

Representations of Migrant Workers in Malayalam Movies

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Certificate of Examination

This is to certify that the dissertation titled '**Representations of Migrant Workers in Malayalam Movies**' submitted by **Sidharth S H** (Reg. No. MS15165) for the partial fulfilment of BS-MS dual degree programme of the Institute, has been examined by the thesis committee duly appointed by the Institute. The committee finds the work done by the candidate satisfactory and recommends that the report be accepted.

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Declaration

The work presented in this dissertation has been carried out by me under the guidance of Dr. V Rajesh at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Mohali. This work has not been submitted in part or in full for a degree, a diploma, or a fellowship to any other university or institute. Whenever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions. This thesis is a bonafide record of original work done by me and all sources listed within have been detailed in the bibliography.

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In my capacity as the supervisor of the candidate's project work, I certify that the above statements by the candidate are true to the best of my knowledge.

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Abstract

Different waves of migration play an essential role in the economic development of the south Indian state of Kerala. The outmigration of Malayalees has resulted in a shortage of labor power in the state, which led to the wave of in-migration of workers from other Indian states. At present, workers mainly from the north and north-eastern states of India serve as the workforce of god's own country. Cinema, as a visual-auditory narrative, can communicate with the mass audience and influence the formation of opinions in a society. This study analyzes various kinds of approaches that get represented through the migrant worker characters and themes related to them, in Malayalam movies. While stereotypical images and themes get reproduced, the real-life of migrant workers, the state's fuel for development, often goes unrepresented.

Chapter 1

Introduction

*“ജനിച്ചു നാടുവിട്ടുകലയാസ്സാമിൽ
പണിയ്ക്കു പോകുന്ന പരിഷകൾ ഞങ്ങൾ...
വലിയ തീവണ്ടി കയറിപ്പോകിലും
വയറിന്മേൽ മുന്നോട്ടിഴയുന്നോർ ഞങ്ങൾ...
തടിക്കില്ലമ്പലം, തടുക്കിലാ പള്ളി
പടച്ചവനിപ്പോൾപരദേശത്തിലാം...
അറിയുമേ ഞങ്ങളറിയും
നീതിയും നെറിയും കെട്ടൊരീപ്പിറന്ന നാടിനെ...
അതിഥികൾക്കെല്ലാമമരലോകമിരിക്കിതവി
ഞങ്ങൾക്ക് നരകദേശവും...”¹*

‘ആസ്സാം പണിക്കാർ- ശ്രീ വൈലോപ്പിള്ളി ശ്രീധരമേനോൻ

Eminent poet Sri Vailopilli Sreedhara Menon, in his poem 'Assam Workers', reports the migration of Malayalees from Kerala to Assam for the construction of military camps during 1940-42. This poem details the circumstances that led to migration, and the dreams of those who left home to seek work. However, over the years, the episodes have changed totally. The state of Kerala is witnessing a reverse process of what the poet has expressed in 'Assam Workers.' Today, a large number of people come to Kerala seeking employment from the north Indian states that include Assam. Vailoppilli illustrates that Malayalee Workers migrated to Assam, cursing their homeland as the beauty of Kerala was not enough to quench their burning appetite. The same factor can be indicated as the driving force of the present-day laborer migrations into the state. The objective of this study is to analyze how migrant workers and their life in Kerala is reflected in Malayalam cinemas. Cinema has a special status in shaping the judgments, beliefs, social, and cultural perceptions of modern Malayalees. In and out migration that reconstructed the Kerala society socially and economically gets reflected in the Malayalam movies, known for the portrayal of life and reality. This study focuses on a corpus of Malayalam films from 2010-20 that represent migrant workers from the northern states of India.

¹ Few lines from the Malayalam poem 'Assam workers'(1941) written by Vailoppilli Sreedharamenon.
“We are the ones who flee to Assam for our livelihood, leaving our motherland...
We travel on long-distance trains in order to quench our appetite...
Temples or mosques will not restrict us; for us, God is there in the exile...
We realize that our motherland is a Paradise for guests, but for us, it is a land of misery...”

Multiple definitions exist for 'migration' as its socio-cultural-economic repercussions need to be emphasized along with the space-time aspects. The reasons have been social, political, cultural as well as economic: while natural disasters, wars, ethnic conflicts, civil wars, etc. have forced people to seek refuge in other place, factors like seeking employment, better education and life prospects, etc. have been factors inducing movement of people across the borders. Migrations for different reasons during different times result in the transformation of various dimensions at the origin and destination points. Nearly half of all international migrants worldwide in 2015 were primarily originating from India. The neoclassical theory proposes international migration, like its internal counterpart, is caused by geographic differences in the supply and demand for the labourer. Countries with a large endowment of labour relative to capital have a low equilibrium market wage and vice-versa (Massey 1993). The global stock of migrant workers is roughly 150.3 million according to 2013 data, in which 75% were in high-income countries (United Nations 2018).

During the second half of the 20th century, the Indian State of Kerala witnessed waves of outmigration. Initially, it was to the states of Malaysia and Singapore for working in plantations and then to the African countries as school teachers. During 1960s emigration to North America and Western Europe occurred and later to Gulf countries spurred by the oil boom which began in the 1970s, and surged during the 80s and 90s. In the last three decades, and especially since the advent of the information and communication technology revolution and new economic policies, the favourite destinations have been the United States of America (U.S.A) and Europe. The educational profile of emigrants from Kerala who try their luck abroad varies from illiterates to highly qualified professionals. According to Kerala migration survey 2013, Kerala has 2.4 million migrants. The massive inflow of remittance to the households as a result of migration reduces the worker- population ratio of migrant households (Zachariah, K. C., Mathew, E. T., Rajan, S. I. 2001). The scarcity of different types of labourers occurred in the state as the work seekers from the migrant households became selective in taking jobs. 'The way Kerala workers have penetrated every economic sector in the Gulf, the replacement workers from other states have started penetrating in all economic sectors in Kerala' (Zachariah and Rajan, 2001).

Kerala has witnessed episodes of in-migration since its formation and is now the favourite destination for interstate migrant workers. Unskilled workers who came from the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka for earth and construction works were the first circle of migrant labourers to come to the state. At present, Kerala has migrant labourers from all the states of India, and the largest populations hail from West Bengal, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Odisha. Sources of migrant workers to Kerala are states with the largest tribal, Scheduled Caste, and Muslim minority population in India (Benoy Peter and Vishnu Narendran). The study carried out by the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation (GIFT) for the labour department of the Kerala government locates about 25 lakhs of migrant labourers throughout the state in 2013. The survey by GIFT shows that most of them are male, with around 75% in the age group of 18-29. Their religious proportions show that 70% of them are Hindus and 24% are Muslims. Plywood industries that heavily depended on migrant labourer from eastern Indian states like Odisha initiated this wave of in-migration (Benoy Peter and Kamla Gupta 2012). Today, they can be spotted anywhere – they are present in construction sites, factories, wooden furniture-plywood industries, hotels and restaurants, mining and quarrying, paddy fields and plantations or even at places of worship. The spatial distribution of migrant workers in Kerala is not only confined to big cities, as in other states. They are present in main towns like Kochi, Kozhikode, and Trivandrum and also in villages and even in remote areas.

Previously, they came as a part of the construction projects of major job sectors, and now they come to Kerala with the certainty of getting a job somewhere in the state where there are a variety of job opportunities. The long-distance train services functions as migration corridors that drew beeline from northern states of the country with Kerala. Migrants from other countries like Bangladesh and Nepal presently work in various sectors in the state, where the Nepali men were appointed as Gurkhas in the past. These migration episodes can be elucidated by the push-pull factors, as discussed in E. G. Ravensteins' laws of migration. Factors like sustained job opportunities, relatively high wages, good living conditions, social security, etc. made Kerala a much-desired destination for migrants, who were faced with fewer and irregular job opportunities, poor living conditions, and low wages in their region.

Although the agricultural and industrial sectors have not achieved much in Kerala, where family planning and universal education were implemented much earlier than other states, a unique work culture prevailed. The expeditious massive influx of migrant workers influences the indigenous life, social order, and the culture along with the wage, division of labour, and economy of the state. It resulted in dualities like local-migrant, we-them, son of the soil- son of labour and even reconstructed and redefined the notion of public, civil society, people, and community. Migration of workers to towns and places that are economically stable results in frictions and political movements with 'son of the soil' argument. Such emerging regional debates challenge the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by Article 19 of the Constitution for travel and employment anywhere in India. Local workers see the presence of migrant labour as a threat. Their presence lowers the general wage rate, and also their willingness to work harder leads to a fit of anger towards them.

Migrant workers who play a significant part in the economic development of the state are often seen, portrayed, and treated as an alien community, which hampers their integration and assimilation with the host culture. Malayalee whose ties with Tamil land hark back to centuries, had a friendly relation with the Tamil labourers, but in the case of migrant workers from the northern states of India, they seem to have an ambivalent relationship as is evident in the various responses and expressions in mass media and other public discourses. The intimate relation with Tamil migrants drew from the geographic and cultural proximity and the common Dravidian linguistic tradition. Their cinemas, festivals, foods were all familiar to people in Kerala due to the social, historical, and ancestral bonds. Addressing interstate migrant laborer as 'anya samsthaana thozhilalikal'² in mass media and public discourses itself alienate them from the society.³ As a result, their access to healthcare, education, banking, legal facilities get limited. There are also apprehensions in mass media about migrants as a source of unhygienic practices, epidemics, and sometimes illegal migration and terrorism. They are also portrayed as sexual predators and drug peddlers.

² Literally mean 'workers from another state' but the usage of prefix 'Anya' meaning stranger, roots exclusion.

³ They are being addressed as 'guest workers' recently in the government programmes.

They are not even aided with the necessary safety measures in their workplaces and are also forced to work in unsafe and unhygienic environments. Malayalees complain about migrant workers that they are making premises unkempt. But at times, the fact is that they have not been provided with the facilities to clean or dispose of waste. This often leads to eternal confrontation between natives and migrant workers, and it should not be seen as a problem of law and order but as a negation of necessities. As citizens of India, they are being denied the rights and benefits, and they do not appear in the public discourse of Malayalees, which proclaim as having high political literacy. Through their negative representations and portrayal, the answer to the severe problem of the need for human labour that Kerala faces today is kept obscured. According to the Malayalee community, migrant workers do not own the qualities which are regarded as traits of Malayalees, like literacy, personal hygiene, and political consciousness. Discrimination can also be spotted in the case of the wage distribution as the migrant workers often receive lower wages than local labourers.

The migrant labourers regularly swap occupations and workplaces in the interests of, wages or personal relationships with their friends or relatives. This widespread 'temporary' or 'informal' status in their workplace is being used while representing them in the public domain, in the media, and sometimes even in academic discourse. However, most of the time, it is interpreted as their natural/original state or a state of choice. There is also a hint in such representations that they are outside the 'formal' or the general community. However, in their real lives, these terms are not mere 'adjectives,' but 'verbs' that depict their condition in the state. The sector in which they are employed makes use of their temporary status. In the globalized manufacturing sectors, the hallmark of the globalized economic system is this permanent 'temporality.' Capital is benefited in many ways by this temporality of the unorganized migrant worker community. The migrant worker community exists as a reserve force that can be deployed for any purpose in society. The predominant but disorganized existence weakens their power to claim something, thus helping to bring down wage levels. They are satisfied with the lure of getting high wages, and also, for many reasons, they are not asking for other benefits or infrastructure. Many of them do not consider themselves righteous to ask for necessary infrastructure and benefits, which forces them to live in unhealthy environments. Such lifestyles affect not only their individual health but also concerns those residing in the surroundings. Although the places where migrants stay are formally 'public spaces,' they are not 'civil spaces' where

everyone can interact. There exist unwritten and unspoken restrictions that prevent their social integration. Migrant workers living in one place might have a lot of social and cultural interests to share as they might be from the same family/village or same caste. But the mainstream society that encompasses where they live is not homogeneous and comprehensive in such a sense. The possibilities of tension and suspicion that may be exposed between these two societies are numerous.

Literary and art forms have a significant influence on the creation, dissemination, and consolidation of cultural values in a society. In that context, cinema, discussed as the art form of the twentieth century, has an indispensable role to play in modern society. Cinema a collaborative medium, as a visual-auditory narrative, communicates with the mass audience and formulate perceptions and impressions on the events in the society. When literature addresses only literate, the cinema has expanded its sphere of influence by appealing to the masses, including rural and urban. Authenticity and reliability get developed among the audience for such visuals that get considered as the replica of real-life experiences, although it is mere visuals that appear in the movie screen. The story of the audience running while attending the screening of the documentary film 'the arrival of a train' itself is a proof that even the birth of cinema, a technical art, has impressed people and created the illusion that the screen footage was a physical reality. Various situations that appear on the screen and the sound effects that generate an emotional mood develop a feeling that cinema is the reflection of real life. The representations that seem real to some viewers, unconsciously influence human minds. Because of such features of the art form of cinema, it becomes clear that the role of cinema in shaping the values in a society is crucial when compared to other mediums. Analysing the films is, therefore, appropriate to comprehend the public beliefs and opinions on specific issues that get portrayed through various movie representations but that remain hidden in the overt level.

The poem presented at the beginning of this chapter is one of the most prominent literary works in Malayalam that discussed the migration of Malayalees seeking employment. Benyamin's novel 'Aadu Jeevitham'(goat days), published in 2008, also discusses the hardships of Malayali's migrant life. In addition to literary works, many films also have been released that discuss the same topic. Though not so intense, the influx of migrant workers to Kerala is also evident in Malayalam literature and movies. The novel 'Bengali Kalapam' (Bengali Mutiny, 2019) by Amal, and short story 'Biryani' (2016) by Santhosh

Echikkaanm, are some notable literary works in Malayalam that discussed the theme of immigration. Malayalis are observant of the changes around them and express their opinions on various platforms. The comprehensions and apprehensions of Malayalee about migrant labourers, who bring transformations in the society, are getting reflected in their cinemas, literature, digital platforms, media, and even in trolls.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The representations of particular social groups in artistic works are critical as it plays an important role in fashioning views in a society. A link can be discovered between aesthetic configurations and social issues. The objective of the present study is to examine representations of migrant workers in Malayalam movies. The effects of representations in the cultural and social aspects of society are significant as different kinds of interpretations can occur for the meanings and messages that get represented. It is in this context, the chapter titled 'The Work of Representation' from the book *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* by Stuart Hall, the prominent British cultural studies theorist, is of great importance. It is equally vital to comprehend how such representations are getting interpreted in society. French critic Roland Barthes argues that along with the straightforward descriptive interpretation, a representation also has some hidden meanings in it. He discusses this secondary interpretation in the chapter 'Myth Today' in his book *Mythologies*. Identifying hidden messages and their impacts in society is equally significant as probing the way of representation of a social group. Barthes's chapter, 'Myth Today,' lays a foundation in such an aspect. The representations of social groups is often limited to certain few features only. Therefore, it is imperative to study stereotyping, which is a highly specialized representational practice. The chapter, 'The Spectacle of the 'Other'' from the book 'Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices,' is incorporated in the theoretical framework of this study as the author, Stuart Hall, covers various features of stereotyping in it. Maidul Islam, in the chapter 'Imag(in)ing Indian Muslims in Post-liberalization Hindi Cinema,' from his book 'Indian Muslims After Liberalisation' analyse how the far-reaching Hindi cinema portrays the minority community of Muslims. The question of how a particular social group or a minority community gets portrayed in regional Indian films is a crucial element in the structure of this study.

2.2 Representations

Stuart Hall, the prominent British cultural studies theorist, in the chapter titled 'The Work of Representation' from the book 'Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices' discusses representation and its role in culture by bringing in different theories and models. The process of representation is a complex one as it is through this process; meanings are created about something or someone and shared among people in a culture. The author himself justifies the chapter title 'The Work of Representation' by relating representation to a 'kind of work that makes uses of the material object and effects.' The chapter begins with three different theories on the representation of meaning through language, 1. reflective 2. intentional 3. constructivist, and then focuses mainly on the constructivist approach of representation which he claims to have more contact with the cultural studies and is discussed with the framework of semiotic and discursive approach. The author tries to make the theories familiar to the readers through various examples.

Hall describes representation as a process through which meaning is produced and shared, using language, signs, and images. The reflective approach theorizes that the language, signs, or visual images reflect/portray the real meaning that lies in the object. According to the intentional approach, the meanings that are personally assigned by the author/writer gets shared through representations. The constructionist theory rejects the judgments of the other two theories of representation, and it identifies the social character of the language. Meanings are constructed by the people in a society with a specific cultural background, through various representational norms and systems like linguistics. People belonging to a particular culture/place derive meanings for the similar concepts/beliefs that they have in their minds using their language. Hall discusses the 'shared concepts' and 'shared language' as two systems of representations that work together in the production of a shared set of meanings in society. Iconic signs (images) and indexical signs (language) that can be used to represent a particular concept/meaning is decided by certain socially derived norms in the culture, described as codes by Hall. This gives substantial proof for the argument of the close relationship between culture and representation.

Hall gives the example of traffic lights to validate his arguments on representation. Traffic lights work by making use of our concept of colours to which certain codes and meanings are assigned to characterise/name them and carry a certain message. The constructionist theory proposes that signs used to represent something does not have any inbuilt meaning. So, certain meaning or message can be assigned to any colour of our choice in the traffic

light as it is not colouring but the difference between colours acts as a signifier in the traffic light.

The semiotic approach, influenced by Swiss linguist Saussure's view on representation, is presented as one model of the constructionist theory of representation. Saussure mainly focused on language and treated it as a system of signs that consists of various forms that can signify and the ideas that get signified. Saussure argues that as the meanings of the forms change, the ideas corresponding to it also changes, which points to a different culture. As the relationship between the signifier and the signified is specific to each culture and society, the meanings and representations remain unfixed that leads to various interpretations. Hall employs the argument that other interpretations follow interpretations in support of the constructionist theory that he focuses on. Saussure considers 'langue'-the rule-governed structure of knowledge that can be studied because of its limited nature as the social part of the language and 'parole'-the enormous ways of presentations, as the surface of language. According to Saussure, language is a social phenomenon, in which the author is free to choose various ways of representations, but needs to stick to the norms of language system followed in that region for the representation to be understood. Besides words and images, objects also act as signifiers that produce certain understandings and meanings in the semiotic approach, study of signs in culture. The structuralist model of language that Saussure studied gave less attention to the language-power relation and signifier-signified relation. The linguist, Charles Sanders Peirce, discuss more on 'referents' in the real world by studying the signifier-signified relation, which Hall argues that Saussure has less focused in his approach. French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss adopted a structuralist move as his focus was the rules and codes that a representation follows in a culture.

Hall observes that Saussure limits the process of representation into language and fails to address the relation between power and knowledge. In this context, he introduces French philosopher Michel Foucault who was concerned with the production of knowledge through 'discourses,' which was the system of representation for him. Knowledge and meaning produced from discourses are specific to particular space, time, and culture. Ideas can belong to the same discursive formation when they refer to the same concept. As the discourses are specific to a particular culture and time, it will not be valid outside that. A regime of truth exists as absolute truth cannot be claimed since no forms of knowledge can be fully detached from the relation of a network of power, which can make itself right.

Along with the sovereign position of power, Foucault also talks about the circulating, 'microphysics' of power. Foucault's concept is closely associated with Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony, which is a form of power that influences the thoughts and ideas of others through consent. Both Foucault and Gramsci opposed class reductionism of power-knowledge relations in the Marxian concept of ideology. Hall discusses the painting by André Brouillet of the famous French psychiatrist and neurologist, Jean-Martin Charcot, who considered hysteria as a female malady. According to Hall, Charcot, with his authority and power, is applying the practice of hypnosis in one of his lady patients and make her represent the disease symptoms, which he documented in photographs and paintings. The argument that 'subject is produced within discourse,' is discussed by Hall as Foucault's radical proposition. Painting by the famous Spanish painter, Velasquez, called *Las Meninas*, is used by Foucault to correlate with his concept of discourse and to conclude that there is no fixed meaning in such a representation where each element in it can be considered as a subject. Later, Hall suggests that the meaning of a representation is completed by its spectators, which justifies the argument of the constructionist theory that people in society produce meanings. Spectator's interpretations will be based on the beliefs that they have in their minds. Discourse makes spectators a subject, who will not be able to interpret a representation until they subject themselves to the subject-positions constructed by the discourses.

In his attempt to establish a link between representation and cultural studies, Hall mainly focuses on the constructionist approach that defines meanings as something produced by the social actors. Indeed, an author or user cannot fix his/her meanings in the system of language. The messages and politics/social views they share through various kinds of representations cannot be considered as purposeless in culture and society. If an author decides to convey a negative message/meaning for something or someone through his representational works, then it can influence the onlookers' perspectives, views, and decision making. If these privately intended meanings can influence a similar set of beliefs/concepts in the minds of people belonging to society, then it could also easily manipulate the meaning that is then constructed in that society. Therefore, the intentional theory of representation also necessitates some attention while studying the connection between representation and culture, whereas Hall focuses only on the constructivist approach. Hall presents Foucault's notion of discourse, which opposes the Marxist theory of ideology as a vital variant of the constructionist approach. The Marxian argument that

ideas are influenced and controlled by the capitalist ruling class in society also needs to be incorporated into the discussion of representations. Capitalist class, with its power, can frame specific representations that can meet their needs and interest. By citing the concept of secondary/hidden meaning discussed as a myth by Barthes, Hall extends his argument of the connection between representation and culture. Restricting the process of representation to language in semiotics is discussed as a limitation by Hall. The influence of power and authority on ideas and content will get dropped while limiting the representation study to the language system only.

Stuart Hall also uses the argument of French critic Roland Barthes to conceptualize how the representation works. According to Barthes, signifiers and signified will first form an idea which then acts as a signifier for some hidden meanings or concepts that may be ideologically framed, which he describes as a myth. He treats all objects and activities as texts so they can be analyzed and studied. Barthes argues that representation can be interpreted in a simple descriptive manner (denotation) or with a framework of some social ideologies, which is defined as connotation.

2.3 Interpretations

As a semiological technician, Roland Gérard Barthes employs Saussure's concept of semiology, to define myth as a second-order semiological system. He argues that the culturally sanctioned myth will develop as a rational exercise that can draw interpretations and opinions. Barthes also discusses the motivations and resistance in the mythical systems. Roland Barthes, a writer whose works considered as poststructuralist in France, himself calls 1957 (the year in which the book got published) the 'postface' of mythologies, i.e. 'myth today'. Facts, history, and knowledge accepted as reality are perceptions that are shaped by the mythical system. Barthes explains how myths get a hold in the language system and distort the concepts acquired through it. For him, everything can be a myth if communicated through some discourse.

Barthes postulates myth as a type of speech that can signify several messages through various forms of representations like written texts, visual images, cinema, and sports. His argument that its material does not define myth, validates that every object can convey some kind of messages. Meaningful texts, pictures, and objects that act as a tool for communication can also carry myths in them. He notes that in Minou Drouet's poem, the natural form of a tree is transformed when it is wrapped with the myths in poetic language. Barthes brings in Saussure's concept of semiology to postulate myth as a signification/form.

Along with semiology, the concept of myth also has recourse to ideology. Saussure mainly focused on language and treated it as a system of concrete entity-signs that consists of various forms that can signify and the ideas and concepts that get signified. Barthes defines myth as a second-order semiological system and tries to correlate the tri-dimensional pattern of the semiological system with it. Sign, the concrete entity in the semiotic approach, is the point of departure for the mythical system. Myths are developed by keeping the language-object of the semiotic system as a base. Barthes defines myth as a metalanguage that describes language in the semiotic system. The essay continues with two examples, one taken from Latin grammar, the second from the cover of the magazine Paris-Match.

To differentiate between the linguistic and mythical system, the author defines the signifier in the linguistic system as meaning and as a form in the mythical system. Since the concept is getting signified in both the systems, there are no separate terms assigned for it. Signification is the term corresponding to the term sign of the linguistic system. Myth

propagates the hidden message along with some information that gets shared through its language system. Signifier carries some knowledge and history in the language system and omits them when meaning becomes form in the mythical system. Barthes claims that 'form does not suppress meaning, it impoverishes it, put it at a distance' (Barthes, 1957, p. 117), and as a result, myth gets conceived. Unlike the empty form of myth, the signifier of the language system is always filled with certain concepts. Barthes claims that even if knowledge gets dropped at the level of form, a new set of knowledge gets associated with the signifier in the mythical system. The mythical concept and hidden messages are appropriate for specific viewers/readers in society. In both semiotics and myth, a particular concept can be shared using various signifiers. The existence of multiple signifiers for a concept helps in the decoding and interpretation of a myth. Barthes argues that the myths are not fixed; they can alter and disappear.

While discussing the correlation between form and concept in the mythical system, Barthes argues that they are well manifest. The mythical form has an immediate mode of presence, which is spatial, whereas the concept has a global appeal. Barthes also notes that unlike form, the concept does not need any extensions as its mode of presence is memorial. 'Signifier' in a mythical system comprises of both meaning and form, and the concept distorts and alienates the meaning. Both form and meaning exist alternatively in the mythical signifier. If the spectator chooses to read the meaning, then the form which is also present at that time will remain empty for him, vice versa also. Both meaning and form will not act together. Barthes claims that 'myth is a value, and the truth is no guarantee for it' (Barthes, 1957, p. 122). The deliberate force of myth is discussed as its vital character by Barthes since it can direct its readers to form multiple interpretations on various subjects. The myth that reaches the spectator fakes itself to look neutral. Barthes argues that 'the moment taken for a surreptitious faking, gives the mythical speech a benumbed look' (Barthes, 1957, p. 124). Significations in a mythical system are purely intentional and motivated. Barthes argues that the form in the mythical system can also present an absurd myth. A signifier of the myth carries only a few features from the full range of analogous features provided by history. Barthes notes that the pure ideographic system of myth, in general, work more effectively with incomplete images like caricatures and pastiches.

Myths can be read in three different ways, by shifting the focus from meaning to form. In an empty signifier where concept fills the form, mythical signification gets reduced to the literal meaning. Whereas when the focus is on a full signifier, signification does not occur as the meaning distorts the myth. Barthes defines these two types of readings that destroy the myth as static and analytical. In the dynamic way of reading a myth, both meaning and form of the signifier are equally focused, so that the signification of myth transpires. The dynamic way of reading myth opens several ideological interpretations for semiological knowledge. Myth naturalizes its intentions instead of hiding it. The act of naturalization noted as an essential function of myth by Barthes, demonstrate a causal relationship between signifier and signified in front of the reader. Analysis of such a relationship leaves an immediate impression among the readers, which is not further altered by time or knowledge.

Barthes argues that myth creates the secondary level of interpretations by stealing language, and thus it can be functioned anywhere. 'Articulated languages which contain some mythical dispositions offers little resistance to myth' (Barthes, 1957, p. 131). The abstractness of concepts in the language system offers various interpretations. Barthes notes that when myth faces any resistance from specific languages, it will take it away entirely rather than invading. He gives the example of mathematical language to validate the argument. Myth converts the lack of order of signs in poetic language that offer high resistance to myth, into an empty signifier. Barthes also discusses traditional literature in terms of myth in which writing marked as a signifier, concept as signified, and literary discourse as signification. Barthes introduces the concept of second-order myth, in which the signification of a particular myth is taken as a signifier for another myth, to work against the first myth. 'Bouvard et Pécuchet', work by Gustave Flaubert, is cited as an example of such a false myth. Barthes treats language as a form and claims that the 'writer's language is not expected to represent reality, but to signify it.' (Barthes, 1957, p. 136)

Such mythical significations theorized by Barthes can be spotted in the movie images also. In the essay titled 'the Romans in films' from the section 'mythologies', Barthes discusses how roman ness gets presented in the films with some images. He notes that films use images like roman fringes, nocturnal plait, and even sweat as signs for signifying various concepts. Signs can be either openly intellectual or deeply rooted.

Barthes has noted that in a mythical system, the form keeps only a few analogous features from a wide range. Also, he discusses naturalization as an essential principle of myth, which makes it look neutral and innocent. This can be related to the concept of stereotyping. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall argues that 'stereotyping reduces people to a few, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by nature' (Hall, 1997, p. 257). Stereotypical images that are presented as usual and neutral in movies that reach the spectator, function as a myth that can delineate some hidden meanings and messages.

2.4 Stereotyping

In the chapter 'The Spectacle of the 'Other'' from his book *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall discusses 'differences' and their representations. Various aspects of the representational practice of stereotyping are discussed and theorized by providing suitable examples. Hall focuses mainly on ethnic and racial differences and argues that it can be applied to other kinds of differences as well. Hall discusses the importance of 'difference' in the framework of four different theories and also presents some transcoding strategies to challenge and reconstruct the regime of representations. The title, "The Spectacle of the 'Other,'" signifies the process of othering and separation in society as a result of the 'differences'. Presentations of such 'differences' are significant as it is through such representations the spectators acquire specific interpretations and opinions. Stereotyping is considered as one crucial representational practice to display different types of people in a society. Hall uses mass media images like commercial advertisements and magazine illustrations, to theorize stereotyping.

Pictures of African American athletes like Ben Johnson, Linford Christie, and Carl Lewis are used by the author to point out the representational differences based on race, colour, gender, and sexuality. In light of Barthes' argument of myth, certain secondary level of interpretation of such pictures are also made. Hall brings in the concept of preferred meanings as there is no fixed meaning for any visual representation. He argues that 'discourse of both text and photography are required to produce and fix meaning' (Hall, 1997, p. 228). Hall admits that a broader realm of meanings are obtained when the images of the black athletes get interpreted in connection with one another and describe it as 'intertextuality.'

Four different theoretical backgrounds, from the levels of linguistics, cultural, social, and psychic, are introduced to delineate the significance of 'difference.' Saussure's argument, the difference between two things acts as a signifier for the production of meaning, is characterized as a linguistic argument for the justification of 'difference.' Hall brings in philosopher Jacques Derrida's argument, that there are few neutral binary oppositions, to claim that fixing meanings based on binary oppositions is a kind of reductionist approach.

Russian linguist, Mikhail Bakhtin's argument that meanings are derived in the dialogues between two different people, forms the second explanation for 'difference'. The fact that meanings cannot be controlled by one group only is discussed as a drawback of this theory.

In the anthropological explanation, the relation between 'difference' and culture is emphasized. According to Mary Douglas, social actors arrange things into various categories and thus create meanings. But the misplacement of things in categories can disrupt the social order and culture. Certain symbolic boundaries prevent this misplacement, to maintain the social order, and to keep categories 'pure'.

The psychoanalytic explanation is based on the influence of 'others' in the subjectivities of one's psychic life. Hall employs the Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex to substantiate this explanation. For Freud, the other is essential to the constitution of sexual identity and the subject. Since subjectivities are formed through the interaction with 'others'- that lies outside, there is no stable core to the self or identity.

All four approaches are mutually exclusive, but it shows that differences can have both positive and negative effects on society and are essential in the production of meaning.

The spread of imperial images through commodity advertisements resulted in marking a racial difference. Hall argues that the advertisement of 'soap, capable of cleansing and purifying, symbolized the racializing of the domestic world and domestication of the colonial world' (Hall, 1997, p. 241). Spreading certain concepts and ideas through commodity advertisements continue in the present day also. During the time of slavery, the body became a totemic object for representing the racial difference. Such representations of racial difference during the time of slavery demonstrated the impression that the blacks were lazy, and they lack culture. Revisions and modifications get arrested when 'differences' are reduced to 'nature', in representations. Physical differences and bodily features were used to signify black people. Hall observes that a sentimentalized version of stereotyping prevailed even during the times of anti-slavery movements. Stereotypical images of blacks recurred in American cinemas, a popular art form. Even Paul Robenson, a celebrated actor and black activist, could not wholly escape from the regime of stereotyping.

Hall argues that 'stereotyping reduces people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by nature' (Hall, 1997, p. 257). In order to make a distinction between typing and stereotyping, Hall introduces Richard Dyer's argument that- objects, people, or events are categorized based on their simple, memorable, widely recognized characterizations, which he calls typing. In stereotyping, specific characteristics of a person are fixed by exaggerating, and everything else regarding that person is reduced to those 'types'. Stereotyping results in the exclusion of those who do not match up with the accepted 'types' in a society. The boundary that the stereotyping creates, split the society into normal and abnormal. According to Hall, stereotypes are created when there is an imbalance in power. The 'others' who go excluded from a society based on the 'difference' will get stereotyped if any kind of power does not support them. Power helps in imposing norms of one's culture on those who are excluded as a result of the stereotyping. Dyer observes that the authority/power structure creates the concept of normalcy by making use of the types and stereotypes. Hall relies on the arguments of Foucault, Gramsci and Edward Said on power-knowledge nexus to derive a connection between representation, difference, and power.

Along with the represented sentiments, there could also be particular hidden meanings in the stereotypes. Hall claims that the representational strategies like the infantilization of black are covering particular hidden sentiments or fantasies of whites, like 'blacks are better endowed than whites'. With specific examples, Hall discusses 'fetishism', a representational practice that involves the substitution of a particular object for some tabooed subjects.

In the last part of the chapter, Hall discusses three transcoding techniques to challenge and restructure the stereotypes produced in the regime of representation. The famous Blaxploitation movie, shafts directed by Gordon Parks in 1971, portray a black detective who is not deferential to the whites. Hall point out such movies as perfect models of the reversing stereotypes, which is discussed as one transcoding strategy in the chapter.

Adding positive images to the pool of the representation regime that comprise negative stereotypes is the second transcoding strategy discussed by Hall. He notes that the black activist spread such positive images through their works. Hall argues that such positive images may not completely uproot the negative stereotypes that exist.

The third strategy of transcoding adopted in the anti-racist movement is concerned with the forms of representations and try to make stereotypes work against themselves. Hall notes that the exaggerated afro-Caribbean caricature of Lenry Henry that made the audience laugh with them rather than at them is such a transcoding strategy.

Stuart Hall, in this chapter, is discussing stereotyping in the context of popular cultural forms like films, advertisements, illustrations, and mass media images. The visual images that Hall brings in open up a discussion on the influence of signifying practices in the spectator's interpretations. Factors like fantasy, violence, and desire add more layers to the practice of representations. Stuart Hall believes that the stereotyping has its own poetics and politics. The theories that Hall proposes by focusing on African American culture can be applied to any culture to analyze the representations of differences.

Films, the form of art that span a more extensive set of audience portrays such differences in its characters and narratives. Stereotyping, as Hall points out, maintain a social and symbolic order by facilitating the bonding together of all of 'Us' who are 'normal' into one 'imagined community'; and it sends into symbolic exile all of Them - 'the Others' - who are in some way different - 'beyond the pale' (Hall, 1997, p. 258).

2.5 Regional cinema

Studies on the representations of social groups in Indian cinema are few although there exists rich literature on the history and sociology of Hindi and regional films at a broader level. In a recently published book titled *Indian Muslims After Liberalisation* Maidul Islam discusses the influence of India's economic reforms in the Muslim community. A chapter in this book, which deals with the identity of Muslims and the socio-economic challenges they face in the country, is devoted to the representation of Muslims in Bollywood cinema. Titled 'Imag(in)ing Indian Muslims in Post-liberalization Hindi Cinema', Maidul analyzes how the far-reaching Hindi cinema portrays the Muslims, who belong to a minority community in India. The author interprets the cinematic representation of Muslims in the framework of India's free-market liberalization and the rising Hindutva politics. The chapter title itself proclaims the author's argument that a change has occurred in the film imaging of the Muslim community during the 1990s. In the title itself, by coupling the terms of 'imaging' and 'imagining', Maidul demonstrates that some sort of an agenda exists in the movie portrayals of minorities. The chapter discusses the mystification and stereotyping strategies for the production of 'Muslim others' in the media discourses. Maidul recounts various movies to point at the issue of missing Muslim protagonists and the rise of the wave of portraying them as terrorists and gangsters. He separately discusses the portrayal of Muslim women also. Discussion of the chapter stretches into the limits of the secular themes found in Hindi cinema and the documentation of livelihood problems of the minority community. Maidul concludes the discussion by analyzing a set of blockbuster Bollywood films.

Media advertisements and films often produce several stereotyped and mythical images of the Muslim community to depict them as 'other' in society. Stereotyped images like caps and beards for men and burqa and chaddar for women then become Muslim cultural symbols. Maidul makes a note of the arguments by various scholars to claim that the perception of Islamophobia is also presented in the media discourses, which he describes as a racist attitude towards the Muslim community. The reach and forms of media got expanded during the time of liberalization. Maidul claims that the Hindi media at that time portrayed Muslims as loyal to the external agencies of Islamic brotherhood. He equally stresses the influence of the Hindutva agenda in such media representations. Professed cultural symbols of beard and caps did not suit the liberal progressive Muslims, and hence they did not find a space in the media discourse. Globalization has expanded the horizon

of Hindi cinema to the south Asian diasporic community worldwide. So its themes and characters reach a more comprehensive set of audiences. Maidul identifies four different approaches of Hindi cinema in the portrayal of the Muslim community. They appear as an enemy of the nation, as a source of terror, as a conflation of Muslim-terrorist Pakistani or with low citizenship status. Discussion on the Muslim representation in films proceeds in the framework of politics-film connection. Maidul claims that globalization and Hindutva politics have caused the disappearance of a commoner as the protagonist, increased themes on communal overtones, and glossy, glitzy nature of representation in the post-liberal phase Hindi cinema. He notes that the decade of 1970 exhibited Indian secularism in films, and some Muslim social films were made. Muslim actors adopted Hindu/anglicized names and had a high profile in the film industry at that time. By the 1990s, Indian films lost the cinematic presence of Muslim protagonists’.

Maidul claims that Muslims are less represented as protagonists in the limelight despite a large number of successful and popular Muslims in the film industry. Muslims appear as disintegrated aliens most of the time, and Maidul notes that their absence in Bollywood films became notable during the liberalization phase. Maidul supplies examples of various filmmakers and actors who held brand names (e.g., Khan) and celebrity identities rather than a Muslim identity. The topic of ‘Muslims in Bollywood cinema’ remains unattempted even in academic studies. He cites movies like *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994) and *Hum Saath Saath Hain* (1999) to claim that Muslim subalterns are presented in a subordinate position along with the Hindu elite class in Bollywood movies. Maidul interprets the character of ‘Ismail’ in the movie ‘*Lagaan*’, who gets injured while playing, as a representative of the disadvantaged group of Muslims in India. He gives samples of movies in which the Muslim characters are limited to small roles when compared to non-Muslim protagonists.

According to Maidul Islam, Bollywood movies also produce some stereotyped and mythical images of Muslims, which includes terrorist, gangster, and feudal lords. He spots ‘tawaifs’ as one of the stereotyped images of Muslim women in movies. He also claims that the Hindi movies mystify some particular features of the Muslim minority and blanket issues like discrimination and backwardness. ‘*Muhafiz*’, a movie that problematizes the portrayal of Muslim characters, breaks the stereotypes that Urdu is exclusively spoken by Muslims only. Maidul identifies a set of movies in which Muslims are portrayed as rooted in the feudal system. Hindi films that feature the partition have focused more on the Sikh

and Hindu victims, and less prominence is given for the sufferings of Muslims. The author also discusses films like 'border' and 'surfarosh' with the theme that the solution to problems of a system is fighting off aliens and outsiders, in the light of the rise of Hindutva politics in the country.

Maidul examines a considerable boost in the number of movies with Muslim protagonists exhibiting religious extremism, fanaticism, and terrorism after the September 11 attack and Kashmir violence. Muslims who did not appear as the protagonist began to arrive in negative roles in blockbuster Hindi movies. The author interprets the process of demonizing the Muslim 'other' in light of the rise of Hindutva politics, which he claims to have happened during the liberalization phase. Maidul claims that the Muslim other 'is celebrated through the stardom of the 'Muslim terrorist''(Maidul, 2019). Some movies portray 'bad Muslims' with some anti-national sentiments and 'good patriotic Muslims'. Maidul notes that the film 'Mumbai meri Jaan' worked against the biased mindset of viewing Muslims as terrorists. He provides a bunch of examples to validate his argument that Bollywood movies follow a biased representation of Muslims. Maidul claims that Bollywood films that are captivated with the theme of gangster and underworld most often portrayed Muslims as criminals or dons in it. He notes that such films have also 'celebrated the stardom of Muslim gangsters'. It is hard to see Muslims in the role of cops in Hindi gangster movies.

The author senses some films that dealt with the theme of secularism. Some films questioned the marginalization of Muslims and the insecurity of minority. But Maidul claims that even in the movies with secular themes Muslim protagonists were presented with certain stereotypical symbols. Caps and beard continued to remain a symbol of Muslim men and women characters were presented with their head covered. Maidul claims that the repeated representation of stereotyped Muslims with some cultural symbols results in the identification of the minority as an 'other'. He also notes that just like Muslims, the northeast community is also underrepresented in movies.

Maidul identifies many films in the post-liberalization phase with the theme of Hindu-Muslim romance. Muslim women are presented as submissive when compared to the Hindu male character in such movies. He also notes that only very few films (eg: my name is khan) have featured Muslim men marrying a non-Muslim woman. Maidul argues that the frequent portrayal of submissive Muslim women is part of a Hindutva agenda in work.

Through the submissive representation of Muslim women, authority is established over their bodies, which is then extended to the entire community. Movies like 'Lipstick Under My Burkha' (2017) and Secret Superstar (2017) deal with the theme of protest of women against patriarchal norms. Maidul argues that 'burqa', which is used as a stereotyped symbol even in the movies above, is not the main issue or hindrance of Muslim women. Maidul brings in to notice the films that discussed the theme of 'Muslim social', marginalization, and demonization of the minority community. He claims that movies like Garam Hawa and Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro opened discussions on class dimensions and equity while discussing identity problems of the Muslim minority. He mentions 'Iqbal', that discussed problems of Muslim peasantry in the neo-liberal phase, as an influential movie that portrays a Muslim protagonist without stereotypes. Bollywood also contains movies that attempted the mainstreaming of the Muslim minority by breaking stereotypes. Maidul claims that the movie 'Chak de India' 'combines the identities of most of the marginalized and disadvantaged groups in India'(Maidul, 2019).

Maidul also analyses the Muslim representation in the blockbuster Bollywood movies that reach a broader range of audiences. Muslim portrayal and stereotype images in such movies can often influence the attitude of spectators towards the Muslim community. Any kind of misrepresentation or stereotyping will have a significant influence in society. Maidul notes that only two movies among the top 12 Hindi movies that collected 300+Cr worldwide have an Indian Muslim protagonist representation in it. While many movies gave a token representation of Muslims in small roles, some superhits did not even portray them. He notes that blockbuster movies like 'PK' and 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' portrayed Muslims as citizens from outside India. He also spots some industry hits in which Muslims were presented as terrorists and frauds. Blockbuster movies that he cites validate his argument of 'missing Muslim' protagonists in popular Hindi cinema. In cinema, the portrayal of Muslims by non-Muslim elites remains distorted facts, mythical and stereotypical. 'The fact that such stereotypes are continuously getting reproduced and percolated in Bollywood cinema for generations is a testimony to the fact that such prejudices, stigma, and myths against Muslims exist within the broader audience that watches cinema'(Maidul, 2019). He concludes by pointing out the requirement of content-driven films on the theme of 'Muslim social' to overrule hegemonic misperceptions on the Muslim community.

2.6 Conclusion

Some of the arguments that Stuart Hall makes in the chapter, 'The Work of Representation' can be used to analyze the representation of migrant laborers in Malayalam movies. Different portrayals of migrant worker characters in films can be analyzed in the light of the three different theories on the representation of meaning, discussed by Hall. Foucault's argument that connects the power with the production of meanings, cited by Hall, can be employed while analyzing the negative cinematic representations of migrant workers. He also discusses how objects, like clothes, act a signifier in the production of meaning that can be found in the migrant worker representations also.

Roland Barthes discusses some signs and images in the essay titled 'the Romans in films' from the section 'mythologies.' Some such signs can be found in Malayalam movies that portray migrant laborer characters. The stereotypical images of migrant laborer characters in Malayalam movies can be discussed as a second-order semiological system that signifies certain negative impressions about them. As Barthes discussed, multiple numbers of signifiers subsist in movies to signify myth related to the migrant laborers. If the portrayals of migrant laborers are a kind of myth, then there will also be some motivation, that Barthes mention, behind such presentations that can be of some corporate-political interest. He claims that the dynamic focusing of myth will pass the concept from semiology to ideology. Negative impacts and perceptions that the movie characters of migrant workers transfer into society validate this argument.

The theories on the representational practice of stereotyping that Hall discusses in the chapter 'The Spectacle of the 'Other"' can also be used to analyze the portrayal of migrant laborers in Malayalam movies. The anthropological explanation that Hall discusses, argues that the marking of 'difference' forms the basis of culture, explains the distinction between locals and migrants. The recurring stereotyped images of the physical appearance of migrant laborers can be revised in the context of David Green's argument that 'socio-cultural differences among the human population became subsumed within the identity of the individual human body' (Green, as cited in Hall, 1997, p. 244). Strategies that challenge the stereotyping, termed as transcoding by Hall, can be located in some movies that represent migrant worker characters. The notion of intertextuality that he discusses, in which new understandings and interpretations ensue for certain texts in the light of other texts, can be noticed in the case of the movie images of migrant workers also. Hall mentions that the 'naturalization' of differences fix them forever. The attempts to 'naturalize' the

negative images of the migrant laborers prevent their integration with society, and they also get reduced to such interpretations only.

The presence of migrant worker characters in blockbuster and critically acclaimed movies can be checked, just like Maidul did in his study. Stereotypical symbols and myths exist for the migrant workers in Malayalam movies, just like the case of Muslims in the Hindi cinema that Maidul discussed. Also, he discusses the limitations of those movies that attempted to break the stereotypes that need to be done in this study.

Chapter 3

Guest Workers On Reels

3.1 Introduction

The representation of north Indian migrant workers in the Malayalam movies released in the last ten years is taken up for this study. Less than 25 movies have been referred to in this study from an industry with an average annual release of around 100 films. Based on the significance of migrant worker characters in those movie plots, movies can be categorized. Movie 'masala republic', which got released in 2014, has migrant workers as the central characters and the main plot is directly related to them. Therefore significant importance is given in this study for the analysis of those characters and movie scenes with the theoretical underpinning. A comprehensive analysis of all other movies that support this study is provided towards the end of the chapter. There are movies in which the migrant worker character appears as mere peripheral characters in relatively few number of scenes. However, such representations earn recognition as it might be quite different from the usual portrayal, or they enact notable roles and situations in the movie plot. Characters in movies like, 'Oru Muthassi Gadha,' 'Sathyam Pranjal Viswasikumo?' 'Kismath,' and 'Amar Akbar Antony' can be found to have such a significance and those characters and the scenes in which they appear are analysed in detail. There are movies, like 'C/O Saira Banu,' 'Bhaiyya Bhaiyya,' and 'Njan Prakashan,' with themes related to other state migrant workers as its central plot or subplots. Even if the migrant worker characters in these movies do not have much screen space, the themes it shares are significant in the context of the study. There is also a set of movies in which the migrant worker characters get portrayed in small characters. Even if the characters in the movies like, 'theevandi,' 'ee adutha kalathu,' 'aan maria kalippilanu,' 'janamaithri,' and 'swathanthryam ardhatriyil,' appear in less significant roles, the context of such representations and features of those characters need to be analyzed. Although the characters of migrant workers come to the forefront of the films like 'acha din,' and 'Appuram Bengal Ippuram Thiruvithamkoor', such a background of those central characters does not have anything much to do in the film's succeeding plot. Analysis has been done, by proffering priority for those movies with thematic relevance. Besides these fourteen movies, around ten movies, with relevant references of migrant workers, have been mentioned in this study.

3.2 Masala Republic

Directed by	Visakh
Written by	Arungeorge K David
Produced by	Sukumar Thekkeppat
Starring	Indrajith Sukumaran, Vinay Fort, Soubhin, Shine Tom, Balachandran, Mamukoya, Sunny Wayne, Vinayakan, Sumangal, Rupesh Bhimta, Anfas Ansary, Aparna Nair
Release date	25 April 2014
Running time	143 minutes
Box-office verdict	Flop

Movie Masala republic, directed by Visakh in 2014, is a satire that discusses the pan masala ban and can be considered as the first movie featuring migrant worker characters throughout. The satire and humor elements that the film attempted to convey got jaded due to the lack of a solid screenplay and the film became a flop in the Kerala box office. It seems that the writer-director had lost control over the narrative when they tried to include a series of unusual incidents after beginning the movie with a serious social issue. The absence of superstars, and the fact that two interstate migrant workers came to be the central characters, may also have kept people away from the theatre.

The movie begins by thanking residents in 'thuruthy,' perumbavoor in its thanks credits. Perumbavoor town in Ernakulam district, with plenty of plywood industries, is a major hub for migrant workers in Kerala. The 'Bhai bazaar' on Sundays and the theaters like 'lucky' and 'Jyothi' playing Hindi and Oriya films are some of the hallmarks of Perumbavoor. Perumbavoor's downtown sights, which include both migrant workers and locals, are used in the film.

In the opening scene, a group of people discusses getting rid of a commodity that remained unsold under some circumstances. Nothing more about the commodity or about that particular circumstance gets revealed in that scene. Most of the main characters in the film get presented in that scene, even if their names are not revealed. As the film progresses, it becomes clear that the characters in the scene are a group of local friends (Althaf(Soubhin), Sivankutty(Shine Tom), Ambu(Vinay Fort), Prince, and Piku), politicians (Pattanam Balan(Balachandran) and Beeranikka(Mamukoya) and two migrant workers (Sanju Bhai(Sumangal) and Bhimta(Rupesh Bhimta)). In this scene, Sanju Bhai, who has been

listening to loud music in his earphone, is also sometimes paying attention to the serious talks going on among the local people. The song that Sanju hears is given as the background score in the scene. Prince, who seems to be disappointed by the circumstances, takes the phone from Sanju's hand and crashes it for playing the song. Sanju expressed his anger and frustration when his new phone was damaged. Sanju tries to get the phone fixed when people around him blame Prince's act. At that point, the scene gets shifted into the mobile shop from where Sanju and Pempa bought that mobile. Sanju's excitement while hearing music in the earphone, Pempa's bargaining, local shopkeeper's bragging description about the phone are all shown in that scene.

Then appears the title cards along with a title song in the Bangla language. The journey of Sanju and Pempa from the north-eastern states of India to Kerala by train and other modes gets presented with the help of motion graphics during the title song. The film's title 'Masala Republic' appears after showing that they started the distribution of pan masala in Kerala after working in many other states. Though there are lakhs of migrant workers in Kerala, they are treated as an alien community by the mainstream society, which hampers their integration with the host culture. In such a case, the title 'masala republic' may be used by the filmmakers to symbolize the sub-culture.

In the very first shot after presenting the movie title, Sanju and Pemba show up on a scooter in a busy junction. The visuals of the busy junction presented in the movie include Local supervisors who hire migrant workers in vehicles to transport them to various workplaces. The next scene presents the dispute between two local coordinators on their control over the migrant workers. This scene explicating the agents' approach of earning massive profit by keeping migrant workers under their control, also introduces another main character in the movie, Bengali babu(Vinayakan), who is the agent of around 2 lakh Bengalis.

In the next scene, the director establishes the character of 'Pattanam Balan,' who is the leader of a new party that mainly aim the migrant workers vote called 'Naya Naukari Sena(NNS).' In that scene of a political meeting, Pattanam Balan speaks about the necessity to protest against the massive hike of onion price that he claims will affect the migrant workers directly. Pattanam Balan's dialogue-' if there is no onion, then there will not be any Bengali in the state. Moreover, If there is no Bengali, then there will not be any Malayali too', satirically presents to what extent the Kerala society depends on the migrant workers. The NNS party analyses that their plan to provide free onion for migrant workers was not

sufficient enough to increase the followers in their party and needed some other programs. So they plan to help migrant workers to get the 'Avakash card,' which was made compulsory by the government.

Movie narration proceeds by presenting a group of local friends, Althaf- works in a Chinese-tele channel, Ambu and piku- secondhand car dealers, Sivankutty- worker in a timber mill and Prince- Theatre owner.

The visuals of Sanju and Pempa, delivering pan masala with great excitement and joy, reveals that they are comfortable in their job. In one scene, when Sanju Bhai adores a heroine in a movie poster, Bhimta asks Sanju to worship 'kabutar set' (owner of the kabutar masala they were selling) by pointing at his picture in the pan masala packet. The two then go to meet a hermit named Baba, who lives in an isolated area. It is clear from Bhimta's conversation that he is an eternal visitor there, whereas Sanju is not interested in meeting him. Baba informs Bhimta that something unfortunate is going to happen to them.

Then appears the television news that the Kerala government has decided to ban pan masala/products in the state. The reactions of local people favoring the decision and workers'(both local and migrant) unhappiness with the ban are shown in the movie. Pattanam Balan, Beeranikka, Ambu, and Shivankutty discuss various aspects of the pan masala ban in a teashop. 'Bengalis will be suffered most by the pan ban as they cannot work without it,' 'government is trying to mislead public attention from their mischiefs through the ban,' 'pan masala will continue to circulate,' arguments like these are raised in that teashop discussion scene. Sanju and Bhimta join the teashop scene, and the group of local people there informs them about the pan masala ban. The warm gestures and dialogues between Sanju and Ambu manifest an existing friendly relation between migrant workers and that gang of locals. So it can be inferred that such a friendship has made the locals aware of the pan-masala business of Sanju and Bhimta, and that friendship itself led them to pass the information on the pan ban to the migrants. There is nothing mentioned in the movie about the evolution of the friendship between these locals and migrant workers. These locals can also be one of the buyers of pan masala, which made them familiar to Sanju and Bhimta. Then Sanju and Bhimta meet Pempa, the man who seems to be their leader. Pempa assures them that there is nothing to worry about and tells that he has made a settlement with the police officers.

An Anti-Gutka Squad (AGS) was formed by the government with Shambu(Indrajith Sukumaran) as its head, to enforce the ban of pan masala. AGS begins its action through announcements on the masala ban in both Hindi and Malayalam languages. Raids conducted by the AGS team is presented through a song. Shambhu also raids the 'lucky' theatre, which plays mainly other-language movies, owned by Prince. AGS recovers pan masala from one of the theatre staff and arrests all migrant workers who were there in that theatre for the premiere. Prince and his friends speak against Shambu's actions in one local channel, 'belpuri,' which is committed mainly to cover the news related to migrant workers. In another scene, Sanju Bhai expresses his wrath against Shambu's actions while chatting with Bhimta. Sanju stays in his stand to take revenge against Shambu even if Bhimta stresses about Shambu's power. Shambu raids the timber mill owned by Bengali Babu and arrests migrant workers with pan masala from there. NNS party workers take advantage of this opportunity and offer support to Bengali Babu for releasing the migrant workers.

Meanwhile, Sreya,(Aparna Nair) a news reporter, takes permission from Shambu for the live coverage of an AGS raid. However, the team of Althaf, Ambu, Sivakuty, and Piku, troubles Sreya while reporting Shambu's raid, and Shambu arrests them. While interrogating, pan masala was seized from Piku. The other three were released as the channel people did not show interest in charging the case. This incident creates hatred towards Shambu among those local friends.

By depicting migrant workers who decide to quit their jobs and return to their states of origin because of the pan masala ban, the movie tries to stress that the migrant workers are intensely addicted to pan products. A piece of business news is shown in the movie stating that the ban on pan masala has reduced the working efficiency of Bengalis, and the construction sector is facing a crisis. Bhelpuri news records the local people's comment that the availability of migrant workers has reduced after the ban of pan masala.

Althaf, Ambu, Sivakuty, and Prince decide to start pan masala business to take revenge on Shambhu, who became famous through pan masala raids. They plan to execute it with the help of Sanju and Bhimta. Those migrant workers also showed great interest in it, and they tell that gang of friends about 'Bada Bhai,' who has direct contact with the pan masala manufactures. The local gang realizes that a massive profit can be fetched through the business of pan masala, besides the revenge against Shambu. Those four locals and the migrant workers meet Bada Bhai, who is a Malayali, to seek help for their business. Bada

Bhai advises them also to find the support of any local political party. So the gang approaches Pattanam Balan and claims that Bengalis will join the NNS party if they are supplied with pan masala. NNS party also decides to support the business anticipating the enormous funds and followers. Sanju, Bhimta, Pempa, and their followers (includes both migrant workers and locals), plans and executes the pan masala trade without getting into Shambu's notice. From the movie scenes, it can be assumed that they supply pan masala mainly to the migrant workers and labor camps. Sanju and Bhimta are delivering huge profits from the sale of pan masala to that group of four local friends. In that scene, Sanju shows solid confidence that Shambu cannot prevent them from this business. It may be in the spirit of trading a large quantity of pan masala, despite the ban. When Sanju and Pempa left that scene, Althaf jokingly compares them to cows that give good milk, by giving only straw. To distract Shambu's attention, Sanju and Bhimta start beedi and cloth business in the market. Based on the intelligence report, Shambu and AGS officers covertly follow those three migrant workers. The scene, in which Sanju and Bhimta proudly discuss among themselves, that they are earning more profit and money than others, including local Malayalis, shows how satisfied they are at their work. AGS officials who collected enough evidence by secretly following migrant workers decide to arrest them. The first half of the movie concludes with the chase and arrest of Sanju, Bhimta, and Pempa and destroying the seized pan masalas.

The second half of the movie begins with the television news on the arrest of those three north Indian migrant workers. The media is quoting Shambhu as saying that the leaders behind the trio also need to be identified. In the police station, Shambu interrogates Sanju, Bhimta, and Pempa and finds that they hail from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Tibet, respectively. Police officers beat those migrants as a part of the questioning. At the same time, the four local friends fear whether the migrant workers will disclose their names to the police officers. Interrogation of migrant workers in the AGS custody brings out the name of Bada Bhai, and Shambu arrests Bengali Babu on suspicion as Bada Bhai. Pattanam Balan and NNS party decide to work for Bengali Babu's bail on a condition that all Bengalis under babu should join in the NNS party. Bengali Babu offers all his support for Pattanam Balan and his party. NNS announces hartal as there was no provision for Bengali Babu's bail. The hartal became a massive success as the shops remained closed, and the migrant workers refused to work, which pressurizes the police to release Bengali Babu. This incident establishes Pattanam Balan as a capable leader among the locals and migrant

workers. With the release of Bengali Babu, the team of four local friends decides to go to him and confess that they were the ones selling the pan masala, fearing that otherwise, he might try to find the pan vendors who have caused his jail term. Even Sanju and Bhimta gets beaten up at the police station, nothing other than the name Bada Bhai gets revealed. So Shambu decides to release Sanju and Bhimta and secretly follow them, which he assumes will lead to Bada Bhai. Pempa, who is considered as the leader among the group, is not released.

After getting released, Sanju and Bhimta decide to go and meet Althaf and seek help. Out of the four friends, Sanju and Bhimta might have felt that Althaf as a more kind person, which might have leads them to choose him. From their conversation, it gets clear that they have strong faith in Athaf and are confident that they will get help. Even if Althaf tries to avoid meeting them at first, but then he gets ready to talk to them. The fear that the police might catch him by following the migrant workers is visible in Althaf. It is because of this fear that he asks Sanju and Bhimta to avoid coming to his home anymore. Sanju and Bhimta shares about their sufferings in the police station and the difficulties that the police arrest caused in their life. Althaf gives them money for medicine and food and guarantees them that he will find some job for them. The police officer who was following the migrants doubts their meeting with Althaf and decides to follow Althaf also. In the next scene, Althaf discusses with his friends about helping Sanju and Bhimta. While Althaf speaks in kind of them, others hesitate to help the migrant workers and also warns althaf to stop contacting them. When Althaf considers it as a responsibility to help the migrant workers, who have not spoken to the police about the group behind the pan masala business, his friends disagree. The scene ends when Althaf gets angry and leaves the group as his friends comment that keeping in touch with those migrant workers will cause trouble to them also.

At that time, the Chinese telemarketing company in which Althaf is engaged takes the dealership of imported Chinese masala noodles, and Althaf was asked to take responsibility for the trial sales of the sample product. He plans to execute it through Sanju and Bhimta, who was searching for a job. Althaf explains the job to them and is also providing them money to repair their scooter, even though he has less money with him. Sanju and Bhimta consider the business of masala noodles that comes with the tagline of '1km noodles for 10rs', as a fresh opportunity for them. They begin the business by praying to Baba and getting blessings from Althaf's parents. And then it is also shown that they bow down to the statue of Gandhi in the city and presents noodles packets to the statue to seek his

blessings. Initially, people hesitated to buy, but they move on enthusiastically with the trade. Meanwhile, there is a scene in which Shambu stop Sanju and check the masala noodles packs with him. He also bought a noodles packet from Sanju for a forensic test to check whether it is pan masala in the form of noodles. When the migrants give the money that they received by selling the noodles to Althaf, he pays them 500 rupees each as the wage of that day. According to the study conducted by GIFT in 2013, only 9.80% of migrant workers reported a daily wage of 500 or above. So it can be inferred that in this movie, which got released in 2014, Althaf's character gave a decent wage for those migrant workers. Sanju asks Althaf more noodles for business as he finds that everyone, irrespective of Malayalees and Bengalis, is purchasing the product. This shows that they are delighted in the job and salary. Realizing the profit that can be fetched from the masala noodle business Althaf and his friends decide to invest in it. Pattanam Balan decides to join the gang and initiate the supply of masala noodles among migrant workers in the label of 'nutritious drive' lead by the NNS party. The movie depicts precise images in which local friends and migrant workers celebrate the success of their business together.

When Baba is shown in one of the next scenes, Sanju is also visiting him, along with Bhimta. Predictions made by Baba during the time of the pan masala ban might have built faith in Sanju. This time also Baba warns them about an unpleasant thing going to happen shortly. Then appears the television news on the initiation of the supply of free noodles (Hamara noodles) by the central government, for everyone through ration shops, which was also a political move by the opposition to overthrow the nutrition drive-by NNS party. There is a scene where Sanju and Bhimta discuss the business crashing with the arrival of the new noodles. Even they recognize that their dreams of a new house, marriage, etc. are collapsed, Sanju expresses optimism that the best of times will come. This scene takes place in a house, which does not resemble a labor camp, in which Sanju and Bhimta reside.

Then comes the scene where the politicians, local friends, and migrant workers discuss the ways to get rid of the imported Chinese noodles, which is shown at the beginning of the movie also. With the help of a Chinese company, they make a plan to convert the noodles into fertilizer.

Meanwhile, the group of politicians and locals friends gets some shreds of evidence on govt officials' corruption in the Hamara noodle program, from a group of activists. Pattanam Balan makes use of this evidence and pressurizes the government to form a new department

of 'migrant worker welfare' to become a minister. The government approved his demand, and a new department for the welfare of migrant workers was formed. Pattanam Balan's achievement invigorated Bengali babu to establish a new party-'Pradesh people party', which also aims at the roaming votes of migrant workers. The gang of local friends and migrant workers decides to seek the help of Bada Bhai to sell the fertilizers that were made from masala noodles. Shambu and the AGS team searching for Bada Bhai, follow the gang of local friends, including Sanju and Bhimta, who move to Gujarat as per Bada Bhai's behest. The movie ends with an animated portrayal of the gang's journey to Gujarat from Kerala, with a Bengali song in the background.

There are two songs in this movie that belongs to a comedy entertainer category. These two dirt songs, featuring Shambhu, are depicted in the movie, as composed and uploaded by the four local friends to defame him as a part of their revenge.

Nowhere in the movie does it show how Sanju and Bhimta got into such a profession or who led them to it. When Shambu questioned Bengali Babu on his connection with Sanju, Bhimta, and Pempa, he confesses that they used to be his workers up to 5 years ago. They might have left their job under Bengali Babu and started trading pan masala. And also nowhere in the movie, has it mentioned about the profit Sanju and Bhimta avail from the sale of pan masala. It can be inferred from the pleasure they exhibit and their choice to continue in the smuggling of the pan, that they were making a fair profit in the pan masala business. During the time of illegal pan masala trade, Sanju even says that they will work day and night.

According to the intentional approach of the representation, which Stuart Hall discusses in the chapter 'The Work of Representation' from the book 'Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices', the meanings that are personally/intentionally assigned by author/writer are shared through various kinds of representations. It can be gathered that this film in totality bestows a message that migrant workers cannot survive without pan masala. Many scenes get presented in the movie where foreign workers expressing their dissatisfaction with the ban on pan products and locals stress on the pan usage of migrant workers. While the movie stresses the pan addiction of migrant workers, it does not depict anything about their harsh living conditions or the hardships they face in the State, which makes it difficult to defend the argument that the filmmakers intentionally do the negative representation of the migrant worker community. The spread of such

negative meanings and images of migrant workers in representational forms can also be considered as the strategy to secure corporate interests, in light of Foucault's argument, which emphasize on the strong correlation of power in the production of meanings. French critic Roland Barthes postulates 'myth' as a type of speech that can signify several messages through various forms of representations and also claims that there are no myths without any motivation. If such portrayals of migrant laborers is a kind of myth, then, according to Barthes, there will also be some motivation behind such presentations that can be of some corporate-political interest, which is similar to what Foucault proposed. Hall also claims that the practice of representation has both an overt and suppressed level. Portrayal of migrant workers in negative appearances and characters can be considered as the overt level of a representation that covers some suppressed positive truth about them.

The movie features different kinds of people from various strata of the Kerala society. The first group is a set of migrant workers who came in search of jobs to the State. Then comes the diverse group of native people. Police officers form the third category of people in the film. Also, there are characters like Bada Bhai and Baba, who stand out a little from others. The film brings them all together through a plot, which is centrally based on the penetration of north Indian migrant workers in the State. Most of the main characters and storylines featured in the film revolve around the migrant workers and issues related to them.

The film uncovers Malayalees who are different in terms of their appearance and opinions, and also who have varying attitudes towards the migrant worker community. However, the tendency to address the entire migrant worker community as 'Bengalis' is common in all of them. Even Sanju and Bhimta, who hails from Assam and Arunachal, respectively, address migrant workers as 'Bengalis' in the movie. The diverse group of migrant worker community who hail from the states of West Bengal, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Orissa gets reduced to the tag of 'Bengalis.' Four local friends have been portrayed in the film, simply and realistically. The desire to make money quickly, which is labeled as natural in Malayali youth, can be spotted in them also. Then comes the group of politicians, including Pattanam Balan and Bherranikka. Even if Pattanam Balan gets portrayed as the leader of the group, it is shown that he is incapable of making his own decisions and devising tactics, which are mostly done by others like Bheeranikka. Another category of host people shown in the film is the agents of migrant workers and their assistants. Bengali Babu and Pattanam Raghu, two migrant worker agents, portrayed in the movie, are presented as having a stronghold over the migrant community. The dark shaded

background score used in the movie while showing the character of Bengali Babu might be to sketch his controlling and authoritative position. Politicians like Pattanam Balan, who take advantage of the migrant votes, migrant worker agents like Bengali Babu, and locals who use them for selfish gains, can be considered as the sarcastic picture of Kerala society. A Hindi-Bengali song is used as the mobile ringtone for Pattanam Balan's and Bangali Babu's character. The ultra-consumerist approach of Malayalees, who were trying to give themselves a clean sheet by claiming that only Bengalis use the pan, is being mocked in the movie with the arrival of masala noodles. By presenting Malayalees, who proudly declare about their daily consumption of a food product by blindly believing in the advertisement, their willingness to be the consumer of a low priced product without even considering its quality, is being criticized.

The movie also presents comments of local people on the ban on pan products. When some favour the ban and consider it as a good initiative, others feel that the ban has made Bengalis quit working, while some others demand the ban of alcohol and cigarettes. Pattanam Balan, Beeranikka, Ambu, and Shivankutty interpret the pan masala ban differently in the teashop scene. This shows the fact that different kinds of opinions and interpretations are formed within a particular society on a subject, and this can be connected with the constructivist approach discussed by Stuart Hall. Hall also has employed the argument that interpretations are followed by other interpretations in support of the constructionist theory that proposes that meanings are constructed by the people in a society with a specific cultural background.

In Kerala, the migrant workers who came in search of jobs are different from the local people in various aspects like language, appearance, food habits, celebrations, and entertainment. Stuart Hall discusses the significance of 'differences' and their representations through four explanations/theories. The anthropological explanation that argues that the marking of 'difference' forms the basis of culture, explains the distinction between locals and migrant workers. Films, the form of art that span a more comprehensive set of audience portrays such differences in its characters and narratives.

According to Stuart Hall, besides words and images, objects like cloths also act as signifiers that produce certain understandings and meanings in the semiotic approach, the study of signs in culture. Dull colored costumes of migrant workers in movies can act as a signifier that can spread the impression that they are untidy and frowsy always. As Barthes

discussed, multiple numbers of signifiers exit to signify myths related to the migrant labourers. In the scenes that represent migrant workers, not only clothes, objects like mobile, earphones, onion, pan packets or places like timber/plywood mills where they are mainly employed can be spotted often. A plugged-in earphone can be seen with Sanju throughout the film. In this and many other films, the earphone can be spotted as an 'object signifier' when portraying foreign workers filmmakers use such objects as signifiers while portraying migrant labourers. Roland Barthes, in his essay 'Romans in films' states that signs that are used to signify various concepts can be either openly intellectual or deeply rooted. In movies, dull-colored clothes, especially t-shirts, disheveled-uncombed hair, and particular objects, overwhelms one with evidence, that he is a migrant worker

According to Hall, in stereotyping, certain characteristics of a person are fixed after exaggerating, and everything else regarding that person is reduced to those 'types' that are presented as neutral and normal. Stereotyping, as Hall points out, maintain a social and symbolic order by facilitating the bonding together of all of 'Us' who are 'normal' into one 'imagined community'; and it sends into symbolic exile all of Them - 'the Others' - who are in some way different - 'beyond the pale' (Hall, 1997, p. 258). As Hall suggested, such stereotyped images create a barrier between the locals and migrants in society and prevent their integration and results in the exclusion of migrants from mainstream society. The recurring stereotyped images of the physical appearance of migrant labourers can be revised in this context of David Green's argument that 'socio-cultural differences among the human population became subsumed within the identity of the individual human body' (Green, as cited in Hall, 1997, p. 244). The body becomes a totemic object and holds a vital role in the popular representation of otherness. Stereotypical images that are presented as normal and neutral in movies that reach the spectator, function as a myth that can delineate some hidden meanings and messages.

'*Masala Republic*' presents Sanju, Bhimta, and Pempa, coming from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Tibet, respectively, in front of the Malayali audience, who addresses all migrant workers as Bengalis. Sanju and Bhimta are portrayed in relatively clean and colored outfits when compared to other unskilled migrant workers presented in the movie. Pempa's look is more stylish and appealing than Sanju and Bhimta. Moreover, in many scenes, these three can be found using sunglasses. Bhimta appears wearing a couple of chains that can be assumed to be related to faith; also, he has a stud in one ear. While interrogating Pempa, police officers jocularly ask him whether he is a superstar to wear a

golden chain and ring. Such an appearance may be used to illustrate the massive profit that they earn by peddling pan masala when compared to other unskilled workers. However, it also dismantles the stereotypical image of dull, color-faded outfits, which, to some extent, are used in movies while presenting migrant workers. Stuart Hall discusses different transcoding techniques that can challenge and restructure the stereotypes produced in the regime of representation. The portrayal of migrant workers in relatively better outfits can be considered as a reversing stereotypes strategy. Even if such positive images try to break the regime of representation, as Hall pointed out, it gets submerged in the large pool of negative images that got spread through other blockbuster movies.

It is imperative to analyse how the three main elements of a state - government, the media, and police - are portrayed in the film, and their attitude towards migrant workers gets manifested. The government gets mentioned in specific instances that cause crucial twists in the storyline of the movie. The decision taken by the government to ban pan products and supply free noodles directly concerns the central characters in the movie. Also, in the film, it is shown that the ministry accentuates that they have made noodles available free for the migrant worker community also and commences a new department for their welfare. Such scenes can be counted as a tool for mockery of the actions of a governments that conceals their selfish interests and presents it as doing benefits for the public.

The movie features three different types of media. The 'Belpuri' news channel gets presented in the movie as a channel that exclusively covers and discusses issues related to migrant workers. The 'Belpuri' Channel is coming up with reports of instances like migrant workers being arrested from the 'lucky' theater or footages where migrant workers express their opinions on the pan masala ban. When the gang of local friends speaks against Shambu in 'bhelpuri' news, another police officer calms him by saying that the channel has only very few viewers.

Live Kerala news, another channel in which the character of Sreya works, is also mentioned in the movie many times. 'live Kerala news' focuses more on the actions of police, government announcements, and views of Malayalees and gives less prominence for the issues of migrant workers or their opinions. The business analysis program in the live Kerala news presents that the ban of pan masala has reduced the working efficiency of migrant workers, which leads to the collapse of the construction sector. Such presentations accentuate that all migrant workers are addicted to pan products and they cannot work

without it. So it can be deduced that live Kerala news provides news that pleases the Malayali audiences.

Other than 'bhelpuri' and 'live Kerala,' the movie presents another mainstream media that telecasts authentic news and programs that analyse the socio-political scenarios of the State. The program that is shown in the movie as telecasted in the mainstream media asserts that Malayalees and Bengalis alike will be trapped in the pan hunt by AGS and that the ban on the pan will give birth to a new mafia. Representation of three different kinds of media in the movie tries to bring in different versions of a news and assert that not all media typecasts or negatively portray the migrant workers.

Police officers are another group of people that gets a critical representation in the movie. The government forms a separate squad (AGS) of around eight officers, including two ladies for curbing pan masala with Shambu as their leader. They appear in a dark green uniform, rather than the usual khaki uniform. Officer Shambu, who uses sunglasses in most of the scenes, is portrayed as a humorous character. Even his name, Shambu, can be connected to that of a fictional comic character in amar chitra kathas. Shambhu is depicted as a comic character who, at the same time, is a very strict officer who is committed to his duties. It resides unclear why the police officers dealing with such a severe issue of the State were presented in such a comic manner. Such a representation of police officers makes the audience look at the film as a spoof of the police films with the policeman who are muscular and having a soft corner for a female character, here it is the journalist (Sreya). Shambu's comment that everyone, including Malayalees and Bengalis, uses Pan-Masala, makes it is clear that he is not, in particular, targeting migrant workers.

In this film that reaches mainly the Malayali audience, the explicit narration establishes the central characters of migrant workers. The screenplay is also designed in such a way that it allows those characters to express all their feelings. Instances like Sanju getting angry when his phone got destroyed, migrant workers getting sad during the breakdown of their business, and their celebration along with Malayalees explicates that in the movie, equal importance is given to their feelings as well. In the movie, Migrant workers use their own language in most of the scenes, which eludes the slapstick comedy scenes usually found in films made by making migrants speak in Malayalam. In the movie, migrant workers in the state themselves acted as Sanju Bhai, and Bhimta and both did well, although it was their first movie appearance. Making stereotypes work against themselves is discussed as a

transcoding strategy by Stuart Hall in the chapter The Spectacle of the ‘Other’ from the book *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices.* Casting two migrant workers as central characters can be regarded as such a transcoding strategy from the director who shows a heart of experimentation. Sumangal, who acted as Sanju Bhai, continued to act in around 10 Malayalam films. In the 2015 film Kanal, there is a scene in which Sumangal is complimented. Mohanlal's character, who was traveling on the train, realizes that one of his fellow passengers on the train is the migrant worker (Sumangal) who has acted in the 2014 film Masala republic. He then introduces Sumangal to the other passengers on the train, praises him with applause.

3.3 Kismath

Directed by	Shanavas K Bavakutty
Written by	Shanavas K Bavakutty
Produced by	Rajeev Ravi
Starring	Shane Nigam, Shruthy menon, Vinay fort, Sumangal
Release date	29 july 2016
Running time	103 minutes
Box-office verdict	Hit

2016 movie Kismath, placed in the town of Ponnani, Malappuram district, was the debut directorial venture of Shanavas. K. Bhavakutty. It is about the love story of a 23-year-old Muslim boy Irfan(Shane Nigam), from a well-off family and a financially less privileged 28-year-old Dalit Hindu girl Anita(Shruthy), who seeks police help to get married when unconventional age gap and religious differences trigger issues in families and in the conservative society they are part of. However, the domineering police officer(Vinay Fort) did not support them and faced a backlash from both of their families who arrives at the police station. Believing in the false promise that things will be settled, Irfan agrees to go home, and Anita, who faces stiff opposition from home, chooses to go to a rescue home. Reaching home, Irfan realizes that the promise that he got was bogus and was accidentally murdered by his brother during a heated argument. The title of the movie, 'kismath,' meaning fate, fits appropriately as the duo fails to unite in the end. The film, acclaimed by both audience and critics for its theme and craft, was a hit in the box-office.

The movie narration mainly takes place in a police station to which a migrant laborer, Sumangal, is also brought for a bike accident case. He then appears in around three scenes in the first half of the movie. As soon as he brought to the station, police officers try to interrogate him but fail due to the language barriers. He responds in the Assamese language to the officers who were questioning him in a language that was a mix of Malayalam, English, and Hindi. The practice of Malayalee to address workers from any north Indian state as 'Bengali' is displayed by the police officers in the movie who continue to call the migrant laborer 'Bengali,' even after learning from him that he is from Assam. Though Sumangal repeatedly states that the other rider caused the accident, police officers ignore it. When everyone gets up to show respect for the sub-inspector (Vinay Fort) who enters the scene, Sumangal does not care for him. He was accused in a bike mishap involving two Malayalis, and a local person(addressed as KT) who seems to have a strong relationship

with the police officers come to speak for the Malayalis, whereas no one is there to converse for the migrant worker.

When Vinay fort asks his subordinates about the accident case, one police officer informs him that they were unable to cross-examine the migrant worker because of the language barrier and also proclaim that Kerala police do not know Hindi. The challenges created due to the language barrier in the law and order department of the state get exposed in that scene. However, SI himself enters the scene and interrogates Sumangal in Hindi with physical aggression. When questioned about the job, Sumangal first answers that he works in a bakery and then changes it to cement work (construction). SI investigates whether the migrant laborer taken in custody is a terrorist when he tells that he is from Assam. From the questioning, it gets exposed that Sumangal was not having a license or valid ID card. When Sumangal reveals that the bike was given to him by his master, police officers collect his master's phone number, and that scene ends there. Irfan and Anitha, who was also present in that scene, witnessing the mode of interrogation by SI, might have got an idea of how tyrannical the officer is.

The third main scene in which Sumangal appears comes after about five scenes; meanwhile, SI talks to Irfan and Anitha on their issue. It is a scene comprising SI and two other cops, KT (the local man), Malayalees involved in the accident, the bike owner, and Sumangal. Sumangal counters his master's argument that he took the bike without permission by explaining that his mistress gave the consent to take the bike for buying cement. However, the master tries to show that Sumangal is telling a lie. KT interferes, and proposes a compromise by asking a compensation of 2000rs from the bike owner, but he refuses to give money. Sumangal realizes that the case can be settled by giving compensation, and so he offers Rs 600 that he has at that time. He seeks the help of his friends to arrange money as per the police officer's instruction. In the meantime, even if Sumangal repeats that he has not done anything wrong, no one minds. It can be deduced that by influencing the police officers, locals took precedence over the migrant laborer, and the accident case was compromised by asking the migrant laborer to pay compensation without even hearing his contention, even if he demands his justice. Sumnagal can be spotted in the police station scenes where incidents related to the main storyline happens. One policeman snubs Sumangal's request to help his friends who were coming with money and did not know the way to the police station by talking to them on the phone. He asks for a mobile charger instead of food at the police station. After some time, two of his friends (who are also

migrant workers) come with money. However, they were able to manage only 1800 rs, and KT, who got busy already by getting involved as a mediator in Irfan-Anitha case, decides to settle things there with that amount, which grants permission for Sumangal to leave.

The movie scenes portraying the migrant laborer divulge various subjects like the language barrier, exploitations from locals, lack of valid IDs, and prejudice labeling of the terrorist tag. The study carried out by GIFT for the Kerala govt in 2013 recommends an urgent voluntary registration for migrant laborers in the state as the issue of Migrant Labourer concerns the domain areas and jurisdictions of many Departments of Government including the Labourer, Health, Social Welfare, Police, Education, and Local Self Governments. In this movie that follows a realistic narrative pattern, the director has cast the migrant worker Sumangal, himself as the character with the same name. Sumangal appears in colored outfits, which similar to other characters in the movie. Also, he gets portrayed as a character who, despite being an interstate migrant worker, dares to speak out and argue his part in front of the police without being insecure, which happens not so often. Designing such a character can be assumed as a deliberate attempt from the director to break the stereotypical portrayal of migrant workers while discussing a serious issue related to them, the lack of valid ID cards. The film highlights the passive attitude of the police even after realizing that Sumangal does not have valid documents. The lack of vigilance in issues related to migrant workers and the prejudiced attitude towards them from the police department gets exposed in through these scenes in the movie.

3.4 'Sathyam Pranjal Viswasikumo?'

Directed by	G Prajith
Written by	Sajeev Pazhoor
Produced by	Urvasi Theatres
Starring	Biju Menon, Samrutha Sunil, Alenxier, Sumangal
Release date	12 July 2019
Running time	130 minutes
Box-office verdict	Hit

'Sathyam Pranjal Viswasikumo>' the 2019 Movie directed by G.Prajith is about a group of laborers, their problems, and alcohol addiction. The movie narrates how a group of laborers who are desperate for money come out of the troubles that happen when they try to steal liqueur bottles from a lorry that has an accident. Sunil, the central character in the movie, witness the accident and decides to steal the liquor bottles and to bootleg them later. He calls his friends for help and also takes the lorry driver in critical condition to the hospital. A missing case of a local woman also happens at that same time, and the group of workers gets allegedly accused in it. However, In the end, the accusations against them prove to be false, but the police recover the liquor bottles that they had stolen and secreted. The movie ends when the central character, played by Biju Menon, decides to quit alcohol consumption. The film that had various layers of sarcasm on the attitudes of Malayalees became a hit in the Kerala box office in 2019.

The team of laborers includes Sunil(Biju Menon), who seems to be the leader of the gang, an older laborer played by Alanxier, mostly-drunk Thamara(Sudhi Koppa), gulf aspirant and a migrant worker Shanavas(Sumangal). Sajeev Pazhoor, a national film award-winning writer, in this movie delineate a migrant laborer, who is settled in Kerala after marriage with a local woman and also keeps a warm relation with his local friends. The character named 'Shanavas' earns attention in a society where such incidents occur very rarely. Only he is there as a migrant worker in that gang of Malayalees. At the beginning of the movie itself, it gets clear that an amicable relation exists between Sunil and Shanavas. It might be Sunil who took the initiative for the marriage of Shanavas and the Malayali girl. There is a scene where Sunil takes away Shanavas from his house at night to steal the liquor bottles from the lorry that had an accident. Mother-in-law's care and responsibility for Shanavas are apparent in that scene when she expresses her dissatisfaction in taking away Shanavas at midnight. There is a scene after the interval, in which Shanavas' mother-in-law

comes to Suni's house and becomes enraged when Sunil and friends, including Shanavas, go into hiding because the police are looking for them. When she says, "Shanavas looks after family very well although he is a migrant worker", "he was regarded not even as a son-in-law but as a son," her love towards the migrant worker gets flashed. Although Suni and friends were found not guilty in the missing case, the bloodstain that clung on Suni's shirt while he taking away the lorry driver to the hospital creates more trouble. When the police interrogate him about the bloodstain and try to make Suni answer by beating him up, Shanavas tells the police that they have stolen liquor bottles from the lorry that had an accident. Shanavas reveals everything as he could not tolerate the police beating his friends. His love for his friends is evident from that.

It is the relationship between the workers that one perceives in the movie. Even the migrant laborer is seen as one among the gang by the rest of the characters, which does not happen so often in Malayalam movies. Mother-in-law's extra care towards the migrant laborer can be considered as the change in social perceptions. She expressed her worries when he went missing. Shanavas is always called by his name and not by any words like Bengali. His love and commitment towards his local friends are also pitched at various instances in the movie.

The character of Shanavas gets designed such that it breaks all stereotypical images concerning a migrant worker in Malayalam movies. He gets presented in suitable outfits that make him blend with the rest of the characters in the movie. Nowhere in the movie, has it used the images of earphones or mobiles while portraying Shanavas, which is most often seen in the representations of migrant workers. The representation of Shanavas can be considered as a deliberate attempt from the filmmakers to trigger the process of social integration of migrant workers in a community where they are getting marginalized even in the worker community itself. According to Stuart Hall, Positively portraying the character without any stereotypical symbols or negative shade can be considered as a transcoding strategy by the filmmakers. Also, this film does not make the audience perceive the character of the migrant worker with the aid of particular objects like earphones, pan masala, and dull-colored clothes, this 'object signification' often happens in other movies while portraying them. The film crew even released a character poster for the character of Shanavas, which was played by Sumangal, a migrant worker himself.

3.5 Oru Muthassi Gadha

Directed by	Jude antony joseph
Written by	Jude antony joseph
Produced by	A V Anoop
Starring	Rajini chandy, Bhagyalakshmi, Suraj Vejaramudu, Krishna Prasad
Release date	14 september 2016
Running time	142 minutes
Box-office verdict	Hit

Besides the construction works, migrant laborers are also getting considered for domestic works in real and reel life. Director Jude Antony Joseph, in his movie 'Oru MuthashiGadha' released in 2016, presents a migrant laborer as a caretaker. The movie is a family-entertainer that follows the story of a grandmother, Leelamma(Rajini Chandy), in her mid-sixties who terrorizes everyone around with the meddlesome and quarrelsome behavior. Her character annoys the whole family consisting of her son Sibi (Suraj Venjaramoodu), his wife (Lena), and two children. Due to the ill-tempered nature and harassments, no one was ready to work with the grandmother until the arrival of 'Bhushan babu,' a migrant worker caretaker. When Sibi and his family go for a trip, they call up Sibi's mother-in-law, Susanna(Bhagyalakshmi), to give a company for Leelamma, who was not willing to join them. Then the movie narrates the relationship between these two grandmothers and how Susanna changes the troublesome behavior of Leelamma by helping her to fulfill the dreams in her bucket list. Bushan Babu also helps Susanna to accomplish Leelamma's dreams. At one point, Leelamma exhibits her desire to meet her ex-lover Zakariya, and the trio-Leelamma, Sussanna, and Babu decide to go and find him. However, on that day, Babu leaves their house without informing them. So they seek the help of Susanna's granddaughter and her boyfriend to find Zakariya. However, they unexpectedly meet Babu at the native place of Zakariya along with their neighbor's daughter. There, Babu reveals that he was acting as a 'Bengali' to keep in touch with his lover. Then when they locate Zakariya, Lelamma slaps him for dumping her in the past. The old-duo also start an initiative to meet the dreams of those in nursing homes. The audience acclaimed the film that narrated the dreams of a grandmother and was a hit in the Kerala box office.

Before presenting the character of Bhushan Babu, the movie reveals Leelamma's rough and acerbic attitude towards the caretakers. Sibi's friend is introducing Babu as the caretaker for Leelamma, and before that, there is a scene in which Sibi and his friend discuss the migrant worker community. Sibi expresses his aversion to his friend's argument that the Bengali language will have more demand in the future than Malayalam; Sibi's friend also adds that his son has Bengali language tuition. Interestingly, Sibi's friend introduced the migrant worker caretaker to Sibi at the end of the scene in which Sibi expressed his dissatisfaction with the massive encroachment of migrant workers in every field. What follows is a dialogic scene between Sibi and his wife. The scene commences with the closeup shot of his wife, who appears to be shocked and angry while perceiving from Sibi that the new caretaker is a migrant worker. She even asks Sibi whether he has gone mad to appoint a 'Bengali' in a house where their teenaged daughter is also residing. Sibi somehow convinces his wife that the migrant caretaker is a reliable guy. Sibi, who then thinks about the ways to convince his mother, sees Babu massaging Leelamma's aching legs. In that scene, it also seems that Babu has earned Leelamma's consideration by chatting to her about some healthcare tips. When Leelamma asks Babu about his fluency in Malayalam, he replies that his eight years of stay in Kerala have aided in learning the language. The following three to four scenes narrate the disturbing behavior of Leelamma, who does odd things to annoy and harass Babu. However, Babu tackles such acts with his calm responses and exhibits hard work that pleases everyone in the house. In another scene, Babu consoles Sibi, who fails to pacify Leelamma, who is reluctant to join on tour, however, Sibi warns him not to get involved in the issue of Malayalees. Leelamma is often seen addressing Babu as a Bengali and maltreats him. However, Susanna gets presented as very kind to Babu. Attainment of Leelamma's wishes gets pictured through a song in which Babu also gets portrayed along with the duo of grandmas. In another scene, the doctor examining Leelamma gets the smell of alcohol, immediately suspects that the migrant laborer is the drunken one, even though other characters present in that scene were also drunk. Another significant scene in which Babu's character appears is close to the climax of the film. The team who were searching Zakariya meets Babu by chance there. One of them holds and slaps Babu for no reason, who was trying to run away, thinking that they came searching for him. Babu gets frustrated when Leelamma calls him a thief and finally discloses that he is a Malayali, and his name is Appu. It is the scene in which he reveals that he impersonated as a migrant worker to elope with his girlfriend, who was residing in the neighborhood of Leelamma's house. The character played by Krishna Prasad appears in the tail end of the

movie when the grandmas leave for accomplishing dreams in their bucket list. When Leelaamma addresses him as Babu there, the character reminds her that his name is Appu and not Babu.

Characters in the movie behave to the migrant caretaker Babu differently. Leelamma's character mistreats Babu very often, whereas Susanna's character treats him kindly. Sibi, who shows disturbed in the massive influx of migrant workers in Kerala, becomes willing to hire a migrant worker at his home when there was a need. Sibi's wife seems unhesitant to acknowledge Babu, who has performed all housework and reduced her workload. The doctor who perceives the migrant workers with contempt also gets featured in the film. The lead characters in the movie comment that 'Bhushan babu'(migrant caretaker, aka Appu) belongs to a category of people who uses pan masala instead of toothpaste and one grandma character claims that Bengalis are also skirt-chasers like Malayalis. Safety concerns arising while appointing a migrant laborer in a family, particularly the safety of a girl in teenage, is also discussed by characters in the movie.

The character of Bhushan Babu gets portrayed as a man with uncombed hair and dull-colored clothes. Babu appears with a pendant and hand chains in both hands. Also, his character gets presented in some of the scenes with a plugged-in earphone. The same character, while revealing that he is a Malayalee, appears neatly in relatively colorful clothes. Appu does not have the pendant or hand chain that Bhushan Babu used to wear, which indicates that those were typical symbols used to impersonate the appearance of a migrant worker.

The representation earns more attention as it was a Malayali, impersonating that migrant laborer to stay in touch with his girlfriend, which gets revealed at the climax only. Migrant laborers, who came in search of jobs, have crowded out the local workers from many sectors in Kerala today. Today, for various reasons, the hardworking migrant laborers are preferred over locals for work, which might have inspired the director to conceive such a character. On seeing the migrant caretaker along with the local characters in the hotel, the waiter state that 'the restaurant is unique without having a migrant employee.' The reflections of Dialogues such as 'Native students have started learning the Bengali language to ease the communication problem with other Bengali students in the school' and 'The Bengali language has more demand than Malayalam in future' appeared in Kerala exam results, where children from illiterate migrant family showcased their academic

excellence. Projects aiming at the educational advancement of migrant workers' children were initiated with the support of SSA, district panchayats, and various NGOs in the state. The migrant caretaker is suspected to be a thief when he goes missing. Instances of migrant laborer deaths due to alleged assault and torture by the local people arising out of such suspicions have been reported in the state. 50-year-old Manik Roy, a migrant laborer from West Bengal, was beaten to death by two local people who had accused him of stealing a hen, in the district of Kollam. Even there are stereotypical images used while portraying the character of Babu, by presenting him as a dedicated domestic caretaker, the movie revises the trend to portray them only as workers at the construction site.

3.6 Amar Akbar Antony

Directed by	Nadirsha
Written by	Vishnu and Bipin
Produced by	United global media
Starring	Prithviraj, Indrajit, Jayasuriya, Shafique Rahman
Release date	16 October 2015
Running time	144 minutes
Box-office verdict	Blockbuster

'Amar Akbar Antony,' the multi-star entertainer movie, which got released in 2015, is the directorial debut of Nadirsha, who comes with a mimicry background. The film narrates the story of three youngsters (played by lead actors like Prithviraj, Indrajit, Jayasuriya) and their dreams. The screenplay by Vishnu and Bipin is baked with many comedy scenes, along with it also discuss the socially relevant issue of child abuse. The film gets narrated through the lives of three central characters, parallely crimes done by a habitual pedophile migrant labourer, Dhappan (Shafique Rahman) is also framed. Apart from the opening scene of the film, Dhappan appears in around three scenes in which the lead characters also meet him. However, they tend to ignore him as he does not directly concern them. The youngsters get crisscrossed with the migrant laborer when a girl in their family was raped and killed. Then the trio of heroes defeats the migrant worker in a fight. By the end, they came to know that, girl in their family was killed not by the migrant worker but by a beloved local man in that colony. Both were beaten to death by the local community in front of the police, in the climax.

The villain, Dhappan, gets portrayed along with the title cards, even before introducing the heroes in the movie. For that, the director first uses a close-up shot of his slippers then shows his hands with a bracelet, which is in rhythm to some music. The migrant worker appears in dull t-shirts and blond hair. Even before focusing the face of the antagonist, the director then sets a close-up shot of his in-ear earphones. While introducing the antagonist migrant worker, a piece of TV news on the massive inflow of migrant laborers and their involvement in crimes gets played in the background. Even if the crimes reported with their involvement is very meager when compared to their proportion in the population, some notorious cases and the negative roles typecast for them in movies carved a criminal image for migrant workers in the Malayali minds—a 23-year-old migrant laborer Ameer-ul-Islam from Assam convicted of raping and murdering law student Jisha in April 2016. Narendra

Kumar (28) hailing from Uttar Pradesh was found guilty of the Parambuzha triple murder case.

Without even a lot of reel time or a single line of dialogue, the face of a habitual pedophile migrant laborer character sends chills down the spine of viewers throughout the movie. The images of the migrant laborer, his blood-curdling staring, and frightening smile get crudely interspersed throughout the movie, creating a menacing vibe that outlasts and exceeds the theatre screens. While the crimes committed by the migrant worker gets presented one by one terrifyingly throughout the movie, the movie is getting proceeded without highlighting the local person who indulges in the same sort of crime unless in the climax portion. Admitting the fact that filmmakers practice climax twists as the success formula for a commercial film. However, when the film ends with the climax scene that creates adrenaline rush in the audience, the offenses that appear in more than three scenes in the movie, committed by the migrant worker, is likely to be perceived by the audience than the local person's negative role. The movie was a blockbuster in the Kerala box office by collecting more than 50crs. So the representation of migrant workers in negative roles with typical stereotypical symbols in such blockbuster movies that reach a more comprehensive set of an audience can directly influence a large chunk, and their impressions on the migrant worker community will be derived accordingly. The analysis of the blockbuster movies is crucial while studying the representation of particular social groups in cinema as any kind of misrepresentation or stereotyping will have a significant influence on society. The idea of mob lynching, which the film puts forward at its climax, is also crucial, and the decision of police officers who grants permission for the lynching of the accused, instead of bringing them in front of the system of law, need to be addressed and debated.

Along with discussing the transcoding strategies to demolish the regime of representation in the chapter 'The Spectacle of the 'Other'' from the book *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*', Stuart Hall also talks about the challenges that the transcoding strategies face. Hall argues that positive images that get presented may not completely uproot the negative stereotypes that exist. Such positive images, which will be very few, will get overshadowed by the already existing large pool of negative images. The negative representations of migrant workers in this blockbuster movie can be considered as a challenge to the positive images portrayed in other movies.

3.7 Njan Prakashan

Directed by	Sathyan Anthikkadu
Written by	Sreenivasan
Produced by	Sethu mannarkkad
Starring	Fahad fazil, sreenivasan, nikhila vimal, devika
Release date	21 december 2018
Running time	131 minutes
Box-office verdict	Blockbuster

Besides the fascinating wage and living conditions, Malayali's' unnecessary inferiorities and reluctance towards specific jobs resulted in the appearance of migrant laborers in the state. Movie 'NjanPrakashan' from the hit director-writer combo of Malayalam, Sathyan Anthikadu-Sreenivasan, criticizes this approach of Malayalee. The protagonist character in the movie, played by the young superstar Fahad Fazil is an educated, irresponsible man who aspires to lead a luxurious life without too much effort. Prakashan is not interested in the nursing profession in which he is qualified, asserting that it is underpaid, and he craves to go abroad. Prakashan decides to restart love with his ex-girlfriend, who got an excellent job in Germany, and thus to go abroad in the husband's visa. To arrange money for the travel of his girlfriend, Prakashan seeks the help of his friend Gopalji, who is a coordinator of the migrant laborer in Kerala. However, later Prakashan realizes that his girlfriend has married one german citizen and was cheating him to arrange money for her travel. Prakashan's plans turned sour, and he failed to repay the money borrowed from Gopalji, which made him work with the migrant laborers from where he learns the virtue of hard work, and later, he resorts to the profession of a home nurse to look after a schoolgirl. Prakashan develops a strong relationship with her, who was facing a malignant brain cyst. The unexpected death of that girl in the climax transforms Prakashan into a grounded human being.

The central character goes through various sufferings that the migrant workers face in the state. The film shows the morning image of the present Kerala junctions, where migrants gather together and disperse to various workplaces as per the order of their agents. By featuring a Bengali cultivation song in the paddy fields of Kerala, the director draws the extent to which the host community depends on the migrant laborers. 'Gopal Ji,' Migrant laborer agent in the movie, is having the view that the number of migrants from the state of Bengal diminished due to the change of government there. The display of Malayalam meanings matching to the words used by the migrant laborers for ordering food in a hotel

speaks about the language barrier existing between the host community and the migrants. Most of the migrants in the state live in cramped rooms with limited ventilation and inadequate sanitation facilities. Ironically, none of the movies brought into the screen the real living conditions and hygiene issues of laborer camps in the state. Movie 'Njan Prakashan' brings in the picture of a congested migrant laborer camp where there is no separation between kitchen and sanitation facility. The movie also features the congested chambers and the inadequate number of sanitation facility. 'Apna Ghar' project undertaken by the Kerala government now provides safe and hygienic rental accommodation for the migrant laborers in the state. The film was a commercial comedy entertainer and a blockbuster in 2018 collecting more than 50crs. The representation of migrant workers in blockbuster movies earns more attention as it would reach a broader set of the audience and influence in the construction of opinions. Even though the movie does not feature any prominent migrant laborer character, it can be rated as the first Malayalam movie that brings in the conditions of the labor camp in the state into the limelight. Such a representation is relevant and essential as such issues have to be addressed to provide better living conditions for those who play a pivotal role in the development of the state. The same director has shot a scene in which one migrant worker advises the irresponsible protagonist in the movie 'Jomonnte Suvisheshangal'(2017). However, the protagonist, who does not listen to such advice, insults the migrant laborer from Nepal and ask him to continue the assigned work.

3.8 C/O Saira Banu

Directed by	Antony Sony
Written by	Antony Sony
Produced by	Maqtro pictures
Starring	Manju warrier, Shane Nigam
Release date	17 march 2017
Running time	156 minutes
Box-office verdict	Hit

2017 movie 'C/O Saira Banu' directed by Antony Sony is the story of a single mother, Saira Banu (Manju Warriar), who tries to rescue her son Joshua peter (Shane Nigam) when he gets entangled in the hit and run case of a migrant laborer. Surprisingly a leading advocate, Annie john herself, takes the advocacy of the migrant worker. Saira decides to advocate for her son in the court when no other advocates were willing to help her. She realizes that advocate Annie's son, who, in fact, a child, was responsible for the death of the migrant worker, as he drove the car carelessly. However, Saira decides not to indict Annie's son. The lead character Saira is a postwoman, and she notices that there are many people in the migrant laborer community with the same name and address. In the climax, the murder case of the migrant laborer, Kishan Kumar, gets withheld when another person with the same identity of the dead was presented in the court. Moreover, the court asks the police to find out who was deceased. In the end, Saira decides to find out Kishan Kumar's family to pass the death news.

The movie was a hit at the box-office and also received positive reviews from critics. However, a discussion was initiated on the political correctness of the film's theme that conceals the death of human life as insignificant and deliberately saves an offender who was supposed to be chargeable in front of the law. Movie flashes on the predicaments that can occur due to the lack of valid id proof for a migrant laborer. A construction site supervisor in the movie 'Saira Banu,' reveals the exploitation faced by migrant laborers who are brought in fake names to avoid insurance coverage. Even if the movie discusses the issue of undocumented recruitment of migrant laborers, in the end, it manipulates the identity of the migrant worker in the rescue of the culprit. Even the climax twist, which is penned by highlighting the issue of lack of identity among the migrant workers, was able to maintain the thriller mode of the movie; the film ends without providing the social security and legal protection that the migrant working class has to get.

3.9 Bhaiyya Bhaiyya

Directed by	Johny Antony
Written by	Benny P Nayarambalam
Produced by	Laisamma pottore
Starring	Kunchako boban, Biju Menon
Release date	5 septetmber 2014
Running time	129 minutes
Box-office verdict	Flop

As the name indicates, a brotherly bond from childhood between a local and a migrant worker is discussed in the movie 'bhaiyya bhaiyya' directed by Johny Antony in 2014. Babu ram Chatterjee (the character played by Biju Menon) came to Kerala from West Bengal during the 1980s, when he was a child and grew up with a Malayali child. Babu, a character played by Kunchako Boban, is an agent who supplies migrant workers to the construction site with the help of babu ram. The movie discusses the problems arising due to the lack of valid identification of migrant laborers. The central characters of the movie take the dead body of a migrant worker, Usir Ali Mandal of Chota Lalgad, who had an accidental death at the worksite to his place of origin. Along with the two bhaiyyas, Angel (Babu's lover), babu ram's love interest, their friend, and two thieves get in the ambulance along with the dead body. Then the movie proceeds through many comedy scenes. They realize that the dead man was Bindra, a wanted Maoist criminal in West Bengal only after reaching there. A goon who was following the gang as per Angel's father's instruction undertakes Bindra's murder, to claim the declared bounty. Later that goon was killed by the terrorist group in which Bindra belonged. Even if the film is set in the backdrop of Kerala's migrant laborer population and their identity issue after the second half movie shifts its focus to the love story of the lead characters and how they resolve some issues they encounter in it. The film did not discuss the lives of migrant laborers thoroughly and was not received well in the box office. It might have been the massive influx of migrant workers to the state by the year 2014, which led the director to such storytelling. The portrayal of the migrant worker as a Maoist with fake identity can be articulated with the anxiety that the locals had at that time regarding the background of the migrant community. However, here, the filmmakers have not displayed any heart to represent the life of migrant workers or to focus on the criminal background that some may have. Instead, they have designed the movie with love and comedy, which are believed to be the success secret of commercial movies.

3.10 Acha din

Directed by	G marthandan
Written by	Vijeesh
Produced by	George
Starring	Mammoty, Mansi Sharma
Release date	17 july 2015
Running time	108 minutes
Box-office verdict	Flop

'Acha din' directed by G.Marthandan is the story of a family from Jharkhand settled in Ernakulum for a long time. Mammoty, one of the superstars in the Malayalam film industry, plays the role of Durga prasad, a migrant laborer who works as cleaning staff at lulu mall and is ready to do anything for the community that sheltered him. The story is about how Durga Prasad prevent a terrorist group from attacking the state. When his wife got hospitalized for delivery, he became in need of money, and while looking to arrange that, he came across a criminal leader for whom the police declared bounty. Durga Prasad was offered money by the criminal group when he tried to take them to the police. He bought that money from them in order to meet the urgent medical expense of his wife. However, later, he realizes that the criminal group that he let to go free was a deadly terrorist group with a plan to destroy some significant spots in the state. Durga Prasad himself uncovers their terrorist plot and obstructs their pan to destroy the state. This lazily executed movie with an absurd script was a flop in the box-office.

'Achadin', displays tortures that the migrants face from the police who allegedly accused them of a Maoist background most of the time. 'Durga Prasad' does not have many friends other than a local man and some Tamil migrants, even after his 20 years of stay in the state. Lack of friendship makes him feel isolated on many occasions in the film - when he checks his phone contact list to share a piece of good news and when he required some money urgently. When Durga prasad faces torture from police who accuse him of a Maoist background, his wife becomes upset and realize the exclusion that they face in the society, even after learning Malayalam language and joining in host society's festivals like Onam and other entertainments like cinema, for past 20 years. The shopkeeper character in the movie exhibits the fearless attitude of locals who take pleasure in harassing migrant workers. 'Migrant workers can be tortured and harmed, whereas they cannot do that with native workers,' this dialogue by the shopkeeper reveals the attitude of locals towards the migrant workers. In the end, the same shopkeeper gets arrested on a complaint filed by the migrant laborer against on lack of hygiene in the shop.

3.11 Theevandi

Directed by	Fellini T. P.
Written by	Vini Vishwa Lal
Produced by	August cinemas
Starring	Tovino Thomas
Release date	7 september 2018
Running time	143 minutes
Box-office verdict	Hit

The movie is about the life of Binesh Damodaran(Tovino Thomas), who is a chain smoker, parallely, it also narrates some political scenario of a village. At a point, Binesh decides to set a record by smoking a large number of cigarettes. Sanju Bhai, a migrant driver of a politician/MLA, donates all his money and belongings to buy cigarettes for Bineesh. Then while driving the car, Sanju reveals that he is a victim of the deadly game blue whale challenge and tries to commit suicide by crashing the car into a building in which Binesh was smoking for a world record. The MLA who was there in the car falls into the coma state with that accident, and Binesh's attempt for the world record also gets failed. Expecting a by-election, the local leaders start the game for the candidate position. In order to make his brother-in-law the only nominee for election, Binesh accepts a challenge to quit smoking, which was put forward by the other nominees. In the end, Bineesh quits smoking while the MLA recovers from the coma state.

Leisure time entertainments of migrant laborers who are not at all permitted to mingle in the society, get limited mostly to the mobile screens. A survey that covered more than 1000 migrant workers across the state finds that the majority of the migrants (85.7%) possess a mobile phone (study by GIFT for NRHM in 2013). The mobile phone addiction of migrant workers might have made the director develop such a character who makes a twist in the storyline. Along with that, the movie presents the issues caused by the language barrier. The politician/MLA fails to understand what Sanju says just before he attempted suicide. The character of 'Sanju Bhai' has no significant dialogue in the film except in this scene. At the end, when Sanju meets the MLA, with supplicating hands, that shot evokes laugh in the audience.

3.12 .Ee Adutha Kalathu

Directed by	Arun Kumar Aravind
Written by	Murali Gopy
Produced by	Ragam Movies
Starring	Indrajith, Murali Gopy, Anoop Menon, Nishan, Tanusree Ghosh
Release date	24 February 2012
Running time	160 minutes
Box-office verdict	Hit

This 2012 movie, directed by Arun Kumar Aravind which narrates the story of six people from different strata of the society, was acclaimed by both audiences and critics and became a hit in the box-office. The couple, Vishnu and Ramani, earn their living by making toys from the garbage. Ajay Kurian, a wealthy man who faces a midlife crisis, pretends that he hates his wife Madhuri, who has appeared in some Hindi films. City police commissioner tom and journalist rupa form the third couple in the movie. Certain peripheral characters connect the stories of these main characters. Murali gopi's well-crafted script has topical references of some of the social events that occurred at that time 'vilappilshala' waste management issue and a massive influx of migrant laborers from north Indian states. Actor Nishan plays the role of 'Rustam,' a Hindi speaking migrant who resides near a construction site with a lot of north Indian migrant workers. He works for a team, located outside Kerala, that create porn videos. With his innocent face and sweet voice, he plays a lover boy character and provides porn videos for such dubious websites by seducing innocent homemakers by building a relationship through frequent contacting. In order to cover this, he does some odd jobs also. However, his attempt to target Madhuri, who has some relationship issues with her husband, fails as Vishnu, who came there for theft, meets them. Rustam gets killed in the grappling with Vishnu. Madhuri realizes that she was being cheated, and to hide the death of Rustam, Vishnu and Madhuri decide to throw the corpse into the heap. As a reward for helping, Maruti appoints Vishnu as a watchman at her home. However, while everything goes smoothly, police who were searching for a serial killer recovered the corpse and claimed that it is of an unidentified man and settled the case by charging this murder on that serial killer. The film ends when the problems of all three families come to an end. The vagueness of locals and irresponsibility of police in dealing with the natural/accidental death of migrants in the state gets depicted here. In one of the movie scenes, a local man seeming to be their contractor, with a gangster background, behave rudely to the migrant workers in the construction site.

3.13 Appuram Bengal Ippuram Thiruvithamkoor

Directed by	Sennan pallassery
Written by	Eldho Jacob
Produced by	Prasad Mylakkattu
Starring	Maqbool Salman
Release date	4 march 2016
Running time	124 minutes
Box-office verdict	Flop

2016 Movie 'Appuram Bengal IppuramThiruvithamkoor' directed by Sennan pallassery tells the story of a friendly relation between 3 local youngsters and a Bengali family who rent a house nearby. The inter-caste marriage forced the Bengali couple to migrate from their home town. The three youngsters help the couple when they face a financial crisis in a medical emergency. The movie presents the migrant in the skilled profession of a clerk. One of the youngsters even comments that till then, interstate migrant workers, for them, were just unskilled construction workers. The attitude of the host society, to blame and torture the entire migrant community for a theft done by one among them, is sketched in the film. Kumar, the migrant, was beaten by a group of locals accusing him of a robbery.

3.14 Janamaithri

Directed by	John Manthrickal
Written by	John Manthrickal
Produced by	Vijay Babu
Starring	SaijuKurup,Sabumon Abdusamad, Indrans
Release date	19 july 2019
Running time	121 minutes
Box-office verdict	Average hit

2019 movie Janamaithri is about the mission of a group of cops to serve tea for the late-night drivers. A lot of hilarious incidents occur when the lead character Samyukthan and another group of thieves meet these police. Meanwhile, a robbery takes place in a place nearby, and samyukthan helps the police officer to chase the thieves. The movie also presents the police plan to settle the case of an anonymous who paste black stickers in houses at night that make villagers panic, by accusing and convicting a migrant worker, without proper evidence. However, at the climax, it is revealed that the sales manager of a CCTV company was putting stickers on houses to enhance their sales by making people feel insecure. Realizing that the migrant worker is innocent, police release him by offering some money, before the news gets media attention. This entertaining film, with lots of new faces behind the camera, was an average hit in the box-office.

3.15 Swathanthryam Ardharathriyil

Directed by	Tinu pappachan
Written by	Dileep kurian
Produced by	Lijo jose pellissery
Starring	Antony Vargheese, Vinayakan, Chemban Vinod
Release date	31 march 2018
Running time	137 minutes
Box-office verdict	Hit

Movie 'swathanthryam ardharathriyil'(2018 Tinu pappachan) narrates an attempt by a group comprising of Malayalees and a migrant laborer to break the jail. The group includes Jacob(played by Antony Varghese), Simon(Vinayakan), Devassy(Chemban Vinod), Udayan, Ramu, and a twin brother, who were all jailed for various criminal offenses. 'Ramu,' the migrant worker was jailed for stabbing his contractor. The movie proceeds by narrating the effort by this group to create an underground tunnel to escape and also the central character, Jacob Varghese's past. The movie received well in Kerala box-office. It might be his criminal background or labor-power, prompted the locals to include him in such a crime with massive labor requirement, but by such an inclusion, the director has presented the undeniable presence of migrants in the group of locals.

3.16 Conclusion

Just like language and pictures, movie scenes also share messages or meanings to the audience. Some of the arguments that Stuart Hall makes in the chapter 'The Work of Representation' are useful in the analysis of the representation of migrant laborers in Malayalam movies. Migrant workers were portrayed in movies with a negative shade during the initial time of their arrival. 'Ee Aduth Kalathu,' 'Bhayya Bhayya,' 'Masala Republic,' and 'Amar Akbar Antony' got released during 2010-15, and they presented migrants workers as a sex predator, Maoist, drug peddlers, and habitual pedophile respectively. Meaning and impressions conveyed to the audience through such representations, can be considered as purposefully assigned by the filmmakers, an intentional approach, that Hall discussed. This can reshape the shared concepts/beliefs that people will have about the migrant laborer community in a society. Micheal Foucault emphasizes the strong correlation of power in the production of meanings. The spread of such negative meanings and images of migrant workers in representational forms can be considered as the strategy to secure corporate interests, in light of Foucault's argument. By preventing the inclusion of migrant laborers in society, their demands and organized movements can get suppressed. Such beliefs among viewers will then continue to construct stereotypical meanings and images for the migrant laborer characters through various kinds of representations. In the constructionist approach, Hall claims that society constructs meanings.

However, gradually, at least to some extent, Malayalees began to shift away from their attitude of alienating the migrant workers. Such a change is also evident in the representation of the migrant worker community in cinema. Strategies that challenge the process of stereotyping, termed as transcoding by Hall, can be located in the movies as well. There are movies, with migrant laborers portrayed in a more normal appearance and outfits, without any stereotypical images. Even if such positive images try to break the regime of representation, as Hall pointed out in the chapter 'The Spectacle of the 'Other'' from the book 'Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices,' it gets submerged in the large pool of negative images that got spread through blockbuster movies. Examination of films released after 2015, make it clear that the films that featured migrant workers in negative roles are not many. The featuring of the guest worker as a jailed criminal in the 2018 movie 'Swathanthram Ardharatriyil' is the only exception. However, since the other characters in the film are also prisons, it is better to interpret that

representation as a representative of the criminally minded migrant worker, which is also there, than the deliberate attempt to represent the entire community of other state workers as criminals. Movies like 'Ann Maria Kalipplanu,' 'Oru Muthassi Gadha,' 'Appuram Bengal IppuramThiruvithamkooor,' which got released in the year of 2016 represented migrant workers in the domestic and skilled professions, by breaking the conventional image of an unskilled construction worker. The portrayal of migrant laborers in domestic works like caretaking and housekeeping might be a strategy to reverse the stereotyping, as Hall discussed, of migrant workers as construction site workers. Some characters, by appearing in the stereotyped roles, open up discussions about their misery life in the state and the problems they face because of the exclusion due to stereotyping. According to Hall, such representations are another strategy to challenge the regime of representation. Subsequently, many films and characters have discussed their hard work and inevitability in the state. Mocking up the lazy-jobless protagonist in the movie 'carbon'(2018), who wonders how the works were done in Kerala before the arrival of other state migrant workers, his friend says, "If they had not come, people like you would have got a job." Other-state workers have begun to appear in smaller roles in films such as 'Jallikkett,' which premiered at international film festivals like Toronto International Film Festival 2019. The absence of the character does not hamper the story being told, but such a representation explicates the inevitability of the migrant worker community in all spheres of society. The movie 'Sathyam Paranjala Viswasikumo?' got released in 2019 that portrays a migrant laborer, who is settled in Kerala after marriage with a local woman, can be counted as an instance of representations that promote social integration. Representation of migrant worker characters in movies like 'Kismath'(2016),' C/O Saira Banu'(2017), and 'Janamaithri'(2019) reveals the issues of othering, exploitation, and irresponsibility towards the community of interstate workers even from the law and order department of a state. In the movie 'Achadin,' the migrant worker lead character is represented as a hero who protects the state from a terrorist attack despite the harassment that he faces from the same place. It can be the star value of the actor who enacted the lead role in the movie, incited in such a heroic representation of the migrant worker. The movie 'Theevandi' released in 2018 humorously presents blue whale challenge, a social network phenomenon that resulted in many committing suicides across the world, through one of the peripheral characters in the movie. It gets presented through a migrant worker who is in the role of a driver in the movie. It might be the common belief that all migrant workers are addicted to phones, led the director to portray such a character in that particular role. None of the movies has

exclusively depicted the real-life of migrant workers in the state. 2018 blockbuster movie 'Njan Prakashan' has displayed some hardships of the migrant workers; however, that portrayal was limited to a song portion only, in a considerably unnoticeable fashion. However, The situations through which the protagonist realize the virtue of hard work is placed in a migrant labor camp, and this can be considered as quite a sensible approach from the scriptwriter. The life of migrant workers and the portrayal of migrant camps is just a subplot of the movie. However, the presence of the protagonist played by a lead actor, Fahad Fazil, in those scenes might help in earning the attention of at least some audience to the difficulties of the migrant worker community in the state. These include the overcrowded migrant camp, inadequate sanitation facilities, and various hygiene issues. There are also some hit movies like Chandrettan Evideyya(2015), Darwinte Parinamam(2016), Jomonte suvisheshangal(2017) in which migrant worker characters got represented in one or two scenes mainly made for comedy.

Although Tamil immigrant working woman has been presented in movies, women and girls from eastern and north-eastern Indian states working in sectors like saloons, restaurants, etc. are not at all projected as characters in the big screen. The relatively low number of migrant women workers in the state can be cited as a reason for this. Characters of 'devayani' in '*Appuram Bengal Ippuram Thiruvithamkoor*' and 'Sheetal' in '*achadin*,' are portrayed as two glamorous protagonists who were forced to migrate when their love marriages were thwarted in their native states. However, they are not portrayed as working laborers in these movies.

If Malayalees used to call the Tamil migrants 'Annan' (brother), they use words like 'hindikkar'(Hindi speaking), 'Bengali'(one from Bengal), or 'Bhai'(brother) to address the other state migrant laborers on whose labor they bank on even for their daily needs. There is an approach of tagging the entire migrant worker community as 'Bengalis,' irrespective of their state of origin. It might be because the majority of workers hail from the state of West Bengal. Such a practice of Malayalees gets displayed in movies like '*kismath*,' '*Oru Muthassi Gadha*,' '*Swathanthram ardharathriyil*.' Their character names are most often not used. Migrant worker agents in movies like 'bhayya bhayya' and 'masala republic' are named as Bengali babu. 'Bengalis' has become a popular term to represent the entire unskilled migrant worker community in the state. The Migrant worker without any name gets addressed as 'hindikkaran' in the movie 'Amar Akbar Antony.' In the movie 'masala republic' even the migrant worker characters address the entire migrant community as

Bengalis. Addressing all migrants as Bengalis in movies might be a reflection of society. However, this trend addressing all migrant workers from north-eastern Indian states as Bengalis even in blockbuster movies will increase the popularity of the usage of that term among the ordinary people also.

There are movies like 'masala republic' and 'theevandi' in which migrant workers get addressed as Bhai, which mirrors the usage of 'Annan' to address Tamil migrants. An amicable relation exists between locals and migrants in these movies. The Migrant workers get revered while their character name itself gets used to calling them in movies like 'aan maria kalippilanu'(Sanath), 'sathyam paranjal viswasikuvo'(Shanavas), 'acha din'(Durga) and 'appuram Bengal ippuram thiruvithamkoor'(Kumar). These characters exhibit a healthy relationship and integration with the host society in these movies, which is required.

Some images and objects can be spotted commonly in the representations of migrant worker characters in the movie. Distinct and easily discernible outfits make those characters stand out from the rest of the movie characters. Migrant laborers have been portrayed in Malayalam cinema with various character traits. However, there are some stereotyped movie appearances like dull-colored dirty clothes, mostly t-shirts and disheveled-uncombed hair with which they appear. These images might supplement to Malayali's prejudice that the migrant workers are untidy creatures. The host community considers migrants as frowsy while giving scant or nil attention to their living conditions. A local character in the movie '*Godha*'(2017) avows that he believed the 'hindhikkari' (the girl who speaks Hindi) would be an unattractive 'Bengali.' This seems to be the reflection of an overwhelming attitude among Malayalee that looks at all north Indians as 'frowsy Bengalis.' Migrant worker characters appear in better outfits, in the movies '*kismath*' and '*sathyam paranjal vishwasikumo*.' A difference in the appearances of Migrant laborer characters with and without amicable relations with the host society can be spotted in the movie 'masala republic'. Sanju, Pempa, and Bhimta, who mingle with the local people, appear in a better outfit when compared to other migrant workers shown in the movie. Such character portrayals can be counted as a reversing stereotype transcoding strategy, as discussed by Stuart Hall. 'Durga prasad,' hero of the movie 'acha din,' does not have any such stereotypical symbols; instead, he appears in colorful outfits. When Durga Prasad declares in one of the scenes that it is as per his wife's wish that he is dressed well, actually, the director is creating an excuse for such a portrayal.

There are also particular objects associated with the migrant laborer characters Hall claims that besides words and images, objects also act as signifiers that produce certain understandings and meanings. The set of objects includes mobile phones, earphones, and pan masala, with earphones the most frequently used object while portraying a migrant laborer. Even before focusing on the face of the antagonist, who is a habitual pedophile migrant laborer, the director sets a close-up shot of his in-ear earphones in the movie *Amar Akbar Antony*. When most of the movie presents the migrant worker character with plugged-in earphones, where the movie '*sathyam paranjal vishwasikumo*' can be cited as an exception.

Besides appearance, Malayalam cinema also has different approaches while writing dialogues for its migrant laborer characters. Humor scenes have been made in the movie scripts by making migrants speak half-done Malayalam dialogues with many mistakes. Mockeries that they face in such scenes outlive the movie screen and furnishes a funny face for them in society. Another group of migrants portrayed in movies were those who stunned the local people with their fluent Malayalam replies. The movie '*Oru yamandan Prema Katha*' released in 2019 presents such a character who astounds locals by using complex Malayalam words. Incidents of migrant laborers studying Malayalam language during their long-time stay in the state are also presented in movies like '*oru muthassi gadha*' and '*sathyam paranjal viswasikumo.*' Migrant laborers in the movies like '*kismath*' and '*masala republic*' use their mother language while communicating with the local people. However, Sanju Bhai in the movie *masala republic* expresses his resentment in Malayalam when a local man crashes his mobile phone. Character 'Durga prasad' in the movie '*Acha din*' is presented as a migrant worker who speaks fluent Malayalam, which he learned from his stay in the state.

Interstate migrant worker, Sumangal, A native of Udalguri district in Assam who came as a bakery worker in the Ernakulam district, has acted in more than ten films in the roles of migrant workers. In some movies, Malayalam actors have also played the roles of migrant workers. Mammooty, one of the leading superstars in the Malayalam film industry, has portrayed the role of a migrant laborer in the movie '*Achadhin*' that got released in 2015.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

The south Indian state of Kerala is an origin and destination of multiple waves of labor migrations that plays an essential role in the development and economic sector of the state. The massive inflow of remittance as a result of the outmigration of Keralites has raised the wages in the state, which attract workers from other Indian states, especially from north and north-eastern states, to meet the labor needs of Kerala. At present, though the state bank on lakhs of interstate migrant workers for various jobs, they are often blamed for the crimes, thefts, epidemic, and usage of drugs. The local workers are also desperate as the migrant workers are willing to work for relatively low wages and extra time. The migrant workers' community persists as a separate group in the society that does not integrate well with the Malayalam speaking people. Even today, there are differences in opinion among locals in including migrant workers communities in the development and welfare programs of the state. They remain unconsidered while their labor power gets exploited. Malayalees are setting a hidden criterion that the community of migrant workers has to be accountable to the Malayalees for the facilities and opportunities available for them in the state.

Festivals and celebrations play a meaningful role in keeping Malayalees as a community. However, there is discontent among locals in the participation of migrant worker communities that comprise around 10% of the state's population in these festivals. Similarly, the intolerance that the local people display towards their celebrations like Holi can be considered as one of the barriers to their integration with the host society in both the social and cultural aspects. There also exist several undocumented restrictions that migrant workers face in public spaces. The political, social, and cultural organizations are less interested in representing them and addressing their concerns. While their labor force gets recognized in the economic sector of the state, their identity and physical presence remain overlooked. The community of migrant workers should be given a space in the socio-cultural domain of the state, such an integration with the host society has to be enabled.

Just like in the public spaces, the community of migrant workers remains unrepresented in various media discourses as well. They do not get represented anywhere, as a section of the Kerala society. Addressing them as 'Anyā' samsthana thozhilikal'(Literally meaning

'workers from another state' but the prefix 'Anya' means stranger) in the news and even in government announcements until some time ago can be referred to as an example of this negligence and othering. They appear in media only when there is a crime or problem related to them; even then, they get represented as an alien creature that has entered the state to assault the natives. Just like the other subaltern classes in Kerala, the hardships and living conditions of the community of migrant workers remains undocumented and underrepresented. The process of representations is a complex one, as it sustains a connection between various cultural and socio-economic diversities in a society. More than the mere dictionary definition that, 'describing something or someone,' the effects of representations in the cultural and social aspects of society are huge as different kinds of interpretations can occur for the meanings and messages that are represented.

Representations in mass media discourses like cinema have a significant part to play in the formation of opinions in a society. Meaning and impressions conveyed to the audience through such creative representations can be considered as assigned intentionally by the creators, which can reshape the shared concepts and beliefs that people will have about a particular group in society. Representations can induce the process of integration. The ideas that the representations share among viewers will then continue to construct particular stereotypical meanings and images for such groups through various kinds of portrayal that follow, the community of migrant workers is such a social group. Stuart Hall discusses the process of representation in his chapter titled 'The Work of Representation.' Representations, on reaching the audience, does not stand inactive; instead, it opens up a lot of interpretations and discussion. Roland Barthes, in his chapter 'Myth Today,' asserts that the representations can carry a hidden meaning in them. Such hidden meanings can be spotted in the representations of the migrant worker community in Malayalam movies. The keyword, stereotyping, cannot be excluded in the analysis of movie representations of social groups. Stuart Hall discusses stereotyping in the chapter 'The Spectacle of the 'Other'', in the context of popular cultural forms. Cinema, one such popular audio-visual form, has the power to influence the formation of beliefs and opinions among viewers. Therefore analysis of the representation of various social groups in the medium of cinema is crucial. Maidul Islam, in the chapter 'Imag(in)ing Indian Muslims in Post-liberalization Hindi Cinema,' discusses how the community of Muslims is getting represented in far-reaching Bollywood cinema. The evaluation of the movie representations of the socially vulnerable group of migrant workers in Kerala, therefore, deserves consideration.

Malayalam cinema is known for its realistic portrayal of various socially and politically relevant themes. Movies that narrate diverse topics in society opens up extensive discussions and interpretations among the audience. Migration is one such theme that filmmakers narrate with the elements of drama and emotions. Malayalam movies have portrayed various kinds and aspects of migration in the last 90 years. Among various kinds of migration, the one in search of jobs draws more attention as it affects the economic sector along with the socio-cultural aspects of a place. Kerala is a land where a lot of labor migration has occurred over time. Such migration episodes also appeared in cinemas, which is the prime entertainment medium of Malayalees. Countless movies have discussed the outmigration of Malayalees to distant places in the world in search of jobs. Movies that portray migration of Malayalees to gulf countries is the prominent one among them, and it is also subjected to various academic studies.

Along with outmigration, cinema has also portrayed the in-migration of workers to the state. South Indians, especially Tamil migrants, were the first set of migrant workers to appear in the society and movies of Kerala. By 2010 the influx of migrant workers from north Indian states increased, which got reflected in their representation in movies as well. Movies in Malayalam can be considered as one of the media through which the opinions and apprehensions of the community get shared. This massive influx of so-called outsiders creates a sense of cultural anxiety among the natives, and the analysis of movies with their representation reveals how a separate identity gets assigned for those 'outsiders' through such representations. In ten years from 2010, migrant worker characters have appeared in around 25 Malayalam movies. Even if this number is meager considering the number of movies getting released in Malayalam every year, the variety of roles in which these characters appear in such movies make their representation a subject of study. They mostly get portrayed as domestic/unskilled laborers, sexual predators, drug peddlers, and terrorists in movies. The portrayal of migrant workers characters ranges from appearing in an insignificant single shot to the full-length characters. Malayalam movies seem to adopt specific trends and establish certain imageries while representing migrant workers in the state. These can be observed in the themes of representation and while planning characters, their appearance, and dialogues.

The community of migrant workers in Kerala remains underrepresented in movies, even if they are crowded in every sector today. The attention and consideration given by the government for them underline their inevitable presence in the state. However, the filmmakers exhibit more interest in picturing mainstream society, whereas the theme of migration, social integration, and exclusion related to the web of migrant workers gets ignored. Malayalam cinema has represented migrant workers in diverse characters. However, most of the time, they are represented in films either to evoke humor or in negative shades. Even in the humor scenes, personal and cultural degrading of the migrant community can be recognized. Stereotypical symbols and myths exist for the migrant worker characters in Malayalam movies. The negative representations of migrant workers as sex predators, drug peddlers, criminals, illegal migrants, and terrorists occur mainly in popular films. Their livelihood problems and challenges remain undocumented while exaggerating some of their faults. Even those movies presented migrant workers in positive roles practice specific stereotypical images while representing. Migration and migrant workers, rather than just being a theme or object for movies, must be discussed in detail. The issues and exclusion they face in the state should be documented. Social acceptance and integration need to be developed in society as well as in the movie representations as the society needs their labor power for its progress. Cinema is the reflection of society and, at the same time, is also a medium that can influence society.

Appendix

➤ List of films:

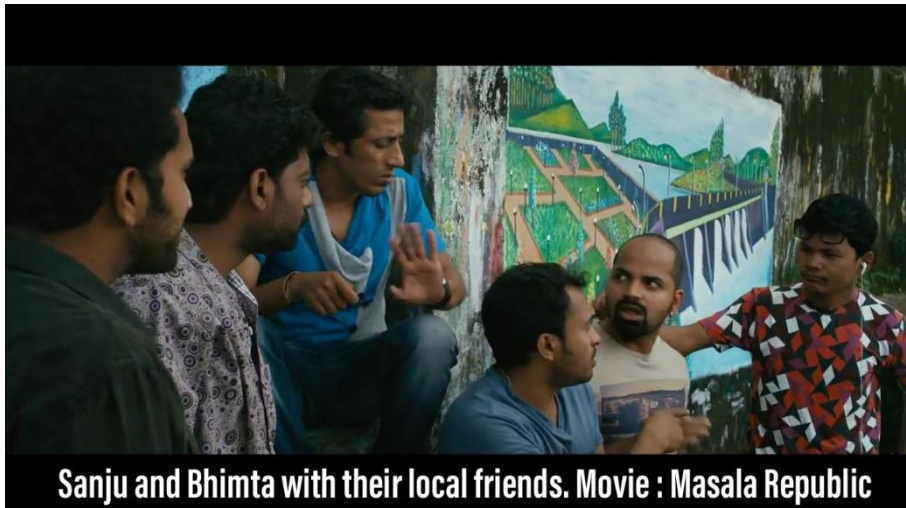
- 1) Masala Republic (2014)
- 2) Kismath (2016)
- 3) Sathyam Pranjali Viswasikumo? (2019)
- 4) Oru Muthassi Gadha (2016)
- 5) Amar Akbar Antony (2015)
- 6) Njan Prakashan (2018)
- 7) C/O Saira Banu (2017)
- 8) Bhaiyya Bhaiyya (2014)
- 9) Acha din (2015)
- 10) Theevandi (2018)
- 11) Ee Adutha Kalathu (2012)
- 12) Swathanthryam Ardharatriyil (2018)
- 13) Janamaithri (2019)
- 14) Apuram Bengal Ippuram Thiruvithamkoor (2016)

➤ **Relevant Images:**





An agent who sends migrant workers to different worksites. Movie: njan prakashan



Sanju and Bhimta with their local friends. Movie : Masala Republic



Sanju and Bhimta partying with their local friends. Movie: Masala Republic



An agent who sends migrant workers to different worksites. Movie: njan prakashan



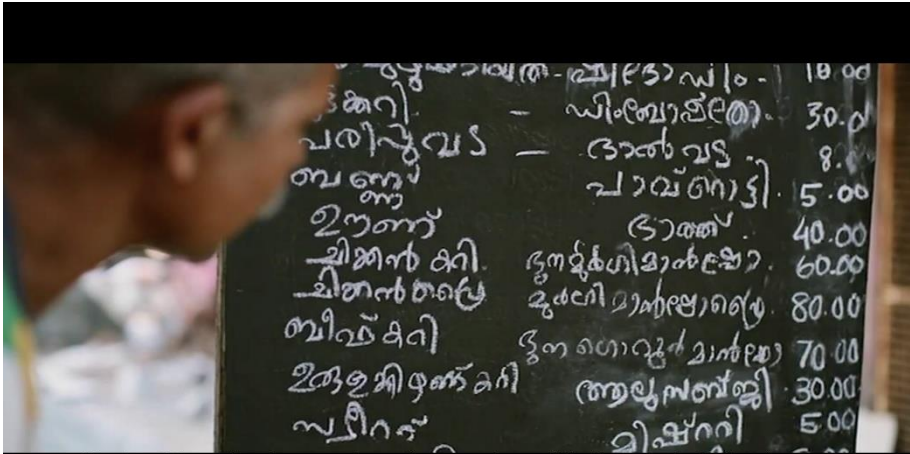
shot of an congested migrant labourers camp from the movie 'njan prakashan'



A shot from the movie 'njan prakashan' that speaks the lack of basic facilities in labor camps



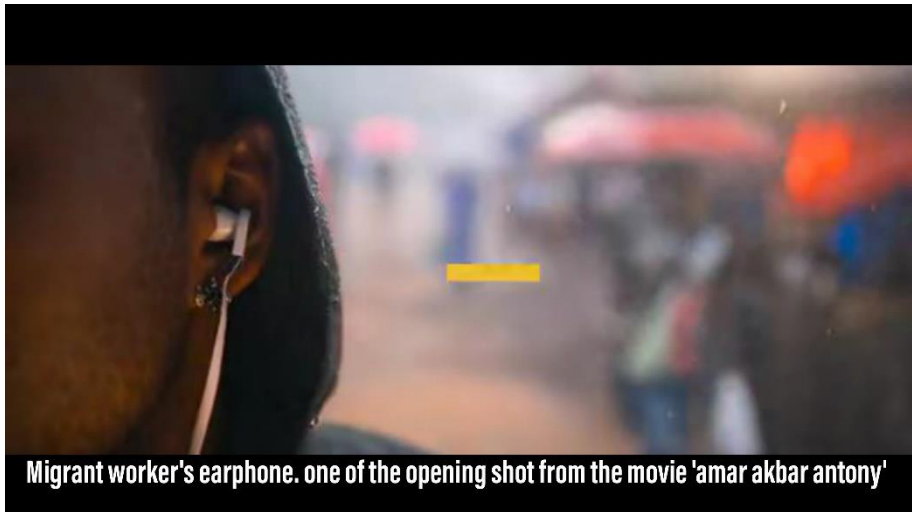
Image of a migrant camp with no separation between kitchen and sanitation facility, movie: njan prakashan



Display of the malayalam meanings of commonly used hindi words, in the hotel scene from the movie 'njan prakashan'



Police officer questioning sumangal in the movie 'kismath'





Shnavas from the movie 'Sarhyam paranjal viswasikumo'



Shnavas with his local friends. Movie: Sathyam Paranjaal Viswasikuvo



'Bhushan Babu' from the movie 'Oru muthassi gadha'



Acha din movie poster



Character poster of Sumangal from the movie 'Sathyam paranjal viswasikumo'

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