of the proletariat clearly portrays the weight of his authority and his ability to use the power of money to quash the voices of anyone who stands against him.

Baby's mother Achamma (Salma George) is presented as a conventional homemaker, who, with the typical motherly affection serves him lunch and in fact she is the first person to notice the bruises on her son's right hand which have occurred due to the strife the previous night. When Baby meets his sister-in-law, Roseline (Kannur Sreelatha), he inquires about his elder brother Sunny and she replies that he has gone to one of their estates to sort out a labour problem. Baby, who is quite indifferent as far as these matters are concerned, retreats to his room.

His eldest son Koshy is also an arrogant person just like Mathews. Even though Sunny is a drunkard, he is the only son of Mathews who is presented as a caring and affectionate person, desiring to lead a peaceful life unlike his father and elder brother who will not hesitate to go to any extent or adopt any means in order to accumulate wealth. He, knowing Baby's character very well is not ready to believe that there is a strike in the college and suspects that his younger brother has returned home after creating some problem in the college.

George presents Baby as a confused teenager having several vices like smoking and consuming drugs. He loves Nirmala (Radha), a girl living near his house and goes to meet her. When she asks why he has returned back home within one week of going to college, he answers that he has brutally beaten a student and the college has placed him under suspension. The director very ingeniously brings out the protagonist's attitude towards education and also his inherent violent nature in the conversation with his girlfriend where Baby is shown as saying that he feels there is no use in him studying and that he is doing so just because his father has secured a seat for him in the college by paying money. His innate violent nature becomes quite evident from his comment that he will murder whosoever comes to marry her when she informs him that her mother has started searching for a suitable marriage alliance for her. Unaware of his criminal tendencies, she takes this comment of his lightly. With nothing else to do, Baby simply idles away his time roaming around the whole day and coming back home only at night.

Baby's grandfather, a bedridden man, is looked after by the male servant Unnooni (Mohan Jose) and nobody, including his own son Mathews, pays any attention to the old man. Throughout the film the grandfather is seen uttering lines from the Bible,

but nobody has any time to listen to him and they all continue with their misdeeds. Baby is the only person who shows some sympathy towards his grandfather and spends some time with him. Baby is thoroughly dissatisfied with the conditions prevailing in his family and he expresses this to his grandfather by mentioning that in this house everyone is busy doing their own work and nobody has the time to even talk to one another. It is quite possible that this sort of circumstances prevailing in the family has affected the teenager mentally, which could be one of the reasons for his criminal tendencies.

Mathews' attitude that using his money and power he can hush up any matter is evident from the incident where he bribes the police man who comes inquiring about the ragging case in which Baby is involved. Even though Baby does not spill the beans, the news of his suspension because of being involved in a ragging incident appears in the newspaper the following day. Sunny sees this and lets all the other family members know this real reason of what has made Baby return home in the middle of the college session.

Very much upset with this development, Mathews calls his eldest son Koshy to discuss this matter with him. Even though Mathews reprimands Baby for indulging in such activities, he makes all efforts to save him and asks him why he did not inform this on the previous day itself so that something could have been done to prevent the police from filing the case. Baby replies, rather emotionlessly, that there is no use in telling all this to them. Without wasting any further time, Mathews immediately directs Sunny to call up the minister so that he can do the needful to efface all the proofs in this case. Mathews is more concerned about protecting his name and fame rather than correcting his son's wrong deeds and that is why he accords such a high priority to this matter. Mathews' arrogant demeanour towards the police officer who comes to his house in

search of Baby once again shows his scant respect for the rules and laws of the land and he wants things to be done only the way he desires. Not only that Mathews speaks very rudely and harshly, Koshy even tries to physically assault the police officer and it is in fact Sunny who intervenes and stops the duo from misbehaving with the public servant. Subsequently, Mathews meets the police officer in his guest house and covers up the whole issue by paying him a bribe of twenty five thousand rupees. The police officer advises Mathews not to send his son to the college immediately and then the father and his two elder sons decide that Baby need not continue his studies. Koshy opines that Baby can be given the responsibility of any one of the estates and may be get him married so that there will be a change in his character. Sunny disagrees with this idea and Mathews says that Baby is not grown up enough to take charge of any of the estates. This again shows Mathews' authority over his family and that he has the final say in all matters. The cardinal of the church who also happens to be Achamma's brother, after reading the news about Baby in the local newspaper, comes to Mathews house and advises that he and his sons should desist from doing wrong deeds. But, Mathews, blinded by arrogance, brushes off his advice saying that as such there is no problem in the Palakunnel family and that everyone is leading a peaceful life.

Without any freedom and independence in his own house, Sunny starts feeling suffocated by the dominion of his father and expresses his desire to Koshy that he would like to part ways and start his own business in the city. Koshy says that he does not feel his father would let Sunny go after giving him his share, all the more because there are plenty of business opportunities existing here itself. But Sunny is of a different nature and says that drugs as well as timber business is not his cup of tea. Basically, Sunny is

portrayed as a good person, but the fact that he has nothing to do except going to the estates as and when instructed by his father makes him feel very frustrated and as time passes by this frustration makes him increase his dependence on alcohol.

Quite worried about her youngest son, Achamma takes Baby to the church and they meet the cardinal. This particular scene is a well structured one and it throws light on the present mental condition of Baby. From the conversation ensuing between the cardinal and Baby, it becomes amply clear that the latter's life is totally out of gear because he does not love anybody and even expresses doubt as to whether God loves him or not. He is totally in a perplexed state and neither sees any worth in living nor the purpose of living:

CARDINAL. Son, I am not talking to you as a cardinal. You are my nephew. Do you know that when my sister cries in front of me, I too feel sad like any other brother? With great expectations, they have sent you to study. Do not make your parents sad. Don't you love them?

BABY. No.

(Achamma is crying).

CARDINAL. Achamma, please sit there for sometime.

(Cardinal gets up, comes near Baby and sits next to him).

CARDINAL. Son, there are some things that are disturbing you. Tell me frankly what they are. Why did you say that you do not love your father and mother?

BABY. Nobody loves anybody else in that house. I too do not love anyone.

CARDINAL. Why do you feel so?

BABY. How can I answer that? That is how I feel.

CARDINAL. If nobody else loves you, God loves you.

BABY. I am not sure about that also.

CARDINAL. Do you pray?

BABY. No.

CARDINAL. There is no shortage of anything in your house.

BABY. Everything is in abundance.

CARDINAL. (Getting up). Yes, nothing should be in abundance. (*Irakal*)

After this conversation, the cardinal addresses Achamma and says that there is some mistake in the way the children have been brought up by them. He says that proper care, love and affection should be given to children during their formative stages. Only the cardinal and Baby's grandfather identify that the fundamental problem in Palakunnel house is the lack of love and ultimately it is precisely this reason which leads Baby to become a psychopath.

Other than his girlfriend Nirmala, the only other person with whom Baby interacts normally is his friend Raghavan (Asokan) who works in the rubber estate. During one of his meetings with Raghavan, Baby starts talking to him in an abnormal manner and remarks that the rubber sap oozing out from the rubber tree is red in colour just like human blood. Raghavan dismisses his remark as a bout of hallucination due to the drugs which he had just consumed, but in reality it is the abnormal criminal mind of Baby rearing its ugly head.

Another aspect in Baby's family that affects him is his sister Annie's life and her misconduct. Baby finds the illegitimate relationship between Annie and Unnooni, which no one else in the house is aware of, quite disappointing and finds it difficult to digest the lies which Annie keeps saying about her husband Andrews. Andrews hails from a middle class family, is a government employee and is an ordinary man who lives life according to the accepted social rules. He finds it difficult to adjust with Annie's habit of roaming around with friends as well as her drinking habits and he unequivocally voices out his opinion saying that in our society there is a limit for the freedom a woman can exercise. He specifically dislikes his wife going out with a lady named Thara Nair, whom Annie calls as her friend, but he feels is a prostitute. She quarrels with Andrews very often and then comes to her father's home and seeing this action of hers, Sunny sarcastically remarks that every three months Annie comes home for ten days.

Fed up with his wife's behaviour, Andrews comes to Mathews' residence along with Annie and informs Mathews that he is going to divorce her. Even though Mathews asks Andrews to come inside the house so that they can talk about this matter, Andrews is not willing to do so and he maintains that he does not want to live with a woman who is not morally sound. Without even bothering to ascertain the truth about Andrews' allegations, Mathews refuses to believe that his daughter would have committed any misdeeds and threatens him with dire consequences if he proceeds to file a divorce petition.

The second half of the film focusses on how Baby graduates to become a full-fledged psychopath, the various murders committed by him and finally how he himself gets murdered at the hands of his own father. Baby's mental depression, lack of goal in

life, and the totalitarian approach of his father and brothers make him demented, and manifest themselves in variegated emotional and psychological ailments, eventually making him a murderer. One of the important scenes which shows Baby's present mental state is the one where he picks up a gun kept in his father's room and points it at his father himself when he was asleep and at this point it becomes quite clear to the viewers that Baby's condition has deteriorated to such a deplorable condition that a son no longer considers his own father to be one.

Baby starts dreaming of killing Annie, but ends up killing the servant Unnooni with whom Annie has an illegal relationship and this is the first in the series of murders which Baby commits. He comes to know that Nirmala is going to get married to a shop owner, Balan and subsequently starts dreaming of killing her. Ultimately he murders Balan inside his shop and after killing Balan, he starts crying which shows the perplexity prevailing in his mind. In a bid to mislead the investigating authorities, Baby removes the money, wrist watch and a gold ring from Balan's dead body and throws it into the river after tying them in a handkerchief. He believes that by doing so, the police will be misled into believing that the intention of the murder is robbery and in this process he will not figure in the list of suspects since it is a known fact that he is from a well-to-do family. Nirmala is quite certain that Baby is the culprit and mentions this to him during her subsequent meeting with him.

Day by day, Baby's mental health condition deteriorates and no one in the family is able to identify his psychotic attitude. Soon, he reaches the verge of becoming a complete lunatic with an ever growing tendency to murder people around him. Raghavan tells Baby that he is going to marry Nirmala and soon after that, the latter makes an

attempt to murder the former. Luckily, Raghavan escapes from the murderer's clutches and when he dislodges the face mask he finds Baby's face behind it. He lodges a complaint in the police station and the police officer comes to Palakunnel house in search of Baby. Upon questioning about the whereabouts of Baby on the previous night, Mathews emphatically declares to the police officer that Baby was very much present at home only. The father summons Baby through Roseline, but is unable to find him in his room. Mathews informs the police officer that he will send Baby to the police station as soon as he comes back home. After the officer leaves, Mathews asks Roseline whether Baby was there at home the previous night and she replies that Baby had reached home very late in the night and that when she had asked him where he had been all this while, he had said that that he had gone to kill someone. After hearing Roseline, Mathews becomes a bit confused and he calls Koshy. Meanwhile Baby hides in the outhouse and he cuts his vein in the hand with a knife and sits there till night. After it becomes sufficiently dark, he moves towards his house and sees Mathews sitting and Koshy walking in the sit out, both in a pensive mood. Koshy sees Baby and calls him but without answering anything, Baby fires at Mathews. Mathews escapes the bullet and goes inside his house and a fight ensues between Koshy and Baby in which the former receives a bullet injury. In the meantime, Mathews returns with his gun and fires at Baby, thus putting an end to the life of his own son.

An analysis of *Irakal* presents three different types of men in the film. Mathews and Koshy, who belong to the first type, are the ones who are ready to do anything and everything for their welfare and progress without the slightest concern of whether it is legal or not. Through out the movie, Mathews is presented as a dictator who has built up

his own empire by hook or by crook and he finds no regret in the ways and methods he has adopted to reach this position. His pride, prejudice and lack of faith in religious beliefs are clearly highlighted in the conversation with the cardinal who comes to meet Mathews and his family and hopes to correct the Palakunnel family with his advice. Koshy is the obedient son of Mathews who follows the same path of his father. He is also involved in illegal business and does not hesitate in resorting to physical brutality in order to get his work done. Sunny, on the other hand, is quite different from Mathews and Koshy and he doesn't possess the domineering nature of his father and brother. He belongs to the second type of men depicted in the film. Venu opines that, "Sunny, unable to adjust with the overbearing nature of his father and brother, lives as a drunkard in a prison which has been created by his autocratic father" (71).

Baby can be seen as having inherited the aggressive nature of Mathews and Koshy and the self torturing and escapist nature of Sunny, and this deadly combination of several negative virtues makes him a completely shattered self gradually and by the end of the film, a psychopath, with violent tendencies as his only possession. He represents the third type of men in the film.

There is a striking similarity between the families of Mammachan in *Adaminte Variyellu* and Mathews. For Mammachan, just like Mathews, making money is the highest priority in life leaving him in a situation where he has no time to spend with his son and daughter and there is a high probability that Tony also will end up in a similar situation like Baby due to similar familial conditions.

As usual, in his own distinctive style, George gives a unique to both these films. In *Swapnadanam*, each and every viewer, depending on his mental makeup, is given the

option to draw his own interpretation to the ending. The pessimists may infer the protagonist riding away his scooter without uttering a single word at the time of reunion, to be symbolic of his escape from the arduous family life so that he does not face the risk of going mad again. Whereas for the optimists, this very same action of the protagonist could indicate his desire to enter the lap of nature for a short while in order to forget all the past, get rejuvenated in its freshness and then return home to start a new life with Sumitra afresh. In *Irakal*, the film concludes with Baby's father killing Baby, thus denying Baby the scope for a treatment and thereby the cure for his mental aberration, unlike the hero of *Swapnadanam*.

Chapter 6

Man and Society

Theoreticians in the field of men and masculinity studies, opine that masculinity is not a homogenous category but rather a combination of different practices which vary as the contexts and circumstances change. Along with the concept of hegemonic masculinity, other types of masculinities come to the forefront when contextualising masculinity in the matrices of power and gender relations.

The next two films, K. G. George's *Ulkadal* (1978) and *Kolangal* (1981), which have been chosen for this research are different from the earlier ones in the sense that the earlier ones focussed on masculinity in the familial and/or work place settings, whereas these two films give a scope for understanding the concept of masculinity when placed in a broader frame of reference moving from the closed context of the family and/or work place to a broader context having the college campus and the village as the centres of action respectively.

Ulkadal is one of George's masterpieces where the campus love of the 1970s is very exquisitely and flawlessly interwoven with the main theme of the film which is the weirdly normal life of the protagonist Rahulan (Venu Nagavalli). The film is the journey through the protagonist's emotionally disturbed life and sublimely reveals the anxieties, aspirations, and confusions in the mind of a young man coming out of college after master's degree at the threshold of starting a new chapter in his life. In a nutshell, the film in general explicates the existential crisis of men during the decade, focusses on themes of contemporary relevance like love in the college campus, religious fundamentalism, and unemployment and the impact of these on masculinity. Unlike the usual

representation of men as aggressive, violent and sexually harassing, this hero Rahulan is a very mild person who is always represented as being immersed in his own invisible inner world of thoughts.

Most of the studies on men and masculinities associate as well as view masculinity and patriarchy as overlapping and congruent to each other and perceive them to be united together because of the existence of the notion that patriarchy represents the predominant form of masculinity and that the hierarchical form of patriarchy is created by masculinity. This film by George is somewhat iconoclastic in the sense that it is trying to portray the idea that, “men can enact non-patriarchal masculine subjectivities and thus break the real and implied nexus between men, a normative model of masculinity and patriarchal dominance” (Pease 9).

In the traditional perspective, man’s paid work bestows upon him a certain status, position, power, and identity and he has been identified as the one who steps out to become the breadwinner for his household. In this frame of reference, the concept of paid employment plays an important role in a man’s life and its absence poses a threat to the conventional conception of masculine identity because it is seen as an anomalous force in the discourse where heteronormativity prevails. George’s *Ulkadal* very thoughtfully showcases the relevance of paid work in the instance where Rahulan, in spite of being one from an affluent family, strives to be employed soon after his higher studies.

After the success of *Swapnadanam*, George directed a series of films which did not become hits and he wanted to direct a film entirely different from his previous ones. In his autobiography, George describes the events which eventually led to the birth of this movie. “We (George and Lathif) stopped the vehicle in Kottayam and got out of the

vehicle. There was a book exhibition going on by the road side. While going through the books in the exhibition, we came across a book, *Ulkadal* penned by George Oonakkoor. It was an interesting read” (George, *Flashback* 57). During the remaining leg of his travel, George read the entire story and discussed it with Lathif. When they met the producer, K. J. Thomas, George narrated the story of *Ulkadal* to the producer which was accepted by him immediately without any hesitation. This movie turned out to be a resounding success, which can be predominantly attributed to the novel treatment of the theme amalgamated with the world class directorial skills of George.

The film, which can broadly be divided into two sections on the basis of Rahulan’s life, begins with Rahulan returning back home after the completion of his graduation. Upon reaching his home and seeing that his father is sitting in front of the house talking to some people, he does not confront him directly, but enters the house through another entrance instead, and meets his mother first. It is his mother who takes him to his father and the way he presents himself in front of his father with folded hands and the way he talks to his father shows his fear coupled with respect towards his father. He belongs to an upper class family and in stark contrast to the nature of his father who is a dominant as well as an authoritative figure in the family, Rahulan is depicted as a very quiet and submissive son who is always in a state of confusion and perplexity, not quite sure of himself and his dealings:

MOTHER. Rahulan has come.

FATHER. Ok. How was the exam? Will you get a first class?

RAHULAN. (Standing with folded hands) I have written it. I will pass.

FATHER. What is the use of just passing without a first class?

MOTHER. He will get a first class. (*Ulkadal*)

Without having anything much to do, Rahulan roams around his native village and goes to the river bank where he reminisces about his childhood sweetheart, Tulsi whom he loved dearly. The memories about her make him quite disturbed and in the beginning of the movie itself the viewers get a feel of the extent to which his love for her torments him. The transition from Rahulan's present to his past is so very mellifluous that this flashback brings to the forefront the kind of direction which George is acclaimed for. The present melancholy of Rahulan is contrasted with his happy and cheerful childhood days, especially the days he spends with his girlfriend. Memories of how she awakens him to pluck flowers during the Onam season, how he teases her on the river bank and the instances when he visits her house, all haunt him. Her very presence used to give him consolation and her absence makes him a sullen soul.

The reasons as to why thoughts about the deceased Tulsi pain Rahulan are not made amply evident to the viewers, but it is through Rahulan's memories that the viewers come to know about the existence of such a person in his life. One day, Rahulan's mother informs him that Tulsi's house, which had been lying vacant after Tulsi and her mother's death, has been purchased by them and it was being demolished that day. This triggers a fresh wave of memories in his mind and Rahulan goes to that house and recollects his last visit which he had undertaken during one of his vacations from college. When he had gone there to meet Tulsi, her sister who was morally not sound had misbehaved with Rahulan and when Tulsi witnessed this, she reprimanded her sibling for her misbehaviour. Rahulan, on his part had become flabbergasted as well as embarrassed on such a move by Tulsi's sister and he had left the place without uttering a word. In the

very next scene, the viewers get to see Rahulan going back to the college after the vacation and on the way he sees Tulsi who asks him how he can go without bidding farewell to her and the following conversation transpires between them:

TULSI. You are going. Right? That too without telling me? Alas!

RAHULAN. I came to see you Tulsi.

TULSI. And then you got to see whom you desired to see! I did not expect this from you, Rahulan.

RAHULAN. If I had known that this is the condition of your house I would not have come. (*Ulkadal*)

After this flashback, the next scene is one in which the demolition of the house is shown and subsequently the viewers get to see Rahulan overhearing a conversation among the workers in which they talk about the death of Tulsi. Having shown two scenes full of sepulchral overtones, the director sets the stage for the next scene which shows Rahulan singing a poem which talks about his beloved who no longer has an earthly presence. One of the reasons for the sadness writ large on his face and the gloominess obsessing him may perhaps be plausibly attributed to his feeling of guilt that the cause of Tulsi's suicide might be because of his rejecting her.

After the declaration of the results, his father calls him and tells him that he has secured a first class, but neither happiness nor joy is seen on his face after hearing this, but rather his face remains to be filled with indifference and confusion as before. Another instance where Rahulan's submissiveness, confusion, and lack of determination comes to the forefront is when his father gives an unequivocal peremptory order that Rahulan

should pursue his higher studies by joining Master of Arts Rahulan keeps quiet initially and only when his father prompts him for the second time, he conveys his consent.

The following scene is another song sequence in which the audience get to see Rahulan singing a poem which explicitly conveys his lost love and after the conclusion of the poem, Rahulan sitting on a chair in his hostel room writing something and his roommate coming along with his friends to get acquainted with Rahulan. The director does a good job of expressing how Rahulan reconciles when he feels unloved. His roommate introduces himself as Jayasankar (Jagathi) and mentions to Rahulan that his hobby is collecting love letters. As soon as he sees a white paper with something scribbled on it, he snatches it from Rahulan's hand with the hope that it is a love letter, but his facial expression changes from that of hope to disappointment after he reads it and then he remarks that Rahulan is a poet. This is in fact the first instance where the viewers get to know that Rahulan possesses poetic abilities as well.

Rahulan's college life does not turn out to be as lonely as his life in his village and home, especially because he gets a bosom companion Davis (Ratheesh) and it is his friendship with Davis that creates a turning point in his life. As days pass by, Rahulan gets acquainted with Davis' sister Reena (Sobha) which later on blossoms into a love relationship thus making the love theme in *Ulkadal* evergreen in the history of Malayalam films.

George very skillfully idealises and embellishes the romance in *Ulkadal* by flipping the cliché of the romantic film genre. Unlike the usual, where the love between the hero and the heroine develop during their meetings in parks, coffee shops and the

like, the love relationship between Rahulan and Reena develops in quite an unusual way and even their meeting places are unconventional.

George has very carefully and aesthetically directed the scene where Rahulan and Reena meet in the library. Rahulan is shown sitting in the library, reading his poem titled *Ulkadal*, which has been published in a magazine and in the meantime, Reena comes and congratulates him:

REENA. Congratulations. I haven't read such a beautiful poem till now. It is full of very powerful words which captivates the mind. (She sits on a chair, reads a magazine and asks Rahulan). Shall I ask you one thing? What is the reason for this sadness? It is very much highlighted in this poem? (She notices Rahulan's silence). I have come looking for my brother.

RAHULAN. Davis has gone from here early. (*Ulkadal*)

One gets to see that Rahulan is quite reluctant to talk to Reena and the conversation initiated by Reena remains a monologue most of the time. Rahulan's silence makes Reena realise that his mind is in a confused and perplexed state and in order not to vex him further, she takes his leave, stating a fine excuse that she has come to the library in search of her brother Davis which is actually a deliberate misstatement.

One of the disparate features of this film is that unlike an archetypal hero present in a majority of films, the protagonist in this one is portrayed to be a very unassuming character. However, over a period of time, he starts gaining popularity both in and out of college, albeit at a slow pace. After reading Rahulan's poem, Davis' father expresses a desire to his son that he would like to meet this budding poet and in order to satisfy his

father's wish, Davis comes to invite Rahulan to his house on one Sunday morning.

Rahulan's visit to Davis' house enables Rahulan to get to know more about Davis and Reena's life and the viewers also, from this scene, get a feel of the rather contrasting inherent natures of both Rahulan and Davis. Davis is a very open, frank and happy-go-lucky kind of a person. He aspires to study medicine but does not get through the qualifying exam and he also does not have enough marks to pursue his masters in any science subject, which is his next choice. Left with no other option, he joins Master of Arts which is actually not his cup of tea. He also considers college life to be an escape from his father's persuasion to manage their shop selling God's photos. Davis belongs to a Christian fundamentalist household where most of his uncles and aunts are either priests or nuns and his father is also a very conventional person as well as a theist to the core. Davis considers Rahulan to be a true friend with whom he can share everything.

During the course of Rahulan's conversation with Davis' father, at one point, Davis' father asks Reena to show her paintings to Rahulan, and even though she is a bit hesitant in doing so, she takes Rahulan through her paintings. This opportunity makes Rahulan get to know more about Reena, ignites a romantic spark in him and starts painting the canvas of his life with the colours of Reena's love. The love between Reena and Rahulan develops deeply and garners the applause of platonic lovers. Both of them being lonely souls, Rahulan finds solace in writing poems whereas Reena tries to conquer her loneliness through paintings.

Meanwhile Rahulan's exams get over and it becomes time for him to leave college and go back home. The very thought of getting separated from Rahulan is unbearable for Reena and she shares her confusions and fears with him. However,

Rahulan does not reciprocate and replies only after receiving a letter from her and in that also he expresses his inability to come and meet her at this juncture. This lack of reciprocation of love seems quite unnatural and can once again be probably attributed to the desolation which his mental faculty has been subjected to.

The director packs in a lot of unexpected events in the second half of the film. Davis' getting a job as a medical representative is an important event because Rahulan and Reena feel that Davis' freedom and independence will give him the strength and boldness to mention about their love affair to Reena's father. As far as Davis is concerned his securing a job is an escape route from the loneliness he feels at home. He reveals to Rahulan that after his mother's death Reena is his only consolation who provides him some solace and that he yearns for a job which, he believes, will make his life more active.

Davis's love for Susan (Jalaja), a nun who has left the convent, can be considered as a bold and revolutionary move on the part of Davis and he voices out his trepidation to Rahulan as to whether Davis' father will acquiesce with his decision. However the optimism of Rahulan and Reena that they would soon be able to convey their love affair to Reena's father through Davis is short-lived and their hopes are shattered into smithereens when Davis passes away unexpectedly in a bike accident. Reena is also drawn into a quagmire since she can no longer leave her father. In the midst of all these tragic events, the only silver lining in the cloud for Rahulan, which provides him some comfort is his getting a job as a lecturer in a college which in turn instills in him a bit of boldness to ask Reena whether she is prepared to come and join him as his life partner

going against her father's will. Enticed by hope, he comes to meet Reena after getting the new job:

RAHULAN. I have rented a house. When will you come there Reena? I want you to be with me always. I know what you are thinking. I have come to meet your father too, to get his permission.

REENA. Don't expect that he will give his consent. He will not bless us.

RAHULAN. Are you sure?

REENA. Sure. His mind is immersed in the religious teachings most of the time.

RAHULAN. Then what to do?

REENA. All hopes are ruined. I have no peace of mind.

RAHULAN. Will you come with me if I call you?

REENA. Then I may have to witness one more death in this house.

(Ulkadal)

When Rahulan asks Reena whether she will come with him if he calls her, she does not give a reply in the affirmative and she tells him that Davis' death has wrecked her father emotionally. She is very much concerned about her father and unequivocally conveys to Rahulan that she is not intending to marry him without her father's consent and hence their marriage seems to be a distant possibility. Rahulan meets her father in his shop, sees the impasse into which her father has been drawn into and being a gentleman to the core, empathises with him during his time of bereavement. During this interaction, her father mentions to him that he considers Rahulan in the place of his lost son Davis, and even requests his help for arranging Reena's marriage. Hearing these words and

visibly moved by the condition of Davis's father Rahulan gets choked with emotion and becomes unable to convey the fact that he loves his daughter and wants her in marriage, thus failing miserably in his endeavour due to overpowering sentiments. Rahulan retreats, a confused and a disappointed man since he is now almost certain that he will be unable to make Reena his spouse and this is when he starts facing a kind of existential problem and a dilemma as to what to do to proceed further in his life and what not to do. His gloomy countenance gets noticed by his colleagues and one of them remarks that Rahulan is quite different from the contemporary youngsters who neither are gloomy, nor are confused, but rather are a jovial and pleasure seeking lot.

Another significant development which takes place around this time in Rahulan's life is that one of his students, Meera, belonging to a rich family and who also happens to be an ardent fan of his poems gets bitten by the love bug and falls in love with him. Her frequent coming and meeting Rahulan makes him somewhat uncomfortable and he requests her not to disturb him anymore and at the same time is unable to communicate to her the reason for his confusion.

One more turning point in Rahulan's life is when he comes to know about the proposed marriage between Reena and Dr. Alex from his senior colleague, Paul when he visits him in his house. Instantaneously he becomes dispirited and George, very dexterously highlights the pensiveness in his mind in the scene where Rahulan forgets to take the book that he had brought along with him and it is his colleague Paul who calls him back and hands it over to him.

After hearing the news about the marriage proposal of Reena, Rahulan's approach towards Meera gets changed considerably which might be due to his cognizance that

Reena probably can never be a part of his life and that his waiting for her is futile.

Rahulan and Meera's parents proceed with the marriage proposal and they fix the marriage date. Even at this juncture, the perplexity in his mind does not cease since he is torn between his love for Reena and Meera's love for him. In an unexpected turn of events, one day Reena takes a bold step and comes to Rahulan leaving her father and her house. Rahulan again plunges into a crisis, gets caught in a state of turmoil because he is unable to take a decision as to whom he should accept as his life partner, Reena or Meera, and finally decides to accept the former.

Kolangal, produced by D. Philip and K. T. Varghese is yet another film directed by George whose screenplay has been written by the director himself. The movie which is based on P. J. Antony's story *Oru Gramathinte Athmavu* has also been dramatised as a play *Moonnu Pennungalum Kure Nattukaarum* and it depicts the incidents in the lives of the people living in a village situated in the Central Travancore region.

Unlike the beginnings of George's other films which usually portray a journey or a crowded street, this film commences with the pristine scenic beauty of Kerala, a fine morning with the sun rays passing through the foliage of coconut leaves, being shown to the viewers in a medium close-up shot. A close reading of this film will make one deconstruct the visual text and understand that through this film, George is trying to highlight that village life, just like city life, is also a conflict between good and evil and he is trying to break the notion that a village is always filled with innate goodness and that the villagers are the epitomes of innocence.

George presents a pure village experience and brilliantly intersperses the movie with a portrayal of culture, ways of living, and various incidents in a typical village in

Kerala, which includes, women going to the market to sell their produce, men doing some small works, duel between families in the village, the celebration of festivals, the dominance of women over men in the families, love relations between men and women, and scandals and gossips in the village. A distinctive aspect of this film is that it is difficult to ascribe the role of a protagonist to one or two single characters because the focus is on several personae in a village, each of whom contributes something different and unique and hence has equal importance. In order to project the realities of social life to the fullest extent possible, the director unleashes the power of characterisation by selecting characters like Chantha Mariyam (Rajam K. Nair), Kallu Varkey (Thilakan), Paily (D. Philip), Kunjamma (Menaka), Eliyamma (Gladis), Kesavan (Srinivasan), and Paramu (Nedumudi Venu) who are an apt representation of the cross section of the village society since each of these characters conveys a predominant quality of goodness or evilness to the audience in a very realistic manner.

The camera pans from the rising sun towards a beautiful rippling river showcasing the natural beauty at its fullest and then the viewers get to see the ferry man Paily doing his daily ablutions at the start of his day. The medium close up shot slowly changes to a long shot showing Kunjamma walking towards the boat with milk bottles in her hands which are to be ferried across to the opposite bank. In the next scene, the long shot changes into an extreme long shot where the banks of the river and the other parts of the village have been captured in order to present a feel of the village area in Kerala and this is one instance where the directorial skills of George come to the forefront. Throughout the film, the director employs long shots and extreme long shots in order to ensure that

the unmatched scenic beauty of the village bestowed upon by nature is presented unadulterated to the audience at large and their aesthetic sense is kindled.

The houses of Chantha Mariyam living with her fifteen year old daughter Kunjamma and husband Pathrose (T. M. Abraham), a daily labourer and Eliyamma living with her daughter Leela (Sumangaly) who is also around fifteen years of age, are situated on the opposite sides of the road. The central theme of this film is about the explicit quarrels erupting between these two women and the implicit tendency of one to outdo the other. Though the origin and the cause of their conflicts are not presented, the viewers are given the impression that both these women are deadly enemies and the feud between these two quarrelsome women is shown from the beginning itself:

(Eliyamma is pulling Mariyam's calf through the road).

ELIYAMMA. Why can't you tie it and look after it? (Beating it with a stick) Go.

MARIYAM. (Running to the calf). Don't touch my calf!

ELIYAMMA. Tie your calf and rear it properly. If it comes to my yard, I will beat it for sure.

(Leela runs out of the house towards Eliyamma. Pathrose and Kunjamma stand behind Mariyam)

MARIYAM. (Coming forward). Will you beat it?

ELIYAMMA. What will you do if I beat it?

MARIYAM. (Coming forward). Will you beat it?

ELIYAMMA. If it enters my yard I will beat it. (*Kolangal*)

Mariyam is an ordinary woman from a Christian family who works very hard to make both ends meet and to save some money for her only daughter's wedding. She is depicted as very authoritative and courageous having full control over her husband and daughter and also as a hard working woman who manages everything in the house right from the morning including waking her husband up, giving fodder to the cattle, forcing her husband to go to work and then she herself going to the market to sell sweets. In the market place also her authority is very evident and she has a separate place of her own where she sits and sells her sweets. Her daughter Kunjamma helps her mother in the household chores and also in tasks like distributing milk.

Within a single film, George is credited with portraying a range of male characters who can be broadly grouped as those who are harmful and those who are not. On the one hand, men like Kallu Varkey and Paramu are depicted as those who intend to harm and cause suffering to others by using their money power and by their voyeuristic actions respectively, whereas on the other, the male characters like Kesavan, Paily, Raman Nair, and Cheriyan, who have come from different places and settled in this village, have been shown as benevolent. In spite of the village having more good people than bad, the lives of many of the good people get destroyed because the potency of the bad is far greater than that of the virtuous.

George portrays Paramu as an embodiment of evil and he is undoubtedly the most dangerous person in the village. He derives pleasure by peeping into the lives of women, especially by watching women bathe and subsequently he destroys the lives of these women by using the information collected, thus highlighting his immoral and wicked character. "Voyeurism is the act of viewing the activities of other people unbeknown to

them. This often means that the act of looking is illicit or has illicit connotations” (Hayward 446). Voyeurism is considered to be a male prerogative and here the director, through the actions of the character Paramu, shows how voyeurism has been used for sexual gratification and to destroy the lives of women and also simultaneously reinforces the fact that many times women come under the control and gaze of men due to the masculine power inherent in the patriarchal nature of men together with their voyeuristic tendencies and this enables men to assert their power according to their whims and fancies which may be actually detrimental or against the interests of the second sex. The concept of male gaze has been coined by the feminist critic Laura Mulvey in her essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” and in cinematic narrative, this concept can be coupled with the model of voyeurism. In the cinematic field where gender power disparity is prevalent, the voyeuristic objectification of women characters is very prominent.

George’s passion for watching classic Hollywood films had a great impact on his career as a film director and he adopted ideas from Hollywood films, a case in point being making voyeurism a theme in his films. In the majority of films which have voyeurism as a theme, the focus is on the body parts of the woman object, but George, in this film does not show the object which the voyeur is watching, but instead shows the actions of the subject, succinctly projecting the voyeuristic tendencies of the subject and this is precisely where the genius of George comes to the forefront when the viewers see that subtle modifications have been made in presenting the adopted ideas, thus giving a personal touch and making his films innovative and unique.

Paramu, a jobless young hoodlum in the village claims that he was in Mumbai, keeps talking about his life in the megalopolis and is considered a hero by some of the village youngsters apparently due to his exposure to city life. Being unemployed and in the absence of any other constructive ways to spend their free time, which they possess in abundance, these youth resort to playing cards and gossiping in order to while away their time. Paramu has voyeuristic traits in him and without any feeling of shame or hesitation, peeps through the bathrooms to gaze at women taking bath and his dignity has fallen to such abysmal levels that even when the women admonish him, the sense of contrition does not creep into him. He is also a malevolent human being and is fully responsible for destroying the life of Kunjamma and Devayani, two innocent women in the village, who fall easy prey to his iniquitous behaviour. Kuttisankaran Nair hailing from Malabar comes to this village as a government officer and after a period of courtship marries Devayani. On one occasion, Kuttisankaran Nair overpowers Paramu in a physical duel and this bruises Paramu's ego and harms the heroic image which he is maintaining in the village. Reconciling himself to the fact that he will be unable to overpower Kuttisankaran Nair by force, Paramu decides to use a contemptible stratagem to take revenge on his foe and divulges to Kuttisankaran, a completely untrue fact, that Devayani had a pre-marital affair with him and goes on to substantiate his statement by describing her body and revealing the presence of a mole on her private body part which he had actually seen during one of his voyeuristic stints. This becomes a turning point and believing Paramus's words, Kuttisankaran deserts Devayani making her a mental wreck.

Another bad personality who appears in the film is the middle aged drunkard Kallu Varkey. He is projected as authoritative and as a person who will not hesitate to go

to any extent in order to get things done according to his wishes, no matter how unreasonable they may be. In the scene which introduces Varkey, the audience gets to see him sitting near a shop, drinking toddy and on the verge of losing consciousness due to alcohol intoxication. In the meantime, his soul mate and drinking partner, Chacko, gets some snacks from Mariyam, which they share and then after finishing their toddy bottles get ready to make another sojourn to the toddy shop.

One day Varkey was traveling in Paily's boat and seeing Kunjamma also sitting in the boat, he picks up the following conversation with her:

VARKEY. (Looking at Kunjamma) You are the daughter of Mariyam.

Right?

(Kunjamma pretends that she has not heard what he said). Can't you hear?

(Looking at Paily) Paily, she is Mariyam's daughter. Right?

PAILY. (With contempt). Yes.

VARKEY. (Again to Kunjamma). You have grown up. How old are you now? (Kunjamma keeps quiet). (*Kolangal*)

From this point of time onwards, a desire to marry Kunjamma erupts in Varkey and he entrusts the job of getting the consent of her parents for this marriage proposal to Chacko. In turn, Chacko discusses the marriage alliance of Kunjamma and Varkey during his next meeting with Pathrose:

PATHROSE. From where is the proposal?

CHACKO. Not from very far away. From a nearby place only.

PATHROSE. What do you mean by a nearby place?

CHACKO. The other bank of the river.

PATHROSE. Who is the person on the other bank of the river whom I do not know?

CHACKO. You know the person. It is our Varkey.

PATHROSE. Is it Kallu Varkey?

(Chacko nods his head. Pathrose looks at Chacko with a bewildered look).

CHACKO. Do you know Varkey's first wife?

PATHROSE. Yes.

CHACKO. She is no more. Is it not?

(Pathrose looks at Chacko again with a bewildered look).

CHACKO. Now Varkey wants to marry again.

PATHROSE. (Angrily) Chacko!

CHACKO. He is very rich.

PATHROSE. You have told this to me. It is okay. But, do not tell this to Mariyam. You know what will happen if you tell this to her. Right?

CHACKO. Varkey conveyed his desire to me and if I do not convey the same to you, that is not right. That is why I told this to you.

PATHROSE. Chacko, I have only one daughter. I do not want a widower to marry her. You know Varkey. Right? He married a beautiful woman and then killed her.

CHACKO. Is that not just a rumour?

PATHROSE. It is not just a rumour. It is true. (*Kolangal*)

Subsequently, Pathrose dies in an accident at his workplace and it becomes all the more easy for Varkey to fulfill his desire of marrying Kunjamma. Through Chacko,

Varkey successfully persuades Mariyam, who concedes to his request, and then Varkey weds Kunjamma. In the last scene, the viewers get to see Varkey and his young bride, crossing the river in Paily's boat and going to Varkey's home on the opposite bank. The film concludes with a resounding laugh from Varkey which echoes in the air and this resounding laughter can be construed as the victory of money and male power through which one can apparently fulfill all their earthly desires.

Another malicious male character appearing in this film is Chacko who lives as a parasite on Varkey and whose main job seems to be gossiping and selling news obtained from one group of villagers to another group. His crookedness becomes evident from the following conversation with Varkey wherein he explains how he successfully blocks another marriage proposal for Kunjamma:

CHACKO. I told them (Family who comes with the marriage proposal for Kunjamma) that two times she has undergone an abortion and that now she is with you (Varkey). This had its impact on them:

(Varkey with great happiness embraces Chacko and kisses him on his cheek).

VARKEY. (Happily). You have done a commendable job.

(Chacko smiles with satisfaction). (*Kolangal*)

After blocking this marriage alliance, he brainwashes the widow, Mariyam and persuades her successfully to give consent to the marriage of Kunjamma and Varkey.

The non-native, Cheriyan hailing from Attingal is portrayed as a virtuous man and comes to the village as a bangle seller. He likes the village, falls in love with Kunjamma and decides to stay there permanently. He befriends the boatman Paily who suggests that

he can request for some land from Raman Nair, who is known to be a philanthropist, so that he can build a house and can stay there. One day Cheriyan sees Kunjamma pass by near his newly built house and invites her inside. This is noticed by Paramu and one of his friends Anthony who seize this opportunity and spread rumours that Cheriyan has an illicit relationship with Kunjamma. When this hearsay reaches the ears of Mariyam she becomes furious and instantaneously punishes her daughter by beating her and this rumour also actuates, in great measure, her personal animosity towards Cheriyan which she openly exhibits by picking up a fight with him when he was returning back from Kesavan's tea shop. When Raman Nair witnesses this brawl, he immediately intervenes and breaks up the fight between the two and also gives a sane advice to Cheriyan that under the present prevailing volatile circumstances, it would be in his best interest to leave the village for a few days and then return, by which time the dust would have settled down:

RAMAN NAIR. You go to some other place for a few days. Come back when things get better. We will find out solutions for everything.

CHERIYAN. Human beings exist wherever we go. Is it not? I am not going anywhere. I will die here only. Let people from this village itself kill me (if they want to). (*Kolangal*)

The troubles of Cheriyan do not cease as seen in the incident when he faces flak from Paramu and his friends for resting his bangles as well as other trinkets on the bench in front of Kesavan's tea shop and through these occurrences, the director very subtly conveys to the audience how difficult it is for an outsider, even if he is a good person, to establish base in a close knit community like a village. Cheriyan endures the trauma and

blemishes only because the hope that he will succeed in winning Kunjamma's hand in marriage lives with him, but when that optimistic anticipation is shattered, he himself breaks down and the roiling mess of grief and anger makes him set fire to the very house which he had built with so much of expectation and finally he leaves the village.

Raman Nair, the broadminded and philanthropic landlord is one of the important male characters who is very helpful to the villagers. He lends money and is even willing to part with a portion of his land for the homeless without any hesitation, a case in point being the land he gives to Cheriyan to build a house. Being a landlord he has a say in the day to day activities of the village, however he is not so influential that he can avert the total destruction like what happened in the lives of Cheriyan, Kunjamma and Devayani.

Paily, the boatman is a quiet person but plays an important role in the lives of the village folk because his boat is the only means of travel between the two banks of the river along which the village is situated. He loves Kunjamma and conveys his love to her, but she does not reciprocate. In spite of her rejection, being a good natured person that he is, he helps Mariyam during the last rites of her husband. At the end of the film, the viewers get to see Varkey bringing Kunjamma as his bride and travelling in Paily's boat to the other bank. From Paily's facial expression, it can be distinctly noted that grief is writ large on his face and the deafening silence on his part clearly conveys how he commiserates on Kunjamma's plight.

Kesavan is another good hearted person in the village and he owns the Samthripathi Vilasam Nair Hotel, which is the only hotel in the village. His good nature is exploited by the villagers especially by people like Paramu who consume items from his shop on credit with an intention never to pay back. In the following dialogue which

transpires between Kesavan and Cheriyan, the confusions in the mind of Kesavan and his perception of the village and its inhabitants are amply visible:

KESAVAN. (Reading the Newspaper). The newspaper is filled with reports of a looming threat of war. But there is no war in sight. If they are not capable, let them step aside and give way to other capable persons.

CHERIYAN. What is the difficulty if there is no war, Kesavan?

KESAVAN. Everything will become alright only if there is a war. Now the hydrogen bomb is going to be used and the first one will fall on this village. You just watch.

CHERIYAN. Why are you so angry with this place?

KESAVAN. All the people here do not have any self respect. They do not repay their debts (to me). Hydrogen bomb should fall here.

CHERIYAN. Then will you also not die?

KESAVAN. Let me die. Who is going to lose anything? What is the point of living among these people who behave like animals?

(Kolungal)

Finally, when he raises his voice and talks back against Paramu and his friends, they ruthlessly beat him and destroy his shop. With no recourse in sight he runs away since he is unable to cope up with the misdeeds of some of the villagers.

Kolungal not only portrays masculinities that are bold, authoritative, and malicious but also ones which are passive. The former type is represented by Paramu, Varkey and the latter is depicted by the characters like Cheriyan, Paily, and Raman Nair.

Thus, this film clearly points to the fact that there indeed exists different types of masculinities in the society and that these masculinities coexist simultaneously. At a micro-level, if one observes the conversations, group dynamics, and the interactions between the villagers, it can be seen that Paramu and Kallu Varkey serve as the harbingers of destruction of the motley village. The men who perform good deeds, who act for the well being of others and who question the wicked deeds of the men who rule the village, like Paramu and Kallu Varkey, are placed in a subordinate position and are quite powerless. The contempt for the good non-native men who have come from other places and who are trying to dominate the unethical native villagers is viewed as a kind of questioning the very authority and power of the native men in the village like Paramu. The two outsiders, Kuttisankaran Nair from Malabar and Cheriyan from Attingal are portrayed as good persons and both of them become the victims of nefarious men like Paramu and his friends. Though women like Chantha Mariyam are presented as bold and courageous, the last scene of the movie, where the resounding and reverberating laughter of Kallu Varkey is heard, shows that women are under the control of, or rather are victims of male supremacy. Mariyam is presented as a strong woman in the beginning, but towards the end she succumbs to the inveiglement and marries off her daughter with Kallu Varkey, a middle aged drunkard thereby establishing the fact that the world is predominantly ruled by men and their idiosyncrasies.

The majority of the Malayalam films till the 1970s portray men as the saviour of women. However this stereotypical approach gradually undergoes a change especially in George's films where he starts showing women asserting their freedom and independence and the resultant crisis among men due to this development.

Conclusion

This section consolidates the various aspects discussed thus far, thereby providing a basis for drawing a conclusion as to whether this analysis provides an effective antidote to the inherent and absolute ideas on men and masculinities:

Hitherto, all historical existing societies for which we have good evidence, had been characterized by a sexual division of labour, legitimated by what it was imagined to be natural or godly for men and women to do. This division of labour, although it took a vast variety of forms, had systematically privileged men, who characteristically enjoyed superior power, resources and status to women, and who legitimated this by claiming that they were naturally superior to women by virtue of their sex. (MacInnes 7)

The critics on men and masculinities have observed that one of the main reasons for the crises of men in the twentieth and twenty first century is that their role as the breadwinner in the family is being questioned:

... women's demands for freedom and equality have left men confused about their role. The dependent housewife model of the family is in decline and one of the questions that come to haunt men is how can they prove their masculinity and superiority in these changing circumstances. Furthermore sociologists like Bradley (2013) suggest that the rise of feminism together with new models of masculinity has emerged in response to economic and cultural changes. Thus the New Man (a softer

caring creature), sometimes labeled feminized man, replacing Connell's hegemonic masculinity has led to a moral panic about what it means to be a man at the beginning of the 21st century. (Dasgupta and Gokulsing12)

The contemporary society strives to achieve gender equality and as a result, men who find it difficult to assert and exercise their power and strength, devise various strategies in order to deploy their authority. An analysis of men and masculinities in isolation may not yield the desired outcome and the exercise will tend to be more meaningful and result oriented when done in conjunction with an analysis of femininity. Coming specifically to this research, the reasons for the ambivalences and negotiations in the lives of the male protagonists in George's films can be broadly classified into four distinct categories. The first reason being the all round progression of women which includes their gaining education, their access to wealth indicating their financial independence, and their quest for freedom and equality. The entry of a woman in the life of a man in the form of his spouse or his lover and its influence on him is the next reason. The familial structure as well as the background in which the man is born into can be considered as the subsequent reason and the last one for this aberration is when the society and its people start influencing the life of the man in a negative manner. If one peruses these reasons, it will be quite obvious that such scenarios exist in the day to day life of men and this is not confined to Georges's protagonists alone who are merely the microcosm of men in the society at large.

The films, *Mattoral* and *Adaminte Variyellu*, depict how men consider the concept of homemaker as stable and unchanging even in the twentieth century when women folk have started entering the public sphere and are no longer confined to their

houses. The common and accepted notion of a homemaker as an embodiment of femininity, lead men to have idealistic views on how a homemaker should be, what her priorities in life should be, and what are the duties she is supposed to perform. Any deviation from these pre-conceived notions creates confusions in the minds of men leading to a distinctive situation which has been identified as an area of study in this research.

In the film *Mattoral*, the major cause for the ambivalence in the mind of the male protagonist Kaimal, is his wife Susheela's assertion of independence and escape from the domestic trauma. And based on such a reading, this film can be said to fall under the first category of reasons where the cause of the man's ambivalence is the quest for recognition, freedom and equality by the woman. From Kaimal's viewpoint, Susheela is a very happy and contented wife because he, under the influence of patriarchal norms, assumes that she possesses all what a woman requires - food, clothes, children, a well employed husband, one's own house and protection. If indeed these are all the requisites for a woman to be happy, then Susheela, without an iota of doubt, is indeed a lucky and fortunate woman, but the reality is not as simple as this because a woman is not just a body with life, but one with her own specific likes and dislikes, pleasures and sorrows, her own self and subjectivity, and her own identity and freedom and till the time the husband becomes conscious of her ontological existence and begins to consider her as a subject, family happiness will remain as evanescent as ever before. Kaimal was unable to read into the mind of his spouse and remained in a fool's paradise until the day when Susheela eloped, after which reality dawned on him, but it was a trifle too late because by

that time he had fallen into a quagmire and the manner in which he negotiates the predicament in which he had landed himself in is by committing suicide.

Adaminte Variyellu, is a film which presents two families belonging to different strata of the society, and an analysis of the reasons for the confusions in the minds of the male protagonists reveal that here, the financial independence of the women involved is the root cause. Even though the cause for the confusion is more or less the same, the way the two protagonists negotiate is quite different. In the case of Mammachan, his wife Alice's assertion of independence and access to wealth create a lot of dilemmas in his life and he deals with these problems by taking the help of social institutions like religion and family and also by exercising his patriarchal power to control Alice, forcing her to be under his clutches. In the case of the other male protagonist Gopi, given the fact that his spouse, Vasanthi has a well paying and stable job, an inferiority complex develops in him which is the primary cause for confusions in his mind. Unable to come to terms with the thought that he is not the bread winner of the family, he resorts to alcoholism and abuse of his wife, both physically and mentally, as a means of escape.

The three films, *Yavanika*, *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback* and *Mela* particularly focus on women's exposure to the public domain and how this affects the lives of the male protagonists.

Yavanika's male protagonist, Ayyappan, is a unique creation of George in the sense that on one hand he is a maestro in his field of art, whereas he is also a ruffian when it comes to dealing with others in the society in which he lives in. His masculine features are used by him to fulfil his desires and he does not hesitate to indulge in violence if need be. His main strategy of dealing with other people is by threatening them

irrespective of whether they are men or women. Ultimately when he uses this same strategy of his in order to satisfy his carnal desires, he meets his end in the hands of a woman co-artiste, Rohini. Being a full time alcoholic, one cannot decipher the confusions, if any, which may exist in his life.

In *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback*, the protagonist, Suresh Babu, is confronted with confusion when Lekha, an upcoming actress enters his life. This cause of confusion provides scope for the study of men and masculinities in this film. Lekha's assertion of independence can be seen in two stages, one is her decision to leave her own parents who utilise her as an object to earn money for them and the next one is her decision to live with Suresh Babu, who is already a family man. This decision of Lekha creates bewilderment in Suresh Babu and he becomes unsure of how to proceed with his life. However, after a few days of stay with Lekha, when his wife and son come in search of him, he deals with the situation by returning back along with them without any apparent hesitation, leaving Lekha all by herself, establishing the fact that he gives more importance to the family system and respects the institutions called marriage and family, even though he does not love his wife and his ideologies differ from hers.

Along with culture and power, the psyche also has a direct influence on the male body and it perceives the body as a medium through which the experiences can be felt and identified, thus making it possible for masculinity to be understood corporally. A man can identify one's masculinity through two ways, one is through his body and the other is through the relationship between his body and the body of others. In the case of Govindan, the protagonist in *Mela*, when he reaches the city with his wife, his male body enters into a dialogue with other male bodies and in the process, starts drawing a

comparison between the two. When his wife sees the new social relationship existing between her husband and the other men in the city, she begins to perceive him in a different way which is mainly due to the fact that his male body is deviant from the normal one. The difference between the culturally created male body and the actual one in Govindan's case, which is deviant from the accepted norms, creates tension, confusion and anxiety leading to an identity crisis in him. His committing suicide at the end of the film signifies how miserable his life is in a heteronormative world where the notion of masculinity is mainly determined by one's relationship with the surroundings. He negotiates by giving up his life, thus saying goodbye to a world which cannot accommodate a midget like him by providing suitable place and space.

In the next two films *Swapnadanam* and *Irakal*, which form a part of this research, George's approach is not only unique but also different and he makes use of the concept of madness in order to portray the perplexities and negotiations of the heroes. In *Swapnatanam*, it is the entry of a woman into the life of Dr. Gopinathan that creates quandaries and doubts in his mind. His wife Sumitra's constant nagging by mentioning the name of his college day lover Kamalam and his dreaming about Kamalam slowly creates fissures in their marital life. His marriage with Sumitra against his desire and solely in order to satisfy his mother, leads him to a situation where he becomes incapable of leading a happy and satisfied family life which, over a period of time, makes him a mentally aberrant person ultimately leading him to a psychiatric hospital. Post treatment, he becomes normal and regains his ability to recognise his near and dear ones, however the protagonist's negotiation is portrayed in a different manner in this film. The cured Dr. Gopinathan, upon reaching his house, rides away on his scooter without any destination

leaving the conclusion an open ended one as far as the viewers are concerned.

Baby, the protagonist of *Irakal*, is depicted as a teenager who is at war with himself. His family, comprising of his dominant father, eldest brother, and his promiscuous elder sister, creates a kind of negative atmosphere which leads him to become a victim of criminal madness with lots of confusions in his mind. He loses interest in his studies and also finds it boring to do any job. Taking solace in drugs, he eventually becomes a serial killer and he deals with his plight by resorting to violence and crime. Unlike Dr. Gopinathan in *Swapnadanam*, Baby, is not given a chance to undergo treatment for his mental disorder, neither is he brought in front of the judiciary to undergo trial, but rather he gets killed by his own autocratic father, thereby giving an unusual ending to the film.

The last two films analysed in this thesis are *Ulkadal* and *Kolangal*. Here the problems faced by the protagonists are different from those of the previous ones and the ways in which the problems are dealt with are also interestingly depicted by the director. Rahulan is the main character in *Ulkadal* and his life is filled with doubts and uncertainties from the beginning itself. As a teenager, in his early college days, he loves his childhood friend Tulsi, who stays near his house, but at the same time, he is not sure of his love for her. He is presented as a confused young man, who is unable to take decisions at critical junctures in his life, an example being, being unsure whether he wants to pursue his higher studies in college or not and finally acts as per the decision of his father who decides that he should. Unable to resist the sexual advances of Tulsi's sister and unable to convince Tulsi that he is innocent, he leaves the place for pursuing his higher education without bidding farewell to her like an escapist. The second phase of

Rahulan as a master degree student shows him as an introvert and here he falls in love with his college mate, Reena. At this stage of his life, the confusion as to whether he will get a job or not haunts him. Subsequent to getting a job as a lecturer, his imbroglio continues when it comes to marrying Reena or Meera. The main reasons for his confusions are the presence of various women in his life and his lack of confidence in making decisions. He tries to overcome his problems and doubts by writing poems in order to escape from his confused life. He is passive, calm and not at all arrogant unlike the usually seen masculine trait.

In his film *Kolangal*, George presents a group of men as the main characters, the non natives, Cheriyan and Kuttisankaran Nair and the natives, Paramu and Kallu Varkey. Since each of these characters is unique in themselves, the confusions and negotiations are also different for each of them and hence this movie provides ample scope for studying a variety of masculinities in a single film. The main reason for trouble in Cheriyan's life is his love for the village girl Kunjamma whom he loves sincerely. But, given the fact that he is an outsider and a non-native, Kunjamma's mother is not ready to give her consent for their marriage and his confusions further aggravate when Kunjamma conveys that she will not marry him without her mother's consent. Her marriage with Kallu Varkey completely shatters Cheriyan and he deals with the situation by leaving the village forever after burning the house which he had constructed with the hope of leading a married life with Kunjamma. In Kuttisankaran Nair's life, the uncertainty in his mind is mainly due to his thoughts as to whether he should believe his wife Devayani or the rumour spoken by people like Paramu, regarding her virginity. Given the fact that Nair is a non-native, he is unaware of her past and finally he leaves her and the village itself

without giving scope for further mental pain. The natives like Kallu Varkey and Paramu mainly concentrate on how to assert their power and authority in order to fulfill their desires. In Kallu Varkey's case, his main confusion is whether he will be able to win the hands of Kunjamma and he negotiates the situation by exercising his money power. In Paramu's case, without having a proper job, he is quite jealous of the others who are having a good position in the village and he destroys the lives of others, especially the women in the village by rumour mongering and in this manner, he negotiates his predicament.

The analysis of the above films reiterates the fact that masculinities are actually behavioural patterns, which fluctuate over a period of time and these fluctuations, indeed, can be construed to be the primary cause for a kind of identity crisis among men globally, which shows that their identity is fragile and inconsistent. This research also shows that the meaning of the concepts like men and masculinities are not static but as involved in a constant state of negotiation at various levels which could be cultural, political, economic, and social.

Upon revisiting the catechisms which were posed in the beginning of this research, I find that the investigations, through analysis, which have been conducted so far, have proved to be successful in answering them. Is masculinity a socio-historic construct? This was the first research question and this has been answered with the help of various theories from the field of gender studies as, gender, both masculinity and femininity, is indeed a social and historical construct.

The history of the organisation of labour shows that, in the twentieth century, the technological inventions coupled with the progress of women, helped women to earn by

themselves thus rejecting the earlier notion of man as the sole source of productive force. In George's films, the female characters like Vasanthi, Rohini, Lekha, and Chantha Mariyam are presented as having their own means to earn money and sustain themselves and their families. This century bears testimony to the fact that women also contribute to the economic well being of any society, thus answering the second question, should masculinity be the only productive force.

The third question, whether the public sphere is dominated only by men, calls for special attention because there are two supposable connotations arising. The first one relates to the superiority and authority men exercise in the public domain and the second interpretation to the number of men in this domain vis-à-vis the number of women. Upon pondering about these aspects in the light of the present research, I see that the answers are not readily forthcoming. Even though, on the one hand, characters like Ayyappan, who exercise their masculine power and privileges to control women in public spaces are very much present in real life even today, but at the same time, one can assume that this trend is diminishing, given the fact that there is an enormous thrust from all quarters which encourages equal participation from men and women alike and subsequently provides them equal recognition, thus establishing a level playing field to both without any discrimination whatsoever. The Indian Army which was one of the final male bastions has now been made accessible to women and they have also been given combat roles. Even in the corporate world, one gets to see umpteen examples where women are at the helm of affairs. The Government, non-governmental organisations and civil society are putting in efforts to ensure that women are provided an equal status in the society. However paradoxically, even in the midst of such a sea change, one still comes across

cases of violence towards women in the public places which corroborates that the public domain is dominated by men even now. Coming to the other aspect regarding the numbers, I have reasons to believe that men outnumber women in the public space. However, this gender disparity is witnessing a diminishing trend, thanks to the progression of women in all walks of life. The viewers also get to see this changing trend in George's films where the director presents the women characters as employed compared to the women of the previous decades.

The next group of interrelated questions is whether men have to safeguard their authority, how and why men assert their power and whether men apprehend something. In the movies being analysed, Mammachan, Gopi, Ayyappan, Suresh Babu, Kallu Varkey and Paramu are all male characters who tend to safeguard their authority by hook or by crook and are shown to dominate and assert their power and superiority over others, including women, at all times. The freedom which women have started enjoying of late, coupled with their progression in all walks of life have created a situation which have led men to try to safeguard their superiority and authority over women, whether it be in the work place or in the family, Gopi in *Adaminte Variyellu* being a classic example.

When the notion of hegemonic masculinity is broken, do hegemonic men suffer any identity crisis and how men try to overcome this identity crisis are the final two questions which this research attempts to provide answers to. The researches on masculinities in the postmodern era conclusively show that men do undergo crises at various levels thereby marking their presence in the mainstream gender studies. Identity crisis causes the breakdown of hegemonic masculinity in some men who find it quite

difficult to adjust with the changing situations and circumstances, leading to confusions among them, which later become the principal reasons for negotiations in their life.

Since the primary focus of this research is to study the ambivalences and negotiations in men, those films of K. G. George have been carefully chosen which provide a scope for analysing this aspect. The protagonists including Kaimal, Mammachan, Gopi, Govindan, Baby, and Dr. Gopinathan who feature in these films are all victims of one form of crisis or the other which ultimately lead them to negotiate their lives, albeit in different manners. A close and thorough examination of the films, which form the subject matter of this research, indicates that, irrespective of class, caste, creed, geographical region, position held in the society, financial status and the like, men do negotiate in their lives if the circumstances call for and the masculine traits exhibited by such men can be said to fall under the category of transacting masculinities, a term which I had introduced in chapter two.

George is one of the very skilled directors whose films deal with a number of themes, all very relevant in the contemporary society and this provides scope for exhaustive studies on his films. The present research concentrates on only one aspect of his films, leaving room for further research.

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