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
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](image)

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 Ghaill 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 viewpoint:

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 consequently 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 matriliny in the early part of the twentieth century in favor of more respectable practices of monogamy, patriliny 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 matriliny to patriliny 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.