**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.