CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to read the ways in which the popular art films operate in the everyday life of an ordinary Malayali male thereby constructing him in the hegemonic mode. This happens in spite of the fact that real life in its variety anticipates multiple masculinities. The correspondences between real life situations and popular art films in Malayalam can be profitably explored by contextualizing them within the cultural geography of Kerala. Such a contextualization is also unavoidable in order to detail the idea of culture as ordinary, a “minor” narrative of a region. This choice of regional films instead of national films as the subject/object of study is not upon the recognition that the former is the progenitor and perpetrator of hegemonic masculinity and the latter a harmless discourse. The choice rests firmly on the reason that by accessibility, immediacy and availability the former operates more decisively as an ideological apparatus that targets the ordinary in its everyday forms in manufacturing consent and effecting co-option.

The concept of “culture is ordinary,” integral to the Marxist interpretation of Raymond Williams has changed the notion that extraordinary events alone constitute history and culture (Williams, 1989: 3-14) The focus on the everyday practices of individuals and social structures is essential to expand the territories of living as well as to rescue the everyday from conventional habits of the mind. Drawing insights from such interpretations of culture, the discussion is set to understand masculinity of the everyday life in all its intricacies and incongruities.
There are staggering advances in ontology and epistemology. The new awareness created by these advances has radically reconstituted the human perception of the process of meaning making in relation to various structures and institutions around us. The understanding of the ideological and hegemonic constitution of knowledge systems and the constructed character of all these structures and institutions prevalent in human societies are the objects of study now. For a long time, most of these structures were taken for granted. But taking them for granted further would be tantamount to participating in the perpetration of the exploitative institutions. Theories of language and social construction constantly remind us that all spaces—the physical as well as cultural—are implanted with signs. So these spaces are inevitably political and symbolic terrains that are actively contested by various sections of the society in the process of negotiating the existential realities. The premises prompted me to pick on categories like “the everyday,” and “the ordinary” and connect them with cultural artifacts, the film and masculinity in particular, to explore how these terrains of daily existence are contested.

A critique of film as a cultural/ideological entity thus involves an understanding of its confrontations with the mainstream power structures, which includes the family, and how it attempts to chalk out a specific regional realm of existence within the homogenous narratives of the nation. The change effected by the 1990s that was to lead to a flattening rather than a focus on ideological specificities had its effect regionally as well. There seemed to be a certain blurring of boundaries in every walk of life. The 1990s have been identified to be the era during which late capitalism furthered its ruthless economic and cultural interests unopposed owing to
the collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of a unipolar world with America as the centre. This plunged the Indian left intelligentsia into a terrible crisis. The response of the Indian middle class including the left variants to the overbearing demands of the global financial capital was multi-pronged and hectic ideological activities were initiated to reconstitute the national and local structures for the maintenance of its domination. This kind of structural adjustment takes place in the visual culture also and it can be studied by taking stock of the changes in film culture.

Most of the film studies conducted in India were analyses done in the context of the nation in its making and unmaking. Reading film as a metanarrative of a national time and space, as argued by Ashish Rajadhyaksha, makes one a part of the dominant practice. The political shift that happened in the 1990s with the fall of the left block had its cultural resonances as mentioned before. Slavoj Zizek keenly notes this when he elaborates the concept of ideology. He asserts that ideology is not but some big social, political, project which died in 1990 with the fall of the USSR, but a still well and alive - not as a big system-but precisely in a most self-evident, normal, everyday form. But the regional, national and international became local and at the same time global or rather glocal in the 1990s is the reality that this thesis is going to address in its analysis. One finds the bi-polar world becoming unipolar but the manifestations indicate a world that is multipolar too.

The ‘man’ifestations of the male in the public field became so prominent that Pierre Bourdieu argued that a masculine domination is getting reproduced through
symbolic violence.\textsuperscript{1} The males in films are never the manifestations of heterogenous variants of masculinities available in real life. Those males are reproductions of the hegemonic vein by appropriating the variants using the possibilities of visual media. C.S. Venkiteswaran explores the formation of such males in the symbolic space making use of the insights from Claude Levi-Strauss. Levi-Strauss locates two strategies generally employed to cope with the otherness of the other.\textsuperscript{2} One is complete assimilation of the other while the second is the elimination or the vomiting of the other. Such hegemonic engenderings pressurize the ordinary males of everyday to cope with the dominant model taken as norm and defined and put in place by a colonial patriarchal ideology which was actually reforming the “barbaric” life of the Malayalis.

Just like the modifications in the life of women in Kerala following the more than twenty legislations that reconstituted the joint family into a nuclear structure which as studied by feminist scholars like G. Arunima, Praveena Kodoth, J. Devika and a host of academics, the changes that happened in the life of men as husbands and fathers shouldering extra burdens resulting from the shift to paternal order have to be studied. This is in no way an attempt to deviate the attention, but address the issues of “minor” men, or even the major men, and to liberate them from the burdens of hegemonic masculinity which is a construct. The question is whether we can, as

\textsuperscript{1} Symbolic violence involves a misrecognition of actions. In cases where this violence is symbolic, the subjugated individuals see their domination as natural. By viewing different social constructions as natural, the dominated agents participate in their own subjugation. http://peacejustice.msu.edu/exhibits/show/symbolic-violence/meaning; accessed on 14/12/13.

\textsuperscript{2} Claude Levi-Strauss suggests that just two strategies were deployed in human history whenever the need arose to cope with the otherness of others. The first strategy was aimed at the exile or annihilation of the others, the second aimed at the suspension or annihilation of their otherness; http://realsociology.edublogs.org/2013/10/16/summary-of-liquid-times-chapter-three-time-space/; accessed on 21/09/2013.
Bourdieu implies, delegitimize it. This will be the concern of the thesis in its further move.

The introduction of films in the school and college syllabi in Kerala, since the early 2000s, saw the seemingly casual entry of this hegemonic male figure and the irrelevant “others” into the mindscape of millions of school and college students. These syllabi may be seen to have inaugurated the saga of males as Apu in the Indian context, and his incarnation as Newspaper Boy in Malayalam. Films, their production and reproduction through syllabi do not happen in an ideological void. It is one that is constrained by dominant ideology, happening in definite historical circumstances, and influenced by socio-political structures. Films, in other words, reinscribe the patriarchal family structure and reproduce the imbalances of power.

The patriarchal regime constructs masculinity not on the basis of men’s “real” identity but on the “ideal” image constituted in contrast to his “other.” That is, masculinity, under patriarchy, needs an “other” from which a “Man” can distinguish himself; for masculinity resides completely in what “woman,” femininity, is not. It is too simple to assume that, in every instance, the patriarchal white film industry, as David Considine described it, reduces itself in creating models of femininity alone; rather, it constructs masculinities as well. Films have a veritable role in formulating and perpetuating not only femininity, but also masculinity as a social construct. Women also are made to look at men. Or there is a panoptical eye that looks at both women and men. They are under surveillance. The study of the films prescribed in the school and college syllabi become significant in this context.
One need go back to the nineteen twenties to know the beginning of the construction of femininity as well as masculinity in films. From the very first film, one can trace of history of masculine subjectification and interpellation. Films serve as manuals for gender roles, a kind of reference book on how the typical Indian male or female should dress, move and think. The plural nature of multiple cultures and the diverse role that wo/men play are not visible, but uni-dimensional projections of their lives construct another reality. Man has been constructed as a authoritative subject, one who carries the look, go out in search of material goods and come back to look after his family and as the sole agent of the change.

The existing studies on Malayalam films are largely confined to the analysis of the discursive construction of the female, though attempts have begun to address the issues of the male recently. This construction of the female envisages a male with an embodied patriarchal self. But, the present thesis would argue that, there are males who are incomprehensible or unidentifiable. The French thinker Gilles Deleuzes concept of the “minor” can be employed to make visible the unidentifiable and incomprehensible male identities. One task of the thesis is to problematize such “homogenous male” and to retrieve the “minor” others that got suppressed by those studies on otherness limited by “binary syndrome.”

The Malayalam film industry has been the domain of men. They produced, distributed and consumed the product. They constructed the image of an emerging new Man, masculine in every sense, a result of the project of the colonial modernity at work as part of the much acclaimed Kerala Renaissance. The web of social conditions related to the production, circulation and consumption of films within the
economy of power are important thus to the understanding of the mainstream Malayali public, a domain of different forms of masculinities. A critical analysis of films is imperative now as films are increasingly becoming part of the academic curriculum, which means that through a new media culture, the ideal of the masculine world and the male is inserted into young minds. This aspect needs to be critically viewed.

As one from Payyanur, my understanding of the popular-art films of the 1990s requires a contextualization within the cultural geography of Payyanur, a region which has significance in various ways to film. It has been the business of India’s most important historians to write “the biography of the emerging nation-state.” As with the history of Modern India, the history of Indian cinema has until recently been written mainly in nationalist hues. In recent years, there has emerged a body of new writing that is influenced by a “post-nationalist” historiography. This attempt to imagine beyond the nation is significant enough as far as the study of regional cultures are concerned. Understanding of regional film industries also falls within the purview of such post national narrative.

While talking about the change in imaginative geography, facilitated by e-literature and e-learning, P.P. Raveendran describes as to how such a transition has led to a questioning of a canon, aura, and originality as well as an incorporation of everyday

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3Payyanur was part of Ezhimala Kingdom and was ruled by King Nandan. Later, Ezhimala came under the regime of the Chera and thereafter the Mooshaka Dynasty. Payyanur was a part of Kolathu Nadu ruled by the Kolathiri Rajas based in Chirakkal near Kannur. During the British Rule, Payyanur was part of the Chirakkal Taluk. Soon after receiving independence from British, and the formation of Kerala state in 1957, Payyanur was taken away from Madras state and joined to Kerala state.

realities. William Raymond’s notion of culture as ordinary has led to a mapping out of the imaginative geography to include the most ordinary, everyday events as part of discursive constructions. E.V. Ramakrishnan has emphasized on the importance of art forms to address the everyday, a trajectory which, according to him, still remains uncharted as far as Malayalam poetry was concerned. The book *Elite and Everyman* observes the multiple everyday sites of social spaces of action (work places and homes, schools and streets, cinema and sex surveys, temples and tourist hotels) to delineate the lives of the middle classes which are indispensable to show how middle class definitions and desires articulate the hegemonic structures of power. Specific and everyday experiences become significant for the study of construction of masculinity. Just as the understanding of the stabilization of class relations (Connell 1977), focused on the dynamics of structural change involve the mobilization of whole classes, masculinity can also be understood only with relation to specific historical and regional contexts, which results in alternative hegemonic structures within masculinity and femininity.

Payyanur has been a hub of various political movements since 1928. Payyanur is chiefly known for its civil disobedience movements like Salt Satyagraha and Khadi Propagation. There were organized peasant revolts at Karivellur, Korom and

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8 It’s a coincidence that the official history of Malayalam film begins with *Vigathakumaran* in 1928 as T. Muralidharan says in his “National Interests, Regional Concerns: Historicising Malayalam Cinema,” *Deep Focus* (Jan-May 2005): 85-93.
Munayankunnu. All of them were part of the communist movement, questioning the oppressive measures of the landlords and the colonial regime. Back in history, Payyanur Pattu, a ballad of the north, has ample suggestions of how a business culture was opposed for an agricultural one.\(^9\) The importance accorded to land and agriculture as primary means of production was in keeping with a casteist structure that segregated the population into various castes based on the division of labour. The industrial belt in Payyanur had suggestively remained weak, in keeping with the general atmosphere of North Kerala. The role that Payyanur was to play in the nationalist and regional struggles for independence against internal and external colonization ought to be viewed in this backdrop.

The march against untouchability initiated by Swami Ananthatheertha and AKG are landmarks in the making of the alter-native history of Payyanur. There have also been other regional interactions and interventions that have been carried out at various levels by environmentalists and other grass root organizations distanced from the left. The preservation of mangrove forests by Dalits like Pokkudan, resistance activities by Public Health Forum, Chithralekha and Janavedi action councils etc. were such non elitist “ordinary” cultural negotiations with the various kinds of capitalist and patriarchal engendering. However, these negotiations are exclusively male-only-spaces, which ultimately get a space in the popular weeklies like Mathrubhumi\(^{10}\) and films like Papilio Buddha.\(^{11}\)


\(^{10}\) K. Ramachandran, K. Sahadevan and a lot many eco-political activists from Payyanur health Forum are active in the Kootamkulam and such issues through Mathrubhumi nowadays.
The 1990s saw a sea change in themes as well as audience expectations and tastes. Nehruvian dreams about mixed economy had receded and the national economy was undergoing significant structural changes. The buzzwords were liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation. The “opening up of the sky” and the proliferation of TV channels brought in a virtual flood of images and narratives from all over the world. The plethora of tele-serials that dominated Malayalam TV channels virtually ate into the hitherto thematic terrains of the film narratives. The coming of television also transformed the audience base of cinema. With the soaps reaching the drawing rooms directly, there was a withdrawal of the family audience from the theatres.

Coming to the thematic of Malayalam film, it was an era that gave voice to various contesting trends onscreen. On the one hand laughter films held sway, through their not so famous or new faces, a shift from the village to the city etc, on the other, the parallel stream was tightening its hold through a blurring of boundaries between the art and the popular, the hegemony of each seeping into the other, and creating a neo-liberal popular-art consensus, the ideological underpinnings of which would be the intention of this study. The fact that film has been introduced as part of the school-college curricula in various universities makes such a critique more urgent than even before.

Papilio Buddha is an Indian feature film that focuses on the atrocities committed against Dalits, women and the environment. Payyanur-based Environmentalist KallenPokkudan appears in an important role in the film. The role done by Saritha, an alumnus of Payyanur College is modeled upon Chithralekha, a dalit autorikshaw driver who was victimized as part of her lower caste identity. See J. Devika, “The Many Vices of Chitralekha,” Kafila. Website. Sulfath and Subrahmanyan and others have participated in the woman auto-rickshaw driver Chithralekha issue as an extension of their political interventions in Payyanur [etc]. Sulfath, though a female doesn’t ‘appear to be feminine to the mainstream male of payyanur as Indiara Gandhi was not to the popular outlook. See appendix for the great men of India where the picture of Indiara is given. “India is Indiara” was a slogan in the 1970s Emergency period.
Popular-art film as a category is elaborated here to describe the neo-liberal consensus in Malayalam film that happened in 1990s in the realm of the art genre. The tendency found itself through co-opting of multiple males through a star system that was a predominant aspect of the films in the early 1990s. This aspect of how the popular art film makers use the technique of star persona co-opt the multiplicity inherent in the males in films, can be exposed mainly with reference to the films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan and his alter-native auteurs of the “art” stream in Malayalam film, especially the ones where the popular-art divide becomes insignificant.

**Family and Engendering the Modern**

The abolition of matrilineal kinship by the (post) colonial Kerala legislature in 1976 was a predictable consequence of two centuries of legal interventions of the colonial rule. Between the 1930s and the 1970s (The Madras Marumakkathayam Act of 1933 and the 1976 legislation) most landed *tharavadus* all over the state were in a process of disintegration and a new integration of individuals. The period allowed the “Papas” painted a generation earlier by Raja Ravi Varma to come into their own houses as husbands and “property” owners. The colonial modernity internalized by the Malayalis brought the father into the central position. It is this preference for the male-father that colonialism idealized, is depicted in Ravi Varma’s painting. A painting, for instance, by Raja Ravi Varma titled “There Comes Papa” (1983) (Appendix I) depicts a “graceful” mother with her son standing inside her bedroom, but pointing outside and telling him that his father is coming home. Father, in his absence, becomes central figure in this painting. Though he is absent in this painting, he is very much present there through a caption. That is, the painting itself becomes
possible through the presence of a father. But, this father was not a central figure in the lived reality of Kerala of the nineteenth century. Further, the “Papa” imagined in the painting has been sought in houses as husband and “property” owner. That is, an ideal male is wrought in colonial modernity and is sought inside the home. This male virtually replaced the “effeminate” Malayali male, which too was a colonial discursive construction. The new masculine body (who is a protector-owner-judge) constructed by colonial modernity and imagined in paintings and cinema thus becomes an alternative to the “effeminate” male and the one similar to the state/male in the West, potent enough to protect the female. (See the poster picture of Pazhassi Raja (2009) in Appendix I).

There is a flattening that happens at the level of cultural identities. The colonial regime took only two centuries to level down the diversity and flatten a culture into a monolithic one. As part of it, the colonialists who had successfully constituted their own culture as the ideal and civilized one had also constructed a tradition and culture for the colonized. By internalizing these colonial constructions as real, the colonized began to think and act in the way the colonial modernity suggested. This has been effectuated in Kerala through various sites like schools and colleges, libraries, print media, art creation, judiciary, and bureaucracy. This internalization of the colonial modernity as real and the preferred made the construction of colonial subjectivity possible. It is from this colonial subjectivity that the contemporary Malayali male as well as his perceptions are created.

The idea of a well-defined and monolithic community is incorrect and even dangerous. Partha Chatterjee (1998) argues that, during the colonial period there was
a renewed attempt to impose a particular brand of the modernized upper-caste Brahmanical culture as the true national culture on the grounds that all the great nations of the West were built through a process of cultural homogenization. Through such a process, culture, which is a multiplicity of local cultures, diversity in culture, religion, tradition, etc, is undermined and the multiple “minor” identity representations are disabled by constructing images of a normative set of engenderings. The current visual environment is saturated with images of women presented specifically as sights for the viewing pleasure of a spectator who is presumed to be male and is thus constituted as male in the very production and reproduction of these images. Colonialism erased multiple voices and, judging from their enlightenment rationality, created a monolithic male-centred culture and social order. The level of misrepresentations of non-European cultures is yet to be understood. In the case of Malabar, this construction of a monolithic male often idealized the patriarchal Namboodiri Brahmin male as the model, one could prefer since he is construed as akin to the white European patriarchic male in values and practices. G. Arunima (2003) argues that, the Anglo-Indian legal system derived from a pastiche of different western and indigenous sources on the one hand and the utilization of customs and practices of the elite and the literate groups which in most instances meant the Brahmin texts were used by the colonial discourse to forward its patriarchal ideology of the reinstating of the modern institution of the family to civilize the matrilineal, “sexually promiscuous” Malayali males and females (17).

Its effects in the everyday lived world in the succeeding period were the dividing of the matrilineal household along the lines of patrilocal residence with concomitant
rights to property to the male. The young professional middle class male became part of the colonial notions of morality. With their engagement with the colonial state, the men in matrilineal families, who were the agents of change, dismantled the last vestiges of “barbarism,” even as they raised the demand for marriage reform to gain control over the sexuality and fertility of women. This colonial reconstitution of the female self and the masculine self is integral to the constitution of the reality that gets circulated in Kerala even today. This modern male and female become the heroes of the modern novel form. For example, the nineteenth century novels in Malayalam, especially O. Chandu Menon’s *Indulekha* (1889), makes a clarion call for the end of matriliny. The extension of the Hindu code in the 1950s to govern Nairs (Chakravarti 25) made Indulekha - a Hindulekha and Man - a Madhavan.13

Filmic construction of the gendered subjectivity could be treated as a continuation of the construction of gendered subjectivity in other genres of cultural productions in colonial Kerala like painting and novel. The beginning of this construction is through making a series of statements (or discourses) centered on an object (here male or female). The discourses and practices generated within the sexual regime or the sex-gender system is the mechanism that differentiates both the male and female. The male subjectivity produced within the gendered patriarchic order creates its “other” to designate itself as its superior with multiple capacities as creator-spectator-owner-judge. The Malayalam Film industry, for more than a century, right from *Vigathakumaran* (*The Lost Child*; 1928) to, for instance, *Keralavarma Pachassiraja*

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(2009), continue this production of the male. The films produced in more than eighty years of the industry in Kerala, thus, presented stereotyped images of men. Men with a strong individuality have always been imagined in these films. They have been presented as characters with a self. This is attributed to the fact that filmmaking has always been done from a male point of view in Kerala as elsewhere. These films, a product of the “patriarchal, white industry” (Considine 13)\(^\text{14}\) depict men as powerful and omnipotent. While men’s writings - most of the writers were upper caste reformers - often legitimized the existing patriarchal structures, the filmic adaptations are seen to cement them up.

Films have the ability to reach large audience previously untouched by other means of expressions. Its potential permits the development of new expressive techniques, not possible in literature and traditional or modern arts. Films have to be seen, more than anything else, as fundamental to the creation of history and culture and as modes of signification through which social realities get constructed. Films can manipulate the world more skillfully than the human eye and provide great immediacy than verbal reporting. Hence, the dynamics of the discursive field of films needs to be understood.

Films are political. They reproduce the existing social order. Very few of them act against this and try to challenge the existing or imagine an alternative reality to the present dominant order. First variety of films could be called major cinema, since it tunes with the existing hegemonic voice. The latter, which appears very rarely as well, could be called minor cinema, where the truth produced by the existing

hegemonic order is always challenged and unsettled. A major literature is a literature of masters: oppressive, founded upon transcendental justifications, it is hard and ungiving. A minor literature, in contrast, is a project of de-territorialization: in the place of the exclusive rights of the privileged "majority," a minor literature gives free play to the disenfranchised, to minorities - women or people from developing countries - who comprise in reality the majority. Nevertheless, the project of "becoming minor" (the unraveling of hegemonic structures of identity and the machinery of "minorization") are open to everyone and not restricted to specific or actualized minorities. Although minor literature arises from the reactions of the minority within a major literature and culture, its literary and socio-cultural project points toward a "becoming minor" of the whole world, in which all structures of hegemony and privilege give way.

A “minor literature” is skeptical, yet produces “an active solidarity” (Deleuze 17) among the members of the collective group. The evolutionary potential of a “minor literature” is written from the margins, deterritorializing the “fragile community” from the border from whence it is possible “to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility” (17). The question thus would be more about a deterritorialising of the major language of film, and becoming its minor, rather than toppling down a majoritarian hegemonic structure, which would be utopian. It is a fact that the major voice is easily recognized and accepted.

The powerful male subject, who can handle everything single handedly and who represents a downtrodden collectivity, has been the centre of all films. However, the
mass whom this super human male represents is more or less absent from representations, visual or literary. In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze, discusses what he calls “minor cinema,” in relation to Eisenstein’s political films (216). It is impossible to say that the revolutionary proletariat pre-exist the cinema; the revolutionary proletariat is a being-in-formation and the cinema is one of the mediums through which it comes into existence. What interested Eisenstein was the ability to not simply entertain his audience but also to transform them. It remains a question as to whether Eisenstein really presumed the existence of a revolutionary proletariat, or saw it as his – and other artist’s – responsibility to provoke or stimulate this revolutionary form of consciousness through the work of art.

In such a context, deterritorialisation is significant. Minor languages are characterized not by overload and poverty in relation to a standard or major language, but a sobriety and variation that are like a minor treatment of the standard language, a “becoming of the minor” or the minorization of the major language. The problem is not the distinction between major and minor language; it is one of a “becoming.” It is a question of deterritorialising of the major language. Black Americans do not oppose Black English but transform the American English that is their own English into Black English.

The minorization or deterritorialising of the major language of Malayalam cinema would demand new modes of language which serve the purpose of minorization. However, as may be seen, films, in general, have been conceived as a patriarchal industry, falling within the ambit of the developmental state, with little deterritorialisations in its wake, and helping to maintain the realist status quo of the
major cinematic language. The deterritorialisation of the major language in Malayalam film requires an understanding of its processes of co-option of multiple masculinities in various ways in both popular and art films. The next section would situate the study within the larger discourse of Film Studies in India.

**Literature Review**

Films were controlled by the Censor Board quite early in Colonial India. Except for the enquiry undertaken by the Indian Cinematic Committee appointed by the government of India in 1927-1928, no systematic and thorough investigation had been made about films (Deshpande 50). Colonial censorship was strict because the British understood the influence of the cinema. Films which criticized the British rule in India were banned. The same state encouraged imperialist films which glorified the Anglo-Saxon mission in India and stereotyped Indian communities (99). Colonial constraints deflected early Indian cinematic ventures towards the relatively safe mythologicals with intended or unintended consequences. Indian films took recourse to allegories which defined and reinforced textbook versions of historical conflicts in India, glorifying caste norms and patriarchy (122). Literature on films began to proliferate in India quite early, although academic research on films began after 1947. The credit for pioneering film studies in India goes to the sociology department of Bombay University and Penna Shah’s research work in 1950 done here would perhaps be the first doctorate on Indian cinema (97).

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Most books untiringly claim that cinema remains academically under-examined. Some volumes, like *The Cinemas of India*, are encyclopedic in which numerous Indian films are analysed. Ashish Rajadhyaksha’s *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema,* though selective in parts, is more than a reference guide.

Theodore Bhaskaran says that “the arrival of subaltern studies and culture studies and the recent shift in emphasis from conventional historiography to new methods, specifically using film as a source of information, has drawn scholarly attention to Indian cinema. In many research institutes in India and in a number of universities abroad, researchers’ have begun to take close look at Indian cinema. Scholars from varied disciplines such as Literary Criticism, Anthropology and History are engaged in studying cinema”. In India, there is only one university that has a department of cinema, Jadavpur University in West Bengal. Whatever research that goes on in this field is in private research institutions such as the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society [C.S.C.S.] in Bangalore or L.V. Prasad T.V. and Film Academy in Chennai. 

According to C.S. Venkiteshwaran, the number of publications on cinema in each language, the number of books and studies been multiplied during the last decades. With film studies included in the official curriculum of the Universities, attempts are also being made in the regional languages, though a comprehensive or exhaustive

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What is generally termed “Indian” film criticism are writings, studies and reviews mostly about Hindi films that too written in English film magazines and blogs or by academics in professional journals. The non-Hindi films that constitute the bulk of Indian film industry seldom find a place there. Like the various International Film Festivals all over the world where Indian Cinema means Bollywood, Indian film writing/literature/criticism too falling into the same logic.

Most of the writings on cinema from around the world or about respective “national” cinemas about the “art” films and film movements and auteurs etc. now, the new emphasis on to popular films, which is also the academic byproduct of globalisation. Jyotika Virdi, a scholar in the new generation, maps out the difficult terrain the studies on popular Indian cinema traverses especially with the field’s saturation with Hollywood and western cinema: “… film studies stands at the brink of a sea change if we “unthink” eurocentrism, decentre Hollywood/western cinema, and explore non-western film cultures and that multicultural comparative film studies curricula will provide the sorely needed disciplinary reinvigoration” (ix).

It is not surprising that if one looks at the major film theorists from India, they have made Hindi films their main field of study, except for scholars like M.S.S. Pandian, S.V. Sreenivas, M.K. Raghavendra etc. In this process of selective exclusion,
vernacular cinema became invisible and “unrefereable.” The vernacular is denied the opportunity to “talk back” to the national and global. While the dominant cinemas of the first world and Hindi cinema within India dominate the scene, other cinemas occupy the margins. So far as the vernacular cinemas are concerned, the global circulation of films has only facilitated their flow within their language community all over the world, and not triggered a synergetic engagement between the vernacular and the global. As a result, regionalism has been globalised, but not universalized in terms of its communication or discursive engagement with its national and global other (Venkiteshwaran 19).

There are hundreds of studies on Malayalam films both in Malayalam and in English. This includes popular and promotional writings to that of serious academic analysis and interpretations. There are exclusive journals dealing with film and film industries in Kerala. Journals like _Deep Focus_ have also published serious articles on Malayalam Film. Yet another factor one could see reading these studies is that, films has been studies and analysed from different political and methodological perceptions. There are studies from Marxist perception, gender studies, and post-

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structuralist studies. While the early studies plunged into an act of aesthetic appreciation, latter studies began to focus more on ideologies that films disseminate and its social consequences. For example, how films create communal consciousness, de-legitimized economic exploitation of the feudal era, normalizing of political corruption.

There have been attempts at studying various aspects of cinema in Malayalam. The attempts to constitute an autonomous field of “Malayalam cinema,” different from the Tamil or Bombay industry have been studied. Much energy has been spent recently on the question of the father of Malayalam cinema. Criticisms based on the storyline predominated in the early phase of film criticism by those like Kozhikkodan, Nadirsha and Cync etc. Using films as a source of historical knowledge of the region has been a recent trajectory. T. Muraleedharan’s (2005) essay that attempts to identify various socio-historical imperatives specific to the region that determined the early filmmaking attempts in Malayalam, Bindu Menon’s (2005) work on the governmental regulations and the anxieties about the exhibition halls in Travancore during the 1920s and 1930s are the two very few significant

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attempts that looks at cinema in Kerala before the 1950s. Critics like I. Shanmughadas\(^{24}\) and C.S. Venkiteswaran have also focused on the social realist films of the 1950s and later on the 1970s as setting up standards of artistic excellence and artistic expertise respectively. The films of the 1980s, a period of compromising or middle cinema, have also been studied. Critics like Nissar Ahammed (2000) had essayed on it in detail. Construction of femininity,\(^{25}\) masculinity and transgender too has been themes of analysis in studies on Malayalam film. Since this thesis too addresses issues like these, the following pages will provide a critical review of such studies.

Studies on Malayalam films associated with the auteurs,\(^{26}\) star/fan systems,\(^{27}\) laughter films, periodizations and history of films,\(^{28}\) nation and films\(^{29}\) etc. have


been done by critics, based on a perception of a normative male, thereby being a critique of the male as a part of the mainstream patriarchal ideology.\textsuperscript{30} Also there has been a proliferation of film scripts and their studies recently.\textsuperscript{31} However, there have been studies by T. Muraleedharan, who have looked upon the non-hetero sexual overtures in Malayalam films.\textsuperscript{32} Ratheesh Radhakrishnan discusses the modern male with reference to Nair masculinity. Jenny Rowena,\textsuperscript{33} who has talked about a
“benevolent masculinity” with reference to Mammootty, suggesting the way in which patriarchy has created not only stereotypical femininities but masculinities as well. Rowena talks about how “Thamashapaadanghal” or “Chiripadanghal,” a set of films that focused on the generation of humor and laughter that started trickling into the Malayalam cinematic scene in the early 1980s, which fully established itself by the early 1990s. According to Roweena, the comedy-films circulated a cinema of normative "masculine" values as a means to male identity especially aimed at the non hegemonic communities of men. The themes of rivalry, fraudulence, emotional distancing, etc. were all used towards the re-masculinizing of hegemonic masculinities. Vipin Kumar also talks about how the comedy films of the 1990s effected various kinds of subversions. He traces the proliferation of new heroes in the comic film with reference to its reformulation of the relation between city and country which is also characteristic of the nineties. Caroline and Filippo Osella, bring together masculinities and popular culture to think about how they are configured within the arena of cinema. While these studies have been largely restricted mostly to the popular films in Malayalam, the present study would be an attempt to contextualize the male anxieties in the realm of the “popular art” films of Adoor and a host of auteurs.

There is no dearth of books and articles dealing with Adoor films. The first book produced in English is A Door to Adoor, edited by Lalith Mohan Joshi and C.S. Venkiteswaran, in 2006. It is a collection of articles “adoring” Adoor by some of the bigwigs of cinema in India and abroad and hence no critical idiom has been used in evaluating his films. An authorized biography, Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Life in
Cinema by Gautaman Bhaskaran, published in 2010, traces the ebbs and flows of the life of Adoor. Apart from these, there are write ups in Malayalam on Adoor most of which eulogize his contributions in representing Kerala society realistically.[^34] Studies on other directors in Malayalam are less, compared with this. A general pattern that these studies follow is to narrow down film as a representational medium rather than look at it as part of historicization. Critics have focused on the feminist perspective as well as on the progressive ideology in these films. There are books, journals and articles in Malayalam on actors, partly academic and partly journalistic.

**Methodology**

Masculinity as a monolithic structure has been integral to the institutionalizing of middle class hegemonic power. Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Essentialist interpretations of the male/female dichotomy are a major problem in comparative studies of gender. In any given setting, gender differences are often presented and perceived as absolute and dichotomous. Moreover, such gender differences, when viewed from an historical or cross-cultural perspective, often appear stable or repeat themselves as variations on a single theme. However, essentialist explanations cannot explain variation and the fact that cultural forms are never replicated exactly. An essentialist male/female dichotomy cannot account for the ways people are gendered in different places at different times. Once comparative studies expose a diversity of meanings, the idea of “being a man” can no longer be treated as fixed or universal (Lindisfarne 3). “Masculinity” represents not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men

[^34]: M.A. Baby and host of people from the left and right wing politics have written volumes on him.
position themselves through discursive practices. Hegemonic masculinity is the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue. It was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men. Films document the various patterns of this hegemonic male and become a social history in itself of patriarchal male power. In Deleuzian terms, film embodies a modern conception of movement, capable of thinking the production of the new.

Film as a means of documentation of masculine history becomes indispensable for this study. Deleuzian insights as well as those of Bourdieu regarding critique of dominant masculinity as well as those from cultural theorists like Raymond Williams and the notion of Culture as Ordinary as well as recent film theories are used in analyzing the films coming under the present discussion. The concepts like “Culture Industry” and “Minor Cinema” are fundamental in the present analysis. Such an understanding of film demands a regional perspective of reality rather than a reproduction of the meta-narratives of a national reality. The emphasis on film as part of the regional everyday and the ordinary, as referred to in the thesis, thus involves a regional critique of the global masculine as constituted in Malayalam films since the 1990s as well as how such a constitution is suggestive of the flattening of the cultural realm in Kerala that happened during the 1990s.
Chapterization

The thesis has five chapters. The first chapter is “Introduction.” The second chapter titled “Multiple Masculinities” charts the history of masculine studies and argues for the need to conceptualise masculinity also as a construct of a patriarchal society. It looks at the problematics of constructing a normative masculinity, as to how it forbids the heterogenous manifestations of being male. The making of the dominant male in the context of Kerala would be discussed. The transition from matriarchy to patriarchy in the 1930s in Kerala dawned an era of the modern male and female in Kerala’s public space. The second part considers why examining the construction of males in cinema becomes important especially in the context of film studies being included in academics, especially as it got perceived by English Studies. The colonial impetus that had informed the latter was to have its effects on the former as well in the way in which Film Studies was to become a part of the Orientalist discourse. The films that get perpetuated and circulated through these texts belong to the art and the popular art category, which are informed by the dominant patriarchal discourse in their masculine disseminations. In the chapter I would argue the necessity for a critical viewing of mediated realities that film as a cultural text offers, and demands a critique of a construction of a set of patriarchal male models, that an Orientalist discourse had produced.

In the third chapter, “Art Films and Patriarchal Co-Options,” I choose to look at how a close analysis of eighty years of the male in Malayalam films shows that the films were not producing a single unchanging male. Rather, the male appears here as a changing subjectivity, nevertheless his domination is always reproduced. The films
produced in more than eighty years of the industry in Kerala presented multiple incarnations of men. This is attributed to the fact that filmmaking has always been done from a male point of view in Kerala as elsewhere. These films, imagine men as powerful and omnipotent, but having different facets. This obsession with the male would be analysed with reference to the adaptations of the work of Kamala Das as well as the regional art form of Theyyam in the second half of the chapter. It would look at how the filmic adaptation of her novella *Rugminikkoru Paavakutty*, removes it off its minor politics of gender and sexuality, moulding it to suit the patriarchal gaze of Malayalam film. As far as Theyyam is concerned, it is reduced to a museum piece, cast off its regional dimensions. Film fails to fairly depict the female and male minorities. It does the same thing with the low cast(e) men who perform Theyyam.

The fourth chapter, “The Making of Male and The Popular Art Films,” elaborates the concept of the popular art in Malayalam film. It looks at the processes of co-option of multiple masculinities that happened in the art film in the 1990s. In a context where the boundary between the popular and the art were quickly disappearing, a new category called popular art was emerging in Kerala. Art film makers were to capitalize on the phenomenon of star system and other elements of the popular that defined the popular Malayalam film during the 1990s. The popular films, on the other hand, exhibit artistic minimalism. I would discuss in detail the process of co-option with reference to the popular art films of the 1990s and argue how the star system facilitated the politics of hegemony of the art film makers.

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35 The spelling “Theyyam” has been retained throughout the thesis except in cases where it is used as “Teyyam” by those like K.K.N. Kurup, C.M.S. Chandera and V. Dinesan.
would scrutinize the films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan and his alter-natives so as to expose the process of co-option of multiple masculinities in the art film during the 1990s. The conclusion “Instead of a Conclusion,” reconsiders the preliminary analysis made here. As masculinity is a fluid category, it is not available for a conclusive theorization as a solid and concrete category.