



Research Paper

## Down the Purgatory of Memories: The Pain of Remembering in Malayalam Naxal Cinema

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**ABSTRACT:** Kerala, the southern most state in India is known for its cinema and politics. It is in Kerala that Communist Party came to power through Parliamentary election process for the first time in history. The political consciousness nurtured by the Communist movement found its reflections in Malayalam (language being spoken by the people of Kerala) Cinema as well. As a result films produced during the formative years of Malayalam Cinema were characterized by their political content. Having said this it should also be added that since those films are produced within the dominant production system with a view to garner profit they fail to politically stimulate the audience. But the situation had been changed after the Naxalite (radical left movement ideologically inclined to Maoism) uprising in 1969 during which both the feudal/bourgeois value orientations and the alleged degeneration of the Communist Party were challenged by the educated radical youths who fought for an immediate revolution. The state promptly intervened and contained Naxalite uprising with an iron fist. The repressive machinery of the state intervened whenever instances of resistance occurred. The Emergency declared in 1975 exposed the inhuman face of government that unleashed series of tortures against its citizens. The post -1980 political films, otherwise called as Naxalite films, try to recapture the tormenting experience of being political during the time of such mass oppression. Those movies resort to memory to expose the stark experience of the past. Remembering is a way of representing the past with all its nuances as it situates the remembering subject at close proximity with the past. At the same time Naxalite movies explored the possibility of forgetting also to unveil the subtle complexities of individual's relationship with the past. Here I consider two Malayalam films - *Amma Ariyan* (1986) directed by John Abraham and *Margam* (2003) directed by Rajeev Vijayaraghavan - to investigate how memory and oblivion are meticulously used by the filmic narratives to politicize a society already under the grip of political amnesia.

**Keywords:** Naxalite Cinema, memory, oblivion, Malayalam Cinema, politicise

### I. INTRODUCTION

Malayalam Cinema, even from the formative years of its birth, draws its thematic materials from explicitly social themes. The first Malayalam movie *Vigathakumaran* (1928) addressed the lives of the ordinary people, a practice which was uncustomary in other language cinemas. *Navalokam* (1951, Dir. V. Krishnan), *Jeevitha Nouka* (1952, K Vembu), *Neelakkuyil* (1954, Dir. Ramu Karyat and P Bhaskaran) and many other socials that followed situated the diegetic world of Malayalam cinema well within the matrix of social realism that dominated the creative literature of the Fifties. Social themes smeared with agrarian realism evident in those films paved the way for political melodramas of the 1960s. Movies like *Ningalenne Communistakki* (1970), *Punnapravayalar* (1969), and *Mooladhanam* (1971) could easily blend the political with the melodramatic. The problem with those political melodramas was that, in spite of the political content those movies attempted to communicate, they failed miserably to politically stimulate the audience. The melodramatic fictional world in those movies, in effect, hijacked the political debates expected to be generated by them. Insofar as those movies thrived on political situations prevalent some decades ago they could feign political commitment. But, since those films were produced within the dominant production system and patterned, both thematically and structurally, according to the conventional commercial narratives, they became politically less provocative. An authentic attempt to transact political content through cinema in Malayalam was effectively carried out by films which can be called Naxalite movies. Films like *Kabani Nadi Chuvannappol* (1975), (hereinafter shown as *Kabani*) directed by P A Backar, *Amma Ariyan* (1986) directed by John Abraham, *Aparahnam* (1993) directed by M P Sukumaran Nair, and *Margam* (2003) directed by Rajeev Vijayaraghavan explicitly assimilated

Naxalite themes and politicised the medium by digressing from dominant cinematic practices. *Kabani* was, in fact, documenting the political repercussions fuming around during the time of its production - which was also the time of Emergency - without resorting to recreate bygone political situations. Whereas the political melodramas of the 60s recreated the past in a way it was malleable within a narrative, *Kabani* accommodated the present with all its subtle complexities, and thereby denied privilege to the fictional narrative. Later political movies like *Amma Ariyan*, *Aparahnam*, and *Margam*, on the other hand, have taken an altogether different strategy by resorting to individual memories of the past to bring to the fore the tormenting political experience of the Naxalite revolutionaries. These movies engage individual memories to uncover the pangs and agonies of politically tumultuous past with all its intensity. In M P Sukumaran Nair's *Aparahnam* (1991) the former revolutionary Nandakumar (Babu Antony) is simultaneously haunted by the painful memories of the past and the surveillance mechanism of the state. In *Thalappavu* (Dir: Madhupal) it is the memory of the former police constable that brings to the fore the atrocities of the repressive state during the time of Naxalite uprising. Remembering is an individual's act of exploring the past where he/she relives the past from the vantage point of the present as "... when we remember we simultaneously occupy both every day time and the temporality of remembering" (Chris Healy, "Dead Man: Film Colonialism and Memory"). It situates the remembering subject at close affinity/proximity with the past when the public memory conveniently ignores it. At the same time some resort to the act of forgetting to situate oneself in the transformed world. Such people willingly keep themselves aloof from active remembering as the act of remembering reminds them of the gory episodes of violence they became a part of. While most of the post - seventy Naxalite political movies explore the possibility of memories to expose the lacunae left behind by official representations, *Margam* deals with forgetting as a conscious act to evade possible retreat in the past. This paper tries to analyse the conflicting scenario where memory acts as a site of willing political activism (as in *Amma Ariyan*) on the one hand and on the other as a stark reminder of the violent episodes of the past (which the revolutionaries want to forget as in *Margam*.) at the individual level. While *Amma Ariyan* foregrounds the unflagging quest of the revolutionaries to 'memorise' the past, the protagonist in *Margam* disengages with such memories to purge himself from the past.

## **II. Memory and Its Angst: *Amma Ariyan* (1986, Dir. John Abraham)**

In *Amma Ariyan* memory acts as a unifying factor that integrates the hitherto disintegrated former revolutionaries. (The out-of-theatre public exhibition of the movie provides the former revolutionaries with a platform for their reunion). They all willingly carry the weight of the memories of the past however painful those memories are. They were all former revolutionaries who were subjected to the inhuman tortures of the state during the 1975 Emergency. The Emergency exposed the extent to which a state can transform itself into a fascist regime that could mock at the very idea of democracy and human rights. Organised resistances were brutally oppressed and the leaders of such mass resistance were arrested by the police and were severely tortured. The remaining activists had to go underground to organize campaigns against the 'fascist state'. The predictions made by the CPI (ML) fraction of the Naxalite movement about the feebleness of Indian democracy as an institution that carried the possibility of its becoming a fascist regime is, they argued, thus proved true. A mass outrage was fuming in the political atmosphere against the Congress party who declared emergency. But contrary to all expectations and against the national trend the popular electoral verdict in the ensuing election favoured the Congress party. This victory sent out a shock wave that disrupted the romantic worldview of radical politics as the election verdict was considered as a public political statement against the violence perpetrated by the Naxalites. In other words that victory has paradoxically justified police tortures during the emergency. This further escalated the already mounting feeling of ideological dilemma experienced by the revolutionaries. During 1980s two streams of thought were predominant among the naxalites in Kerala. R K Bijuraj points out:

Even though naxalite movement could overcome its initial constraints in the first phase, as it reached the conclusion of 1970s it was still confused about its future trajectory. Despite its strength in executing operations, the organization was baffled with ideological contradictions. On the one hand there were new paradigms of investigations and methodologies in the Kerala fraction of the movement. On the other there were people in the organization who more intensely cling on to the old line of extermination of the feudal landlordism by means of violence. The later enjoyed crucial position in the organization during the 1980s. They implemented their professed old line by killing Kenichira Rajan (Wayanad) and Kanhiram Chirayil Somarajan (Alapuzha)." (275)

Thus the decade began with violent political operations organised and executed by extremists in several parts of Kerala. The killings of Rajan and Mathai evoked criticism from the party workers. A fraction of the People's Cultural Forum raised dissent against the Stalinist line of the party. Several members have quitted the party. An air of inertia was looming in the political atmosphere. As a result the state committee of the party has decided to redefine and reconceptualise its political standpoints in accordance with the changed situations. It was during the middle of the 80s that a fundamental detachment occurred from the Maoist ideas. It was K Venu, ideologue

of the group, who orchestrated such a move and extolled the revolutionaries to perceive power and weapon as different entities. The Kerala State Committee of the movement deviated from the much professed line of armed struggle. So the 80s were a time for the movement to undertake a thorough introspection about what had been practiced as part of their political ideology. The romantic imaginations of the late 1960s and 70s were gradually diminished. The state terrorism unleashed during the emergency period engendered enormous pain and sufferings upon the body and mind of the revolutionaries. Tortured and bruised bodies wandered along the streets of Kerala in helpless indignation. As has been already pointed out the success of the Congress party after the Emergency further exacerbated the deep feeling of disappointment. A rethinking of the line of action they had been following necessitated by changed political conditions started from many corners. Some of the fanatic zealots still adhered to the old doctrine of extermination of the enemy class. But for others, they turned over towards popularizing political power rather than giving priority to armed struggle. The entire scenario led the party towards ideological dilemma from which they could not altogether come out satisfactorily. It was in this context that John Abraham in his experimental movie *AmmaAriyan* ventures in to capturing the tormenting experience of the Naxalites and tries to unfold the politically charged past of Kerala during the 1970s.

By the mid-1980s the violent episode of Naxalite activism had gradually waned from the collective memory of the Keralites. But before its retreat it left a deep and indelible mark in the political consciousness of a few. The painful silence that followed emergency was impregnated with deep sense of despair. The growing middle class with pro-feudal value orientations and pro-bourgeois attitudes was emerging as the dominant social group during the 80s. But the amber of revolutionary ideology was still glowing unnoticed, covered with ashes. It was not easy for artists with activist inclinations to dispense with the horrible memories of the terrible tortures. They set out to keep those memories alive in the political consciousness of our society. For them engaging memory has become a political activity. Emily Keightley says that “remembering is a process that exceeds the psychology of the individual.” (Pickering 176) In an individual’s memory the collective socio political engagements of a society is invariably embedded. That is why she goes on to say that “memory is more than an expression of individual consciousness, and is both socially constructed.” (176, Pickering). When an artist sets out with the task of invoking memory he problematises the past by reminding the society of something which it does not want to be reminded of. John Abraham’s *AmmaAriyan* is, in this way, an attempt in digging out the past from where it is buried and by doing so forcing the spectators stay face to face with the wounds inflicted by the past. Such daring attempts challenge the privilege of the official narrative pertaining to the past and thereby deconstruct the accepted versions of the authority. Those revolutionary expatriates who still bear the irredeemable weight of their revolutionary past expose the brutalities of the past before the public suffering from political amnesia. Milan Kundera, renowned Czech novelist writes, in his novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*: “The struggle against power is the struggle of memory against forgetfulness.” If we think after Kundera, the role of a real revolutionary is to remind the society of the lacunae in the functioning of the democratic state in the past however horrible its past would be. The emerging middle class was getting easily adapted to the changing socio-economic conditions and have managed to sweep such unpleasant memories under the carpet. The Kerala economy during 1980s and 90s showed a growth rate of 6.7% which was unprecedented since 1957. Dr. Thomas Isaac, Finance minister of Kerala, who is also a renowned economist, points out that “in between 1987-1988 and 1996-1997 the gross economic growth of Kerala was 6.7%. It was just 1.6% for a time since 1973.” He attributes the simmering growth rate to the flow of money from the Gulf countries. Since much of the growth was shown in the service sector, it was a clear indication of the growth in standard of living of the people. When the material comforts of the people were expanding, the bleak experience of the past became totally forgotten. It was in this time *AmmaAriyan* brought in to the fore the predicaments of Naxalite revolutionaries.

At the start of the movie we find the protagonist, Purushan (Joy Mathew), taking leave from his mother for a long journey. The tracking camera captures his long walk till he reaches the bus station. He met his ladylove at the library who was waiting for him. The conversation between these two gives us the idea that Purushan is worried about something. Next aerial long shot carries us to the serpentine hair-pin curves to Wayanad. There we find Purushan in the window seat of the bus absorbed in some thoughts. Again in the next shot we find him travelling in a jeep through the interiors of Wayanad. His jeep was stopped by cops as they wanted to carry the dead body of a youth, who has committed suicide, to the Medical College. Looking at the face of the dead man Purushan felt some sort of familiarity with him. With the aid of his friend at the Medical College he visited the mortuary and identified the deceased as their Tabalist friend Hari (Harinarayanan). They brought their close associates Balettan (NilamboorBalan) and Hamza, to the mortuary and confirmed their suspicion. Then they have decided to let Hari’s mother know about the tragedy. Several other friends joined them on their way. At last they found Hari’s mother and revealed the tragedy happened to him. Hari’s self-possessed mother calmly accepts the truth. During their journey to Fort Cochin where Hari’s house is located they met several of their old friends and through the conversations and memories of those friends the tumultuous political past of Kerala stands exposed to the audience. As the title of the movie suggests

it is the report of the death of a son to his mother by his friends. The interior monologue of the protagonist, Purushan, addressed to his mother broadens the meaning of the title. Then it means the report of the death of Hari to Purushan's mother. There are a lot of mothers in the movie like mother of Hamza and mother of Rajan to whom the tragic death of Hari is reported which further complicates the meaning of the title. Now the title means the report of the death of a youth to the entire crowd of mothers in our society. The unbearable, tormenting weight of the past is epitomized in the dead body of the deceased youth, Hari. Harinarayanan, who don the part of Hari in *Amma Ariyan*, in an interview with *Mathrubhoomi Weekly*, talks about the background of the movie: It was a regular practice even in Kerala that youth from middleclass families either left their home or committed suicide during the immediate aftermath of Emergency... It may be from the rotten dead body that we come to learn the real knowledge of historical reality (45). So the dead body of Hari bears witness to the atrocities perpetrated by the repressive machinery of the state during the time of emergency. It metaphorically represents the memory solidified. Hari's suicide was not an individual perversion but the result of the collective despair looming in the political atmosphere of post emergency Kerala. Just like the protagonist in *Kabani* they dreamt of a dawn devoid of discrimination. In a sense *Amma Ariyan* can be approached as a sequel to *Kabani* which reminds the spectators of the perilous outcome of such dreams. The past was replete with political activism aiming to transform the society. They carried out many revolutionary activities. They attacked police stations, organised fishing labourers, and captured forcefully the ration merchants who had hoarded provisions, protested against the commercialization of medical education. But when the state and the dominant ideology crushed such uprisings with an iron fist they became disillusioned and realized the failure of their dream and the very ideology they cherished. A shot where a cow is found eating the poster with full of political slogans written on it suggests the indifference of the people towards the burning political issues. Trade unions very soon became a ploy in the hands of the bourgeois capitalists. They ignored the real issues of the working class. Radical left movement was cracked down by the state. The socially committed educated middle class youths with political inclination were at the crossroads. Just like Hari in the movie they were all totally confused. Life without an ideological position was unbearable to them. Committing suicide in such a context would definitely have political connotation and relevance. Young revolutionaries like Subrahmanya Das, T Guhan and many others resorted to suicide out of that excruciating ideological dilemma experienced by the radical minded youths. Finding an explanation for the tendency of committing suicide Emily Durkheim, a renowned French Sociologist, made the following observation: "It is sometimes said that, by virtue of his psychological make-up, man cannot live unless he attaches himself to an object that is greater than himself and outlives him, and this necessity has been attributed to a supposedly common need not to perish entirely. Life, they say, is only tolerable if one can see some purpose in it, if it has a goal and one that is worth pursuing." (226) The intense internal feelings of purposelessness coupled with loss of faith in all forms of ideological positions made the lives of middle class educated youth unendurable for them. Very soon they felt the mental and physical tortures they have suffered as a part of their political activism absolutely worthless. Just like the protagonist in the novel *Prakriti Niyamam* by P Parameswaran, one of the most influential writers during the post emergency period, the youths were haunted by the memories of the past. In *Prakriti Niyamam* the protagonist suffers from the intense pain of eternal memory. Memory was an ordeal for him yet he never wanted to evade it. He takes medicine to keep those memories away from him. But at the same time he finds solace in those memories. This internal contradiction lying latent within the realm of memory, both as a cause of pain and also a source of solace, marks the ideological crisis of the period. He saw the moral degeneration of the organised left. Unwillingly he had to admit the failure of their revolutionary dreams. In *Amma Ariyan* Hari's suicide is also a logical and natural conclusion of the internal turmoil he suffered. Purushan's monologue at the beginning of the movie exactly captures the confused psyche of the youths: "Why must I go? I don't want to go. Night is creeping into my days. My spent dreams are scarred with silence. I throw them into nights empty of sleep. They fall into the desert of nightmares and miseries. In the eyes of the village, dry and scorched, I seem to find myself. But I must traverse the path of ill omen. I am accursed". (From the movie)

Unlike the pre-sixties political melodramas, *Amma Ariyan* delves deep into the complex interiors of individuals' mind disturbed by the memories of the past and the indifference of the present towards everything political. Mind torn between two extremes-one totally idealistic that dreamt of complete social transformation and the other devoid of all hopes-is daringly and honestly followed by John's camera. As observed by C S Venkiteswaran, the noted Malayalam media critic, "the surface level narrative of the movie is about the search for the identity of a dead body and the journey for it. But this journey is through real spaces. Through the memories awakened by the spaces covered and the people we confront during this journey the inertia of the society we live in is exposed." (65) The radical revolutionaries in the movie *Amma Ariyan* are portrayed as eternal sufferers who had almost lost the political optimism shown by Gopi in *Kabani*. Most of the characters appeared in the movie are former revolutionaries who suffered the terrible tortures of the state machinery. Now that they have returned home, joined their family and started adjusting themselves to the new social order doesn't mean that they are completely disconnected from the past. The rotten body of the dead past suffocates

them in each moment of their existence. They feel unstable and unsettled in the fast changing social order which was gradually getting under the tight grip of the market. They are still outsiders by way of their unwillingness to comply with a system that cast a spell upon individuals without immunity. When majority find it convenient to forget that past, these people keep remembering each and every nuance of their political past. Remembering, for them, is a political act that enables them to make the society stay face to face with the past. So their journey over the geographical space is at the same time a journey through each other's interiors where they felt memory not merely as a psychological function. They memorise the past by means of their body. From each place they reach during their journey spring hot current of painful memories. Every individual joining the group carries within them bundles of memories.

### **III. Naxalite Revolutionaries As Refugees of Memories: *Margam*(2003, Dir.RajeevVijayaraghavan)**

The fragile optimism shown by the protagonist in *Kabanis* no longer visible in *AmmaAriyan* as they have really passed through the ordeals of political emergency. They became fully aware of the futility of armed mass struggle in the face of oppressive apparatus of the state. More than ten years of political activism had diffused much of their optimism for a better society through revolution. They became hopeless but could not disengage with the memories of the past. Engaging memory at a time of mass political dementia was the only political activity they could perform. But there was another phase in the life of the former rebels wherein some of them miserably tried to push such painful memories in to the deep recess of their mind and managed to adapt with the changed situations. Oblivion is willed by them. But while doing so they tried vehemently not to compromise with their political convictions. This mismatch between individual political convictions and apolitical social conditions outside transforms individual's mind as a site of ideological battleground. There are instances where, in search of mental solace, such people resort to ahistorical and apolitical institutions like religion. The 2003 film, *Margam*, thus delineates the internal conflicts of a revolutionary who later realized the absurdity of his extremist political activism. The protagonist of the movie Venukumara Menon (Nedumudi Venu) lives in a flat with his wife Elizabeth (Shobha Mohan), daughter Prakriti (Mera Krishna) and son Benny. He earns a living by taking classes in a private tuition centre. Benny is an engineering student and Prakriti is doing her graduation. She is very close to Venu Menon. The silence and breaks fall in between the usual chit chats among the family members very succinctly suggest the mental agony of the protagonist. He is an idealist by himself and takes firm positions on matters related to marriage, rites and capital. Consequent to the persistent pleading of his wife and daughter Venu Menon decided to visit his ancestral home. It has been long since he visited there. He was accompanied by his daughter. He met his old comrades there and was severely criticized for his political hibernation. After that Venu Menon and Prakriti went to Wayanad to meet his old comrades. He visited a convent to meet the widow of his old comrade Yohannan who had committed suicide out of depression in the post-Emergency political scenario. But she refused to talk to him. This further aggravated the mental agony of Venu Menon. Those visits he made have blown away the ashes of deliberate forgetfulness covering the tormenting memories of the past. He was broken by the realization that despite the sacrifice of many revolutionaries no considerable change has been taken place in the system. He developed a self-aversion for his cowardice retreat in to the comfort zone of family ignoring his political commitments. This overwhelming sense of despair was unbearable to him. He had fallen in to clinical depression.

The plot mainly revolves around the relationship between father and daughter that subtly unveils the complex interior landscape of the former revolutionary. The film maker never resorted to surrealist techniques, which has been a usual practice while exploring the interiority of the characters, to depict such a mental state. Instead realist way of narration with simple dialogues unveils the complicated political unrest of the past. The secluded and isolated life of Menon is portrayed in several medium shots and long shots where he is captured either walking or lying alone. He is more often looked at by others. His gradual mental deterioration is suggested by the continuous looks cast upon him by others. On the contrary Menon does not observe anything. He is not interested in looking around. Instead he prefers staying alone and looks inward, broods over his past, sighs for the guilt he has committed. This point out his inability to come in to terms with the changed social order. He wants to bury his past in the deep recess of his oblivion. We find him engaging class on the topic of time where he asks a crucial question to his students: "Is it possible to go back to our past?" (From the movie). Going back in time, by means of memories, for him was a painful experience. Notwithstanding the consoling presence of his family his feeling of guilt is getting surfaced every now and then. A couple of decades ago he took arms against this very same hostile system. He was one of the conspirators in the Panavally murder case but was acquitted as police failed to prove conspiracy. He was the political ideologue of the revolutionaries who had masterminded many such gory episodes in the past. But those struggles did not bring about any considerable changes in the system.

*Margam* was released in 2003- almost thirteen years after India opened its market for the multinational companies to freely move their commodities. This move was made by the then Congress ministry at the centre

headed by P V NarasimhaRao. It triggered hot political debates all over the country where the organised left severely criticized the government by condemning that move as anti-people. But the same left was later criticized for implementing policies that facilitated capital investment from big players across the globe. Free flow of global capital across the political boundaries of nations made their economy more dynamic. Even countries with communist government like People's Republic of China joined that bandwagon. This perplexing political situation brought about by globalization compelled the left to undergo a thorough introspection. The imbroglia created by economic globalization was never easy for the left to surmount with the conventional ideological positions it held. Organised left was forced to accept some of such policy measures that facilitate the growth of private capital. Such policies were severely criticized by a group of intelligentsia as ideological deviations from the part of the political left. A passing reference on the degeneration of party in this respect is subtly made in the movie when a newspaper headline reads as follows: "Capitalists too are invited to join the Communist party in china" (From the movie). This news was somewhat shocking for Menon. It was from China that extremist revolutionaries received their impetus once. Alleged ideological digression of the political left prompted Menon to withdraw from explicit political activism. He realized the emptiness of the movements and turn to himself for introspection. There is a scene in which he picks up his mother's old box and takes out his father's Gandhi cap and tries to identify himself with his father who was a Gandhian. Gandhi cap here assumes metonymical significance as a symbol of non-violence practiced by Gandhi. Wearing his Gandhi cap, then, becomes an act of repentance from the part of the protagonist who unleashed violence as part of his political activity. He was one of those accused in the Panavally murder case. Wearing his father's Gandhian cap and the relief he feels thus suggest this inner feeling of guilt he bears with him for the last few years. The epithet 'former naxalite' carries complex socio political undertones whereby a society perceives the existence of a former naxalite. Various discourses perpetuated by politicians, intelligentsia, media and common folk together constructed an idea of the naxalite that exerts unwanted burden in the lives of the former naxalites. It is just like a heavy weight being placed on their shoulder which they cannot unload until their death. The existential crisis brought about by such preconceptions forced them to shy away from active social interactions. In *Margam* we see VenuMenon being entrapped in his self-begotten isolation with his daughter as his close companion. He has very few friends and companions. Kabeer, one of his earlier comrades he met during his visit to his ancestral home turns critical and unleashed abusive outbursts against him.

A large group of people were encouraged to take up arms against the hostile system under the influence of Menon's political exhortations. The same zealot turned inactive and withdrawn after the failure of their mission. This was rigorously questioned by Kabeer who is a business entrepreneur now. Menon's indifference towards the plight of the former revolutionaries was exposed relentlessly. That night he wakes up abruptly from his sleep as if from a nightmare. Kabeer was asking the same questions which Menon has been asking to himself for years. The unbearable weight of being a former revolutionary pricks his conscious whenever he is reminded of his past. The only place where he finds peace and harmony was none other than his ancestral home. There he could organically connect himself with an indefinable something that thrills him emotionally. The intelligent camera of the award winning cinematographer Venu subtly captures the nuances of this feudal inclination lying latent within the interiors of Menon's psyche. Menon's enthusiastic description of his proud ancestry to his daughter, along with the flow of fresh current of energy emanated from his face after his visit to his ancestral home are all indicative of his deeply encrypted feudal mind set. His years of political activism and indoctrination were just a superficial covering.

The values of the past were very soon replaced by the values of the new system driven by capitalist way of economic restructuring. Benny, son of Venu Menon, represents the emerging new generation of technocrats who doesn't believe in mass movements and collective struggles. They are no longer thrilled by the slogans of classical Marxism. They need more and more opportunities for employment. For that, they believe, a systemic restructuring of the existing order is a prerequisite. Prakriti and her college friends also represent the changing attitude evident in the youth. They celebrate one others' birthdays from restaurants. They together go for movies. The youths live in the flat adjacent to that of Menon's also are media persons who stand for emerging new possibilities in terms of employment in the post globalized scenario. When the movie is contextualized in the last decade of the twentieth century it exposes the inability of the ex-revolutionary to come into terms with the emerging capitalist world order. The movie does not try to accuse VenuMenon for his revolutionary pre-occupations nor does it point an accusing finger towards the new economic order. The movie simply brings in to the fore the dilemma of many such revolutionaries in the aftermath of the failure of their political action. Unlike the former revolutionaries in *AnnamAriyan* who willed 'remembering', VenukumaraMenon carefully evaded memories as he was astonished to see the total disconnect between the past and the present, especially after the onslaught of economic globalization. As noted by Luisa Passerini, "the art of memory cannot but be also an act of forgetting" (250). Just as in the case of the protagonist the spectators are also denied access to the past by consciously avoiding flash back techniques in the movie. As Turim writes: "If flashbacks give us images of memory, the personal archives of the past, they also give us images of history, the

shared and recorded past”(2). But as long as the protagonist tries to evade the burden of the past, the past becomes memorialized in his person.

VenukumaraMenon in *Margam* lives in three worlds: first one is that of his family that he feels as the comfort zone for him. The second one is the world of his memories where he feels deep regret for his violent political activism and the third one is the world of his ancestry and pride with which he can identify himself very easily. Just like Freud’s categorization of an individual’s mind into conscious, sub-conscious and unconscious these three different worlds have vital significance in determining his complex behaviour. An individual’s awareness of reality is the result of the combined functioning of these three complex mental faculties. Conscious mind, for Freud, remains at the surface level that consists of our immediate thought and perceptions. The preconscious consists of all that can be retrieved from memory. The third one, unconscious is the most complex repertoire of our primitive wishes and impulses and it is in this layer that an individual’s repressed desires are locked away. For VenukumaraMenon he repressed his affinity with his ancestry into his unconscious which got resurfaced at the time of deep ideological crisis. It is even stronger than the memories of his political past which are overpowered by the powerful current of memories locked away in the unconscious. Gopi in *Kabini* was fully convinced of his mission and he strongly believed that the ideology that he pursued would one day liberate the entire humanity. He seemed to be unequivocal in the articulation of his political beliefs. The youths in *Amma Ariyan*, even at the time of their realization of the failure of revolution, were not ready to discard their ideological steadfastness. For VenukumaraMenon he is fully convinced of the failure of his earlier political position and seeks to purge his mind of all such memories. His attempts to visit his old comrades thus carry ritualistic implications since his ultimate aim was to purify his mind. As he was rejected by most of them he has no options left other than resorting to his own spiritual belief. His flight to spirituality is thus an escape from his own confused existence.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Katherine Hodgkin and Susanna Radstone, “The political memory of members of a group is not identical with the personal memory of the individual activist, even though they may share events and concerns in common”(8). The experience of being radically political may not always be the same with different individuals involved in it. As it is the individual’s mind that constructs meaning out of such experiences, the psychological attributes of the individual always come into play while determining his/her experience. Naxalite movement in Kerala has never been like a teleological narrative having a well defined beginning, a progression and an end. It has multiple ramifications in the ever transforming political context of Kerala. It is difficult to assume whether the movement has served its purpose or not. Just in the same way the cinematic representations of the movement, by engaging memory, situate the Naxalite narrative in a convoluted site where mutually contradictory, and at times complementary, discourses are generated thereby comprehensively capturing the complexities of the movement. In the context of Malayalam Naxal Cinema, it is apparent that, while films like *Amma Ariyan*, *Aparahnam*, and *Thalappavu* rely on memories to politicise the act of film making, *Margam* resorts to the act of forgetting to achieve the same goal.

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