

Negotiating Domestic Space and Agency through Mise-en-scène in *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021)

Dr. Sajna Sanal

Associate Professor, Dept. of English, University College, Thiruvananthapuram
(sajnasanal@gmail.com)

Abstract

Malayalam cinema has focused on women's issues at different points in the trajectory of its growth. Jeo Baby's film *The Great Indian Kitchen* released in OTT platform in January 2021 marks a major turning point as it bravely discusses the antiquated system of patriarchy still practised in contemporary modern households. It vividly portrays the day to day activities in a usual kitchen scenario and engages with questions of woman's identity and the enslavement of housewives. The Sabarimala verdict of the Supreme Court permitting women of all ages to enter the temple provides the backdrop for unraveling the story and the callousness of rigid, primitive stipulations related to menstruation is also underscored. By experimenting with techniques like mise-en-scène and montage, the film interrogates the gendered divisions of public and private space. This article examines those techniques to trace the role of the kitchen as an apparatus to manipulate, coerce, orient and secure control over women. The filmic devices are employed to expose the complex relation between gender, sexuality and the home. Towards the ending, a watershed moment completely alters the life of the woman and saves her from stifling to death whereas the man unflinchingly continues to administer parochial, patriarchal rules. The film is clearly a clarion call against misogyny and a paean to the inner strength of women to fight injustice.

Keywords: misogyny, mise-en-scène, montage, gender conflict, patriarchy