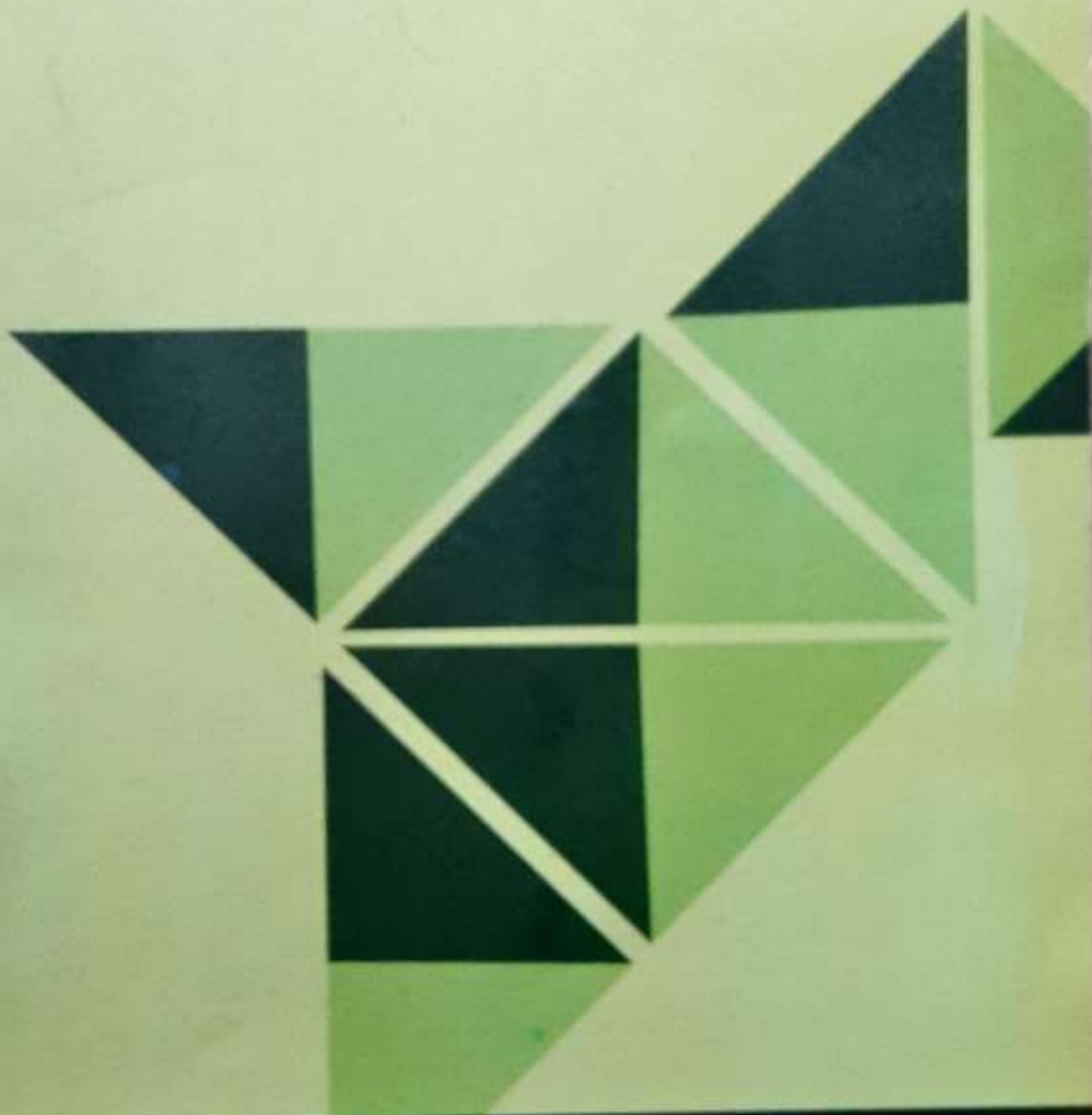


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The Quest

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realize that we 'humans', are in fact witnessing the tragedy through the eyes of the camera, which is also an invention of humans. Certain scenes in the movie disclose the hero's emotional attachment to it, as it was once owned by his father. The *Canon* shockingly gains a character of its own in the end, when the hero focuses and sees many more bodies near a victim, something not visible to his naked eye. Dr. Biju thus skilfully interconnects imagery with documentary realism to wake up the human spectator (or the larger human community) from the ignorance of his doings.

The character essayed by Kunchako Boban in *VCP* is modelled on Madhuraj, a press photographer. Instead of a direct narration, the director uses 'the photographer/camera duo' for the purpose. I would argue that the director has deliberately used this technique to adopt an anthropocentric narration of the tragedy. It is through the hero's facial expression, we see the horror of the situation. It is like FIR (first information report) where we get the first-hand reaction which holds a greater impact on viewers. Thus, the director is using the actor as a property to make the situation more traumatic. Coming to camera, the man-made object, it is used with a higher purpose of interpreting a disaster. It serves as an objective eye to record the subjective world. When we count it as a medium within the medium, the camera takes on some ominous dimensions. When the hero zooms it he sees strange and shocking visuals like the girl vanishing from the bench where she is seated in her class room and the long row of dead bodies near the victim at the rehabilitation centre. Ironically, the camera shows us the menacing future awaiting us, which we refuse to see otherwise.

The director has also captured every typical anthropocene systems at work that controls this endosulfan tragedy. It is horrifying to note that even the twenty committees and the government failed to pay heed to the pleas of the victims and they closed their eyes on this severe human right violation. All are part of a system where transactions matter and where the poor and the suffering are sidelined. It is shown through the minister's contempt and indifference towards the victims and that may be the reason for accusing the film as politically motivated after its release. When the minister says "spraying endosulfan in cashew plantation will not lead to disease in people", it hints at the callous

disregard of the authorities on the victims. The director closes his deliberations by hinting at what is awaiting us. When the closing shot displays the wording "struggle for existence continues", he is hinting at the potential future of humans—a future where homelessness pervades and an increase in the number of environmental refugees.

Campaigns to raise public awareness on global warming and call for immediate action to curb its effect on environment have always been a serious concern for creative artists. Alarming effects of this anthropocene era and how humans have messed up the planet can be spotted in U. S documentaries like *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), and *Climate Refugees* (2010). But Keralites seem to be discarding the threat as they are cloaked in a false notion of safety. The movie *VCP* is a dig at such an attitude and is an exhortation to be more 'humane' in our approach to ourselves, to our planet and to other life forms.

Though I have referred *VCP* as a 'movie', it is more of a docu-fiction. The exposition lays an element of documentary but as the hero realizes the gravity of the tragedy, his emotional turmoil when he sees and empathizes with the victims, imparts a fictional touch to the movie. Glimpses of hero's own past life with his father reinforce this fictional touch. However, constraint has been exercised to make sure that the Stockholm Convention, the court room scene and the final verdict to stay clear of melodrama. The hypocritical response of the Indian representatives in the Convention seems to suggest that facts can indeed be stranger than fiction. The introduction of real characters like Smt. Leelakumari Amma, who took the issue to the court for the first time, Sri. Pedre, who is a witness of the whole tragedy, the victims and their parents—all reinforce the authenticity of representation. But while concentrating on the humanitarian aspect, the director totally neglects the unforeseen effects on the environment due to this irrational human deed. Instead, from the title image till the very end, he beautifully manages to say how we continue to dig our own grave. This cannot be exactly treated as a flaw in his treatment. This only proves further that in an anthropocene era, only 'anthropocentric' treatments will bring the necessary impact for results to follow. Thus, we can say that *VCP* is basically an anthropocentric monologue that objectifies a human dilemma, rather than looking at the environmental hazards. It is one of the bolder