

WAS KG GEORGE A FEMINIST? A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF HIS FILMS

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Abstract. K. G. George, a renowned director of Malayalam cinema, is well known for making films with multi-layered female characters. His characters are so complex that they enable multiple readings from different perspectives. During the seventies and eighties, he paved a new path in Malayalam cinema that traversed through the minds of the characters. In that journey, K. G. George portrayed nuances of the female psychology and came out with films like *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback* (Lekha's Death: A Flashback, 1983), *Aadaaminte Variyellu* (Adam's Rib, 1984) and *Mattoral* (The Other Man, 1988). In this paper, the researcher attempts to analyse three films of K. G. George from the director's perspective regarding issues concerning his female characters. To what extent a male director can be a feminist is the question being repeatedly asked in the era of micro politics where feminist literature has challenged the feminist position of male directors. The paper poses the same questions regarding the works of K. G. George, who has been considered as a feminist film maker of his time. The paper further examines whether a director can escape from the Victorian morality prevalent in a patriarchal society like Kerala. The methodology applied in this study is qualitative. Descriptive analysis and expert opinion are used as tools of research. The researcher concludes that though K. G. George displays genuine feminist approach, he was not free from the Victorian morality imprinted in the psyche of the society.

Keywords. *KG George, film studies, gender studies, feminism, Malayalam cinema, Victorian morality*

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Introduction

The portrayal of women in cinema is not a new field of inquiry in academia. Laura Mulvey puts forward the idea of using psychoanalytic theory as a political weapon to examine how patriarchal society, though unconsciously, designed the structure of cinema. She introduces three types of gazes. For the analysis, she takes the conventional cinema and places male as the bearer of gaze and the female as the object to be gazed at. The female in a cinema undergoes three types of gazes: the gaze of the spectator, the machine—the camera, and the gaze of the male protagonist which suppresses the other two. In her article, she critically analyses the films of Alfred Hitchcock—*Vertigo* (1958) and *Marnie* (1964)—and establishes how the camera feeds for the voyeurism of the spectators (Mulvey, 1975).

Eric O' Donnell explores the critical relationship between women, landscape, sound and music to formulate a resistant account of fresh India. He also examines the cultural changes portrayed in Bengali families after the partition of India. In his observation of the films of Ritwik Ghatak, he points out that the families of Ghatak's films do not tend to depict the traditional extended Bengali family, but 'alternative', 'surrogate' families who are displaced. He focuses on urban lower middle class refugees who are searching for a home. In *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), he analyses the mother of the protagonist Nita. He calls the mother a 'damaging force', who was reluctant to marry off her daughter as she was the only breadwinner of the family. "He employs Bengali folk music and frames Bengali landscapes to inform, both aurally and visually, his representation of Bengali women as symbolic images of the joy, sorrow and nostalgia that he associates the birth of the Indian state" (O' Donnell, 2005). Chuck Kleinhans asserts the need of analysing the portrayal of different sexes to get to know the part of media in assisting the dominant ideologies. The paper exemplifies several attempts made by researchers to understand how women are portrayed in different cinemas (Kleinhans, 1987, 2006).

Meena T. Pillai rejects the concept of women empowerment in Kerala. She terms this concept as 'myth' and 'mystique'. "From Vigathakumaran (1928) to date, on screen, Kerala women have joyfully surrendered their independence and identity too willingly to be putty in the hands of male desire and male gaze." Peripherally acknowledging the 1970s of Malayalam cinema and the works of Adoor Gopalakrishnan, G. Aravindan and K. G. George, Pillai admits that she could not find much change in the portrayal of women (Pillai, 2013).

Swapna Gopinath and Sony Jalarajan Raj explore whether the novelty claimed by the Malayalam films could be seen in the female characters. "We conclude that although women are conceptualised as part of a globalised culture in which 'she' has an identity, they are nevertheless subject to the familiar gender hierarchy and marginalised identity" (Gopinath & Raj, 2015). Eugene Nulman concentrates on the popular Hollywood films from 1990 to 2009. By analysing the popular hits of the three decades such as *Home Alone* (1990), *Titanic* (1997), and *Avatar* (2009), Nulman finds that female characters are shown as peripheral and maternally or romantically linked characters. Though they seek rescue, in some cases they act as rescuers as

well. But that rescue is different from that of the men. The rescue done by female characters are based on maternal love to correct the rescued (Nulman, 2013).

Jayakrishnan Sreekumar analyses the non-traditional representation of women in Malayalam cinema by narrating two cinemas of Malayalam director Syamaprasad. The author examines *Ore Kadal* (*The Sea Within*, 2007) and *Artist* (2013) and debates that through these films the director has broken the middle class mentality towards arranged marriages and relationships within the family. “In both these films, what is at stake is the notion of heteronormative families, where women go against the grain of the ways in which the idea of family is articulated in Indian society”, the author clarifies (Sreekumar, 2019).

Jenny Rowena examines the atrocities faced by P. K. Rosy, the heroine in *Vigathakumaran* (1928), the first Malayalam cinema. She questions the popular notion of connecting the past with those atrocities. She argues that such atrocities would happen even in the present time. The state is secular now is a false notion, she adds. She argues that even today, a Dalit woman is not welcome in Malayalam cinema as heroine. She also proposes that a caste disparity exists in the representation of women within the cinema. While the upper caste characters in cinema are shown as women with pure quality, the lower caste women are portrayed as those having extra marital affairs or breaking the codes of conduct of the society (Rowena, 2013). Navaneetha Mokkil compares *Achanurangatha Veedu* (*A Home in which the Father Cannot Sleep*, 2006) and *Drishyam* (*Sight*, 2013) and links the vulnerable young women as sexual bodies and the foundation of masculinity. Both the films depict the fathers of young women who suffered sexual abuse. The author concludes that in the first film, the father fails as he is a Dalit Christian. And in the second, where the father is an upper caste Christian, wins and becomes a hero (Mokkil, 2020).

Joseph Antony analyses how K. G. George uses his films as a whip to beat the patriarchy. He depicts the choice of Susan marrying Harshan in the film *Ee kanni koodi* as an expression of female freedom. Further, the gaze of George’s camera is rational according to Joseph Antony. It takes a rational distance at a wide angle to get a police officer’s gaze. According to the writer, in all his films especially *Ee Kanni Koodi*, *Mattoral* and *Aadaaminte Variyellu* George places the fate of the female protagonists with sympathy and empathy. “Though George affords Kaimal some sympathy, he refuses to romanticise his self-pity, as other Malayalam films might have done. Instead, he firmly indicates the man’s chauvinism for the crushing monotony his wife experiences. Certainly, her decision to abandon him was a thoughtless act, but we never fail to notice that hers is the natural wager of a desperate person.” (Antony, 2018)

Dr. Ajay Sekhar critically analyses all the films of K. G. George to explain how they are unique. According to Dr. Sekhar, George quarrelled with society and psychoanalytically depicted the problems within marriage (Sekhar, 2018).

C. S. Venkiteswaran analyses the power relations in K. G. George’s films. He observes the films of K. G. George portrays the different layers of oppression and violence that constitute

human relationships and upon which our social institutions are established. “Never resorting to sentimentalism or sloganeering, nor indulging in any kind of voyeurism, his narratives raise disturbing questions about us and our society.” (Venkiteswaran, 2018)

Research questions

The research questions posed by the researcher are:

RQ1: Can a male director, born and brought up in a patriarchal society like Kerala, hold a true feminist point of view?

RQ2: Does the society explicitly or inexplicitly exercise Victorian morality upon the director?

Methodology

The researcher applies Qualitative methodology. According to Wimmer and Dominick, qualitative research is used to study the behaviour, nature, perceptions, actions or interactions among people and it helps one to understand life styles and cultural values. The methods applied are two fold in its nature. “Qualitative methodologies follow interpretive paradigms and the methodologies normally use focus groups, observation, ethnography and interview as methods.” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2012. p.117).

Descriptive analysis: Descriptive analysis collects the present data regarding a phenomenon and describes what the data means. The researcher looks for details such as the story line, how it is being executed, and the use of camera angles, scene lighting and similar aspects.

Samples

- Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback (1983)
- Aadaaminte Variyellu (1984)
- Mattoral (1988)

Expert opinion: The researcher conducts a systematic opinion interview with ten academicians in Malayalam cinema. The same set of questions was asked to everyone to gather their perspectives regarding K. G. George and his feminist vision. The first question was about feminist approach of K. G. George and the second was about the influence of patriarchy and Victorian morality on his films.

Samples

- K. Ramachandra Babu, Cinematographer, receiver of Kerala State Film Award for the best cinematographer.
- C. V. Balakrishnan, Writer, novelist, receiver of Kerala Sahithya Academy Award and screen playwright of Mattoral

- Vijayakrishnan, Director, critic and writer who received National and Kerala State film Awards for the best book on Cinema
- K. B. Venu, Director, journalist, columnist who received Kerala State film Award for the best book on Cinema
- C. S. Venkiteswaran, Critic, writer and receiver of National and Kerala State film Awards for the Best book on cinema
- Shahina Rafeeqe, Screen playwright, Documentary film maker and co-director of the documentary on K. G. George- 8 and ½ Intercuts- Life and Films of K. G. George (2017)
- Lijin Jose, Film Director, and co-director of 8 and ½ Intercuts- Life and Films of K. G. George (2017)
- K. P. Jayakumar, Critic who received Kerala State Film Award for the best article
- Muhammad Rafi N. V., Kerala State Film Award winner for the best book on cinema
- G. P. Ramachandran, Critic, General Council member of Chalachitra Academy and receiver of National and Kerala State Film Awards for the best book on cinema.

Victorian morality

Victorian morality as a phrase used to refer to the way the British people lived during the reign of Queen Victoria between 1837 and 1901. During that period the society had undergone several changes like banning slavery, outlawing child slaves and maintaining civic maturity. The movement was primarily related to sexuality and family. Sexual restraint was an ethical behaviour and protecting the family was the prime duty of men and women. The family structures were patriarchal where male members got more importance. This morality spread across the world where the British had ruled (Study.com, November 27, 2016).

K. G. George

K. G. George was born on 24 May 1945 in Changanassery, Kerala as Kulakkatil Geevarghese George. After obtaining a degree in Political Sciences in 1968, he joined the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. Till then, his exposure to cinema was mostly limited to Indian and Hollywood films, says M. S. Asokan in his book on K. G. George (Asokan, 2016). FTII was his entry into the universe of world cinema. Interactions with filmmakers and his fellow students radically transformed his approach to cinema. Besides, there he met cinematographer K. Ramachandra Babu who later worked as a cinematographer for most of his films.

George started his career in film by assisting Ramu Kariat, the famous Malayalam director who directed films like Chemmeen (1965), in his later projects Maya (1972) and Nellu (1974). Soon he decided to do films independently.

The late sixties and early seventies witnessed radical changes in Indian cinema. Though Indian cinema had already witnessed two masters like Satyajith Ray and Ritwik Ghatak in the 1950s itself, it was a kind of individual rebellion. Seventies experienced the upsurges of several

individuals, independent and rebel film makers from several parts of the country. Inspiration from the academic space such as Film and Television Institute of India and financial support from FFC (Film Financial Corporation, now NFDC, National Film Development Corporation) made this possible. Malayalam cinema too did not lag behind. Though not an FTII graduate, it was P. N. Menon started this collective movement with his film *Olavum Theeravum* in 1970 (Vijaykrishnan, 2004). FTII graduate students like John Abraham, Adoor Gopalakrishnan and the like minded independent artists created a new wave of cinema that Malayalam film viewers had never witnessed before. K. G. George was also part of that group and the movement.

George and his films

George became an independent filmmaker and *Swapnadanam* (1975) was his debut film. His other films include *Ulkkadal* (1979), *Yavanika* (1982), *Panchavadippalam* (1984), and *Irakal* (1986). Scrutiny of the psyche of the character is an important characteristic of Georgian films. In *Swapnadanam*, he traversed through the inner world of a doctor while in *Yavanika*; he solved a murder mystery by understanding the trivia of the character's mind set.

George was known for his firm affinity towards Women's freedom and liberation throughout his career. In *Aadaaminte Variyellu* (1984), through the final sequence where the inmates of a social rehabilitation centre start a rebellion, he states that revolution would come only by the empowerment of downtrodden women. Chithra P. S. gives K. G. George the credit for modernising Malayalam cinema in the 1970s. "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, K. G. 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." While analysing three films of K. G. George namely *Yavanika*, *Aadaaminte Variyellu* and *Lekhayude Maranam Oru flashback*, Chithra argues that these films depicted female situations under negotiation. She also put forward the idea that these films serve as eye-openers to the society (Chithra, 2017).

Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback (Lekha's Death – A Flashback), 1983: A wasted rebellion

K. G. George writes the history of the numerous poor girls who come to Kodampakkam in Chennai, the old centre of South Indian cinema, in his film *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback* (here onwards *Lekhayude Maranam*). By telling the story of the experiences of a Kerala girl Santhamma in four episodes, George takes the viewers to the ugly side of the film industry.

Santhamma / Lekha – face of the faceless

Like any poor family, Santhamma's family too believed that their girl could bring prosperity through acting. They were persuaded by a sex racket pimp, Kurup. Believing his words, the family comes to Chennai and learns the fact that he has been arrested in a sex case. Soon,

Santhamma meets several pimps behind the film industry and becomes a sex worker. She manages to find a living there.

Later, a production controller starts bringing extra roles for her and she starts her journey to become a leading actress. But, she could not throw off the bad conventions of the film industry. Even after becoming a lead actress, she was forced to obey the male stars and obliged to become a sex object for the rich people who control the industry.

At that time, she meets Suresh Babu, a director, who makes the kind of movies which are different from the popular cinema. She gets an offer from him and that experience changes her attitude towards cinema. She bags the award for the best actress. She then gets attracted to him and becomes bold and finally elopes to live with Suresh Babu. He has a family and when his wife comes with their son, he chooses to go with the family. Reluctant to go to the previous life along with her greedy mother and as she was heart-broken due to the negligence of Suresh Babu, Lekha commits suicide. When *Lekhayude Maranam* was released, it faced a controversy that it deals with the original story of the suicide of the actress Sobha (1962-1980). There was a rumour that Sobha, who bagged the National award for the best actress for the film *Pasi* (1979) and who acted in *Ulkkadal*, took her life because of the failure of love life with the famous cinematographer Balu Mahendra. Later, K. G. George had to insert a disclaimer slide that the film has no connection with any real life incident.

Though the film depicts the fate of several young girls who sacrifice their lives in the race to become popular, the blame for such a fate directly aims at the females in their life and cinema itself. The greedy mother is a common villain in several films especially when the daughter is famous. *Visalakshi (Mother)* too is not an exception. It is her greed that led the family to Madras. Though Santhamma wants to return home, it is Visalakshi who greedily tries to keep the family in Madras and decides the rate of her daughter. It is her compulsion that pushes her daughter to be a sex object and refuses her daughter's call sheet to the production controller who helped them in the struggling period. She also rejects the marriage proposals that came for Santhamma. Here, the Victorian ideal family concept- a mother should hold her family tightly- is broken and thus they face the punishment.

The father is shown as a poor and helpless old man. There are many scenes where he visibly gets irritated by the attempts made by Visalakshi and Santhamma. In an early scene, there is an assistant director who exploits their ignorance regarding the industry; father is shown having understood the 'real' intention. When their initial trials became futile, he insists they return. Failed to convince the family and also by knowing the fact that his daughter has become a sex worker, he returns to their village alone. But, when Lekha succeeds in films, he returns and joins the family without any hesitation. He is shown as gentle, loving and caring. Thus in the case of parenting, the blame directly falls upon the mother.

Santhamma alias Lekha breaks the family of Suresh Babu. She elopes and lives with a family man. In the eyes of Victorian morality, it is a sin and she has to face the punishment; so

did she. Suresh Babu too is to be blamed for the entire actions. But K. G. George places some loopholes in the form of dialogues to blame Lekha alone. Some of such dialogues are like this: 'It (their living together) is just an experiment. Let us see...'; 'I had already told you that you need not hope much. I will count this (living together) as a futile adventure'; 'You say, I should forget my family and spend the whole time with you?'

Louis Althusser had put forward the concept of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Harry Benshoff (Benshoff, 2016) puts the idea as the various structures that always address the people: the social instruments that help the state to conquer the human beings ideologically and sustain the status quo. "For Althusser, the reproduction of capitalist normality is achieved not only at the point of soldier's gun or policeman's baton, but, more subtly, by the network of wide range of institutions he calls Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), such as the church, the media and the arts (including cinema)." (Dix, 2017. p.232)

The film warns all the ambitious young ladies, not the young men, about the pitfalls; because in our society it is the duty of the ladies to protect their 'chastity'. Thus, even while making a strong female character, the director himself could not escape from the gender prejudice imposed by the society.

Aadaaminte Variyellu (Adam's Rib), 1984: The resort or rebellion?

The Old Testament of the Holy Bible says, it is from the rib of Adam that Eve, the first woman, was created. This film is about such numerous females being produced from such ribs.

The film can be termed as the first fully women centric movie in Malayalam. The film rejects the conventional practice of giving the names of heroes first in the title followed by that of the actresses. K. G. George reformed the method by giving the names of actresses first followed by that of the actors. The film contains only one title song and it is about womanhood and the title covers female lives, from small girls to old ones.

Archana Vasudev conducts a qualitative content analysis of the film Aadaaminte Variyellu and inquires whether Aadaaminte Variyellu goes through the male gaze. She also inquired whether the cinema exercises female gaze. The researcher argues that the camera position in the film is in such a way that it explores the female body and the female characters go through the male gaze. At the same time, the researcher also exemplifies one incident where the female is in the gazing end and male character is placed at the 'being looked at' position; the cinema exercises female gaze too (Vasudev, 2018).

The three women

The film spins around the lives of three women who live in different social and financial strata. Vasanthi, a government employee; Alice, a rich house wife and Ammini, the female helper at Alice's house are the three protagonists of the film. Though the only earning member, Vasanthi has no say at her home. The mother-in-law always looks for reasons to blame her and the husband is an irresponsible drunkard who continuously quits the job that Vasanthi earns for

him. Vasanthi is the only breadwinner at home and bread maker as well. She has to do double duty; one at the office and another at home. From the early morning to late night, she gets no rest and receives several mental and physical abuses from the husband and the mother-in-law. Vasanthi could not withstand the abuses and started seeing hallucinations about her late uncle who was her father-in-law too. He was a solace to her pain and stress. She becomes unable to go to the office and the tendency of hallucination gets increased. Learning that, the husband and the mother-in-law throw her into a mental asylum.

The life of Alice is like heaven from an outsider's point of view. But she is not happy. She knows that no one at home loves and cares for her. She too has no love towards her husband Mammachen and even towards their children. She hates her husband because he had exploited her body in order to make money. She has no guilt for having an extra marital affair with a young engineer. She cannot understand her children even when the daughter tries to elope with a young boy. She tries to get a divorce from Mammachen. But, the Christian congregation denies that. Finally Alice finds relief in suicide.

Ammini, the housemaid, is an orphan and Mammachen sexually abuses her. She has no choice other than to surrender to his power. Ammini likes children and so do the children. But when Alice learns the fact that Ammini is pregnant, she demands to throw her out of the house. Ammini has been ditched out. She has been taken to a construction site of Mammachen and from there to a government hospital for delivery. Without any regret, Ammini leaves her infant at the gate of a stranger. When she was chased by some abusers, the police rescued her and took her to a rescue home. At the final sequence, Ammini forces the inmates to be freed and the group of women rebelliously moves out, breaking the gates and knocking down the shooting team and leaving the director and the crew in wonder. The final sequence is specially mentioned in the history of Malayalam cinema; because it features the director and the crew in a cameo, attacked by a group of characters made by the director himself.

The final sequence of the film got much appreciation as it realistically reacts to the situation, leaving even the director helpless. Many women centric critics applauded the fact that the fire to real revolution lies in the hands of downtrodden females. When the middle class and upper class find relief in hallucinations or suicide, it is these working class females who revolt against the society. The film earned George the fame as a craftsman and the status as the most women centric director of his time.

Though the director shows the pathetic situation of womanhood with much empathy and sympathy and though he encourages the ladies to be ready for a revolution, an inner Victorian family preaching can be read in this film also.

No viewer exclaims understanding the fact that Alice has an extra marital affair. The making of Alice is in such a way that the audience will easily believe her straying out. She consumes alcohol, does not show compassion towards any of the fellow beings and humiliates her husband whenever possible. She has been blamed for being a bad mother even by her own

brother. She has been shown as unaware of her daughter's growth and mental state. Thus she is not a lady according to the stereotypes. There is no wonder if such a woman has an extra marital affair. Being a lady, Vasanthi does not have an affair.

She is even irritated at the very thought of it. It is generally believed that a woman with different pleasures outside will definitely lose her family. That is visible in the story of Alice. Tony, her son, goes away and Nisha, the daughter, elopes with a young boy. Though Vasanthi becomes mad, her child is safe in the hands of her mother. Her madness is for teaching the family a lesson. The suicide of Alice is a punishment, given by the society to Alice for violating the norms of ideal family; ultimately the family is scattered.

K. Ramachandra Babu, cinematographer of *Aadaaminte Variyellu*, is of the opinion that the female characters of K. G. George has a depth. It is visible right from his first cinema. Even the house-hold helper other than the protagonist had a role to play. They were not shown as parading for the sake of it. According to K. B. Venu, no cinema in Malayalam depicted the rebellion of women like the last sequence of *Aadaaminte Variyellu*. Shahina Rafeeqe adds that his female characters are often remembered and not their male counterparts, which shows the importance he has given to the characterisation.

K. P. Jayakumar feels that by leaving her new born baby in front of a stranger's house, Ammini shatters all the idealistic concepts related to motherhood, shared and upheld by religions, communities and history. "Under strict community practicing, Alice and Vasanthi have no choice other than suicide or hallucinate. But Ammini with less community practice is free to revolt. By shooting the last sequence in this way, George states that he is trying to make female oriented films." Muhammad Rafi N. V. suggests that George sets a platform for the issues of women to have a discourse within the society.

Mattoral (The Other Man), 1988: The change from one kitchen to another

The film is about the fruitless revolt of a housewife, the subject with which the common audience of the time could not identify with.

The futile journey of a woman

Susheela is a housewife and mother of two and is supposed to be living happily in a rich housing colony with all the facilities. But she feels emptiness. Her husband Kaimal is a gentleman with no bad habits. But the prolonged togetherness made inertia in their private life. She does her duties with a machine like perfection. One day, she decides to go with Giri, the car mechanic, quitting her old life. Balachandran, their family friend tries to bring her back. But she decides to continue with the new life.

When days pass, Giri admits to Balachandran that he is bored with the new life and brings a new girl to their life. Kaimal has no choice other than leading the usual life with pain. He sends off the children to his native place and decides to kill Susheela. But later he understands that he cannot do that. Meanwhile, Balachandran continues his effort to bring

Susheela back. One day, Susheela admits that her life is hell and is ready to return. They make a plan to meet at the beach. When Balachandran reaches there with Susheela, they find Kaimal lying dead on the sand, having stabbed himself.

The film presents Kaimal as a typical patriarch, who never allows his wife to seek a job and who is never ready to change. He likes to keep his old car, even though it gives problems every other day. He never allows his daughter to sit and read in the drawing room; he always asks her to go inside. He never likes his son mingling with neighbouring children. He prefers a closed life with his wife and children. Though Balachandran is very close to him, he dislikes the idea of Balachandran and his wife Veni spending a day in his house. He does not like ladies going for a job. Susheela tells Veni that she wanted to work, but Kaimal did not allow that. When Balachandran tells him that Veni has gone for her job, his immediate reaction expresses his dislike in letting women go for a job.

The concept of Ideological State Apparatus can be applied in this film too. Society always wants females to be within the structure of the house, even though she is allowed to work outside. Some films show the revolt of a female but finally give the moral that she needs the help of a man; or else she will face problems. Every female viewer understands the connotations which warn them to be either a house lady or a person ready to face problems. Here also, though seems to be from the point of view of a woman, the film alerts the women folk that by going with another man, only your kitchen changes and you will not get your due happiness. The film continues with the warning that once you step out of the house, your world will shatter, you will not get your children and you will lose your husband.

Finally the film punishes Susheela for her decision by killing Kaimal. It is an ultimate preaching that warns the revolting women. It can be observed that the Victorian morality inside the director does not allow him to have a happy ending where both Kaimal and Susheela understand each other better.

In the film, Balachandran clearly expresses his contempt and scolds Susheela for going with Giri by forgetting her children. The total tone of the film is as if Susheela had done a mistake, that is able to be understood and that can be corrected. In the final compromise talk, Balachandran consoles her by saying that mistakes happen to everyone and the logical thing is to correct it when it is found to be wrong. Though the different critiques by academicians on the film term Susheela's act as revolutionary, the film never considers it in that way. Giri is shown as an irresponsible womaniser; a man who had come out of his own house years back. From the point of view of the film, Susheela deserves people like Giri only. She does not deserve to have a man who loves her, understands her and brings her children to her.

Veni is shown as bold enough to spend late night at the office and return home with the boss. She is bold enough to reject the sexual approaches of her superior officer. But the lady viewer can easily get the clue not to be friendly with the boss so that he will not misunderstand

the friendship. In this way a female spectator can read a number of rules and regulations from the film put forward by the director, the base of which is Victorian morality.

C. V. Balakrishnan narrates the way the film had been evolved. In it, an outsider feels that theirs is a happy family. Inside, the family is unhappy. Susheela takes a rebellious decision to shed the cocoon of the happy family and to move on taking the whole risk. "George understood the character. We purposefully narrated certain scenes to show the financial slavery of Susheela. She might have even predicted that Giri may not protect her later. But the slavery she faced inside the house was severe to take such a step", adds C. V. Balakrishnan. K. B. Venu terms the eloping of Susheela a rebellion, though it is inglorious. "The patriarchal society never discussed the problems of women, but George discussed them well. He discussed the female loudly." G. P. Ramachandran thinks George had never created a female with no character or stand. They bear a personality. The female protagonist of the film *Mattoral* questions and shatters the 'all well family' concept. Lijin Jose is of the opinion that George visualises the male insecurities rather than female insecurities, which are favourite subjects of popular Malayalam cinema. And he says that it is the choice of females to be with a man or to leave him. Shahina Rafeeqe adds the idea that George never becomes judgemental in *Mattoral*. The cinema also depicts the case of a superior male who becomes helpless when his wife elopes.

Opinions on Victorian morality

At the same time, most of the experts neither accepted nor denied the question whether Victorian morality or patriarchy played knowingly or unknowingly upon K. G. George. Instead, they tried to normalise the fact or find a reason for that. Vijaykrishnan blames the society for this. According to him, it is the result when one truthfully depicts a society and social reality. C. V. Balakrishnan admits that in a deep reading, such elements can be visible. K. B. Venu too feels that the question is relevant. But he adds that George never made a female character with exclamatory skills and virtues; the same way he never made a male with the same exclamatory virtues. "His male characters were either dwarfs or womanisers; either culprits or murderers." C. S. Venkiteswaran thinks that the world itself does not give an opportunity to the females to live. "Besides, his films are in a tragic mood. So it is natural that at the end, the tragedy comes upon the female when it details the story of a female. And it is the natural plot development that happens when that reality is depicted."

At the same time, a few strongly agreed to the concept of the influence of Victorian morality. G. P. Ramachandran is of the impression that one cannot deny the influence of Victorian morality on K. G. George. But at the same time, one should also consider the time when he made these cinemas as well as his audience. "As a male living in Kerala society at that time, an unknown male chauvinism might have worked upon him."

Muhammed Rafi considers that *Mattoral* showcases the values of an Ideological State Apparatus that preaches the ladies about the pitfalls hidden while breaking a family structure. Shahina Rafeeqe too feels that the society and the period definitely influence a person and

thus they would have an influence on him. “The Kerala society, even the females, had internalised such a morality. Thus, such morality would have internally influenced him.” Lijin Jose appreciates the observation especially related to the kitchen in Mattoral; by eloping, a female just gets transferred from one kitchen to another. For K. P. Jayakumar it is because of the influence of the society he is living in. As a person who has lived in this society for years, George must have been influenced by the morality preaching within the society. “Though he tries to avoid such concepts voluntarily, the same might have started influencing him unknowingly when he begins to work creatively”, Jayakumar adds.

Conclusion

K. G. George is truly one of the best female oriented directors in Malayalam cinema. His *Aadaaminte Variyellu* was always seen as the epitome of female rebellion as Ammini moved ahead, knocking down the director and the camera crew and leaving things frozen at an open end. It is clear from the analysis as well as the opinions of experts that the director dealt with feminine subjects in the way no one else did. The characterisation of an obedient wife disrupting the seemingly peaceful life by quitting is an innovative and rebellious act, even in this millennium; that is Susheela in Mattoral. Meanwhile, Lekhayude Maranam takes a sympathetic and empathetic stand towards the female sufferings in the pursuit of her dream.

At the same time, it is evident that all these female characters face tragic end. They either die or become insane. In *Aadaaminte varyiyellu*, Alice commits suicide and her family gets shattered. It is to be noted that Alice is the female who broke the chastity of a wife. At the same time, Vasanthi, the loyal wife, is ensured that her son is safe in the hands of her mother. Her insanity can be seen as a warning to the husband and family to change positively.

Susheela never dies in Mattoral; but Kaimal. The death itself can be understood as an eternal punishment to the estranged wife. Besides, by opting Giri, the only change that happens in her life is the change of kitchen. Lekha too commits suicide. Moreover, no experts denied this reading; rather they presented reasons for such a hidden morality.

Most of them blamed the society by expressing the fact that in such a society he could not escape from the influence of such morality. Thus, as a male living in Kerala society, the director is influenced by Victorian morality. Knowingly or unknowingly, he acts as a tool of Ideological State Apparatus to warn the female audience about the aftermath of female rebellion. The ultimate fate of each female in these films can be read as the hidden warning by the director who was influenced by Victorian morality.

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