

Women in M.T Vasudevan Nair's Screenplays: A Historical Study
(MRP (H)-417/1213/KLKE002/ UGC-SWRO dated 29/03/2013)

Principal Investigator: Bhagyalakshmi Mohan

In the 'conventional movies', the audience is more focused. Thus the demand of 'conventional cinema' is to involve the audience as much as possible with what is happening on the screen. These films appropriate the language that already exists in the culture. The techniques that are developed by innovative cinema are also used by conventional movie makers. This can be seen in the movies of M.T Vasudevan Nair also. This project looks at the representation of women in M.T Vasudevan Nair's screenplays. It argues that Kerala public sphere is a realm of "casteist patriarchy" even when it claims itself as the "ideal" space of women. This study has selected movies of M.T from 1960's to the present. M.T is a person who includes autobiographical elements in his works. Most of his works are on the Nair community which is famous for practicing matrilineal system in Kerala. His scripts are known for their aesthetic qualities and the portrayal of powerful women characters. But his portrayal of women seems to be passive and alike and as being subservient to the patriarchal ideology. The project attempted an overview of all the screenplays by M.T and tried to locate the space of women in those movies. The portrayal of women as the "cultural bearers" of society is prominent in his texts. Thus a woman is given a negative image if she tries to live for herself or build her own identity. M.T's scripts seem to echo the dominant male perspective where women are expected to follow certain ethical codes and adhere to the family value system where domestic chores and pleasure of the family becomes the ultimate objectives of their lives. This perspective is solely the representation of the view of the dominant patriarchal society. When he tries to glorify the Nair women who are strictly following the patriarchal order, he seems to "deglorify" the women of other castes or religions. Thus he seems to create an 'ideal' Nair woman and the 'other' by the portrayal of contrasting characters. Also the sexual exploitation towards lower caste or lower class women is naturalized in many of his movies. As a whole, we can see that M.T has given importance to women who assimilate themselves to the patriarchal ideology. All his heroines are almost similar in suppressing themselves. Their identity lies in their submissive nature. Thus these films are entirely constructed by the male perspective for the identification of the male audience. The women's roles are only to provide them pleasure both in intellectual and emotional terms.