

**REPRESENTATION OF FEMININE IDENTITY ON REPRESSED AND  
DESIRE OF THE MOVIES ULLOZHUKKU AND KAATHAL – THE  
CORE**

**DISSERTATION**

**Submitted by  
SAIERAH JOHN ANCHERY**

**SM23JMC011**

Under the guidance of

**Zeba Nazar**

*In partial fulfilment of requirements for award of  
the degree Of Master of Arts*



**ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), ERNAKULAM**

**COLLEGE WITH POTENTIAL FOR EXCELLENCE**

Accredited by NAAC with an

'A++' Grade Affiliated to

**MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY**

Kottayam-686560

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## CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled "dissertation **"Representation of feminine identity on Repressed and Desire of the Movies Ullozhukku and Kaathal – The Core"** by (Saierah John Anchery) is a record of bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.



Zeba Nazar

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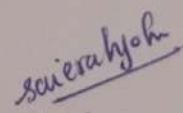
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## DECLARATION

I do affirm that the dissertation "**Representation of feminine identity on Repressed and Desire of the Movies Ullozhukku and Kaathal – The Core**" submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the **Master of Arts degree in Journalism and Mass Communication** Studies has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.

Ernakulam

  
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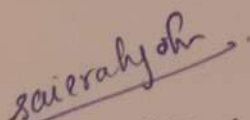
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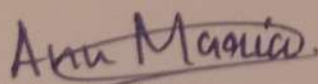
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## **Abstract**

This study examines the performances of Urvashi, Parvathy, and Jyothika in the Malayalam films *Ullozhukku* (2024) and *Kaathal - The Core* (2023) focusing on female representation. Through a comparative analysis, it explores themes of female autonomy, emotional depth, and societal roles, offering insights into the evolving portrayal of women in contemporary Malayalam cinema.

By analyzing character arcs, screenplay, and directing styles, the study evaluates how these films contribute to gender representation in Indian cinema. The performances of the lead actresses are examined for their impact on traditional and modern gender roles. Additionally, the study considers the cultural implications of these portrayals, assessing their influence on audience perceptions and societal attitudes.

This research aims to highlight the shifting narratives in Malayalam cinema and their broader significance in shaping gender discourse in Indian films. It also seeks to emphasize how these films challenge conventional storytelling, providing more nuanced and empowering roles for women. By examining these transformations, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamic evolution of female representation in Indian cinema.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

Cinema frequently serves as a mirror reflecting paradoxes, expectations, and societal standards. Movies like *Ullozhukku* and *Kaathal - The Core* give us a glimpse into the intricate issues faced by women, especially when it comes to the themes of identity and desire. *Ullozhukku* (2024), which was directed by Christo Tomy, tells the story of the family's attempt to bury a relative but the grave instead is flooded with a heavy rain that reveals hidden secrets and lies which might break the family apart.

*Kaathal- The Core* (2023) that was directed by Jeo Baby is a portrayal of the changes in love, freedom, and judgment due to time in a contemporary environment. Both movies are a deep dive into the struggle of the female mind in a traditional society, and they are the ones who tackle the topics of repression, agency, and emotional chaos. This research is an attempt to evaluate how these movies represent convincingly the confusion of female identity and the trapped desire in the perspective of a society that is dominated by men and the traditional norms.

## **1.2. Theory**

In her highly regarded essay 1975 “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Laura Mulvey begins to introduce feminist cinema theory regarding the representation of women in films as well as in a patriarchal society. Mulvey famously argues that blockbuster films are usually designed to please the “male gaze,” where women are presented primarily as the objects of male fantasies. In the film, the action is predominantly captured from the viewpoint of a heterosexual male, which emphasizes women’s looks, charm, and sexual appeal. Referring to Freud’s theory, Mulvey speaks about scopophilia, which is defined as taking pleasure in watching. In film, this relates to the feminine cost of cinema where women are reduced to passive sights and “men display themselves as active spectators of the show.” Mulvey, in her essay, shows that women in classical Hollywood films can be either the objects of the male or the audiences' erotic fantasies, or they may function as a visual spectacle. They are usually the first causes of the male protagonist's journey or distractions during the story. Utilizing the concepts of Freud and Lacan, Laura Mulvey investigates how viewers relate to wish for what they see in films, often analyzing the movies within the context of western civilization. She argues that film, in its traditional form, offers the audience a chance to experience the world through the male protagonists. This prolongs society’s traditional gender roles and power imbalance. Laura Mulvey insists on a departure from traditional methods of filmmaking that objectify women. She recommends alternative, experimental filmmaking that challenges the male gaze and presents women as complex, active participants, thereby interfering with the usual narrative and visual pleasures. The theory remains a ground text in feminist film criticism, encouraging discourse on how cinema reflects and shapes societal views on gender and power.

### **1.3. Statement of the Research Problem**

This paper researches representation of women as held back and desired figures in the films *Ullozhukku* and *Kaathal – The Core*. This study examines how these characters manifest emotional depth and assumes their narrative roles and what that reveals about the representation of femininity in these plays. The two films offer a textured vision of the female experience, revealing the clash between social repression and individual aspiration. In this study I will explore how these representations are signified to wider themes of femininity.

### **1.4. Objectives**

1. To explore the portrayal of feminine identity in *Ullozhukku* and *Kaathal - The Core*.
2. To analyze how repressed desires manifest in the narratives, dialogues, and visual elements of the films.
3. To examine the cultural and societal underpinnings influencing the representation of women in these films.
4. To investigate how the films challenge or reinforce patriarchal ideologies.

### **1.5. Need for the Research Problem**

The behaviour and treatment of women in films has a great impact on how society considers gender roles. Films like *Ullozhukku* and *Kaathal - The Core* show women as both desires are suppressed, therefore, supports or challenges traditional gender roles. The investigation of these representations helps us see if films follow old ideas or more progressive and loud images of women. Movies can reflect and shape the gender perceptions of society.

Examination of how feminism is portrayed in these films helps us to better appreciate the culture they come from and the audience that attracts, thus exposing society's expectations and values over women. The way female characters are portrayed can help viewers understand the empowerment and identity of women. Examining these representations helps us have conversations about gender equality and emphasizes the importance of varied and detailed representations of women in cinema.

### **1.6. Role of the characters**

In the Malayalam film "Ullozhukku," Parvathy Thiruvothu plays the role of Anju, who was caught in a female emotional and relationship struggle. Anju is married to Thomaskutty, who is very ill and needs to take care of her ever since she is in bed. Despite these responsibilities, Anju has a relationship with her long-time lover, Rajeev in spite of these obligations. This affair highlights her inner conflicts and her search for happiness. Parvathy's performance as Anju is intense, showing the character's honesty and strength. The movie features interactions filled with unspoken tensions and hints at deeper problems. These elements are important to the story, exploring themes like love, duty, and the desire for freedom.

In Ullozhukku, Urvashi offers a notable performance as Anju's mother -in -law (starred by Parvathy Thiruvothu). Leelamma is shown as a strong, traditional woman, which lies in her beliefs and standards on family responsibilities and actions. Her personality is essential for the examination of social norms and family dynamics. Many have praised Urvashi's performance as Leelamma.

According to Asvathi Gopalakrishnan of the film Companion, Urvashi "symbolizes a calm anger throughout the film, even when she is still sitting, she still shakes the frame, which has opened within her."

"There is nothing that Urvashi cannot do on screen, and she is as luxurious as Leelamma, portraying a mother in mourning and a woman confronting her own crime and secrets," Sowmya Rajendran emphasized Urvashi's versatility. The film focuses on challenging relations between Leelamma and Anju, which features silent stress and subtle interactions. Their relationship is important for the story, engrossed in subjects like love, duty and personal freedom. Urvashi brings deep into the character of Leelamma, making it both reliable and complex. Leelamma's personal conflicts reflected the big themes presented in the film.

In the 2023 Malayalam film *Kaathal – The Core*, Jyothika delivers a powerful performance as Omana, the wife of Mathew Devassy (played by Mammooty). For almost twenty years, she has been recognized as a very religious woman who has taken on the traditional family roles and duties. The story takes a significant turn when Omana files for divorce, citing Mathew's failure to fulfil marital duties, revealing that they had been intimate only four times during their twenty-year marriage. This choice sets off a series of events that ultimately lead to Mathew coming out as a gay guy.

Jyothika has acquired popularity for her nuanced and complex depiction of Omana. Her performance is amazing for its use of expressive frame language and facial expressions to communicate an incredible deal of emotional depth with little to no words. In retrospect, she called the role an eye-opener, stating that although she had played many housewife roles in the past, playing Omana was a particularly novel and enlightening experience for her.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1. Film Studies Insights Depiction of Women's Lives in Cinema**

Stories of various cultures often see how women's life and hidden desires are shown in films. This topic shows attention to problems and difficulties that women face. Society often tells women how to behave, think and speak, which makes them feel fit in the society. This can make women hide who they really are, along with their true wants and dreams. So, what they feel inside is often different from how they live on the outside.

Hidden desires are key to understanding women's identities in these stories. Often, society tries to control or judge women's desires, whether it's for love, success, sex, or freedom. As a result, women keep these desires inside and hide them, letting them out in small ways through art, dreams, or acts of fighting. Keeping feelings and desires secret can cause stress and shows how people are stopped from being themselves.

In films and books, the combination of being a woman and having hidden desires has led to powerful stories. These stories show how women deal with a world that tries to control them, bringing out their strength and ability to express themselves even when things are difficult by focusing on these problems. This questions what society expects and pushes to see more open minded when being a woman and human desires.



Feminist ideas in films have started talking about how women's body, sexuality and femininity are shown on screen. It raises questions about identity, desire and politics in films. They focus on how these things are shown and presented on the screen and the mind of the audience.

Recently, many scholars have shown more interest in intersection, which is like different types of discrimination (such as gender, race and class) overlap. They are showing covered and oppressed people, both as characters in movies and in movie studies. This view has made it more important to recognize and deal with the suffering of many sides caused by gender, race, class and other parts of the identity that affect how films are made and studied.

Kerala, the regional film industry in India, often called Mollywood, is a good example of how regional cinema in India is changing because of changing social values and a growing audience. This change connects to discussions about the work of Laura Mulvey and Claire Johnston, as well as psychoanalysis was used in feminist cinema theory. It also analyzes how feminist filmmakers can reveal and question the ideas that support women's riot.

Today's feminist film critics can look more than just the male look. The theory of cinema has grown because of ideas of post-colonial studies, such as ethnographic and colonial looks. Cullum says that the early focus on gender and male eyes have lost other things that affect social power and identity. Interdisciplinary methods, especially those of post-colonial theory, offer a more complex understanding of racial and national difference and highlight how race and ethnicity affect visualization and representation.

It may surprise some people that women around the world were doing all kinds of creative cinema work during the silent era, such as writing scripts, producing and driving. So the question is not just why these women were forgotten? But also why do we forget them? Gaines says scholars should be careful about how to reinterpret and tell the stories of Women's contributions to cinema.

## **2.2. Cultural and Social Context**

### **2.2.1. Representation of Women in Cinema**

In films like *Ullozhukku* and *Kaathal-The Core* has added a lot to discuss how women are shown in Malayalam cinema. Each film is related to difficult social issues through its story. The *Ullozhukku*, directed by Christo Tommy, looks at the complex relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, played by Urvashi and Parvathy Thiruvothu. It talks quietly about legal and social problems women face, especially when they are widows and society eases them. The film sees marriage, what is the expectation of society, and when they are standing for their rights, women must meet. Jeo Baby insisted that it is important to include women's ideas in storytelling, stating that society and gender roles often hold women back. The positive response of these films has started talking about the need for real and different female characters in Malayalam cinema. It is motivating filmmakers to go beyond just to fill a quota and use tired stereotypes.

## **2.3. Patriarchy and Gender Roles**

*Ullozhukku*, directed by Christo Tomy, looks at the complex relationship between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, played by Urvashi and Parvathy Thiruvothu. *Kaathal - The Core*, directed by Jeo Baby, is about Omana, played by Jyotika, who wants to divorce her husband

Mathew Devassy, played by Mammooty, after 20 years of marriage because she says he's gay. Both films show how patriarchal systems control women's roles in the family and society. Kaathal - The Core especially shows what society expects of women and what happens when they challenge those expectations. Ullozhukku and Kaathal - The Core are stories that not only entertain but also make people think about the social ideas around women's roles, rights, and how they're shown in movies and real life.

## **2.4. Character Studies**

### **2.4.1. Patriarchal Conditioning**

The film examines the impact of social norms and patriarchal beliefs on the lives of their female characters, particularly Leelamma and Anju. These women are limited by the rigid expectations of a male -dominated society, which dictates their roles and the choices available to them. Often, this makes them hide their desires and dreams, leading to lives of disappointment. The movie shows how deep-rooted cultural values can keep women from being happy by forcing them into traditional roles as wives and mothers, often hurting their own well-being. Kaathal - The Core looks at how patriarchal norms affect Mathew and Omana.

### **2.4.2. Obligations vs Personal Desires**

The film criticizes how these morals lead people to roles that prevent them from being loyal to them, causing an unsatisfactory life. The film also analyzes the conflict between family duties and personal desires. In Ullozhukku, characters like Anju show conflicts between meeting family expectations and demand for personal happiness. Anju is stuck in a wedding for money, showing the sacrifices made by people for her family.

The film reveals the emotional and mental cost of these sacrifices, which shows the internal struggles of those who want to live honestly. Kaathal- The Core shows the tension between family duties and personal dreams. Mathew marries Omana out of duty to family and society, even though he's gay, leading to a difficult marriage with emotional needs not met. The film highlights the sacrifices made when family and society come before personal happiness, showing the emotional level of those choices.

#### **2.4.3. Emotional Undercurrents**

Ullozhukku uses flood to show hidden feelings and family secrets. It captures emotional difficulties below the surface, reflecting the nature of the family's relationship and the impact of the hidden truth. In the form of floods that disrupt everyday life, these feelings and secrets has been level down, affecting relationships and changing family dynamics. This highlights the theme of emotional suppression, showing how issues and desires are not resolved which can create tension and distance among family members. The story focuses on the importance of facing these emotions to achieve real understanding and connection.

The movie Kaathal - The Core, uses a simple narrative to show the emotions and secrets hidden in the marriage of Matthew and Omana. The view of the film about their relationship discovers unsaid feelings, social pressures and personal struggles that define their lives. This emphasizes the impact of unrelated emotions on relationships, showing how the fear of judgment can suppress true feelings and lead to silent despair.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Comparative Analysis**

Malayalam cinema consistently used a subtle story to examine complex mutual relationships and social conferences. Two of these films, *Ullozhukku* by Christo Tommy (2024) and *Jeo Baby Kaathal - The Core* (2023), present deep stories that analyze the complications of marriage and family relationships. Despite his shared attention on personal conflicts within the social structure, films employ different theme, character development, plot structures and stylistic options. This comparative analysis checks how each film explains the impact of these options on its story and the reception of the audience.

##### **3.1.1. Themes**

*Ullozhukku* explores the emotional dynamics within a home, focusing on the bond between a mother-in-law, Leelamma (Urvashi), and her daughter-in-law, Anju (Parvathy Thiruvothu). The movie delves into topics of repressed feelings, individual sacrifices, and the societal expectations placed on women in a male-dominated world. The story emphasizes conflict between obligations and personal goals, providing a complex analysis of human interaction. Conversely, in *Kaathal – The Core* marriages examine the institute, highlight social expectations and to maintain personal authenticity within traditional structures.

The film throws light on the topics of the struggle to manage love, acceptance and personal identity among strict social norms. Unlike Ullozhukku, which discovers the dynamics of family power, Kaathal – The Core takes a more direct view in criticizing social norms related to marriage.

### **3.1.2. Characters**

The main characters of Ullozhukku, Leelamma and Anju are shaped with their constrained roles outside the house. Anju represents a young woman fighting her disappointments and Leelama represents hopes and Older -generation expectations. The circumstances developed serve as the emotional core of the film, showing how their expressed feelings affect family relations. In Kaathal – The Core, characters serve as representation of people limited by social boundaries. The main characters expose the mental stress of social criteria, detecting the complications of marriage. Unlike internal conflicts in Ullozhukku, Kaathal - The Core show their struggles more openly, inquiring about traditional thoughts of love and loyalty.

### **3.1.3. Plot Structure**

Ullozhukku uses a slow story structure, discovering motivations and character conflicts through subtle stories. The structure of the film reflects the gradual revelation of hidden feelings, leading the audience to connect the letter deeply. In comparison, Kaathal - The Core adopts a more linear story, clearly transmitting its subjects. The story directly encounters the difficulties faced by their main characters, which leads to social criticism. The criteria are more direct and understandable.

#### **3.1.4. Stylistic option**

In the film *Ullozhukku*, Christo Tomy has a minimal story, using visual elements and dialogue to express emotional wealth. Cinematography focuses on close frames and natural lights, which produces a sensation of emotional loneliness of characters. The limited visual style enhances the film's contemplative nature.

The film *Kaathal - The Core*, Jeo Baby uses a traditional film approach, focusing on the narrative expressed through dialogue. Extension visual and bright visual characters emphasize the public aspect of challenges, highlighting film participation in social interaction. Story decisions guarantee that the themes of films are available to wide audiences.

#### **3.1.5. Impact on the Audience**

The feelings of the audience are different from the film *Ullozhukku* and *Kaathal - The Core* styles affected. *Ullozhukku* shows the audience to think of unresolved family conflict and encourage active and thoughtful participation. The film's sensitive plot promotes an emotional relationship that ends for a long time after the initial scene.

On the other hand, *Kaathal - The Core* bang social criticism encourages serious thinking. The film challenges the audience by openly addressing the subjects of marriage and personal freedom. Its effects are amplified by installed criteria, both immediate and condensed.

### **3.2. Thematic Analysis**

Ullozhukku (2024) by Christo Tomy and Kaathal – The Core (2023) by Jeo Baby explore themes of identity, societal pressures, and emotional repression, yet they diverge in their cinematic techniques. This analysis investigates how each film articulates its central themes and the influence of their narrative styles on audience perception.

#### **3.2.1. The Theme of Familial and Societal Expectations**

In Ullozhukku, the film explores strict expectations imposed on women in a conventional family environment. The bond between Leelamma (Urvashi) and Anju (Parvathy Thiruvothu) illustrates the gap between generations in vision of commitment and personal satisfaction. The film illustrates the burden of expectations through mild dialogues, long-term breaks and visual symbols, such as closed areas that symbolize locking.

In Kaathal - The Core, the film expands the conversation to cover social demands about marriage and personal identity. Mathew Devasi (Mammooty) is forced to withstand his sexuality in a traditional environment, where the marriage is seen as a duty and not as a personal decision. The theme is clearly presented through confrontation dialogues, court scenarios, and public examination that intensify the conflict, making it more external and immediate.



### **3.2.2. The Subject of Liberation and Emotional Suppression**

Ullozhukku illustrates how women cope with their challenges through suppressed emotions and quiet. Without using overt language, Anju's nuanced expression and Leelamma's commanding yet frail demeanour provide a nuanced portrayal of women working on emotional matches. Images of water - floods, rain, and stagnant pools are used to symbolize emotions that are ephemeral.

The emotional strain of living a secret life is shown in Kaathal - The Core by Mathew's struggle with his sexuality and Omana's (Jyothika) response to his reality. By using confessional dialogue and monologues as a means of release, the film gives its characters the chance to express themselves. Public conflicts serve as pivotal times in the recognition of imprisoned emotions.

### **3.2.3. The Theme of Gender and Power Dynamics**

In Ullozhukku, the film emphasizes the roles designated for women in the home environment, where influence is subtly implemented through family responsibility instead of openly dominance. Although Leelamma appears to be in control, limited by social expectations, and demonstrates how patriarchy affects women as well.

In Kaathal – The Core, the film challenges conventional gender roles by examining the presumed masculinity and heterosexual orientation of its main character. Mathew's journey confronts the concept of gender expectations, illustrating how inflexible norms impact both males and females.

While Ullozhukku investigates gender roles via a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, Kaathal – The Core, expands the focus to question heteronormativity as a whole. Both movies challenge the frameworks that restrict personal identity to established roles.

#### **3.2.4. The Theme of Personal Identity vs. Social Image**

**Social Presence** The conflict between social expectations and individual identity is exemplified by Leelammas' concealed worry and Ullozhukku, Anjus's subtly expressed resistance. The tension between their actual selves and what society expects of them is never fully resolved, and highlights the recurring nature of these difficulties.

Mathew's struggle to confront social hypocrisy head on is explored in Kaathal - The Core. The movie highlights the distinction between a social viewpoint and a personal reality, particularly in the legal and political arenas where appearances are more valuable than sincerity. While it stresses the conflict between identity and societal judgment. Both films explore the victims that people commit in order to maintain a socially acceptable image.

#### **3.3 Narrative Voice and Structure**

Ullozhukku uses a unique story, and depends on gestures, silence and subtitles rather than clear explanation. The film is accompanied by a non-educational manner with the past and the current overlapping, so that the audience can gently share the emotional depth to the characters. This approach emphasizes psychological feelings through a restrained story voice. Movies invite slow pacing and visual modes to engage the audience deeply with complex relationships and Social pressures depicted.

In contrast, Kaathal – The Core adopts a more direct and structured story after a traditional linear. The film quickly shows a major problem and progressively reveals the emotional nuances around it. Dialogue -powered visual and clear discussions are central to illuminate the objectives and backstory of the character, To make the story more accessible and straight.

### **3.4. Pacing**

"Ullozhukku" is purposely slow-paced, which allows depth in characters, requiring the audience's patience, as intentions and emotions are gradually revealed by interactions. "Kaathal - The Core" maintains a faster pace, aligned with its direct narrative style. The structural progress of the film ensures that plot development and character arcs are clearly and effectively presented, choosing the approach of telling viewers a more traditional story.

### **3.5. Character Development and Perspective**

Both films prioritize female protagonists, but are different in the depiction of character arches. In "Ullozhukku", characters such as Urvashi and Parvathy develop through self-reflection and unspoken feelings. Their struggles are revealed in teams so that the audience can observe their transformations indirectly. The film's nuanced conversation and quiet interactions highlight the internal growth and mutual understanding of the characters.

On the other hand, "Kaathal -The Core", offers a more clear study of character growth. The internal struggle of the Jyothika is externalised by significant dialogue and confrontation, resulting in transitions that are shown openly. The film uses personal revelations and direct interactions with other characters, especially the character of Mammooty's, to promote emotional development and give vitality to the arc.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Analysis**

Movies often show what society thinks is important, and for a long time, they have carried forward ideas about how women should behave, think, and what they need. But films like *Ullozhukku* and *Kaathal - Core Shake Things Up*. They show women what they expect. This chapter sees how these films see women and their secret craving. We will use the ideas of thinkers like Laura Mulvey and Freud, what women who want for themselves and what society wants from them will see tension between them. We must be seeing how these films change old stories and show different aspects of being a woman.

#### **4.1. Ullozhukku**

The scenes of *Ullozhukku* show how much shape is given to women's lives, which is expected from them, especially for Leelamma and Anju. Each selected moment pushes and shows the bridge what they are going to do, what they hide, and how they fight back. From Leelamma telling Anju's mom that she'll take care of her daughter (which keeps those old roles going) to Anju begging for freedom, you see how this goes on from one generation to the next, and how hard it is to break free. *Ullozhukku* doesn't just call out what's wrong with society; it paints a detailed life picture of women trying to figure out who they are when they're stuck in these strict rules.

#### **4.1.2. When Anju's Affair Comes Out**

Anju is judged for breaking the rules when her affair is found out by everyone who indicates how strict the rules are for women. Anju is seen as the bad woman for looking for love outside her marriage, which is clearly an example of Mulvey's idea of male gaze. Freud's theory about hiding feelings can be noticed here.

Anju has been hiding what she wants for so long, and now it's all coming out, causing problems. The secret of Thomaskutty being sick is ignored, but Anju is shamed for wanting love. This shows how society cares more about a woman being “pure” than being happy, commonly seen in a patriarchal society. The movie doesn't punish Anju, instead makes the audience think about their own right and wrong.

#### **4.1.3. Leelamma Stands Up to Anju's Parents**

When Leelamma confronts Anju's parents, she starts to realize that she's been part of the problem by supporting those old rules. Using Mulvey's idea of Woman as Bearer of Meaning, the scene turns around the usual image of women suffering in movies. Leelamma isn't just watching anymore; she's speaking up against the wrong things happening in her own family. This fits with Lacan's Mirror Stage. Leelamma sees that she's been helping a system that hurts women like Anju and herself. This moment hit me hard because it's true that often, the people who support those old traditions don't even realize they're causing harm. Her outburst isn't just about standing up for Anju; it's when she wakes up and sees what's been happening. It's one of the best scenes in the film.

#### **4.1.4. Anju's Asks for Freedom**

One of the key moments in 'Ullozhukku' is Anju's fight for freedom. She wants to live a life in which she wants to be happy. Anju's father questioned about her relationship, which he was against. However, she stood firm on her decision to stay with her boyfriend thus refusing to accept his decision. Still, during her husband's funeral, her father finally allowed her to leave, and acknowledged that she was looking for an escape from her current life. In the last moments of Ullozhukku, Anju comes to a painful acknowledgement - her boyfriend was never really committed to her, but rather for the wealth and security that came with her deceased husband's dowry.

Throughout the film, she believed in their love and defied her father's objection, just to see his true intentions loosen. As she stands at a crossroads for the future, the weight of betrayal and self-insight causes her to make a smart choice.

Instead of escaping with him, she decides to stay with her mother-in-law, embracing an unexpected bond that offers her a sense of belonging and purpose beyond the illusions of love. From a feminist point of view, Mulvey says that female characters in movies often don't have any power. But Anju is fighting back. She refuses to obey the rules that may not seem right for her. This moment is so powerful because it's not just a movie. It is about women who fight against women's roles everywhere who push on them. It makes Leelamma and the audience wonder if doing what you're supposed to do and being in love is the same thing. It questions the social norms that society has instilled in them. The power of this scene is its honesty. Anju isn't rebelling just to rebel; she's a woman who wants the right to choose her own life.

#### **4.1.5. Coming Together When Things Are Hard**

At the end of Ullozhukku, the flood is both a real event and symbol. It washes the old rules that control the lives of these women, comes with Leelamma and Anju. This is not a typical movie where rebel women are punished. Mulvey's counter-cinema idea is clear here. The film doesn't follow the usual story; it lets things end without judging. Jung's Individuation theory explains how both women change inside and out, bringing together their personal and social selves. What's great about this ending is that it admits that change takes time. Instead of a fake happy ending, the film shows understanding between two women who have been shaped and held back by the same forces, but in different ways.

#### **4.2. Kaathal - The Core**

Each of the selected scenes suggests a key moment where in Omana, the primary character, realizes something, faces something, or changes. Her tale is special due to the fact, not like many Indian movie girls, she's now not only a sufferer. She asks questions, resists, and takes back who she is.

##### **4.2.1. The Big Surprise**

Omana's world falls apart when she finds out her husband, Mathew, is gay. It changes everything she thought she knew about marriage and herself. Unlike dramatic scenes in most movies, this one is quiet but full of emotion. It makes her inner struggle even stronger. Freud's defence mechanism theory is clear when she first denies it, showing how shocked and confused she is to learn that her marriage was a lie. The film doesn't explain her feelings too much. It uses her silence and the expression on her face to show her sadness and confusion.

She was not just betrayed but, this moment makes Omana question everything. Her identity as a wife suddenly feels pointless. Instead of just being a watcher, you get to see her pain in a real way. Personally, the scene was impactful as it points out how society has set stereotypical expectations for women like hiding their emotions, tolerating injustice.

#### **4.2.2. A Profound Realization**

In the climax of the Kaathal - The Core Omana experiences a deep acknowledgement when she treats the truth about her husband, Mathew Devassy. While their marriage was built on mutual respect, it lacked the romantic love and emotional fulfilment she longed for. This moment of awakening arises when she observes Mathew in court, where his oppressed identity is laid only before society. The weight of years used in a marriage that never really belonged to her becomes undeniable.

Through the lens of Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze, Omana's journey can be regarded as an undermining of traditional cinematic depictions of women. Instead of being a passive figure defined by her husband's narrative, she regains her agency by going out of the role that was assigned to her. Psychologically, this is consistent with Jacques Lacan's concept of the mirror stage, where an individual recognizes his fragmented I and seeks whole. Omana's moment of realization corresponds to this self-recognition-she does not appear as Mathew's wife, but as an individual who deserves emotional fulfilment.

Towards the end of the film, she chooses to prioritize her self-respect for society's expectations, and marks a calm yet radical liberation. Her decision is not just about Mathew's truth, but about regaining her own identity, moving away from a life where she was just an extension of the history of others.



#### **4.2.3. The Tea Scene – A Moment of Sisterhood**

In Kaathal – The Core, there is a tea scene between Omana and Mathew's former lover's wife, which is a powerful moment of silent solidarity, where two women, social expectations, find a unique connection.

Through the male principle of Laura Mulvey, this scene reduces the traditional cinematic representation of women as inactive objects of will. Instead, the film allows them to exist beyond their relationships with men and recover their stories through shared experience.

Psychologically, this moment corresponds to Carl Jung's collective unconscious, where individuals recognize shared archetypes - in this case the silent resistance of women in patriarchal structures. When sitting together, none of the women explicitly need to express her pain; their mutual understanding is a reflection of years of internalized victimisation. This quiet but profound interaction acts as cataract recognition for Oman, and reinforces that her struggle is not isolated, but part of a larger pattern of oppressed female agency. The stage shifts the sub-focus from men's choices to the woman's resistance, making it one of the most introspective and layered moments in the film.

#### **4.2.4 The Final Choice**

The end of the Kaathal - The Core is not about revenge or society is correct. This is about taking a decision to live a life of Omana on its own terms. She doesn't want anyone and is not pressured to deal with the situation that does not make her happy. She chooses to separate from Matthew, which is usually different from how women in Malayalam films are. The Ericksons Identification Principle helps in understanding. Omana is going through an identity crisis because being a wife, who was her foundation, was suddenly taken away.

Her last choice is how she resolves this crisis. She withdraws her power instead of deciding what her future will be. This end makes it special that it does not follow the old story lines that say you should just do Things or forgive. Omana does not need anyone to tell her right, and he does not allow himself to get caught in a wedding. By changing what it means to be free, she questions what the marriage should be, it should be made. A calm but powerful work decision of rebellion.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

This research is aimed to detect the fine depiction of female heroes in recent Indian films *Ullozhukku* (2024) and *Kaathal - The Core* (2023), especially through the performance of Urvashi, Parvathi and Jyothika. The background of this study highlighted the change of female roles in Indian films, which evolved to run the narrative of inactive, strong, strong, central figures. *Ullozhukku* presents an interaction conflict that refers to deep roots and social expectations, while *Kaathal - The Core* delays political, personal disruption, and emphasizes the flexibility of its leading character. These films show how shifting cultural and social mobility has influenced the way women characters have written and covered, making them more reliable and effective.

Literature reviews referred to these findings within the feminist film theory, discussing how female representation is historically limited to stereotypes that strengthen patriarchal norms. However, contemporary films, including *Ullozhukku* and *Kaathal – The Core* challenge these criteria by portraying women as independent, complex and central fiction. The increasing appearance of strong female roles aligns with widespread social changes and increasing demand for diverse and realistic representation of femininity. Through a qualitative research approach, the study analyzed various elements such as cinematography, character arcs, and performance, to understand how these films produce their female hero. Cinematographic options in *Ullozhukku* emphasize the emotional depth of their characters, using close-up and lighting to highlight their internal conflicts. Similarly, *Kaathal - The Core* appoints the visual story stories to outline the struggles of the hero against social obstacles.

Urvashi, Parvathy and Jyothika performed feminist narratives of films, as each actress brings authenticity and strength to their role. The importance of these demonstrations cannot be understood, as they contribute to the overall impact and reliability of the characters, causing them to resonate deeply with the audience.

The findings of this study indicate that Malayalam cinema is making significant progress in painting strong female characters. However, future research can expand this task, such as examining other Indian film industries such as Bollywood and Tollywood to understand how female representation in various linguistic and cultural contexts is developing. Additionally, audience's reception studies can give insight out how this depiction affects the public perceptions of femininity and gender roles. Further research directors and screenplay writers can also detect the creative vision, analyzing how their attitude shapes the narratives of strong female characters.

This study underlines the importance of strong female heroes in contemporary Indian cinema, *Ullozhukku* and *Kaathal - The Core* works as an example of how movies can redefine traditional narratives and provide more enough roles for women. The growing prominence of such narratives indicates a change to a more equitable and inclusive cinematic landscape, reflecting broad social changes in gender perceptions and roles.

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