CHAPTER 2

FILM AND AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

There are three terms used to denote cinema—Film, Cinema and Movie.¹ Each of these terms refers to a specific aspect of film. The filmic is that aspect of the art concerning the relationship with the world around it; the cinematic deals strictly with the aesthetics and the internal structure of the art. The third word, movie, provides a convenient label for the third facet of the phenomenon; its function as an economic commodity. "These aspects are closely inter-related. But, in general, we use these three terms for the art in a way that closely parallels this differentiation; movies, like popcorn are to be consumed; cinema (at least in American parlance) is high art, redolent of aesthetics; film is the most general term with the fewest connotations".² This distinction in terms of reference has resulted in three approaches, film, movie and cinema, and within each approach there is a corresponding spectrum of function, ranging from documentary and non-fiction on the left through the massive, popular narrative commercial cinema that

2. Ibid.
occupies the middle ground on to the avant garde and abstract film on the right.

This distinction in three aspects of film is used here as it serves as a point of beginning, to look at the film not as a monolith with just one aim, but a multifunctional medium with three distinct purposes - commercial, entertainment and aesthetic. Since the aesthetic aspect is discussed throughout this study, in this chapter discussion will center around the "filmic" aspect of film i.e that aspect of the art concerning the relationship with the world around it and the "movies" aspect i.e. its function as an economic commodity. These functions of cinema will be dealt with, under various headings such as

a) Producer/Distributor/Exhibitor network
b) Censorship
c) Governmental assistance
d) Film Society Movement
e) Film Education
f) Media on Films.

The basic premise here is, that the relationship between cinema and society and cinema and politics cannot be determined only by examining cinema and its direct effects on society or vice versa. At this point, it would be useful to remember that the relationship
between cinema and politics and society is not one of cause and effect which can be determined easily. One has to delve deeper and look at the organisations, practices, and governmental regulations which have developed on account of cinema, which will throw some light on this complex and indirect relationship between cinema and the outside world.

a) Producer/Distributor/Exhibitor Network

Malayalam cinema was a late beginner; while the Indian cinema can trace its beginnings to D.J.Phalke's Raja Harischandra, made in 1913,\(^3\) and the first South Indian cinema to Nataraja Mudaliar's Keechakavadham\(^4\) in 1916, the first Malayalam cinema, Vigathakumaran was produced only in 1928.\(^5\) But, however, it is worth noting, that one of the film theatres in Kerala, Crown Theatre, was built in Calicut, in 1925, earlier even to the production of the first Malayalam cinema.\(^6\) The other theatres in the major centres were built by 1931. (Ramavarma Theatre, Trichur (1930); Gowder Theatre, Palghat (1930); Jose Theatre, Trichur (1931); Chitra

\(^5\) Supra, ch.1, p.13.
Theatre, Trivandrum (1931). This gives us an indication of the people's interest in seeing films, even though they were not Malayalam films. When we take into account the fact, that during the period 1928-1938, only one more Malayalam film was produced, this becomes a significant piece of information. The films shown in the theatres mentioned above, were silent films/talkies in English, Hindi or Tamil. The spoken language was considered important, to follow the trend of the narrative cinema of those days. Yet, a lack of knowledge of the spoken language of the cinema, did not prove to be a deterrent (in watching the films) to people of Kerala. Their pronounced liking for the moving image (visual) becomes evident; the other examples evidencing their liking for the visual arts, are the dance dramas of Kerala - Kathakali, Kutiyattam, and Krishnattam, where one has to reconstruct the content mostly through Abhinaya (acting through gestures and facial expressions) and the Tolpayakkuthu (the leather puppet show) wherein the audience do not depend on the song sung as background music for following the content. It is significant to remember that in spite of such a strong 'visual' tradition in the art forms and a pronounced liking for the 'moving

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
image', the earlier Malayalam film did not pay enough attention to visual communication, but instead depended more on the verbal communication.\(^9\)

Another important factor to be borne in mind, is that though it was a late beginner, once the audience caught on to the implications of the form, its growth was phenomenal.\(^10\) Thus, Film became a popular medium of entertainment with Kerala audience and grew into a significant industry of Kerala as the following statistics\(^11\) (as of 1987) reveal.

- **No. of Theatres in Kerala**: 1300 (approx)
- **No. of film societies**: 60 (approx)
- **Employment potential (including artists, technicians, theatre personnel)**: 13,500 (approx)
- **Expenditure for film**: Rs.15,000,000 (approx) per year

It therefore, becomes important to analyse the infrastructure of the film industry in Kerala. It may be a coincidence that the production of the three early films in Malayalam was done by people who belonged to Kanyakumari district (J.C. Daniel; Vigathakumaran;


\(^10\) Supra, ch.1, p. 35.

Sunder Raj; Marthanda Varma M. Sundaram; Balan), which was at that time a part of the Native state of Travancore, but is, at present, a part of the Tamil Nadu.12 The proximity to Tamil Nadu, where the film industry had already made a mark, would have been one of the reasons why the early Malayalam films showed the distinct influence of the Tamil drama and the Tamil film.

What prompted them to launch on a business, of which they knew nothing? J.C. Daniel was, for example, a dentist by profession, and started film making as a hobby.13 His motivation could have been partly the fascination for this new art form and partly business motives. But the fascination for the art form must have been the predominant motive, because, as a business venture, his film did not succeed, and he lost all his investment and had to retire from film making itself. As for Sunder Raj’s Marthanda Varma, he had to retire in ignominy, as the film was confiscated by Kamalalaya Book Depot, the publishers of the book, for not having obtained the copyright to produce a film based on that theme.14

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
The commendable factor is the adventurous spirit with which these pioneers approached film making, a new venture, and their sincere effort in producing the film, paying very little attention to personal gains and losses. As the industry grew and became a full-fledged business, the aspect of personal gains took a front seat, pushing the emphasis on the quality of the film and its aristic excellence to a back seat. By the time *Balan* was produced in 1938, the business motive took the precedence.15

The social factors with regard to the films of the forties were the following:

Firstly, film making was predominantly a sporadic, individual effort. It was literally a one man show - the one man combining the functions of producer, distributor and exhibitor. The finances came from his personal means, or from other rich businessmen who loaned it to him as a purely business investment. The success or failure of one film at the box office meant the success or utter ruin of the producer also. As a business, "uncertainty" was the hallmark at every stage.

Secondly, most of the film producers were Tamil speaking-Malayalis, from the border district of Kanyakumari.

15 VIJAYAKRISHNAN, Op.cit, p.44.
Thirdly, the motivation for film making was artistic as well as business oriented. But in effect, both the motivations resulted in production of low quality films. They took as models, the existing verbose Tamil drama, Parsi drama and Tamil film and as a result, the films were filled with songs, dances, humour and other crowd-catching antics. It was a veritable hotchpotch of all elements of entertainiment. As a business venture, the producers felt, that as their income was to come out of the ticket collections from a heterogenous crowd of people, they had to make films, including elements to please all sections of people. The primary concern of film makers was to please the audience rather than presenting artistic pieces and thereby moulding audience tastes to appreciate such works.

Fourthly, the films were not made to be shown only to the Malayalam speaking people, as it was felt that showing films exclusively to this limited audience was not a viable proposition. So, the film was made in such a way that it would not only be appealing to Malayalis, but to Tamils, Canarese, and the Telugus who lived in the neighbouring large, undivided Madras Province. To make it pleasing to a mixed audience,

16 Discussions with KAIMAL, P.K., VASUDEVAN, T.E., and PRABHU, R.S., well known producers of Malayalam cinema.
who spoke different languages, it was action packed, and had dances, stunts, fights etc which would appeal to every one irrespective of the language used. The language itself, was stilted and theatrical and filled with high-flown Tamil and Sanskrit words and did not have the flavour of Kerala dialects.

Fifthly, because of the limited number of films produced each year, many of these films were box office successes, in spite of their debatable cinematic quality. Therefore, from the very beginning, the business considerations outweighed the artistic considerations.

Lastly, the elite of Kerala did not participate in film ventures or support them. They dismissed it as an "alien" art, a "mass" art, and therefore, a "cheap, unsophisticated, crude form of entertainment" fit to be seen only by the illiterate, uneducated masses. They remained aloof, and therefore, in the earlier stages of film making, the film did not have an intellectual or artistic base.

The first change in the producer-distributor-exhibitor network in Kerala came about, when Kunchacko established K & K Productions and Udava Studios at

17 Discussions with BHASKARAN, P., PANIKKAR AYYAPPA, Professor of English, Kerala University and RAJASEKHARAN THOTTAM, writer and film critic.
Kottayam in 1949. Soon, P. Subramanyam followed suit and established Neela Productions and Merryland Studios at Trivandrum in 1952. This was the beginning of the studio system in Malayalam cinema. Both these producers were primarily businessmen, who treated film making as a business venture. They established a system whereby regular salaried employees were appointed to perform the functions related to the creative side of film making such as script writing, lyric and music composition, camerawork, editing etc. Since the creative aspects of the film were mostly tackled by the same people, over and over again, the content and form tended to be stereotyped and repetitive. This was the beginning of the formula film in Malayalam. The formula for popular appeal was decided by the producer-director, with his business instincts, and the creative artists were reduced to the status of supplying the required ingredients to work out the formula.

On the administrative side, the producer emerged as the most powerful figure with the overall responsibility for the production. He was involved in all aspects of film making. The producer was a

18 Supra, ch.1, p. 16.
19 Supra, ch.1, p. 17.
20 Supra, ch.1, p. 40.
figure to be reckoned with, in the film community. This had salutary as well as harmful effects on the industry. The discipline, the single-mindednes and a desire to succeed gave the industry of film making a certain standard and respectability which it sadly lacked in earlier days. However, as the producers were not, very often, creative minds, they were not particular about engaging creative artists for executing the creative aspects of the film. They did not, as a rule, encourage off-beat directors, variety in themes, experimentation in form and technique. So, film did not explore into or experiment with new themes and new forms. There was a stagnation in the field of film, a desire to continue the status quo and never veer too far from the conventional patterns.

During this time, the functions of production, distribution and exhibition were clearly delineated and remained in the hands of different sets of people. There were contracts governing the rights and responsibilities of the producers, distributors and exhibitors. The producer was still the all powerful figure who could dictate terms to the distributors and exhibitors. The scarcity of Malayalam films (on an average two films per year) and the absolute control that the producers had over these films, ensured the supremacy of the producer in the partnership. There
were only two producers in the running - Kunchacko and Subramanyam - and there was hardly any element of competition. They divided the spoils between them and had their own brand of cinema with their own group of followers. Kunchacko specialised in Northern ballad themes (Unni Archa), revolutionary themes (Punnapra Vayalar) or social themes with family stories (Jeevitha Nauka), while Subramanyam specialised in mythologicals (Kumarasambhavam), social themes of a stereotyped, melodramatic nature (Adhyapika), and jungle themes (Ana Valarthiya Vanampati). 21

Into this set up of the two king pin producers, came other individual producers, whose artistic motives went hand in hand with business motives. Their artistic motives were a) freeing the Malayalam cinema from the influence of Tamil cinema and developing a Kerala identity and ethos. b) including what is good and abiding in the artistic traditions of Kerala, such as the folk tunes, folk idioms etc and promoting a truly Kerala cinema. c) developing the infrastructure for building up a tradition of Malayalam cinema in Kerala itself. 22 Notable among these producers are T.K. Pareekutty of Chandratara Productions, T.E.

Vasudevan of *Jayamaruthi* Productions and P.K. Kaimal of *Tirumeni* Pictures. Pareekutty insisted on variety in themes, outdoor location shots to give the film authenticity and local colour, and inclusion of Kerala folk tunes and dialects to bring out a Kerala ethos. He also brought in many talented people from various fields to the cinema.\(^{23}\) T.E. Vasudevan and P.K. Kaimal managed their production units with great commitment, sincerity and integrity.\(^{24}\) The other notable producers of the fifties and sixities were M.O. Joseph of Manjilas Cine Enterprises, P.Bhaskaran and V.Abdulla. These individual producers did not have the backing of a studio, regularly paid artists and a well-oiled business machinery. What they achieved was a combining of talents from various art forms in cinema, freeing the cinema from the clutches of Tamil theatre and cinema and producing of Malayalam cinema which truly reflected the Kerala traits and ethos. They also brought to the forefront a band of committed artists,\(^{25}\) and initiated an integration of Malayalam literature, poetry, music, painting etc with cinema.

It was roughly at this time that the distributor began to gain prominence in the network. The

\(^{23}\) Supra, ch.1, p. 22.

\(^{24}\) Interview with later Prem Nazir in 1988.

\(^{25}\) Supra, ch. 1, p. 25.
distributor either purchased the film outright for a price or had an agreement for arranging the exhibition of the picture and sharing of the collection on a percentage basis after taking his distribution commission. He also concluded similar agreements with the theatre owners for the exhibition of the films in a theatre and sharing the daily collections on a percentage basis. The distributor then appointed his own representatives in various theatres to monitor the exhibition and collections. The theatres are divided into A, B, C, and D categories based on the population of the town which determines the collecting capability of the theatre. Thus theatres in Trivandrum, Cochin and Calicut are treated as Super "A" theatres; theatres in Trichur, Quilon and Kottayam as "B"; theatres in Wadakkancheri, Shoranur etc as "C".26 In Kerala, the distributor and the exhibitor, in general, had a good understanding and working relationship. Even now, percentage of sharing the daily collections is the system followed in Kerala, by the distributor and the exhibitor, whereas in the neighbouring states such as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, a system of hiring a theatre by the distributor at a flat rate, for a specified period, has come into vogue. This, according to P.K.Kaimal, affects the morale of the distributor and

26 Discussions with KAIMAL, P.K. Producer/Distributor.
in general, the discipline of the film industry itself.27

In the late seventies and the eighties, the system has changed considerably. The new production companies have emerged, replacing the old, the major ones being Jubilee Pictures, Century Pictures and Seven Arts.28 These are partnerships or private limited companies, registered as business enterprises. They not only perform the production function, but has taken on distribution also. Thus, they avoid having to seek distributors with whom they have to share their earnings. After the production is completed they come into a direct agreement with the theatre owners. These combines are run by professionals and discussions reveal that they perform three types of functions.29

1) finding a promoter to invest in a film. 2) looking into the essentials of the production of a film such as story, script, actors, other technicians and processing facilities. 3) selling it or coming into arrangements with theatre owners for exhibiting it. These combines are successful enterprises and their main consideration

27 Discussions with KAIMAL, P.K., Producer/Distributor.

28 Discussions with VIJAYAKUMAR, G.P., Partner, Seven Arts (Producers).

29 Discussions with THOMAS JOY, (Jubilee Pictures), KOCHUMON (Century Pictures) and VIJAYAKUMAR, G.P. (Seven Arts).
is return on investment. They are run professionally and gone are the days when the distributor dictates terms to the producer.

However, a certain type of star system has come into existence in the Malayalam film with the advent of super stars such as Mammootty and Mohan Lal and this has affected the Producer/distributor system also. The star system prevailing in Kerala is based on the glamour of the star. The stardom of the star arises from the fact that there is a marked preference by audience for films which star them. This preference is based on the personality, acting skill and other charismatic qualities of the star. It does not mean that all films starring the stars are successes. But more and more, the tendency to see the films with the stars in them, irrespective of the content and the form, is taking root in Malayalam cinema. The presence of the star in the film is becoming a crucial factor in the box office success of the film. The star, after he is chosen dictates terms to the producer and as a result, the producer who was once a very powerful figure in Malayalam cinema, has lost his importance. Many of the producers of the fifties and the sixties have completely withdrawn from the field.\textsuperscript{30} They are

\textsuperscript{30} VASUDEVAN T.E., KAIMAL, P.K., PRABU, R.S., BHASKARAN, P. all have retired from production of films.
not able to cope with the changed concept of the producer/distributor combine. They are also not able to give the full control of the film to the whims and fancies of the reigning stars.

The change in the producer/distributor network reveals two things. 1) From one man shows, with bankruptcy looming large on account of the vagaries and uncertainties of the industry, and the corrupt practices of the incumbents, the film production/distribution has grown into a highly professional and sophisticated industry. 2) However, on account of the star system and the business mentality with its prime focus on profits, the quality of films produced by these combines in the mainstream Malayalam cinema has deteriorated. It has become a hotchpotch of what the producers think will appeal to the audience - fights, sex, violence, chases, electronic music, provocative sound track, and thin, repetitive story line.

b) Censorship

India is a country where film censoring has been very strict. The first Cinematographic Act was passed in 1918.\textsuperscript{31} Many changes were made to it subsequently, in 1919 and 1920.\textsuperscript{32} The Regional Censor Boards were

\textsuperscript{32} BASKARAN, THEODORE, S., Op.cit, p.129.
established in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta in 1920.\textsuperscript{33}

After the Film Enquiry Report submitted by the Film Enquiry Commission, formed under the Chairmanship of S.K. Patil in 1952, the latest Cinematographic Act was passed in 1952.\textsuperscript{34} At present there are four types of Certificates given by the Censor Certification Board for films reviewed by them.

1. \textbf{U Certificate} meaning "For Unrestricted Public Exhibition," which can be seen by all sections of people without any restriction.

2. \textbf{A Certificate} meaning "For Public Exhibition Restricted to Adults only" which can be seen only by adults (people above the age of sixteen).

3. \textbf{UA Certificate} meaning "For Unrestricted Public Exhibition," subject to films being endorsed with the caution to the parents to satisfy themselves as to whether they would like children or wards below the age of 12 years to see them.

4. \textbf{S. Certificate} "For Public Exhibition Restricted to the members of any profession or class of persons having regard to the mature content of the film".

There is a Board of Film Certification with a Chairman, consisting of 12-15 members appointed by the Government of India. Besides this, there are Regional centres, with Regional Officers, assisted by advisory

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid.}

panels, chosen by them. This is the body empowered to grant/deny a certificate to the film. If the Regional Committee cannot arrive at a consensus, the film is referred to a Film Certification Appellate Tribunal with a retired Supreme Court judge at the helm. Film producers, if they are not satisfied with the decision of any one of these bodies, can appeal to the higher body for reconsideration. Any act of violation or contravention to the conditions for the exhibition of certified films is now considered an offence leading to imprisonment for two years and a fine of Rs.10,000/-. The fee for certifying a film is Rs.100/- per 1000 ft. or part thereof.

The Kerala Regional Censor Board was appointed in 1980 and most of the censoring of Malayalam films is now done at the Regional Centre. That Trivandrum was chosen as a Regional Centre proves that the Government of India has taken cognizance of the importance of film industry in Kerala. Often, disputes between the producers and the Censor Board is on what should or should not be included in a film. There are some guidelines used in examining a film.

35 Discussions with BANERJEE, SAMIK, a member of the Central Board of Film Certification.

36 See Appendix No.2.
In recent times, the effectiveness of the Censor Board in controlling socially harmful elements being included in cinema has been questioned by various forums. Though the Censor Board has partially succeeded in preventing such harmful influences creeping into cinema, the film producers have found ways to nullify the Censor Board's restrictive measures, through extrapolation of "bits" containing pornography or violence, to the film, after the Censor Board Certification, before it goes for exhibition in theatres. This was prevalent in Malayalam cinema, of the seventies, especially the ones which were being secretly exported to the Gulf countries.\(^{37}\)

Though the Censor Board itself has no jurisdiction over this practice, there are vigilant squads set up by the State government to check on this practice and they have the right to seize and ban such films. Several films have thus been seized and banned.\(^{38}\) Within Kerala, this practice is restricted. However, outside Kerala, the practice continues surreptitiously. With the arrival of Television and video on the scene, the prevalence of soft porn film or change of original films with soft porn bits, have increased and there is

\(^{37}\) Supra, ch.1, p. 39.

\(^{38}\) Discussions with SHREEKRISHNA DAS K.L., Regional Officer, Film Censor Board, Trivandrum.
no way to prevent these practices except through rejection by the public of these films.

Another shortcoming of the censoring practice is the generality and the inadequacy of the guidelines. Malayalam movies abound in explicit exhibitions of sex and violence in spite of the monitoring done by the Censor Board in this respect. In a film such as "1921" (1988) by I.V. Sasi, it was reported that the film was approved after twenty one cuts.39 But even after all these cuts, it abounds in scenes of violence. So the cuts had only the effect of reducing the violence shown and the spreading of the cult of violence. The film still has enough to arouse the violence deeply embedded in human beings. The film "Nair Saheb" (1989), directed by Joshi, contains scenes which depict the Indian Armed Forces in such a poor light, that one wonders why it was not summarily rejected by the Censor Board as "anti-National". An interesting fact emerged when discussions were held with Sreekrishna Das, the Regional officer of the Censor Board at Trivandrum. This film was not approved at the Regional level and had to be cleared by the Central Board and the Defence Department, which cleared it. So, it becomes clear that in spite of the various checks and

39 Discussions with SREEKRISHNA DAS, K.L., Regional Officer, Censor Board, Trivandrum.
balances in the Censor Board hierarchy and the guidelines prescribed, a film which is a potential threat and harmful influence to the sensitivity and value system of the audience, gets the formal approval.\textsuperscript{40} These instances make one feel that the time has come to reevaluate the existence, functions and validity of the Censor Board.

c) \textbf{Governmental Assistance}

Malayalam Cinema, or for that matter, Indian cinema, has been, to a very great extent, financed by private financiers, wealthy individuals or indigenous money lenders. Later, it began to be financed partly by businessmen, whose regular income was from some other business, and who treated the money lent to film makers as a pure business investment, a way of making additional profits. Thus, it was always the private investment which supported cinema. The governments (Centre and State) did not directly finance cinema as is the practice in the Socialist countries. As the Government does not recognise the cinema as a regular industry, the normal sources of finances, such as the bank finance, which is available to other industries, is not available to cinema. Moreover, as the risk factor involved in financing the films is very high and

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
the security offered almost valueless (exposed film), the banks are understandably hesitant to take the risk, unless the government guaranteed it.

But neither the unwillingness of the government, nor that of the banks and financial institutions to support the industry, stemmed the growth of cinema. The film entrepreneurs, went ahead with their plans, small timers selling their immovable property, or pawning the jewellery of their wives,41 and raising funds; others getting loans from indigenous bankers, private financiers, businessmen with unaccounted money etc. Their insecurity with regard to the source of finances, was one of the reasons why their motivation in making films became primarily recovery of investment plus profit, rather than artistic or quality considerations. The unsupportive attitude of the government and other financial institutions was thus the prime reason for the degeneration in the quality of films produced even as the quantitative growth was phenomenal. Indisciplined growth, unfair competition, low quality of films produced - all stemming from lack of proper financing and guidance and the resultant insecurity of film makers have placed the Indian and Malayalam film industry in great jeopardy.

41 J.C. Daniel and P. Ramdas are good examples of this practice.
However, the government has, to some extent, realised that its lack of foresight is causing a great deal of vital damage to the film industry and is trying to partially rectify it by giving support through various organisations.

(i) **National Film Development Corporation (NFDC)**

The Government of India established NFDC in 1980 merging two organisations, the Film Finance Corporation and the Indian Motion Pictures Export Association. The main objectives of the NFDC are, "to plan, promote and organise an integrated development of film industry in India. The functions included financing and producing the construction of film houses and formulating other schemes for a greater exposure of good films with a view to help the deserving film makers to further improve the quality of their work continuously".43

The Corporation has been providing facilities for 16 mm film production and has set up a sub-titling laboratory and a modern video transfer and duplicating unit. Of these functions, the most important one is that of offering 100% financing to deserving film

43 Ibid.
According to the scheme, the film after it is made, will be totally owned by the Corporation and out of the profits on the film 7 1/2% will accrue to the director and 2 1/2% to the scriptwriter. The exhibition of the film can be done only with the permission of the NFDC till the loan is repaid.

Generally speaking, the major problems with regard to NFDC loans have been the stiff loan repayments schedule and the unhelpful attitude of NFDC with regard to distribution and marketing of films. But in some cases, NFDC has taken the trouble to rectify their unhelpful attitude by actively marketing the films. A good example of this is Piravi (Birth) produced by Shaji Karun in 1989. As it won the National Best Film Award, it was automatically selected for inclusion in the Indian Panorama and was purchased by Television for exhibition in the National Telecast. The NFDC loan will automatically be paid from the proceeds obtained from the Television. But not all films are this lucky, and they are in a fix as to how to repay the NFDC loan without exhibition of the

44 Piravi (Birth, 1989): Dir: SHAJI KARUN

45 Television has brought forth a scheme whereby the films which have won a national award or are selected for Indian Panorama are chosen for telecasting in the National Network of the TV and are paid a royalty of approx. Rs.700,000/- to Rs.900,000/-. 
film. An NFDC financed film *Ore Tooval Pakshikal* (Birds of the same feather),\(^{46}\) which won the State Award, but missed the National Award and the Panorama selection has problems with regard to repayment of loan, unless some organisation comes forward and subsidises it and repays the loan so that it can be released commercially. There are a number of films in Malayalam, financed by NFDC. Most of these films have won national and international awards\(^{47}\) or selected for the Indian Panorama of the International Film Festival of India. In 1990, two films which were NFDC financed, "Piravi", and *Alicinte Anweshanam* (The search by Alice) were selected for the Indian Panorama.\(^{48}\) *Piravi* had, during the year 1989 won several national and international awards - the prestigious Silver Leopard at the Locarno Festival and the Charlie Chaplin Award at the Edinburgh Festival.\(^{49}\)

The other activities such as coproductions along with Television, financing film houses and export of films have helped Malayalam films also. However, the

\(^{46}\) *Ore Tooval Pakshikal* (Birds of the same feather, 1989), Dir: RAVINDRAN, C.

\(^{47}\) Discussions with PARTHASARTHY, S. Assistant Manager, NFDC, Madras.

\(^{48}\) Interview with SHAJI KARUN, and CHANDRAN, K.V., in. 1989.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.
general feeling among the film makers about NFDC and the help it renders to them, is that it is partial and limited.\textsuperscript{50}

(ii) \textbf{Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC)}

This organisation was established in 1975, with its office in Trivandrum.\textsuperscript{51} It is a unit of the Kerala Government and takes an active part in developing Malayalam films. The Chiranjali Studio with the colour film processing complex was established in 1983.\textsuperscript{52} and has been a great help to Malayalam film makers who were hitherto dependent on AVM, Prasad or Vijaya-Vauhini studios in Madras for film processing. KSFDC's financial assistance to film makers consisted originally of Rs.50,000/- to every film produced in Kerala and an additional Rs.25,000/- for every film processed in Chitranjali.\textsuperscript{53} This has subsequently in 1988,\textsuperscript{54} been increased to Rs.100,000/- for every film produced in Kerala, using the Chitranjali equipment. It has also been responsible for the building of film

\textsuperscript{50} Discussions with HARIHARAN, K. and RAVINDRAN.C., film makers.

\textsuperscript{51} Supra, chap.1, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{52} Supra, chap.1, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{53} Discussions with PILLAI GOVINDA, P., Chairman, KSFDC, Trivandrum.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
theatres in major cities. *Kairali* and *Sri* of Trivandrum are KSFDC financed theatres. KSFDC is housed in Kalabhavan complex, which has an auditorium where good films are shown regularly. The National Film Archives of India and the Regional Censor Board Office are also situated in Kalabhavan. So, there is feeling of cohesion among all film associated organisations and it makes the work of a film researcher easier. KSFDC has started a film society, named "Film Circle" for exhibition of good films and conducting discussions thereon.\(^{55}\) It has a film library for use of film students.

Recently, KSFDC financed the making of a documentary film on the History of Malayalam Cinema in two parts, directed by P. Bhaskaran. This is the first attempt in Malayalam to compile film history and is remarkable inasmuch as it contains excerpts from interviews with artists, old film songs, and sequences from films. KSFDC's present Chairman, P. Govinda Pillai is a film enthusiast who takes an active and intelligent interest in Malayalam film and its growth. KSFDC also is facing the problem of inadequate funds to support the film industry. While it has ambitious plans for opening a visual communication centre with research

\(^{55}\) Discussions with PILLAI GOVINDA,P., Chairman, KSFDC.
facilities, it does not, at present, generate the financial resources to fund these plans. Film makers feel that even KSFDC’s financial support for film making is limited as film making has become an expensive industry. Any film, which used to cost a maximum of Rs. 300,000/- to Rs. 500,000/- ten years back would at present cost a minimum of Rs. 1,000,000/- to Rs. 1,500,000/-56 Therefore, the help rendered by KSFDC tends to be limited.

iii Television

Television has come forward in a big way to aid the film makers. It advances loans upto Rs.1.5 million to deserving film makers for making short telefilms for the duration of 90 minutes.57 The Television has the full rights to the film till the loan is repaid. Television has another scheme for buying a film which has won a National Award or has been selected for the Indian Panorama for exhibition in the National Network.58 This helps the film makers in repaying the financial investments made on the films atleast partially. However, this incentive has its own undesirable facets also. There is a scramble by film

56 Supra, ch.1, p. 41.

57 Discussions, with KUNHIKRISHNAN, K., Director of Television, Trivandrum.

58 Ibid.
makers, to make their films before the Panorama Selections and do enough lobbying to get their films included in the Panorama. Thus film makers are more interested in getting their films included in the Panorama, rather than making good films. As a result, sometimes the standard of films included in the Panorama is very poor. The Panorama, the Television and State and National Awards, designed to help the worthy film maker, have thus become preys to lobbying and honouring undeserving candidates. However, by far, the aid given by the Television has helped the film makers. The well known T.V. films that have come out are *Yathrayude Antyam* (The end of a Journey), *Marattom* (Masquerade) and *Mathilukal* (Walls).\(^{59}\)

The Television has a centre at Trivandrum, which helps the film makers in other ways. Once a week, a Malayalam film is screened on T.V. Apart from this, the film makers are given contracts to produce and exhibit television serials which helps them financially when they are not making films. The very presence of a TV centre in Kerala is a boost to Malayalam cinema and film makers.

iv State Awards

Kerala State awards were instituted in 1969.\textsuperscript{60} The institution of the awards helped the film makers and the technicians in two ways; it gave monetary support; it also gave visibility and recognition to the recipients in the cine field thus helping them in finding sources for future financial support from government and private sources. The Committee of Judges also have helped by giving useful suggestions about the art of film making.\textsuperscript{61} However, in recent times, the State Awards have been beset with controversies. There have been accusations to the effect that the awards have been politically motivated, ignoring many good films. For example, the State gave only the second best award to Shaji’s” Piravi and Shaji refused the award. Later, the same film was adjudged as the best film at the National level and subsequently, bagged many international awards. Adoor Gopalakrishnan’s Anantaram (monologue) and Mathilukal suffered a similar plight in the state contest.\textsuperscript{62} Aravindan’s Marattom never won any award at the state or national level. A time has come to reevaluate the institution of state awards and

\textsuperscript{60} Supra, Ch.1, p. 30.

\textsuperscript{61} PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT, GOVT. OF KERALA (1) op.cit, pp.1-39.

\textsuperscript{62} Discussions with SHAJI KARUN and GOPALAKRISHNAN, ADOOR.
inject a great deal of professionalism and objectivity into the selection of films for awards.

v National Awards

The National Awards were instituted in 1954. Malayalam films won several awards from the first year of institution of these awards. National Awards have helped the Malayalam films in several ways - marketability in international fields, recognition, financial support etc. Besides all this, the State and National Awards have given respectability and credibility to film making as an industry.

vi International Film Festivals and Indian Panorama Section

The first International Film Festival of India was held in 1952 in Bombay. Subsequently, several competitive and non-competitive festivals have been held in different centres in India. These have given the Indian filmmakers and the audience a chance to be exposed to the best in the International Film and the directors of many of these films, thereby improving their own vision and craft. It has also given them a

63 Supra, ch.1, p. 28.
64 See Appendix 3.
venue to market their films for exhibitions at foreign centres. The Indian Panorama Section which exhibits the best in Indian cinema has helped the Malayalam films to prove their thematic and technical excellence in comparison with other regional films. In 1986, out of the 18 films chosen for the Panorama, seven were Malayalam films. (33 1/3%)\(^6\). The International Film Festivals and the Indian Panorama has increased the scope of marketing Malayalam films in India and abroad.

d. **Film Society Movement**

Film Society Movement all over the world took roots from the necessity of having outlets other than the traditional ones for exhibition of serious cinema and discussion of the cinema afterwards. The objectives of Film Society Movement, are the study of film as an art form and social force, and production of films of artistic value. The traditional outlets were always occupied with the exhibition of commercial cinema. As the films with popular appeal took most of the available time in commercial theatres, there was no possibility of exhibiting serious films with no box office elements to attract people. Hence the film societies were formed to undertake exhibition of serious films to a small, enlightened audience. In

\(^6\) Festival Committee reports of 1986.
India, the Film Society Movement dates back to the thirties, when Amateur Cine Society of India was formed in April 1957 in Bombay.\textsuperscript{67} But the movement took real hold in India with the establishment of the Calcutta Film Society by Satyajit Ray, Chidanand Das Gupta etc in 1947\textsuperscript{68} Later, it spread to other metropolises. The Federation of Film Societies was formed in 1959 to coordinate the activities of all film societies and promoting the Film Society Movement in India.\textsuperscript{69} It consists of 240 film societies as on March 31, 1989 and has a membership of over 100,000. The Federation has its regional offices in New Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. In Kerala, the first Film Society was formed in 1965, known as Chitralekha under the leadership of Adoor Gopalakrishnan and Kulathoor Bhaskaran Nair.\textsuperscript{70} Chitralekha formed a film cooperative which financed Adoor Gopalakrishnan’s earlier films, \textit{Swayamvaram} and \textit{Kotiyettam}.

After the formation of this society, many film societies were formed in towns and villages of Kerala. The seventies saw the flourishing of the film society

\textsuperscript{67} THOMAS M.F., Op.cit, p.83.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} Supra, ch.1, p. 44.
movement in Kerala. Even now the maximum number of film societies (Approx. 60 out of 240, 25%) registered under the Federation of Film Societies are in Kerala.\textsuperscript{71} But many of these film societies, after the first flush of enthusiasm, became inactive on account of lack of finances, committed workers and a support system. These film societies were instrumental in bringing about an awareness of the potential of the film as a medium, appreciation of serious cinema and international experiments in film to audience and directors of Kerala. The development of parallel cinema in Kerala owes a great deal to the Film Society Movement which nurtured the awareness to good cinema. At present, the more active of the film societies of Kerala are Surya, and Chalachitra of Trivandrum, Palai Film Society in Palai and Mass in Trichur.\textsuperscript{72}

Odessa, an organisation which is interested in promoting good cinema, is not a film society in the strict sense of the term. It is a People's Movement, initiated by the movie maker, John Abraham in 1984.\textsuperscript{73} John, along with the band of committed young men, formed this society with a four-fold programme of

\textsuperscript{71} Supra, ch.1, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{72} Discussions with THOMAS, M.F., writer and film critic.

\textsuperscript{73} Discussions with A.AMMAD, Founder member of Odessa, Calicut.
production, distribution, exhibition and studies and research on cinema. During the last six years, Odessa has arranged many film shows in various parts of Kerala on a 16mm projector, thus bringing good cinema to villages, and towns. John's philosophy was that, unless film was seen and understood by the common people, it does not serve any purpose. The film shows of Odessa were made possible from small and large collections and donations from people of Kerala. It was from such collections from the people, that John Abraham's last film, Amma Ariyan (A Report to Mother) was made. It was a unique attempt in the history of Indian cinema, whereby, the finances for the production of the film was raised through the contributions of thousands of people, thus avoiding the problems of capital investment by business minded producers and distributors, who dictated terms to directors on the content and quality of films. The film maker was thus freed to make a film in the way he wanted, with no compromises in the content or quality of the film. This concept of raising the finances for the film from common people had two effects. 1. It took cinema to

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Discussions with HARRIS, V.C. and AMMAD, A. Members of Odessa.
77 Ibid.
the people and made it a people's movement. 2. It gave a serious film maker an alternate source of finance. Besides screening John's four films and other serious films in more than 1000 centres, Odessa has conducted seminars, appreciation courses and publishes a quarterly film journal named Odessa Journal with serious articles on film.78

The significance of Odessa is that it has taken serious cinema to common people and disproved the myth that they can enjoy only formula films. They also gave the common man, who had been distanced from good cinema by the cerebral approach of the parallel film makers, an occasion to watch and understand serious cinema. Thus the awareness to serious cinema is being established at the grass root level. "The impact of Film Society Movement must be sought in the growing consciousness of the film goers, film critics as well as government and semi-government bodies about the need for improving the quality of Indian Cinema".79 In spite of the existence and active work of the film societies of Kerala, a majority of the viewers still patronise the mainstream cinema, which in fact, very often represents the desires, aspirations and dreams of the common man. The feeling that parallel cinema is purely

78 Ibid.
cerebral, with no social or political relevance makes it less popular than the mainstream cinema. Parallel film makers are also interested in building up a coterie for themselves, and they do not bother to explain and bridge the gap between the people and their films. The fact that they do not depend on public exhibitions and ticket collections for their sustenance, but are subsidised by the government bodies or international exhibitions may also be one of the reasons why they do not produce cinema which is closer to common man. Thus the film societies' contribution for promotion of good cinema is also limited.

**e) Film Education**

India is a country which produces on an average 800-900 films in a year. The annual capital investment in film production is estimated to be approximately Rs.3000 million. The total number of theatres in India is 12,978. Audience who watch films per week is estimated to be 91 million. The number of film journals in circulation is estimated to be 575.\(^{80}\) This is quite an impressive array of film facts to prove that film has been an all encompassing influence on the Indian society and politics. However, very little has been done to introduce film as part of the formal,

\(^{80}\) Ibid.
educational system. The two institutes which offer a diploma in film are the Film and Television Institute at Poona and the Film and Television Institute at Adyar, Madras. These two institutes offer three year diploma courses in Film Direction and Cinematography and two year courses in Editing and Sound. The curriculum followed is a balanced mixture of theory and practice. At the end of three years, the students make a diploma film. Many of the diploma films are of a very high calibre and they are often selected for the Indian Panorama and international festivals. Among the students selected every year, for the diploma course, at least one third, (33 1/3%) are from Kerala.  

The most illustrious film makers who passed out of the Film Institute at Poona are Adoor Gopalakrishnan, John Abraham, K.G. George, K.R. Mohanan, V.R. Gopinath etc. who brought a new meaning and depth to film making and film appreciation in Malayalam cinema.

Recently there is a proposal by the University Grants Commission to introduce film education as part of the University curriculum. Six centres have been chosen initially to introduce this course and Kerala University is one among them.  

81 Discussions with SANKARAMANGALAM, JOHN, Dean, Film and Television Institute, Poona.  
82 Discussion with BAHADUR, SATISH, Professor and Film critic, Poona.
One of the major contributions to film education is by National Film Archives of India, Poona and its enthusiastic Director, P.K. Nair. The Archives, besides providing the films for the Film Institute, has been organising Film Appreciation Courses since 1974 in Poona and in other centres such as Bombay, Heggodu (Mysore), Cochin, Trivandrum, Delhi and Jamshedpur. Every year, a five weeks comprehensive film appreciation course is organised at Poona. During this course, participants are exposed to viewing approx. 100 films (documentary and feature). Film makers, critics and experts take classes on Film theory, History and Analysis. The courses held in other centres are for shorter duration, approx. 10-15 days. These appreciation courses, have in an informal way helped in dissemination of film education.

There are other private organisations in various parts of the country which also offer similar service to film education such as Chitrabani, established by Fr. Gaston Roberge, in Calcutta, the Loyala College, Madras with its special course in Visual Communication, the Department of Journalism and Communication in the University of Kerala etc. With the establishment of

83 Discussion with NAIR, P.K., Director, National Film Archives of India, Poona.
84 Discussions with Roberge, Gaston, Rev., Director, Chitrabani, Calcutta.
film education and emphasis on study of film theory and practice, it is hoped that the Indian Film theory and aesthetics will be formulated in which Malayalam film theory and aesthetics also will find a place.

f. Media on Films

There are approx. 575 film journals in India. Out of these at least 20-30 are from Kerala.\textsuperscript{85} Kerala is noted for its newspaper culture. Because of a high percentage of literacy and political awareness "newspaper reading" has become a daily habit with people of Kerala. Therefore, there are a number of newspapers and magazines published from Kerala.

It is reported that there are currently (as of July 1987), 130 dailies, 106 weeklies, 68 fortnightlies, and 585 monthlies in Kerala. The well known film critics of Kerala are Vijakrishnan, Rajakrishnan, M.F. Thomas, Kallikkad Ramachandran, M.G. Radhakrishnan and Kozhikkodan (pen name of Appukuttan Nair). Besides these, there are magazines wholly devoted for film news - Chitrabhumi (Mathrubhumi), The Film Magazine (Kala Kaumudi), Nana etc. of these Chitrabhumi and Film Magazine, are the better ones. There are quarterlies such as Odessa journal which deal

\textsuperscript{85} Discussions with NAIR, VASUDEVAN, M.T., Editor, The Mathrubhumi Weekly, Calicut.
with film in a serious manner. Magazines such as Nana are filled with gossip columns, dealing with the personal lives of film stars and other such superficial details. But even the articles which appear in Chitrabhumi and Film Magazine, though highly readable and entertaining, are not well researched, impartial or well thought out. The standard of criticism is also very superficial. In depth articles are not in demand as the publishers feel, that these will not help the circulation of the weekly. Readers, as well as writers, as a rule, except for a few, do not still think of film criticism, as different from literary criticism, or of film as a subject for serious study. The film societies and film appreciation courses are trying to change this attitude. However, there is very little evidence of serious studies or criticism on Malayalam films, in spite of the long-standing tradition of Kerala in film and journalism.

In Kerala, film has, so far, been dominated by private entrepreneurs, who came forward to finance the industry. The Government has not shown a helpful attitude, towards films, nor has it recognised film as a regular industry. However, in recent times, recognising the popularity and all-pervading influence of film as a media, on society, politics and people, the Government has set up various organisations to
promote and support film industry. Their efforts have been partial, and film still remains an industry belonging to the private sector. The awareness to serious films has been aroused by film societies, film appreciation courses etc. But, in spite of all these efforts, the common man still shows a marked preference to the mainstream cinema, with which he can identify and empathise rather than the parallel cinema which tends to be abstract and cerebral.