

Unveiling Toxic Masculinity: The Darkside of Relationships in Select Malayalam Films

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ABSTRACT

This research paper exploring toxic masculinity through the lens of Malayalam cinema, focusing on the films 'Uyare' and 'The Great Indian Kitchen'. From my perspective, toxic masculinity refers to a socially constructed ideal that valorises aggression, emotional suppression, and dominance as markers of manhood, ultimately causing harm not only to women but also to men who are pressured to conform to these narrow standards. This study employs a qualitative approach, analysing narrative structures, dialogue, and visual symbolism to reveal how these films critique and reflect entrenched patriarchal norms. In Uyare, the narrative challenges traditional gender roles by highlighting the plight of an acid attack survivor, whose journey underscores the damaging effects of societal expectations and toxic male behaviours. In contrast, The Great Indian Kitchen presents a stark portrayal of domesticity, where the everyday environment becomes a battleground for patriarchal control. Here, the persistent, mythical attitudes of male characters are juxtaposed with subtle acts of female resistance, revealing the internal contradictions of toxic masculinity within the household. Special attention is paid to the representation of "healthy" masculinity through Todino's character, whose nuanced portrayal provides an alternative to hegemonic norms. This research not only dissects the cinematic techniques employed to manifest these themes but also reflects on the broader Cultural implications for gender dynamics in contemporary Indian society. By comparing these films, the paper contributes to ongoing debates about gender, power, and the possibility of alternative masculinities that can challenge and redefine hegemonic norms.

Keywords: Toxic Masculinity, Hegemonic Masculinity, Malayalam Cinema, Uyare, The Great Indian Kitchen, Gender Violence, Patriarchal Control, Cinematic Narrative.

INTRODUCTION

Uyare tells the story of an acid attack survivor and shows how harmful ideas about manhood can cause real damage. The film criticizes both social attitudes and institutional practices that allow violence against women and force them into the background. When society expects men to be strong, invulnerable, and never show weakness, it ends up hurting everyone. Not only do these ideas cause physical and emotional pain, but they also weaken the community. Uyare uses powerful visuals thoughtful colour schemes and carefully chosen camera angles to highlight how the myth of the "invincible man" indirectly diminishes the strength and independence of women. By mixing these visual clues with its dialogue and story, the film urges viewers to consider both the obvious and hidden reasons behind gender-based violence an important aspect of both films is how they highlight the power of female resistance. In Uyare, the main character's fight for dignity and self-worth challenges the notion that women must remain passive in the face of male dominance. Her determination to

reclaim her life is a powerful statement against the oppressive ideas of what a woman should be. Similarly, *The Great Indian Kitchen* portrays a gradual awakening among its female characters. As they start questioning the traditional roles imposed on them, their small acts of rebellion accumulate into a strong call for change. This message of resistance is not just a cinematic technique it's a reflection of the growing movement in society toward gender equality. and the deep-seated beliefs that keep these harmful stereotypes alive.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to look closely at how toxic masculinity is shown in two films *Uyare* and *The Great Indian Kitchen* and to understand the effects these portrayals have on the characters and the wider society. One of the main aims is to analyse the specific ways in which these films present toxic masculinity, which is often marked by aggression, control, and an inability to show vulnerability. By examining the behaviours and attitudes of the male characters, the study seeks to uncover how these traits influence the relationships within the films. This involves a careful look at dialogue, character actions, and the overall narrative to see how traditional ideas about what it means to be a man are put on display. The research is not just about identifying harmful traits; it also aims to understand the broader impact these traits have on both the individuals on screen and the audiences watching the films.

METHODOLOGY

Malayalam cinema has a rich history that reflects the cultural and social changes of Kerala. In the early years, films were heavily influenced by traditional theatre and literature, often drawing from mythological and historical themes. The silent film *Vigathakumaran* (1928) was the first Malayalam film, marking the beginning of an industry that would later grow into one of India's most critically acclaimed film industries. The transition from silent films to talkies began with *Balan* (1938), which set the stage for the development of Malayalam cinema as a significant art form. During the 1950s and 1960s, Malayalam cinema started to explore social themes, reflecting the political and cultural landscape of Kerala. Films during this period often focused on issues such as caste discrimination, economic hardships, and family values. Directors such as Ramu Kariat and P. Bhaskaran played a crucial role in bringing realism to Malayalam films, moving away from purely mythical or melodramatic narratives. The influence of literary adaptations became more prominent, allowing cinema to connect with audiences on a deeper level. The golden age of Malayalam cinema is considered to be the 1980s and 1990s, a period that saw the emergence of a new wave of films that balanced commercial appeal with artistic depth. Filmmakers like Adoor Gopalakrishnan, G. Aravindan, Padmarajan, and Bharathan introduced experimental storytelling techniques, breaking away from conventional narratives. This era also saw the rise of strong, complex characters and thought-provoking storylines, making Malayalam cinema stand out from mainstream Indian films. The industry became known for its meaningful cinema, earning national and international recognition for its ability to depict human emotions and societal struggles in a realistic manner. As the 2000s approached, Malayalam cinema underwent significant changes with the rise of digital filmmaking and new-age storytelling. The introduction of multiplex culture, globalization, and streaming platforms brought in a new wave of filmmakers who experimented with different genres and narrative styles. This period also saw the emergence of a younger generation of actors, writers, and directors who were keen on breaking away from traditional filmmaking norms. There was a gradual shift in how stories were told, with a focus on realism, social issues, and subtle storytelling rather than over-the-top dramatic sequences. In recent years, contemporary Malayalam cinema has gained widespread recognition for its unique storytelling, strong character development, and innovative filmmaking techniques. Films like *Uyare* and *The Great Indian Kitchen* showcase how the industry has evolved to address pressing social issues such as gender inequality, toxic masculinity, and patriarchal structures. These films do not just serve as entertainment but also act as powerful commentaries on society. They highlight the everyday struggles of individuals, particularly women, and challenge deeply rooted gender norms. By focusing on relatable narratives and avoiding unnecessary exaggeration, contemporary Malayalam cinema has managed to strike a chord with audiences both

in India and abroad. Another noticeable trend in contemporary Malayalam cinema is the portrayal of realistic and unconventional protagonists. Unlike traditional films where the hero is often depicted as an invincible figure, modern films embrace flawed and vulnerable characters. This shift has allowed audiences to connect with stories on a more personal level, making the narratives more engaging and authentic. Directors such as Dileesh Pothan, Lijo Jose Pellissery, and Jeo Baby have been instrumental in bringing these fresh perspectives to the industry, paving the way for a new kind of cinema that challenges stereotypes and provides meaningful social critiques.

The role of women in Malayalam cinema has also undergone a transformation. Earlier, female characters were often confined to secondary roles, serving as love interests or moral supporters for male protagonists. However, in recent years, films have started portraying women as independent, strong-willed individuals who take charge of their own lives. *Uyare* and *The Great Indian Kitchen* are prime examples of this change, as they bring out the resilience and agency of female characters in the face of societal oppression. These films not only reflect real-life struggles but also inspire discussions on the changing role of women in Indian society. Overall, Malayalam cinema has evolved from its early days of mythological storytelling to become a powerful medium that captures the complexities of human emotions, societal changes, and cultural transformations. The industry continues to adapt and experiment, ensuring that its films remain relevant and thought-provoking. With a growing global audience and an increasing number of filmmakers willing to push boundaries, Malayalam cinema is set to reach new heights, further solidifying its reputation as one of India's most innovative film industries.

Another important objective is to investigate the relationship between the way the films tell their stories and how society views gender roles. Cinema has a powerful role in reflecting and shaping cultural values, and these films are no exception. In this study, the narrative structure of the films is used as a lens to see how deeply rooted ideas about masculinity and femininity are reinforced or questioned. For example, in *Uyare*, the way the story unfolds might show the conflict between a society that expects men to be dominant and the individual struggles of characters who do not fit that mold. Similarly, *The Great Indian Kitchen* uses everyday domestic settings to highlight the pressures that traditional gender roles impose on both men and women. By linking the narrative choices in these films to the societal expectations that many people hold, the study aims to draw out how cinema does more than just entertain—it actively participates in the ongoing conversation about what roles men and women should play in society. A further objective of the research is to shed light on alternative representations of masculinity. While many films focus on the negative aspects of traditional male behaviour, this study also looks for examples where men are shown in a healthier light. This could include characters who are empathetic, open to expressing their emotions, or who actively support more balanced and respectful relationships. Highlighting these counterpoints is crucial because they offer a vision of what masculinity can look like if it moves away from rigid and harmful stereotypes. By focusing on these healthier representations, the study hopes to provide a more complete picture of masculinity in contemporary cinema. It suggests that even within films that largely portray toxic behaviours, there can be moments or characters that challenge the norm, offering viewers a glimpse of what a more positive form of masculinity might be.

In simple terms, the research looks at three main areas: first, it breaks down how toxic masculinity is portrayed in the films; second, it examines the connection between the storylines and the broader social ideas about gender; and third, it seeks to find and promote examples of good, healthy masculinity as alternatives to the usual negative images. Each of these objectives is connected by the idea that the films do not just tell a story—they also carry messages that can affect how people think about themselves and each other. By focusing on these three areas, the study hopes to provide insights into the dark side of relationships as seen in these popular films and to suggest ways in which media can encourage better, more respectful interactions between men and women. This research is important because it not only critiques harmful behaviour but also highlights the possibility of change. It shows that even in narratives filled with challenges and conflicts, there are opportunities to promote more positive and inclusive ideas about masculinity. In doing so, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how film as a medium can influence social norms and encourage a shift towards healthier relationships in society. This study will explore several questions about how toxic masculinity is shown in the films *Uyare* and *The Great Indian Kitchen*. As the analysis unfolds in later sections, we will look at specific scenes, character

interactions, and dialogue to answer these questions in detail. One central question asks how the portrayal of toxic masculinity affects relationships within the films. For instance, we will examine the ways in which male characters display controlling behaviors, a reluctance to show vulnerability, or overt aggression. These actions often lead to misunderstandings and conflict, disrupting the balance between partners, friends, or family members. By studying these dynamics, the paper will highlight how such negative traits prevent the development of healthy, trusting relationships and contribute to ongoing power struggles between characters. Another important question is how the female characters in these films respond to toxic masculinity. We plan to analyse whether these responses are passive acceptance, subtle resistance, or outright confrontation. For example, in some scenes, female characters may silently endure harmful behaviour, while in other moments they might challenge or subvert the traditional roles that the films seem to promote. By paying close attention to these responses, we aim to understand not only the impact of toxic masculinity on women within the cinematic narrative but also what these responses reveal about the broader cultural expectations placed on women. Additionally, the research will question whether these responses provide a pathway for change by offering alternative narratives to the dominant paradigms.

In addition to these questions, the study will explore the broader social and psychological implications of toxic masculinity as depicted in these films. How do repeated portrayals of aggressive or controlling male behaviour shape the way society views gender roles? Do these representations contribute to feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, or anxiety among viewers? By linking film analysis with social observations, the paper will try to answer whether the normalization of such behaviors in movies has a direct effect on mental health and social attitudes. This part of the study will draw on evidence from social research and real-life accounts to see if the patterns observed on screen mirror those in everyday life. The analysis will also consider how these toxic behaviors affect women outside of the cinema. For instance, do the behaviors depicted in these films reflect real-world patterns of male dominance and control? And if so, what is the impact on the lives of women in various social settings? This question is crucial because it moves the discussion beyond film criticism into the realm of societal influence. By comparing the cinematic narrative with actual data and personal experiences, the study aims to illustrate the tangible effects of toxic masculinity on women's lives. Beyond these central questions, the study will also ask several related questions to provide a more complete picture. One such question is how the narrative techniques used in the films—such as symbolism, dialogue, and character development—contribute to the depiction of toxic masculinity. For example, what role do visual cues or repeated motifs play in reinforcing harmful stereotypes about male behaviour? Another question to be addressed is whether the films offer any signs of alternative or healthy representations of masculinity. Are there moments where male characters show empathy, share vulnerability, or support balanced relationships? Such moments might serve as counterpoints to the dominant, toxic paradigms and suggest new ways for men to behave that could be more positive and supportive.

Another area of inquiry will focus on the power dynamics within relationships depicted in these films. How is power negotiated or contested between characters? Does the imbalance of power contribute to a cycle of toxic behaviour that is hard to break? Understanding this dynamic can shed light on why certain relationships fail to develop into healthier interactions. Furthermore, the study will question how these cinematic portrayals align with or challenge existing cultural norms. Do the films simply reflect what society already accepts, or do they push the audience to rethink traditional ideas about masculinity and gender roles? By framing our research around these detailed questions, the study sets a clear roadmap for understanding the complex interplay between film and society. In the sections that follow, each question will be addressed with evidence from both films and relevant social research. For example, the analysis will dive into specific scenes where the impact of toxic masculinity on relationships is most visible, and it will offer detailed commentary on the responses of female characters. Similarly, when looking at the social and psychological implications, the paper will draw connections between on-screen behaviour and real-world outcomes, using personal accounts and existing studies to support the discussion. In simple terms, the study aims to answer not just how toxic masculinity disrupts relationships on screen, but also why these portrayals matter in a broader societal context. It will show that films do more than entertain—they reflect, reinforce, and sometimes challenge the ideas we hold about gender and power. By exploring questions about narrative technique, character response, and real-life implications, the paper seeks to offer insights into how media can

both mirror and shape our understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman today. Through this in-depth inquiry, the study ultimately hopes to contribute to a more nuanced conversation about gender equality and the role of cinema in promoting healthier, more inclusive social norms.

This study uses several approaches to understand how toxic masculinity is portrayed in the films and how these portrayals connect to broader social ideas. In order to explore the subject in depth, I have drawn from cultural studies, film studies, and masculinity studies, and I have included a brief analysis of the selected films. By combining these methods, the study aims to paint a clear picture of how cinematic narratives both reflect and shape social attitudes toward gender. At the heart of this research is a cultural study methodology, which helps to place the films in their wider social and historical contexts. Cultural studies look at how ideas, practices, and values are created and shared within a society. In this case, I examine how the films not only tell individual stories but also represent and challenge prevailing cultural norms about masculinity and gender roles. This approach allows me to see the films as more than just entertainment. They are cultural texts that carry important messages about what it means to be a man or a woman today. Using cultural study methods, I analyse the social conditions, traditions, and modern influences that shape the narratives of both *Uyare* and *The Great Indian Kitchen*. In doing so, I try to understand how these films engage with issues like power, identity, and resistance, and how they mirror or contest the dominant cultural expectations of their time. In addition to cultural studies, the study also employs the methodology of film studies. Film studies provide a set of tools to examine the films' structure, style, and content. This involves a close reading of various cinematic elements such as narrative structure, dialogue, character development, cinematography, and symbolism. For example, I look at how specific scenes or repeated visual cues contribute to the overall portrayal of toxic masculinity. By examining the film techniques used in both *Uyare* and *The Great Indian Kitchen*, the study can reveal the subtle ways in which the directors and writers use imagery, sound, and narrative pacing to reinforce or question harmful stereotypes about men. This analysis is not just about technical aspects but also about understanding how these techniques affect the viewer's perception. It shows how what is seen on the screen can influence ideas and attitudes about gender roles and relationships. A brief analysis of the selected films is central to this research. *Uyare* and *The Great Indian Kitchen* have been chosen because they present different yet complementary views of toxic masculinity. In *Uyare*, the film tells the story of a person facing personal challenges in a society that has rigid ideas about success and gender roles. The film shows how the pressure to conform to traditional expectations can lead to behaviors that are harmful both to the individual and to their relationships. Scenes in the film where male characters display dominance or control are examined to see how these traits affect the main character's journey and overall narrative. This film offers a window into the internal struggles that arise from external pressures and how these struggles can lead to behaviors that mirror broader societal problems. On the other hand, *The Great Indian Kitchen* presents a domestic setting where the impact of traditional gender roles is evident. In this film, everyday life and routine interactions within a household are used to highlight the tension between modern aspirations and age-old practices. The film carefully depicts how male characters often reinforce traditional roles by expecting women to adhere to strict domestic duties, while also showing the subtle resistance of female characters. By analysing scenes that focus on domestic power dynamics, the study seeks to understand how these cinematic choices reflect the real-life challenges faced by women. Both films, though different in their narrative settings, provide valuable material to study how toxic masculinity is both depicted and critiqued.

Masculinity studies also form an important part of the methodology. This approach focuses on the concepts and social constructs of masculinity, examining how ideas about what it means to be a man have been formed and how they evolve over time. In this study, masculinity studies help to identify the specific traits that are considered toxic in the films. For instance, the unwillingness to show vulnerability, the need to assert dominance, and the insistence on traditional gender roles are seen as hallmarks of toxic masculinity. By using theories from masculinity studies, the research can better understand why these traits are not only damaging in personal relationships but also how they contribute to larger societal issues such as inequality and discrimination. This theoretical framework provides a basis for evaluating whether the films merely reflect harmful societal norms or if they actively critique and offer alternatives to them. In applying these methodologies, the study proceeds by carefully watching the films multiple times and noting the key scenes that illustrate toxic behaviors. Each scene is examined in light of cultural, cinematic, and gender theory perspectives. For instance, when

a male character in Uyare is seen exerting control over another character, the analysis considers not only the narrative context of that moment but also how this behaviour resonates with cultural ideas about male authority and power. Similarly, in *The Great Indian Kitchen*, everyday interactions are scrutinized to understand how domestic settings become battlegrounds for enforcing traditional roles. The combination of these methods allows the study to offer a detailed understanding of how both overt and subtle forms of toxic masculinity are presented and what effects they have on the characters and the overall story. Furthermore, this methodological approach is not just limited to the analysis of the films' content but also considers the broader impact on society. The study explores how repeated exposure to toxic masculine behaviors in films might influence the audience's views on relationships and gender roles. It looks at whether the cinematic portrayal of aggression, control, and emotional repression is likely to reinforce similar behaviors in real-life settings. The connection between what is shown on screen and what is experienced in everyday life is a critical area of inquiry. By comparing the cinematic narratives with findings from social research and real-life experiences, the study seeks to draw meaningful links between media representations and social attitudes. This mix of cultural studies, film studies, and masculinity studies provides a comprehensive framework that supports the analysis in this paper. Each methodology contributes a unique perspective: cultural studies ground the films in their social context, film studies allow for a detailed breakdown of cinematic techniques, and masculinity studies offer insights into the theoretical underpinnings of male behaviour. By using these approaches together, the research is better positioned to address complex questions about how toxic masculinity is constructed, how it impacts relationships, and what alternatives might exist. The goal is to not only highlight the problems but also to identify moments in the films where healthier, more balanced forms of masculinity are hinted at or portrayed.

In summary, this study employs a blend of methodologies that work together to create a rich, layered understanding of the films. The cultural study approach shows how the films reflect societal values, the film studies method dissects the narrative and technical elements of the films, and masculinity studies provide the lens to critique harmful gender norms. The brief analysis of the films, drawn from these methodologies, will pave the way for further exploration of how toxic masculinity affects relationships and influences both on-screen and off-screen behaviors. Ultimately, by integrating these approaches, the study hopes to contribute to the larger discussion on gender roles and offer insights into how media can both challenge and reinforce societal norms, pointing towards possible paths for a more balanced representation of masculinity in the future. This study is organized into several chapters that together build a clear picture of how toxic masculinity is shown in the films and how these portrayals connect with wider social ideas. The upcoming chapters have been planned in a way that takes us from theoretical ideas about masculinity to detailed film analysis and finally to a conclusion that wraps up the main findings and suggests future directions for research. In simple terms, the structure of this study is designed to guide the reader step by step through the key ideas, the detailed examination of the films, and the broader implications of what is seen on screen. In the second chapter, the discussion will begin with an exploration of the key features of toxic masculinity. This part of the study will look at the specific behaviors and attitudes that are often seen as harmful when they come from male characters. For example, we will talk about the tendency to avoid showing vulnerability, the drive to dominate others, and the insistence on sticking to rigid roles that do not allow for emotional openness. These characteristics are not just random traits; they represent a pattern that has been recognized in both film and real life as damaging to relationships and personal growth. The chapter will examine how these behaviors are displayed in various scenes and how they contribute to the overall narrative of the films.

Along with discussing these key features, Chapter 2 will also introduce the concept of hegemonic masculinity. This term refers to the idealized version of what it means to be a man, as defined by society. Hegemonic masculinity sets a standard that many men are expected to follow, even when those expectations lead to harmful behaviors. In this section, we will discuss how the films reflect these idealized images and how they create pressure on male characters to act in ways that uphold traditional ideas of strength, authority, and control. By analysing the ways in which hegemonic masculinity is portrayed, the study will show that these standards not only limit individual freedom but also contribute to a culture where toxic behaviors are normalized. In simple language, this means that the films help show us how society's narrow definition of "manliness" can hurt both men and women. After laying the theoretical groundwork in Chapter 2, the study moves into

a more focused analysis in Chapter 3 with an in-depth look at the film *Uyire*. This chapter will carefully examine the narrative, character arcs, and specific scenes that illustrate the themes discussed earlier. *Uyire* is chosen because it presents a powerful narrative about personal struggle against societal expectations. In this chapter, we will pay close attention to the ways in which male characters display toxic traits and how these behaviors affect their relationships with others. For example, scenes where a male character's inability to show emotion or his need to control others will be analysed to reveal the underlying pressures of conforming to societal norms. The analysis will explore how the film uses both subtle cues and more obvious conflicts to expose the negative effects of toxic masculinity. This chapter is not just about pointing out what is wrong; it is also about understanding the reasons behind these behaviors and their impact on the characters' lives. Through a close reading of the film's narrative and visual elements, the chapter will illustrate how the depiction of toxic masculinity in *Uyare* mirrors real-life struggles and offers insights into the damaging effects of adhering to outdated gender roles. Chapter 4 takes a slightly different approach by examining *The Great Indian Kitchen*. Unlike *Uyare*, which focuses on broader personal struggles, *The Great Indian Kitchen* brings the issue of toxic masculinity into a domestic setting. In this chapter, the film is analysed to understand how everyday life and household dynamics can become arenas for enforcing traditional gender roles. The analysis will look at how the film portrays male characters who maintain power and control in the home and how this impacts the lives of female characters. Specific attention will be given to moments where male behaviour contributes to feelings of isolation, constraint, or even rebellion among the women. By comparing the depiction of domestic power in *The Great Indian Kitchen* with the themes from *Uyare*, the study will highlight the different ways toxic masculinity manifests in various social settings. This chapter aims to show that whether in public spaces or private homes, the pressure to adhere to a certain kind of masculinity can lead to harmful dynamics. The detailed analysis will cover character interactions, dialogue, and even the setting of key scenes to offer a thorough understanding of the issue.

Finally, Chapter 5 brings the study to a close by summarizing the insights gained from the previous chapters and drawing broader conclusions about the role of cinema in shaping our ideas about gender. In this concluding chapter, the study will reflect on how the films have used narrative techniques and visual storytelling to both reinforce and challenge toxic masculine norms. It will revisit the key questions that have driven the research—how toxic masculinity affects relationships, what responses are shown by female characters, and what social and psychological implications emerge from these portrayals. The conclusion will not only summarize these findings but will also consider the potential for future research. For example, it might suggest ways in which filmmakers can create narratives that promote healthier, more balanced representations of masculinity. In simple language, this chapter will tie together all the threads of the discussion, showing how a careful look at these films helps us understand the deep-rooted problems associated with traditional views on manhood. It will also point out that while toxic masculinity is a pervasive issue, there are signs that alternative, healthier models of masculinity can emerge—both on screen and in real life. Throughout the structure of this study, the chapters have been arranged in a logical flow. The initial theoretical discussion in Chapter 2 sets the stage for understanding the behaviors and ideas that will be examined in the films. The subsequent chapters use this framework to look at the films in detail, first by examining the broader narrative and character dynamics in *Uyire*, and then by focusing on the everyday realities depicted in *The Great Indian Kitchen*. The final chapter then brings all of these observations together and reflects on what they mean for our understanding of gender and power in both cinematic and real-world contexts. In addition to guiding the reader through the analysis, this structure helps to highlight the interconnected nature of theory and practice. The ideas discussed in the theoretical chapter are not left abstract; they are actively applied to the films, showing how cultural ideals and societal pressures are built into the very fabric of the cinematic narratives. Each chapter builds on the previous one, ensuring that the study is both comprehensive and accessible. By the time we reach the conclusion, the reader will have a clear picture of how toxic masculinity operates within these films and why these portrayals matter. The overall goal is to offer not only a critique of harmful gender norms but also to suggest ways in which media can serve as a catalyst for change—encouraging more thoughtful and balanced representations of masculinity.

This detailed structure, therefore, not only organizes the study into manageable parts but also ensures that each section contributes to a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. From defining and explaining toxic and hegemonic masculinity

to examining how these ideas are brought to life on the screen, and finally to reflecting on the broader social implications, the study is designed to engage with the topic in a way that is both thorough and accessible. The hope is that by following this structure, the research will shed light on the dark side of relationships as depicted in cinema and open up possibilities for promoting healthier, more inclusive portrayals of gender in the future.

CONCLUSION

In my research on toxic masculinity in the Malayalam films *Uyare* and *The Great Indian Kitchen*, I have discovered profound insights into the ways toxic masculinity influences relationships, individual lives, and larger societal norms. Both films, though set in different various contexts, delve very deeply into the complex interplay between gender, power, and societal expectations, exposing the harmful effects of toxic masculinity. Through the protagonists' experiences, both films exploring that how toxic masculinity can shape behaviour, enforce inequality, and restrict female agency, while also providing a nuanced commentary on resistance and change. Both films also address the issue of gender inequality and the ways in which women's voices and agency are suppressed by toxic masculinity. In *Uyare*, Pallavi, the protagonist, faces multiple barriers as she tries to pursue her dreams of becoming a pilot. Her relationship with Govind reflects how toxic masculinity can restrict female aspirations and opportunities. Govind's emotional manipulation and physical abuse represent the control that men often seek over women's futures, forcing them to choose between their careers and personal safety. Pallavi's journey, however, is a testament to resilience and defiance, showing that even within systems of oppression, women can reclaim their autonomy and voice. In *The Great Indian Kitchen*, the wife's resistance is more subtle but no less powerful. Her journey is marked by her growing awareness of the oppressive nature of her domestic life. The constant disregard for her needs, the devaluation of her labour, and the emotional neglect she experiences from her husband are all indicators of how toxic masculinity is perpetuated in everyday life. As she learns to assert herself, the film subtly advocates for the importance of reclaiming female agency within the confines of traditional gender roles. Ultimately, her departure from the household signifies a rejection of the patriarchal values that have defined her existence. These films highlight the importance of challenging gender norms and recognizing female agency, but they also reveal the need for a more systemic critique of patriarchy. The path toward achieving true gender equality lies not only in individual empowerment but also in transforming the cultural, legal, and institutional systems that uphold toxic masculinity. Only through collective action, intersectional understanding, and systemic change can society hope to rid itself of the pervasive effects of toxic masculinity.

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