

Gender Vulnerability and Resistance in Selected Malayalam Movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*

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ABSTRACT

The insidious trauma of intimate partner violence affects women in the global context. This study intends to analyse the intimate partner violence and resistance of women in the select Malayalam movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022). Previous literature encapsulates the exploitation of women under patriarchal dominance in the global context. The research gap that the study wants to explore is the element of self-defence instinct and endurance in women to question the atrocity of domestic violence and patriarchal terrorism. In pursuing the argument, the authors discuss the daughters-in-law's ability to resist gender stereotypes through silence and separation to enhance their autonomy. This study uses a detailed qualitative textual analysis method to underscore the rising voice of female characters against the dominance of hetero-patriarchal society in the select Malayalam movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022). As an analytical framework, the researchers draw upon Evan Stark's theory of Coercive Control and Hagelin's Concept of Resistant Vulnerability to demonstrate the gender disparities and power politics of patriarchy in familial relations. The results underline the resistance of the daughters-in-law to the coerciveness of the patriarchy through agency. This article limits its focus only on the suppression of educated married women, especially daughters-in-law, and not on other female characters who are suffering under patriarchy.

Keywords: Coercive control, gender stereotyping, gender vulnerability, insidious trauma, power politics and resistance

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INTRODUCTION

Vulnerability refers to an engendered or unprotected condition with inherent elements of risk and resilience (Havrilla, 2017); on the other hand, resistance is

the opposite of vulnerability, and it is a response to real or perceived challenges to established power hierarchies (Flood et al., 2021). However, vulnerability and resistance are interconnected phenomena, where “resistance leads to vulnerability, and vulnerability (the sense of exposure implied by precarity) leads to resistance, vulnerability is not exactly overcome by resistance but becomes a potentially effective mobilising force in political mobilisations” (Butler, 2016, p. 15). Traditionally, vulnerability is portrayed on screen and in books with regard to images of a female body. Female characters are often projected as timid and helpless in critical situations. However, women must strive to escape marginalisation and subjection to prove their ability in other areas of life.

Movies like *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022) underline the transition of subjugated women from vulnerability to resistance. The rationale behind the movie selection is a critical focus on narratives that showcase daughters-in-law’s resistance against the “sentimental vulnerability”¹ of women (Hagelin, 2013, p. 13). This paper interprets the intricate relationship between vulnerability and resistance, originating from the critical issues of coercive control. The violence committed against women by their partners and family members is discussed in detail through the protagonists of the movies *The Great Indian Kitchen*

(2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022). The study explores the gap between the strong feminist characters who attain agency through silence and separation. The selected movies interpret women’s economic independence as a way to redefine their societal identity. At the beginning of the movie, the daughters-in-law are projected in a typical patriarchal setting, where they try to overcome gender stereotypes and domination to achieve their goals.

This study examines the coercive control of intimate partners and their tactics to “intimidate, isolate, humiliate, exploit, regulate, and micromanage women’s enactment of everyday life” (Stark, 2009, pp. 171-172). The physical and psychological violence against women under the patriarchal system exhibits the insidious trauma of married women in society. Insidious trauma underscores the sufferings of women and marginalised people in the global context. The women in the selected movies are emotionally and psychologically disturbed by the activities of their partners. According to Cantueso-Urbano (2022), women do not have the power to change the system which enslaves them, yet the act of resistance gives them agency. Since we rely on the system, it is impossible to overthrow it. The daughters-in-law in both movies are controlled by their partners and family members, yet unfollowing their rules and norms gives them the agency to have a voice and redefine their identity. The female characters in both movies undergo insidious trauma rendered by their partners and family members in

¹ Sentimental Vulnerability shows that women are more susceptible to pain and injury than men, and it is written that pain and damage are crippling to the female subject (Hagelin, 2013).

day-to-day life. Coercive behaviour and intimate partner violence are not noted seriously unless and until the victims are hurt gravely (Stark, 2009).

The study uses the concepts of Coercive Control and Resistant Vulnerability to emphasise the suffering and resistance of women in society. The concept of Coercive Control elaborates on the intimate partner violence of partners and insidious trauma endured by women in the typical family setting. Meanwhile, Resistant Vulnerability discusses the resistance of vulnerable people against the powerful. This study uses the resistant vulnerability of women in a patriarchal society to establish their identity. Resistance can be expressed in various means possible. Both the daughters-in-law's characters express their intolerance to the atrocity of partner violence by separation. Thus, the victimisation of women leads to the transition from servility to resistance is emphasised.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background Study of the Film

The oppressive cultural norms in India pave the way for intimate partner violence, domestic violence and emotional violence in the course of marriage for women (Jeyaseelan et al., 2015). They are merely treated as toys and sexual objects for the pleasure of men. According to Martin (1981), married women are considered their partners' properties in his work *Battered Wives*. Women are sexually and emotionally abused and traumatised in marriage, which

unfortunately runs through almost all cultures, traditions and customs to enforce the power of husbands over their wives (Mshweshwe, 2020). Here, the media plays a significant task; it communicates the evils in society through movies.

The movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022) have positioned women in the submissive state under patriarchy at the beginning. It mirrors the unconstitutional authorisation of in-laws and the patriarchal dominance of the husband in the family. In marital homes, women are doubly marginalised and adhere to abuses and exploitation by family members (Krishnaja & Jose, 2022). They are restricted to the kitchen in a fixed space, following the orders of the male patriarch. Food is used as a material culture to project the dominance of male supremacy and to conquer the private space of women (Alex & Justin, 2022). The prevalence of male supremacy and a common belief that women should stay subservient to men contributes to partner violence. The power to restrict or control the interaction of women with family, friends and society is a subtle form of partner violence, which is the major concern of this research.

The study incorporates the Coercive Control theory to address the humiliation, hurt, and isolation of daughters-in-law in the movies to address intimate partner violence and gender stereotypes. Coercive control inhibits women from seeking help from government organisations and family members, which leads to mental health disorders. According to a cross-sectional

survey conducted in Mumbai with the data of National Family Health Surveys-3 (2005–2006) and 4 (2015–2016) reports that informal help-seeking has declined compared to formal help-seeking of women in 2021 (Kanougiya et al., 2022). The major factors which prevent women from seeking help are injury, emotional abuse, history of violence, alcohol consumption by husband, health care access and economic situation (Dehingia et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the select Malayalam movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022) use resistance to dismantle the long-sustaining gender injustice in relationships by questioning patriarchal supremacy.

These movies challenge the invisibility of domestic violence prevailing in the private space and the social constraints restricting women from achieving their dreams. It features women as individuals who strive for their dreams and emancipation. In the movies *Ishq* (2019) and *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021), Augustine and Issac (2023) portray the transcendence of women from the given space to the acquired space, which challenges traditional patriarchal ideologies. The women's transition from a place of servility to a created space as a liberation from familial and community ties embodies the powerful act of resistance. Women's resistance builds their real self, the counter-image of the earlier subservient state. To overcome the dominance of patriarchy, women should take hold of their bodies or gain autonomy over them, which will give them the agency to resist (Rajah & Osborn, 2022). This study explores the

role of society, culture, and family, which unconsciously influence women to gain autonomy over their bodies for resistance. Therefore, the study analyses the abuse and violence against women through the theory of Coercive Control and Resistant Vulnerability, which remains an under-researched area that needs consideration.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Coercive Control and Resistant Vulnerability

Violence against women and girls affects one in three women throughout their lifetime (Suri et al., 2022). It includes domestic violence or intimate partner violence in all forms (physical, sexual, and emotional) against women in all settings, from rural to urban areas. Children who witness the intimate partner violence of their parents develop aggressive behaviour and intimate partner violence in adulthood (James-Hawkins et al., 2018). The aggressive behaviour thus formed becomes a form of coercive control in a relationship to subjugate the partner to erode their self-esteem and autonomy. Stark has introduced the theory of Coercive Control to illustrate the aggressive behaviour of men against women in all areas of life. The perpetrators use controlling tactics or violence in severe forms on women frequently to entrap them as subordinates. Coercive control is a technique used in intimate relationships to oppress partners, which emphasises the “deliberate and malevolent qualities to define them as criminals” (Stark, 2009, p. 200). However, the perpetrators may use

many other techniques; the core element of coercive control is to have control over the victim's emotional, psychological and sexual autonomy.

The emotional behaviour of the victims is controlled and monitored in a way that isolates them from the sources of support (parents, friends and law). They are deprived of daily necessities like food, medicine, and communication and enforce rules for everyday conduct. The nature of control is detrimental, instilling fear and cutting down the victim's autonomy and agency. Men deploy coercive control on women to prevent them from escaping through a pattern of rules like “stalking, cyberstalking, beepers, cell phones, and other means... surveillance and behavioural regulation” (Stark, 2009, p. 208). Most probably, the prevalence of coercive control is typically hidden from the view of society due to its covert nature. It can be identified only through the behaviour of the victims, and it is commonly mistaken as the problem is with the women.

Another remarkable feature of coercive control is the gender norms that govern the relationship, such as financial decisions, confining women within the kitchen and monitoring their expenditures, which gives the feeling of uncertainty in married life. The most crucial controlling tactics illustrated by Stark in intimate partner violence are gender norms and stereotypes. Most husbands micromanage their wife's household work, nurturance of children, and love-making process to subordinate them. The restriction of social space, employment,

and opportunities are dealt with in the movies in relation to the Theory of Coercive Control.

Hagelin (2013) argues that there are three kinds of vulnerable characters projected on the screen by contemporary popular culture they are the “traditionally vulnerable female body, the female character overcoming vulnerability through masculinised aggression, and a third body that I will label ‘resistant vulnerability’” (p. 3). The traditional vulnerability of women, which she calls ‘sentimental vulnerability,’ shows women as vulnerable to injury, hurt, and pain. The second kind of vulnerability, which she argues is the one who fights back through masculinised aggression, is subdivided into two types: rape revenge heroines and objectified heroines in the films. The third kind of vulnerability, which Hagelin labels as ‘Resistant Vulnerability’, incorporates both vulnerability and resistance, “the openness and susceptibility associated with vulnerability and the counterintuitive frisson of resistance—embodies what I call ‘resistant vulnerability’” (p. 3).

According to Hagelin's Concept of Resistant Vulnerability, “vulnerability needn't be gendered female and we alter our basic assumption that suffering body is vulnerable and needs our pity and protection” (Hagelin, 2013, p. 4). In the movie *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022), Jaya's husband Rajesh gets injured by Jaya's attack, which suggests that the suffering body is not always vulnerable and does not need our pity and emotion.

In Jaya's case, she resists the patriarchal regime, suppressing her womanhood but not the vulnerable individual. Here, Jaya's transformation or the "act of resisting the patriarchal regime by violating the conventional form assigned to her in the male-made community is... not expected in accordance with the patriarchal ideology" (Alenezi, 2022, p. 6). So, this paper sticks to the point that women are not always passive and vulnerable; they will resist the supremacy of patriarchy at a certain point. As Hydén (2005) states, "[e]nding a violent relationship means dissociating powerfully from the violence" (p. 172). Separation is also a form of resistance that the traumatised and subjugated women use to rescue themselves from the batterers. In the movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022), the daughters-in-law use separation as their mode of resistance to overcome the violence committed by their partners. Thus, the study uses the Resistant Vulnerability concept to interpret women's transition from vulnerability to resistance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Questions

1. To what extent does the relationship between coercive control and insidious trauma affect married women in the hetero-patriarchal (discrimination against women and LGBT people) society?
2. How do the selected movies underline women's transition from vulnerability to resistance?
3. How are women affected by gender stereotypes and power politics of patriarchy in familial relations?

Methodology

The study explores the coercive behaviour of men and resistance of married women in the contemporary Malayalam movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022). The movies are selected with a focus on the characters (daughters-in-law, their husbands, and in-laws), theme, and plot to interpret the main concern of the research, i.e., to examine the intimate partner violence and resistance of women in relation to the theories. Thus, the study uses exploratory research to analyse patriarchal dominance and women's empowerment in films. The study uses textual analysis to closely observe and understand the everyday resistance of female characters in the movies through their words, thoughts, and actions to redefine their identity. The study uses Stark's notion of Coercive Control and Hagelin's Resistant Vulnerability as a theoretical framework to analyse women's transition in the films.

Materials

The two Malayalam movies, *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022) are selected to project the susceptibility and resistance of subjugated married women in the patriarchal society. These movies give ample space for analysing men's dominance and coercive control over women. It signals the transition of women from subordination to empowerment.

The protagonists in these movies invoke the viewers to view the vulnerability of women critically. The movies deconstruct the character of battered women as brave and strong to resist their subordination by successfully achieving their goals in different fields. It is significant to know the transition of gender vulnerability of women from subjugation to resistance and to bring home the point that women need not always be victims.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Trauma of Women: Behind the Closed Doors

This discussion explores the violence committed against married women in some households as a tradition from the past. The culture of subordination of married women by their partners and family members induces torment and trauma in women. In the movie *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021), the daughter-in-law's character is dually affected by her husband's egoistic tendencies and father-in-law's supremacy. When she serves tea for her father-in-law, he says, "I haven't brushed and.... I haven't got my brush dear," Her husband replies, "Just get it for him; he is our dad..." (Baby, 2021, 0:21:52-0:22:06). Her husband humiliates her emotion rather than supporting her. It portrays men as the face of the family and power; on the other hand, women are seen as properties of men. Women's objective is to serve, respect and carry on the lineage of men (Hallagan, 2012). Her choice of action is interrupted by her father-in-law in almost every aspect. He tries to convince

her to follow his ideology, just like his wife. For instance, he does not allow the women in the family to use a gas stove and washing machine but insists they use firewood to cook and wash clothes by hand instead. The highly conservative ideals of her husband and his family do not allow her to be anything but a maid. *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) demonstrates the struggle faced by women in society. Her father-in-law also restricts her from applying for jobs, thinking it would tarnish the family's reputation. His power highlights the perils of the subtle yet pervasive abuse masquerading as protection.

Raj et al. (2006), in their article, detail the dominance of in-laws (forced servitude) as:

One of the most common forms of abuse perpetrated by in-laws... every mention of this type of abuse was at the hands of the mother-in-law ... starts early in the marriage when the daughter-in-law first came home and lived with her in-laws, and then it would continue through visits once the woman no longer lived with her in-laws (p. 942).

Through his words, the viewers can apprehend the indirect force of patriarchy enforced by her father-in-law. The film *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) also illustrates that the father-in-law exercises forced servitude, not necessarily by the mother-in-law. Male vehemence and dogmatism subjugate women corporeally and psychologically to carry forward the same message to the following generations

to repress the future generations of women in the kitchen (United Nations Children's Fund, 2000). The continuous non-violent abuse induces trauma in the protagonist, which can be seen throughout her regular activities and in the background sounds as well.

Moreover, the protagonist's husband considers her an object and sexually exploits her every night to satisfy his lust. When a woman gets married, it is presumed that her husband has the right to have unrestricted sexual access to her (Khan & Hussain, 2008). Male privilege is a social advantage offered to men which gives them the unearned power and right to exploit women (Pepin, 2016). The sexual violence committed by the protagonist's husband could not be projected to her family members. The social stigma forbids her from complaining about the evil acts of her husband. Thus, she becomes fragile and defeated due to her emotional vulnerability. In intimate partner violence, "the victim's susceptibility to injury is a function of the degree to which her capabilities for defence, resistance, escape, or to garner support have been disabled by a combination of exploitation, structural constraints, and isolation" (Stark, 2009, p. 205).

The eternal process of gender stereotyping can also be seen in the movie *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022), where the protagonist, Jaya, starts her married life under the sovereignty of her husband. She is physically and psychologically affected by her husband, Rajesh. He dominates her as well as his

family members. Jaya is physically harmed by her husband, who tries to control and tame her. She pacifies him by adjusting to his desires despite being unaccustomed to them. He repeats his abuse by saying, "You are no one to teach me; you should talk to me properly" (Das, 2022, 0:41:43-0:41:52). The scene in the movie shows that the men do not cook, do not wash their clothes, do not pick up their things, do not adjust to the scenarios. The husband abuses his wife several times for 'mishandling the watch', 'washing his clothes' or cooking something else, which is not his usual preference. Rajesh uses violence and coercive control as a technique to dominate his wife. Stark (2012) states that regulating the everyday common activities of women begins from the default role as a mother and homemaker to a sexual partner and runs along with monitoring victims' access to money, food and transport and also on their dress, cleanliness, cooking and performing sexually.

The perpetrators misunderstand the patience of victims, which persuades them to continue their sovereignty over them. The disadvantage of coercive control is the hidden agenda of the perpetrator. The victim's traumatic behaviour underscores it, and society devalues her as if the "problem is with her" (Stark, 2009, p. 210). It leads to Battered Women's Syndrome² (Walker, 1979). In the first stage, the "batterer expresses hostility without violence, and the woman tries to

² Battered women Syndrome- is a psychological trauma battered women endure in abusive relationships due to physical, psychological and sexual abuse by their partners (Rothenberg, 2003).

placate him” (Rothenberg, 2003, p. 776). In the second stage, “the batterer’s aggression is unleashed and an assault on the woman occurs,” and in the third stage, “the batterer tries to make up for what he has done by convincing his partner of his love for her” (Rothenberg, 2003, pp. 776-777). These set of behaviours hinder women from leaving their abusive partners, and also cultural constraints force them to sustain an abusive and traumatic relationship. The perpetrators use this situation as a strategy to imprison women in the house. They are isolated, manipulated and micro-regulated by their husbands. Their regrets control the decision-making power of victims. In Jaya’s case, Rajesh apologises for his mistake in a way that creates an image of a lovable character. The kindness hinders Jaya’s decision; it changes her into a vulnerable woman and leads to an “emotional career.”³ (Smith et al., 2002, p. 1209).

Rajesh has stereotypical ideas about women that embody patriarchal ideals and influence him to serve the existing patriarchal hegemony he strives to uphold. Jaya is constantly degraded for her activities and desires; he berates her by saying that his work is more important than her emotions. From this, it is established that “women are considered more communal and less agentic than men” (Eagly & Valerie, 1984, p. 736). Their household work and emotions

³ Battering had an “emotional career,” which included “women’s subjective impressions of their experience, such as emotions of guilt and humiliation, a conflict between fear and affection, a loss of hope, love, and closeness, as well as growing loneliness and pessimism” (Smith et al., 2002, p. 1209).

are devalued and rejected. The gender stereotyping sows the seeds for resistance; still, his continuous verbal and physical abuses lead her to confront him.

In *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022), both coercive control and patriarchal terrorism or intimate terrorism are exercised on Jaya. Her husband tries to impose his “power and control techniques, including violence, to dominate one’s partner and impose broad control over the relationship” (M. P. Johnson & Leone, 2005, p. 323). This type of violence is called Patriarchal Terrorism, introduced by M. P. Johnson (1995). The husband’s aggressive behaviour is considered the normal tendency of men and is facilitated by masculine sociocultural discourses. M. P. Johnson states that the main aim of patriarchal terrorism is to gain control over their partner, especially by male partners, in the form of physical violence, economic subordination, and emotional violence. In Jaya’s case, her families urge her to adjust to Rajesh’s behaviour, i.e. to bear the violence inflicted upon her by Rajesh. On average, she is beaten up more than 40 times in a span of six months. Further, Rajesh impregnates Jaya through manipulation, pretending to be a lovable husband, which ruins her emotionally. M. P. Johnson and Ferraro (2000) state that perpetrators not only use physical violence but also emotional, psychological and verbal violence to manipulate and control their female partners. Rajesh abused Jaya emotionally to take control of her and to position his male entitlement.

Women are bound within the family circle in the name of culture, tradition and custom. In the selected movies, the family members abuse the daughter-in-law's identity in the name of culture and family tradition. In *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021), the protagonist is treated as an uncultured person in an orthodox family, and Jaya from *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022) is considered a candid woman by her family members. The daughters-in-law in both movies try to regain their identity, which is destroyed in their married lives. Their husbands and family members dominated the women in both the movies in the name of family, tradition and culture. The gender disparities and violence traumatise the daughters-in-law in different ways, like the messy detritus of their meals to be cleared away by the women. The drumstick and the leaking kitchen sink are small and subtle objects that become powerful metaphors for the daughter-in-law's character in the movie *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021). In Jaya's case, the repetition of verbal and physical abuse and later consoling her through movie outings with her husband worsens her sanity. Their voices are silenced, and their aims and ambitions are never considered worthy of discussion. The husbands in both movies use psychological attacks and gender stereotypes as techniques to weaken the resistance and self-esteem of women (Sharp, 2014). The coercive control of their partners in both movies provokes daughters-in-law to resist systemic patriarchal violence.

In the selected movies, gender stereotyping is continued by men to dominate

women. In *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021), the protagonist's husband marries a second wife, and he says, "My life till now was actually a rehearsal, our life from now on will rectify those mistakes, isn't it..." (Baby, 2021, 01:34:36-01:34:45). The ugly face of misogyny and hypocrisy continues when the husband keeps his sipped coffee mug unwashed. The second wife seems to meet the first one's fate, and the cycle repeats. In *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022), Rajesh's elder brother projects systemic patriarchal violence through Rajesh. He motivates Rajesh to impregnate Jaya to assert control over her in the name of motherhood. The gender stereotype is perpetuated in the movies, as the men uphold the patriarchal tradition of subordination over women. Therefore, the marginalisation and gender stereotyping motivate women towards resistance.

Resistant Vulnerability of Women

The daughters-in-law in the movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022) are screened as vulnerable characters; however, in the later stage of the movie, it is shown how and in what circumstances they had to become agentic. It is commonly believed in patriarchal societies that wives should be submissive to their husbands, so intimate partner violence is considered a common occurrence. This norm is devised by the patriarchal society "to legitimate the domination of men and to marginalise women as second sex" (Mas'udah, 2020, p. 3). The reoccurring violence further

reinforces the submissiveness of women, and at a later stage, it leads to resistance. In *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021), the protagonist agrees with the routine life of her husband's house. However, the family's beliefs on menstruation as impurity induce a sense of revolt in her. This incident invokes the beginning of the transition phase in the protagonist's life.

Besides these incidences, when she touches her husband to help him while he accidentally falls from the bike, he pushes her down with hatred. He says, "Go away. Don't you know you should not touch the pilgrims during this time?" (Baby, 2021, 1:21:26-1:21:30). The incidents which support forced segregation during menstruation and women's subordination infuriate the protagonist to resist the hegemony of men. The issues mentioned above traumatise her to become resistant. The domination and ill-treatment crush the protagonist's self-esteem and autonomy. These kinds of discrimination during menstruation infuriate her to offend the abusers. She opposes and unbinds herself from the subjugation of male chauvinism as a liberated woman by "throwing off the collected sink water on the faces of her husband and her father-in-law" (Baby, 2021, 1:30:18-1:30:24).

Women in traditional Indian families are confined in the space of the kitchen and tied to their husbands (Anuar & Asl, 2022); they become resistant by walking away from the house without any argument to achieve their dream of becoming dance teachers. Sometimes, silence and separation

are used as modalities of resistance to achieve liberty. In the movie *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021), the daughter-in-law's character does not use violence or aggression to show her resistance except for one day when she splashes the dirty water beneath the sink on her husband and father-in-law. She has been deeply affected by the way she was treated the previous day during her periods when she was deemed untouchable. However, on the sixth day of her period, she is considered a clean woman to brew up some tea for the devotees of Sabarimala. It provokes her to break the sociocultural discourse of patriarchy through separation. Even though she walked away from the house silently. She symbolically throws away the tag of subordination, which retains women in the kitchen. Ultimately, "she steps down from a car as an independent woman into the dance class as a dance teacher" (Baby, 2021, 1:33:36-1:34:20). Her dream of becoming a dance teacher and regaining her identity shows her resistance.

The concept of Resistant Vulnerability, a term coined by Hagelin in 2013, has been precisely underscored in the movie *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021), which shows the protagonist's transition from vulnerability to resistance. For Hagelin, women will be resilient in certain phases where she does not expect pity or protection from others. The daughter-in-law in *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) endures married life's physical, psychological and emotional pain, which turns her into a new woman. The metamorphosis of being other

to her 'self' denotes women's resistance to marginalisation and oppression. She is affected by the changes in her life, which traumatises her into a vulnerable position, yet she uses her susceptibility to resist by transforming her perilous reality (Navarro-Tejero, 2022).

Jaya in *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022) is characterised as a resistant and as well as vulnerable woman in the movie. Jaya's struggle under the colonisation of patriarchy invokes "the secret or underground resistance which emerges" in her is "hunted and violated on sexual, physical and mental levels" by her husband (Zakarriya, 2019, p. 2). Jaya uses karate (self-defence) to resist the physical violence of Rajesh. As a next level of control, Rajesh uses sentiment as a tool where he disguises himself as a lovable husband to impregnate Jaya; this shows his evilness and coercive control over his wife. The society accepts the belligerent behaviour of men. Nevertheless, "when a woman finds her way to transition, she will be thwacked by society" (A. G. Johnson, 2005, p. 5). The miscarriage and the verbal abuses by her family members induce the protagonist to transition or liberation from the subjugation of her husband.

Jaya resists the action of the family and husband by silently walking out of the hospital and her marriage by paying the hospital bill through her gold *mangal sutra* (nuptial chain). She gains autonomy over her soul and body through separation. She takes over a chicken farm and becomes economically independent. She registers

her success in business and life through her conversation with Rajesh about the chicken farm inside the court's premises. In this way, she resists and redefines her identity as an entrepreneur. Butler et al. (2016) claim that resistance is the possibility that emerges from vulnerability. Here, the protagonist uses her vulnerability as a possible opportunity to achieve agency.

CONCLUSION

The paper portrays the trauma endured by the daughters-in-law in the movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022) and resistance through the analytical framework of Evan Stark's Coercive Control and Resistant Vulnerability under the patriarchal dominance of their husband's families. This paper presents the role of movies in articulating the insidious trauma experienced by some married women in India. The major focus of the study is how the daughters-in-law's characters are transformed from subjugation to emancipation. The transformation of protagonists from the precarious condition of vulnerability to empowerment gives them identity and confidence in life. The daughter-in-law character from the movie *The Great Indian Kitchen* breaks down the wall of patriarchal hegemony by exiting from the marriage to become a dance teacher. In the movie *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*, Jaya establishes the poultry farm on her own to prove her independence. The independence gives her a new identity and helps her realise her "self."

Implication of the Study

This study shows how gender differences and stereotypes in the family affect women in a greater range due to culture and religion. The empowerment of daughters-in-law in the findings creates awareness for the victims to raise their voices against the oppressor for their rights. These movies will provide a new dimension for the victims of patriarchy to gain agency. As Gondolf argued, “severe violence did not leave a battered woman feeling helpless but instead gave her access to a variety of coping mechanisms, finally transforming her into a “survivor” (Rothenberg, 2003, p. 780).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

This paper sticks to movies to explore the implications of media texts in society. The study restricts its focus on the gender and identity of educated married women in the analysis. The precarious condition of the girl child in the movie *Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* by her parents is omitted. Further, the study recommends exploring the resistant vulnerability of men under the heteropatriarchal normative using trauma theories in contemporary movies for future studies.

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