Conclusion

This section consolidates the various aspects discussed thus far, thereby providing a basis for drawing a conclusion as to whether this analysis provides an effective antidote to the inherent and absolute ideas on men and masculinities:

Hitherto, all historical existing societies for which we have good evidence, had been characterized by a sexual division of labour, legitimated by what it was imagined to be natural or godly for men and women to do. This division of labour, although it took a vast variety of forms, had systematically privileged men, who characteristically enjoyed superior power, resources and status to women, and who legitimated this by claiming that they were naturally superior to women by virtue of their sex. (MacInnes 7)

The critics on men and masculinities have observed that one of the main reasons for the crises of men in the twentieth and twenty first century is that their role as the breadwinner in the family is being questioned:

… women’s demands for freedom and equality have left men confused about their role. The dependent housewife model of the family is in decline and one of the questions that come to haunt men is how can they prove their masculinity and superiority in these changing circumstances. Furthermore sociologists like Bradley (2013) suggest that the rise of feminism together with new models of masculinity has emerged in response to economic and cultural changes. Thus the New Man (a softer
caring creature), sometimes labeled feminized man, replacing Connell’s hegemonic masculinity has led to a moral panic about what it means to be a man at the beginning of the 21st century. (Dasgupta and Gokulsing12)

The contemporary society strives to achieve gender equality and as a result, men who find it difficult to assert and exercise their power and strength, devise various strategies in order to deploy their authority. An analysis of men and masculinities in isolation may not yield the desired outcome and the exercise will tend to be more meaningful and result oriented when done in conjunction with an analysis of femininity. Coming specifically to this research, the reasons for the ambivalences and negotiations in the lives of the male protagonists in George’s films can be broadly classified into four distinct categories. The first reason being the all round progression of women which includes their gaining education, their access to wealth indicating their financial independence, and their quest for freedom and equality. The entry of a woman in the life of a man in the form of his spouse or his lover and its influence on him is the next reason. The familial structure as well as the background in which the man is born into can be considered as the subsequent reason and the last one for this aberration is when the society and its people start influencing the life of the man in a negative manner. If one peruses these reasons, it will be quite obvious that such scenarios exist in the day to day life of men and this is not confined to Georges’s protagonists alone who are merely the microcosm of men in the society at large.

The films, Mattoral and Adaminte Vareyellu, depict how men consider the concept of homemaker as stable and unchanging even in the twentieth century when women folk have started entering the public sphere and are no longer confined to their
houses. The common and accepted notion of a homemaker as an embodiment of femininity, lead men to have idealistic views on how a homemaker should be, what her priorities in life should be, and what are the duties she is supposed to perform. Any deviation from these pre-conceived notions creates confusions in the minds of men leading to a distinctive situation which has been identified as an area of study in this research.

In the film *Mattoral*, the major cause for the ambivalence in the mind of the male protagonist Kaimal, is his wife Susheela’s assertion of independence and escape from the domestic trauma. And based on such a reading, this film can be said to fall under the first category of reasons where the cause of the man’s ambivalence is the quest for recognition, freedom and equality by the woman. From Kaimal’s viewpoint, Susheela is a very happy and contented wife because he, under the influence of patriarchal norms, assumes that she possesses all what a woman requires - food, clothes, children, a well employed husband, one’s own house and protection. If indeed these are all the requisites for a woman to be happy, then Susheela, without an iota of doubt, is indeed a lucky and fortunate woman, but the reality is not as simple as this because a woman is not just a body with life, but one with her own specific likes and dislikes, pleasures and sorrows, her own self and subjectivity, and her own identity and freedom and till the time the husband becomes conscious of her ontological existence and begins to consider her as a subject, family happiness will remain as evanescent as ever before. Kaimal was unable to read into the mind of his spouse and remained in a fool’s paradise until the day when Susheela eloped, after which reality dawned on him, but it was a trifle too late because by
that time he had fallen into a quagmire and the manner in which he negotiates the predicament in which he had landed himself in is by committing suicide.

*Adaminte Variyellu*, is a film which presents two families belonging to different strata of the society, and an analysis of the reasons for the confusions in the minds of the male protagonists reveal that here, the financial independence of the women involved is the root cause. Even though the cause for the confusion is more or less the same, the way the two protagonists negotiate is quite different. In the case of Mammachan, his wife Alice’s assertion of independence and access to wealth create a lot of dilemmas in his life and he deals with these problems by taking the help of social institutions like religion and family and also by exercising his patriarchal power to control Alice, forcing her to be under his clutches. In the case of the other male protagonist Gopi, given the fact that his spouse, Vasanthi has a well paying and stable job, an inferiority complex develops in him which is the primary cause for confusions in his mind. Unable to come to terms with the thought that he is not the bread winner of the family, he resorts to alcoholism and abuse of his wife, both physically and mentally, as a means of escape.

The three films, *Yavanika*, *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback* and *Mela* particularly focus on women’s exposure to the public domain and how this affects the lives of the male protagonists.

*Yavanika’s* male protagonist, Ayyappan, is a unique creation of George in the sense that on one hand he is a maestro in his field of art, whereas he is also a ruffian when it comes to dealing with others in the society in which he lives in. His masculine features are used by him to fulfil his desires and he does not hesitate to indulge in violence if need be. His main strategy of dealing with other people is by threatening them
irrespective of whether they are men or women. Ultimately when he uses this same strategy of his in order to satisfy his carnal desires, he meets his end in the hands of a woman co-artist, Rohini. Being a full time alcoholic, one cannot decipher the confusions, if any, which may exist in his life.

In *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback*, the protagonist, Suresh Babu, is confronted with confusion when Lekha, an upcoming actress enters his life. This cause of confusion provides scope for the study of men and masculinities in this film. Lekha’s assertion of independence can be seen in two stages, one is her decision to leave her own parents who utilise her as an object to earn money for them and the next one is her decision to live with Suresh Babu, who is already a family man. This decision of Lekha creates bewilderment in Suresh Babu and he becomes unsure of how to proceed with his life. However, after a few days of stay with Lekha, when his wife and son come in search of him, he deals with the situation by returning back along with them without any apparent hesitation, leaving Lekha all by herself, establishing the fact that he gives more importance to the family system and respects the institutions called marriage and family, even though he does not love his wife and his ideologies differ from hers.

Along with culture and power, the psyche also has a direct influence on the male body and it perceives the body as a medium through which the experiences can be felt and identified, thus making it possible for masculinity to be understood corporally. A man can identify one’s masculinity through two ways, one is through his body and the other is through the relationship between his body and the body of others. In the case of Govindan, the protagonist in *Mela*, when he reaches the city with his wife, his male body enters into a dialogue with other male bodies and in the process, starts drawing a
comparison between the two. When his wife sees the new social relationship existing between her husband and the other men in the city, she begins to perceive him in a different way which is mainly due to the fact that his male body is deviant from the normal one. The difference between the culturally created male body and the actual one in Govindan’s case, which is deviant from the accepted norms, creates tension, confusion and anxiety leading to an identity crisis in him. His committing suicide at the end of the film signifies how miserable his life is in a heteronormative world where the notion of masculinity is mainly determined by one’s relationship with the surroundings. He negotiates by giving up his life, thus saying goodbye to a world which cannot accommodate a midget like him by providing suitable place and space.

In the next two films Swapnadanam and Irakal, which form a part of this research, George’s approach is not only unique but also different and he makes use of the concept of madness in order to portray the perplexities and negotiations of the heroes. In Swapnatanam, it is the entry of a woman into the life of Dr. Gopinathan that creates quandaries and doubts in his mind. His wife Sumitra’s constant nagging by mentioning the name of his college day lover Kamalam and his dreaming about Kamalam slowly creates fissures in their marital life. His marriage with Sumitra against his desire and solely in order to satisfy his mother, leads him to a situation where he becomes incapable of leading a happy and satisfied family life which, over a period of time, makes him a mentally aberrant person ultimately leading him to a psychiatric hospital. Post treatment, he becomes normal and regains his ability to recognise his near and dear ones, however the protagonist’s negotiation is portrayed in a different manner in this film. The cured Dr. Gopinathan, upon reaching his house, rides away on his scooter without any destination
leaving the conclusion an open ended one as far as the viewers are concerned.

Baby, the protagonist of *Irakal*, is depicted as a teenager who is at war with himself. His family, comprising of his dominant father, eldest brother, and his promiscuous elder sister, creates a kind of negative atmosphere which leads him to become a victim of criminal madness with lots of confusions in his mind. He loses interest in his studies and also finds it boring to do any job. Taking solace in drugs, he eventually becomes a serial killer and he deals with his plight by resorting to violence and crime. Unlike Dr. Gopinathan in *Swapnadanam*, Baby, is not given a chance to undergo treatment for his mental disorder, neither is he brought in front of the judiciary to undergo trial, but rather he gets killed by his own autocratic father, thereby giving an unusual ending to the film.

The last two films analysed in this thesis are *Ulkadal* and *Kolangal*. Here the problems faced by the protagonists are different from those of the previous ones and the ways in which the problems are dealt with are also interestingly depicted by the director. Rahulan is the main character in *Ulkadal* and his life is filled with doubts and uncertainties from the beginning itself. As a teenager, in his early college days, he loves his childhood friend Tulsi, who stays near his house, but at the same time, he is not sure of his love for her. He is presented as a confused young man, who is unable to take decisions at critical junctures in his life, an example being, being unsure whether he wants to pursue his higher studies in college or not and finally acts as per the decision of his father who decides that he should. Unable to resist the sexual advances of Tulsi’s sister and unable to convince Tulsi that he is innocent, he leaves the place for pursuing his higher education without bidding farewell to her like an escapist. The second phase of
Rahulan as a master degree student shows him as an introvert and here he falls in love with his college mate, Reena. At this stage of his life, the confusion as to whether he will get a job or not haunts him. Subsequent to getting a job as a lecturer, his imbroglio continues when it comes to marrying Reena or Meera. The main reasons for his confusions are the presence of various women in his life and his lack of confidence in making decisions. He tries to overcome his problems and doubts by writing poems in order to escape from his confused life. He is passive, calm and not at all arrogant unlike the usually seen masculine trait.

In his film *Kolangal*, George presents a group of men as the main characters, the non natives, Cheriyan and Kuttisankaran Nair and the natives, Paramu and Kallu Varkey. Since each of these characters is unique in themselves, the confusions and negotiations are also different for each of them and hence this movie provides ample scope for studying a variety of masculinities in a single film. The main reason for trouble in Cheriyan’s life is his love for the village girl Kunjamma whom he loves sincerely. But, given the fact that he is an outsider and a non-native, Kunjamma’s mother is not ready to give her consent for their marriage and his confusions further aggravate when Kunjamma conveys that she will not marry him without her mother’s consent. Her marriage with Kallu Varkey completely shatters Cheriyan and he deals with the situation by leaving the village forever after burning the house which he had constructed with the hope of leading a married life with Kunjamma. In Kuttisankaran Nair’s life, the uncertainty in his mind is mainly due to his thoughts as to whether he should believe his wife Devayani or the rumour spoken by people like Paramu, regarding her virginity. Given the fact that Nair is a non-native, he is unaware of her past and finally he leaves her and the village itself.
without giving scope for further mental pain. The natives like Kallu Varkey and Paramu mainly concentrate on how to assert their power and authority in order to fulfill their desires. In Kallu Varkey’s case, his main confusion is whether he will be able to win the hands of Kunjamma and he negotiates the situation by exercising his money power. In Paramu’s case, without having a proper job, he is quite jealous of the others who are having a good position in the village and he destroys the lives of others, especially the women in the village by rumour mongering and in this manner, he negotiates his predicament.

The analysis of the above films reiterates the fact that masculinities are actually behavioural patterns, which fluctuate over a period of time and these fluctuations, indeed, can be construed to be the primary cause for a kind of identity crisis among men globally, which shows that their identity is fragile and inconsistent. This research also shows that the meaning of the concepts like men and masculinities are not static but as involved in a constant state of negotiation at various levels which could be cultural, political, economic, and social.

Upon revisiting the catechisms which were posed in the beginning of this research, I find that the investigations, through analysis, which have been conducted so far, have proved to be successful in answering them. Is masculinity a socio-historic construct? This was the first research question and this has been answered with the help of various theories from the field of gender studies as, gender, both masculinity and femininity, is indeed a social and historical construct.

The history of the organisation of labour shows that, in the twentieth century, the technological inventions coupled with the progress of women, helped women to earn by
themselves thus rejecting the earlier notion of man as the sole source of productive force.

In George’s films, the female characters like Vasanthi, Rohini, Lekha, and Chantha Mariyam are presented as having their own means to earn money and sustain themselves and their families. This century bears testimony to the fact that women also contribute to the economic well being of any society, thus answering the second question, should masculinity be the only productive force.

The third question, whether the public sphere is dominated only by men, calls for special attention because there are two supposable connotations arising. The first one relates to the superiority and authority men exercise in the public domain and the second interpretation to the number of men in this domain vis-à-vis the number of women. Upon pondering about these aspects in the light of the present research, I see that the answers are not readily forthcoming. Even though, on the one hand, characters like Ayyappan, who exercise their masculine power and privileges to control women in public spaces are very much present in real life even today, but at the same time, one can assume that this trend is diminishing, given the fact that there is an enormous thrust from all quarters which encourages equal participation from men and women alike and subsequently provides them equal recognition, thus establishing a level playing field to both without any discrimination whatsoever. The Indian Army which was one of the final male bastions has now been made accessible to women and they have also been given combat roles. Even in the corporate world, one gets to see umpteen examples where women are at the helm of affairs. The Government, non-governmental organisations and civil society are putting in efforts to ensure that women are provided an equal status in the society.

However paradoxically, even in the midst of such a sea change, one still comes across
cases of violence towards women in the public places which corroborates that the public domain is dominated by men even now. Coming to the other aspect regarding the numbers, I have reasons to believe that men outnumber women in the public space. However, this gender disparity is witnessing a diminishing trend, thanks to the progression of women in all walks of life. The viewers also get to see this changing trend in George’s films where the director presents the women characters as employed compared to the women of the previous decades.

The next group of interrelated questions is whether men have to safeguard their authority, how and why men assert their power and whether men apprehend something. In the movies being analysed, Mammachan, Gopi, Ayyappan, Suresh Babu, Kallu Varkey and Paramu are all male characters who tend to safeguard their authority by hook or by crook and are shown to dominate and assert their power and superiority over others, including women, at all times. The freedom which women have started enjoying of late, coupled with their progression in all walks of life have created a situation which have led men to try to safeguard their superiority and authority over women, whether it be in the workplace or in the family, Gopi in Adaminte Variyellu being a classic example.

When the notion of hegemonic masculinity is broken, do hegemonic men suffer any identity crisis and how men try to overcome this identity crisis are the final two questions which this research attempts to provide answers to. The researches on masculinities in the postmodern era conclusively show that men do undergo crises at various levels thereby marking their presence in the mainstream gender studies. Identity crisis causes the breakdown of hegemonic masculinity in some men who find it quite
difficult to adjust with the changing situations and circumstances, leading to confusions among them, which later become the principal reasons for negotiations in their life.

Since the primary focus of this research is to study the ambivalences and negotiations in men, those films of K. G. George have been carefully chosen which provide a scope for analysing this aspect. The protagonists including Kaimal, Mammachan, Gopi, Govinda, Baby, and Dr. Gopinathan who feature in these films are all victims of one form of crisis or the other which ultimately lead them to negotiate their lives, albeit in different manners. A close and thorough examination of the films, which form the subject matter of this research, indicates that, irrespective of class, caste, creed, geographical region, position held in the society, financial status and the like, men do negotiate in their lives if the circumstances call for and the masculine traits exhibited by such men can be said to fall under the category of transacting masculinities, a term which I had introduced in chapter two.

George is one of the very skilled directors whose films deal with a number of themes, all very relevant in the contemporary society and this provides scope for exhaustive studies on his films. The present research concentrates on only one aspect of his films, leaving room for further research.