

**TRANSLATABILITY OF SUBTITLES: AN ANALYSIS OF
EMBODIMENT OF GENDERED SPACES IN SELECT
MALAYALAM FILMS (2014-2021)**

*A thesis submitted during 2024 to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the award of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
TRANSLATION STUDIES**



**by
SAHANA PRADEEP
Registration No.: 18HAPT01**

Center for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies
School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad, India
June, 2024



CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TRANSLATION STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

Declaration

I, **Sahana Pradeep**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**Translatability of Subtitles: An Analysis of Embodiment of Gendered Spaces in Select Malayalam Films**” (2014- 2021)’ submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Translation Studies embodies veritable research work carried out by me with the guidance and supervision of **Prof. J. Prabhakara Rao and Dr. Sriparna Das**, Center for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies (CALTS), School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad. I also declare that it is a bona fide work and has not been submitted previously, in part or in full, to this or any other institution for award of any academic degree. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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Date:

Place: Hyderabad

SAHANA PRADEEP
Registration no.: 18HAPT01
Center for Applied Linguistics and
Translation Studies
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad, Telangana.

Countersigned by:

Supervisor:

Center for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies
University of Hyderabad



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This is to certify that the thesis entitled **“Translatability of Subtitles: An Analysis of Embodiment of Gendered Spaces in Select Malayalam Films (2014- 2021)”** submitted by **Sahana Pradeep (Reg. No. 18HAPT01)** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Translation Studies from the University of Hyderabad is a bona fide research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

This thesis is her independent work and has not been submitted previously, either in part or in full for the award of any academic degree or diploma to this or any other university or institution.

Part of this thesis has been published in the following UGC-CARE listed, peer-reviewed journal before submission of the thesis for adjudication and has produced evidence of the same in the form of acceptance letter or the reprint in relevant area of her research:

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TS801	Research Methodology	4	Pass
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TS881	Gender and Translation	4	Pass

Prof. J. Prabhakara Rao

Supervisor
Center for Applied Linguistics
and Translation Studies
School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad

Dr. Sriparna Das

Co-Supervisor
Center for Applied Linguistics
and Translation Studies
School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad

Head

Center for Applied Linguistics
and Translation Studies
School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad

Dean

School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad, Telangana.

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Sahana Pradeep

Transliteration Tables

Vowels		
Malayalam	IPA	English Approximation
അ	a	cut
ആ	ə	about
ഓ, ഐ	a:	Father
ി, ഇ	i	Sit
ീ, ഇറ	i:	Seat
ു, ഉ	u	Full
ൂ, ഉറ	u:	Fool
ു, ള	ɹ	Better
െ, എ	e	Eight
േ, ഏ	e:	eight but longer
ൊ, ഒ	o	own
ോ, ഓ	o:	own but longer
ൈ, ഐ	ai	Mile
ൗ, ഔ, ഓ	au	Foul

Consonants		
IPA	Malayalam	English Approximation
k	ക	Sky

k ^h	ഖ	Key
g	ഗ	Ago
g ^h	ഘ	Loghouse
ŋ	ങ	Sink
tʃ	ച	Church
tʃ ^h	ഛ	Church
dʒ	ജ	Object
dʒ ^h	ഝ	Hedgehog
ɲ	ഞ	Canyon
t	ട	Stalk but retroflex
t ^h	ഠ	talk but retroflex
ɖ	ഡ	idea but retroflex
ɖ ^h	ഢ	redhead but retroflex
ɳ	ണ	spin but retroflex
ʈ	ഡ	Stalk
ʈ ^h	ഠ	Talk
ɖ̪	ഭ	idea but dentalised
ɖ̪ ^h	ബ	redhead but dentalised
ɳ̪	മ്പ	spin but dentalised
n	ന/ന	Spin
p	പ	Spin
p ^h	ഫ	Pin

f	ፍ	Fin
b	፬	About
b ^h	፭	Clubhouse
m	፮	Mall
j	፯	Yes
r	፬	American English atom
l	፱	List
v	፺	Curve
ʃ	ሸ	Shoe
ʂ	ሸ፱	shoe but retroflex
s	ሥ	So
h	ሰ	Head
ɭ	፳	list but retroflex
ɹ	ረ	Run
r	፬	Scottish English run
t	፱	Stalk
d	፱፬	Idea

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This thesis titled “Translatability of Subtitles: An Analysis of Embodiment of Gendered Spaces in Select Malayalam Films (2014- 2021)” is an attempt to critically read the representation of embodiment of gender and space in Malayalam cinema and their translation and representation into subtitles. The study reads ten popular films released from 2014 to 2021. They are 1) *Bangalore Days* (2014), 2) *Rani Padmini* (2015), 3) *Godha* (2017), 4) *Mayanadhi* (2017), 5) *Take Off* (2017), 6) *Ramante Edanthottam* (2017), 7) *Uyare* (2019), 8) *Kumbalangi Nights* (2019), 9) *Varane Aavasyamund* (2020) and 10) *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021).

This study aims to understand how reading, as an active process, figures as a translational strategy. It investigates how the practice of critical reading opens possibilities to subvert dominant cinematic aesthetics. The films selected for this study were released during the proliferative phase of ‘New Generation Malayalam Cinema’, which emerged in the 2010s, marking a paradigmatic transformation in the portrayal of women subjects (Ray and Mochish 2022). This study critically reads these representations and argues that the transformation in representing the embodiment of gendered spaces in these films signifies a form of feminist translation. Additionally, the integration of subtitling as an Audiovisual Translation (AVT from hereafter) strategy was introduced in Malayalam cinema in 2014. This study critically explores

the contact of two translational operations – intersemiotic and interlingual – and their impact on reading the representation of embodiment of gendered spaces in select films.

1.2. Research Questions

The study investigates how a critical and situational reading of the embodiment of gendered spaces, as represented in the post-2014 popular Malayalam cinema, offers possibilities to question the dominant cinematic representations. The study argues that such an informed reading of the select AV texts results in a site where knowledge and pleasure, defined and produced by popular cinema, are subverted.

The study explores how the act of critical reading, though subverting dominant and normative representations, offers a feminist critique of the representation of women and women's experiences that popular cinema has been producing and perpetuating. It argues that, in doing so, the process of critical and situational reading becomes a form of feminist translation.

The study examines the importance of expressing the representation of the embodiment of gendered spaces through subtitles. The study analyses how the current practices of subtitling influence the reading of select audiovisual texts for initiated and uninitiated readers/viewers.

1.3. Research Significance

1.3.1. Locating the Research

Gender criticism emerged in film studies during the 1970s. It was primarily propelled through the feminist critique of the mainstream narrative cinema. Laura Mulvey, in her “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975), contends that narrative films, through the male gaze, encode the language of the erotic with the dominant patriarchal order, perpetuating sexual

imbalance (835-837). Kaja Silverman's *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988) focuses on women's voices in cinema. Silverman points out that voices and speech play a crucial role in reinforcing normative representations (viii). Teresa de Lauretis has explored the questions of "differences and tensions between actual, real women, and questions the viability of any universally valid 'image of Woman' that conventional cultural productions might claim to disseminate" (Flotow and Josephy-Hernandez 299). Luise von Flotow and Josephy-Hernandez find that through these works have investigated varied gender questions in cinema, "relatively little attention has been paid to questions of gender in the language of audiovisual products, which is, after all, what is translated, and what translation studies research needs to focus on" (ibid. 300).

They delineate three main approaches with gender as a question in audiovisual translation studies (ibid.).

- Works focus on the feminist materials in Anglo-American audiovisual products and their translation into Romance languages,
- Researches that study the difference between subtitled and dubbed versions of Anglo-American source texts and,
- Studies that explore gay and queer source text materials and their treatment in translation.

Flotow and Josephy-Hernandez acknowledge that the existing research in AVT studies primarily focuses on verbal elements in audiovisual texts. They emphasise a need to pave a "way towards studies that take into account of questions of authority and power" (ibid. 306). They also underscore that "AVT does not occur in a gender vacuum" (ibid. 305). Thus, when addressing the questions of power and authority, it is imperative to discuss gender. They say that gender is a "discursive and socio-cultural element affecting any language", asserting that translational

operations are both impacted by and influential in shaping gendered representations within audiovisual content (ibid.).

Any exploration of gender as a sociocultural reality directs attention to the intricate relationship with the body, as the body serves as the material conduit through which we experience and express gender. The body operates as a site where cultural inscriptions occur, playing a crucial role in the formation of identities and differences. These cultural inscriptions are instrumental in shaping gender, viewing it as an inscription within the broader societal framework. As individuals embody culturally determined gender roles, they actively contribute to the reinforcement of cultural ideals that shape and define their bodies. Consequently, these embodied bodies become active agents in perpetuating and upholding cultural norms related to gender within a given social context.

As observed by Flotow and Josephy-Hernandez, though there have been attempts to explore gender questions in AVT, critical investigations into “what is translated” began only in the late 20th and early 21st century (ibid. 300). The question, “what is translated”, is crucial in addressing power and authority as translation privileges specific readings of texts. The performance of bodies on screen makes them spaces and spaced. The gendered inscriptions on the body as a site can reinforce or challenge normative stereotypes. The gendering of spaces where these bodies perform also impact the meanings produced. If these representations are not effectively translated then the politics of the text will be in question. Flotow and Josephy-Hernandez identify AVT studies that explore gender questions. However, they note that there are significant gaps, especially when it comes to extensive research which is descriptive (ibid.). Descriptive studies that connect subtitling and gender studies are practically non-existent.

This project attempts to understand and problematise how subtitling influences the reading of representations on screen.

The study investigates Malayalam cinema after 2014 with a critical reading of ten films released from 2014 to 2021. The study argues that the transformation of representations of gendered embodiment in select films challenges dominant representational patterns. As they subvert, rewrite, and transform the normative representations, they become feminist translations themselves. The study analyses the translation of these representations through subtitles to critically investigate how they impact the reading of select texts. The study explores how much of the embodiment and embeddedness of gendered space is communicated through subtitles. The study also tries to problematise the prevailing practice of subtitling in the Malayalam industry in communicating the gender politics of the select AV texts.

1.3.2. Importance of the Work

Popular culture plays a pivotal role in shaping and reflecting societal norms. Katie Milestone and Anneke Meyer draw on the concepts of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer to state that “films continue to be marketed along the gender lines, stock gender ideologies continue to come to the fore, and the films are formulaic” (54).

This study explores how embodiment, women’s lived experiences, is represented in the movies selected for this doctoral project. The select films discuss women from different social locations and their interactions with the world. The study attempts to read how these experiences are represented and how a critical reading into the portrayal of the embodiment of gender and space enables a reworking of meanings.

Reading is not a universalised experience. Karin Littau says that the recent theories on readings focus on the different meanings produced by different social groups (2006 122). A

feminist reader, according to Littau, resists dominant ideology and enacts a reader into a feminist reader (ibid. 136). The study argues that, in resisting dominant ideology and offering new meanings and interpretations, reading the representation of embodiment of gender and space in the select texts becomes a feminist translation.

As stated above, the shift in the representation of embodiment concurs with the adoption of subtitling in the post-production of films in the Malayalam film industry. This study investigates the potential of subtitles to capture the embeddedness of embodiment in select films. This endeavour is aimed at understanding the politics and possibilities of audiovisual translation in general, and subtitling in particular, in addressing the questions of power and privilege.

1.3.3. Rationale of the Select Texts and Timeframe

This research studies ten films released from 2014 to 2021. They are *Bangalore Days* (2014), *Rani Padmini* (2015), *Ramante Edanthottam* (2017), *Godha* (2017), *Mayanadhi* (2017), *Take Off* (2017), *Uyare* (2019), *Kumbalangi Nights* (2019), *Varane Avashyamund* (2020) and *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021).

Bangalore Days is the first Indian film that was released in theatres with English subtitles. The film received popularity across Indian states. The film was the highest-grossing Malayalam film of the year. It was shown for a hundred days in four theatres in Tamil Nadu and two months continuously in Hyderabad, Telangana (L. M. Kaushik 2015). The release of *Bangalore Days* happened when Malayalam cinema experienced a paradigm shift in the popular representational patterns in commercial movies. The industry was witnessing the growth of a clan of films, which came to be known as “New Generation Movies” around 2010. Vijay George explains the “New Generation Movies” as a set of movies which came after 2009 erased the “superstar system” in Malayalam cinema. They represent ordinary characters and showcase

urban-middle-class themes. Many of these movies orient their narratives on female lead characters. They attempt to revise the dominant perspectives (George 2012). In Malayalam cinema, as observed by Swapna Gopinath, since the beginning, women characters were stereotyped and “revealed to be hypocritical and weak, shallow and ridiculously stupid... The women are depicted as inherently vain, typical of every other female character who populated the screens during the glorious years of the superstars” (2018). The “New Generation Films” position female characters in the lead roles and revise their perspectives, offering a possibility of subversive reading into the representation of women. The release of *Bangalore Days* in 2014 marks a turning point in the history of Malayalam cinema, where the “New Generation Cinema” coincides with the incorporation of subtitling in Malayalam films.

The time frame chosen for this study is from 2014 to 2021. During these years, “New Generation Films” became increasingly the mainstream of Malayalam cinema. The films that showcased stereotypes during this phase were subjected to scrutiny on the lines of representation of gender (ibid.). The industry has been pressured to change its approach towards women and the representation of women. A “superstar movie” *Masterpiece* that was released with misogynist content had to contain an addendum in the monologues of the superstar, “But I do respect women”, owing to the ongoing discourses on gendered representation in Malayalam cinema dynamics (Vetticad 2017.). However, the film failed at the box office, and a similar fate followed films that could not understand the changing dimensions. Popular cinema of the Malayalam film industry started offering reworked representations of gender and gender roles over the years (Manuel 11).

In the “New Generation Movies”, “plots revolve around the life in metro cities... Malayalam movies are increasingly urban in their theme” (Varkey 7). Varkey observes a

remarkable change in the representation of female characters in these movies. She notes that the moral framework of dominant Malayalam cinema is dismantled by the “New Generation Movies”. These movies represent how women experience everyday life, positioning them in various social situations, not merely within households (ibid.). The select films gained popularity and critical acclaim for representing various experiences of women. All these films’ narratives are driven by women and their experiences. These films explore different stages in women’s lives, from childhood and puberty to old age. They challenge the normative representations of these periods. The shift in representing gendered spaces and embodied spaces coincides with the introduction of subtitling as a post-production aspect in Malayalam cinema. These years witnessed the arrival of Malayalam films on OTT platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney Hotstar etc, where subtitles are available for every cinema. Malayalam popular films gained wider popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic through various OTT platforms (Maneesha 2023). The film, *The Great Indian Kitchen*, was released directly on an OTT platform. This study fixes its timeframe from introducing subtitling into the film text with its theatre release to introducing an exclusive OTT platform for Malayalam cinema. Such an exclusive OTT platform implies the inevitability of incorporating audiovisual translation strategies into the production of cinema in Malayalam.

This study analyses how translation, as an intersemiotic and interlingual tool, works in select films while two parallel developments were arising in the cinema – the shift in representing gendered and embodied spaces and subtitling as a post-production aspect.

1.4. Research Scope and Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To critically and situationally read the representation of embodiment of gendered spaces in the select AV texts,
- To understand reading as a feminist translation strategy that operates to subvert the dominant discourses and patriarchal stereotypes,
- To study the reworked gendered meanings, transformation of gendered spaces and rewriting of embodied spaces through feminist translation perspectives,
- To examine the subtitling practices in Malayalam cinema by tracing the history of subtitling in the Malayalam industry and its intersection with the reworked representations of embodiment of gendered spaces in Malayalam cinema,
- To explore the potential of subtitling to translate the re-representations of embodiment of gendered spaces in the select AV texts,
- To study how subtitles influence the reading of embodiment of gendered spaces in the select texts for informed and uninformed readers/viewers.

1.5. Methodology

This research is a descriptive study of the select audiovisual texts. Part of the thesis is a mixture of analysis and description of how embodiment is portrayed on screen and translated through subtitles in select Malayalam films. As this project analyses the representation of embodiment of gender and space in Malayalam cinema and subtitling, the study refers to the related theories of embodiment, gender, space, representation, translation and subtitling. The study focuses on women as the main conceptual category; thus, this thesis will refer to feminist approaches. The arguments of this study are primarily drawn from theories of AVT, Feminist Translation Studies, Feminist Geography, and theories of embodiment. These questions will be explored through the concept of discourses and discursive formations of Michel Foucault.

This study critically reads ten popular Malayalam films released from 2014 to 2021. As introduced in the previous sections, there has been a remarkable transformation in portraying gender, embodiment and gendered spaces in Malayalam cinema since the 2010s and following the emergence of “New Generation Malayalam Films”. With the incorporation of complete subtitling for their theatre/OTT release, these films demand critical attention to understand how the transformation representational patterns are understood by and translated through subtitles. How Malayalam cinema, after the 2010s in general, and the select texts in particular, represent gendered spaces and embodiment is explored through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is employed to identify the time frame and critically select film texts that challenge normative representations of gendered embodiment. CDA examines the ‘dialectical relationship’ between language, society and power (Fairclough 1995). The frame of CDA allows us to understand how discourse, embodiment of gendered spaces in the select films, deconstructs dominant meanings and contends established power structures. How gendered bodies are situated in cinematic spaces within specific locations- both physical and social- are understood through the lens of CDA. CDA shed insights into how the dominant and normative discourses clash with feminist ideologies, reproducing resistance to power and authority.

The study incorporates Feminist Post Structural Discourse Analyses (FPDA) to read the representations of embodiment of gendered spaces in the select AV texts. FPDA focuses on the shift in power dynamics. FPDA covers the criticism of CDA for downplaying gender questions and extends its scope to understand positionality, agency, and resistance. These questions are integral in studying the embodiment of gender and space. Drawing theories from feminist geography, the study understands how spaces are gendered. The concepts from Henry Lefebvre (1997), Linda McDowell (1999), Gillian Rose (1993), Doreen Massey (2009), Seeamanthini

Niranjana (2004) and Saraswati Raju and Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (2011) are extensively drawn to contextualise space, gender and power. The representation of embodiment of gendered spaces in the select films is examined through the act of critical reading. The theories of Karin Littau (2006), Judith Fetterely (1978), Kay Boardman (1979), and Jaqueline Bobo (1988) are employed to carry out a critical and situational reading of the select film texts. This act of contextual reading of the select AV texts open possibility to study how the representations of gendered embodiment in the select texts offers reworked meanings. The representations of gendered embodiment are studied through the theories of Setha M. Low (2017), Meenakshi Thapan (1997), R. W Connell (2014), etc.

Additionally, a variety of concepts on specific forms of embodiment are drawn to detail the representations. The study argues these representations challenge and subvert the dominant representations of gender, embodiment and gendered spaces in popular Malayalam cinema. The study incorporates the concepts from feminist film studies, especially that of Nataniel Fullwood (2015), Laura Mulvey (1989) and Meena T. Pillai (2010), understand the transformation in representing women on screen. When they combat the normative portrayals and patriarchal stereotypes, the representations of embodiment of gendered spaces in the select films become feminist translations. In order to establish this argument, the study integrate the theories of reading with feminist translation theories. The theories and concepts of Barbara Godard (1989), Luis von Flotow (1991 1997 2017), and Rosemary Arrojo (2007) are extensively used to understand the reworked representations as Feminist translation. Maria Tymozcko's (2016) and Tejaswini Niranjana's (1992) approach to translation as combating the power arrangements are also employed in the study. The frame of FDPA, which integrates these theories and concepts,

facilitates the study to critically understand “the possibility of new meanings, richer understandings and alternative insights into gender identities...” (Harrington et al. 11).

The study understands the developments and current trends in Audiovisual Translation Studies through the theories and approaches of Carol O’Sullivan (2011), Michael Cronin (2006), Jorge Diaz-Cintas (2014), Marcella de Marco (2012), Henrik Gottlieb (2010), and Yves Gambier (2016). The feminist approaches in audiovisual translation strategies, particularly of Luis von Flotow are also referred in the study.

In addition to the above, the study closely follows the 9th edition of the Modern Language Association- MLA guidelines for documentation and referencing of the resources.

1.6. Select Literature Review

This dissertation builds upon a foundation of conceptual categories such as Audiovisual Translation, feminist Translation, Feminist Reading theories, theories of embodiment and Feminist Geography. While comprehensive reviews of references will be discussed in the main chapters, this section will detail only the foundational concepts that shape the theoretical framework of this study.

1.6.1. Body, Space and Embodiment

The body is an integral part of one’s lived experiences. The connection between gender, space and embodiment weaves an intricate tapestry that shapes women’s experiences in the world. Women navigate their agency, their bodies and identity in the physical and metaphorical spaces they inhabit. Subjectivity is always embodied as our understanding of the self, others, and the world is inseparable from the physicality of our being. By the mid-1980s, anthropology saw the rise of “the body” as a subfield with the understanding that exploring the discourses on the body is essential for comprehending issues of power and oppression.

Bodies are at once space and spaced. The body is a space in itself; a site where cultural ideas, identity and differences are inscribed. Simon de Beauvoir considers the body “not a *thing*, it is a situation” (2012 68). The ‘space’ of our body is encoded with ‘maps of desire, disgust, pleasure, pain, loathing, love’ (Pile 209). Elizabeth Teather argues that “the body is both object and target of power, and the manipulation of the body is carried out in the context of a powerful field of discourses...” (9). Teather refers to Foucault and states that Foucault has envisioned the body as a “political field” (ibid.). The body is a space where discursive and physical institutions play a significant role in shaping the body and the “embodied structure of subjectivity” (Braidotti 78). The body encapsulates societally prescribed gender roles and cultural norms, subsequently perpetuating these cultural ideals.

The bodies are physical entities with internal experience and positioned within external contexts and environments. They actively engage in and are influenced by the social dynamics of their surroundings. Our surroundings, the spaces in which we are situated, are more than a physical structure connected to social arrangements. It is an integral component that constitutes the very fabric of social existence. Seemanthini Niranjana looks at space as “not just a physical form that may then be linked up with social structure but is very much the stuff of which social life is made” (37). Niranjana highlights the significance of viewing space as a framework for situating social relations. This perspective enables an understanding of gender (and other social) relations as processes that are both constructed and negotiated spatially. How social relations unfold is closely tied to the physical and conceptual spaces within which they occur. Niranjana emphasises on the spatial context as a crucial factor in shaping and influencing the construction and negotiation of social relationships, particularly gender (ibid.). Niranjana details how space

acts as a site where norms, ideals and ideas of femininity are constructed and performed. She says space becomes “a practising ground that anchors and directs female lives” (ibid. 38).

According to Doreen Massey, “social relations are bearers of power” (31). She also states that spatial forms are important elements in the geography of power relations. The arrangement of spatial forms plays a crucial role in constituting and shaping power. The spatial structure is not only a backdrop for power dynamics but is also actively engaged in forming and representing power (ibid.). As spatial form is a significant element in the constitution of power relations, so is it with the construction of gender. The organisation of spaces often reinforces gender norms. Societal institutions contribute to the geography of power relations. These institutions play an active role in perpetuating societal norms regarding gender and influence how individuals navigate and perform their gender identity.

Our everyday experiences are shaped through the interaction of embodied and gendered spaces. The discourses and representation of these spaces play a significant role in discussing how power and privilege manifest. This research focuses on women as the main subject of the gender paradigm. Therefore, the study explores how women’s personal and social worlds are defined and represented. Popular culture plays a pivotal role in shaping and perpetuating societal norms. Cinema, being a main aspect of popular culture, serves as the practice of social representations (Levin and Wang 24).

The representation of femininity in Malayalam cinema has been in the centre of feminist concerns since the 1990s. Meena T. Pillai points out that cinema has become vital in all studies dealing with the women’s question today. She says, “with its capacity to create and then celebrate or berate types while rejecting others, allowing them to be moulded and defined by hegemonic social structures, and in the process unconsciously assisting in the production of these

hegemonies” (16). In her article, “Masculinity to Modernity: Performing Modernity and Gender in Malayalam Cinema”, Pillai says, “Most Malayalam box-office hits of the post-1990’s ensure the erasure of women from the public spaces, marking them exclusive male territories” (110). She observes “as more and more women in Kerala become better educated and step out into the domain as technocrats, bureaucrats and career women, cinema has started echoing a typically male fear of being suppressed/dominated by the woman. So, it is almost as though the more women become aware of their rights, the more they claim independence and autonomy in real lives, the more cloistered they become in screen representations in Malayalam cinema” (10).

With the emergence of “New Generation Films” around the 2010s, Malayalam cinema witnessed a revision in representing gender and gender roles. These films continued to deconstruct the existing patriarchal structures and normative constitution of femininity (Ananthakrishnan and Siri 16). Karimpaniyil and Koudur argue that “the new generation Malayalam cinema foregrounds the empowered female self. The empowerment the female self achieves is an arduous and embattled journey in search of autonomy of the body, spatial mobility, and a violence-free environment...” (1). This research stems from this crucial phase in Malayalam cinema, which prompts the viewers to actively participate in re-evaluating embodiment of gendered spaces portrayed on screen. The examination of how viewers read these transformed female subjectivities and decode the reworked definitions and meanings forms the basis for conceptualising this study.

1.6.2. Reading as Translation

The process of reading, as approached by the post structural theorists, is not a universalised experience for all readers. The shifted focus from ‘a textual notion reader to a contextually situated reader’ in the 1980s dismantled the idea of a ‘universal reader’ (Littau

122). Littau refers to Andrew Benet to state that readers from different social groups produce ‘differences of reading’ (ibid.). Littau observes that “readers do not all read in the same way, but are different” and that “women might read differently from men” (ibid. 123). According to Judith Fetterley, the textually implied reader is male (xii). She argues that women are subjected to the process of *immasculation* by androcentric works and thereby have become compelled to ‘identify against herself’ (xx- xii). Meena T. Pillai, while tracing the history of Malayalam cinema, observes that “Malayalam cinema shows a remarkable propensity to stereotype women characters. Serving a hegemonic function, these stereotypes strive to naturalise and legitimise the gender hierarchies existing in society...” (22-23). It could be derived from Pillai’s observations that the female readers of Malayalam cinema have been put through what Fetterley terms as *immasculation*. Fetterley calls for female readers to be ‘resisting readers’ while engaging with such texts (xxii). A resisting reader “not only reads against the grain, but also produces a number of alternative readings from within the text” (Boardman 208). The negotiation of meanings between reader and text is crucial in the case of media texts. Karin Littau observes, the encounters of the audience with media texts involves “an active process of negotiation, thus enabling critics to locate differentiation in response in subjects rather than texts” (136). Littau differentiates between an informed reader and an uninformed reader in navigating meanings from texts. She distinguishes between female readers who enact themselves as feminist readers and/or professional critics in resisting dominant ideology and the ‘actual female readers’ who are presumed to be inherently activists (ibid.). Jacqueline Bobo’s concept of transforming reading into ‘an act of making strange’ (96) and Mulvey’s idea of ‘passionate detachment’ (18) become crucial in this context. The underlying idea is that adopting these strategies is crucial for a politics of reading, particularly in the context of feminist discourse.

These strategies alert the woman reader to the concerns and perspectives of the feminist reader. By encouraging a critical and reflective distance, the act of reading becomes a dynamic tool for political awareness and engagement, allowing readers to navigate texts with a consciousness of feminist considerations and perspectives. These strategies, especially Mulvey's 'passionate detachment' aims at countering the male gaze. By disallowing identification, these approaches will contest the possibilities of *immasculation*. These negotiations, that rework meanings and give birth to alternative interpretations, then, become feminist translation.

Feminist translation is conceptualised as a radical framework where individuals are not only represented through language but also actively shaped and constituted by it. Translation, in this perspective, is a transformative process where new meanings are generated. Barbara Godard suggests that the translator, who rejects the role of 'a passive amanuensis', instead positions herself as an engaged reader and a 'co-producer of meaning' (3). Hence, according to Godard, the feminist reader, who actively resists dominant ideologies and produces alternative interpretations of texts, is a translator within the framework of feminist translation theories. A feminist translator, in producing interpretations and reworking meanings, 'subverts the monologism of the dominant discourse' (ibid. 44). The dominant discourse has long erased the presence of women and has muted their voices in Malayalam cinema as observed by Pillai. Any evaluation of the history of representation of gendered and embodied spaces in Malayalam cinema will bring forth the unequal power arrangements in portraying women and their experiences on screen. The critical reading of the dominant ideology of texts must encounter these questions of power and inequality. Maria Tymoczko's observations on translation explores the distribution of power arrangements in culture and representations (2014). Tejaswini Niranjana's approach to translation as a political operation which acts on unequal power relations

and othering (1992) also follows a similar line. When translational operations provide a site for power arrangements to contest and visibilise the marginalised subject in general, and women in particular in the process, it becomes feminist translation. In Flotow's words, the main target of feminist translation is to "deconstruct the conventional and prescriptive patriarchal language in order for women's words to develop, find a space and to be heard" (Flotow quoted in Arrojo 2007 10). According to Godard, feminist translation has two objectives; to voice "what has hitherto been unheard of" and to "displace the dominant discourse" through repetition (46).

Tymozcko's consideration of translation as metonymy, where the metonymic characters offer possibilities of correction and retelling of marginalised texts for its original audience (47), holds significance in the context of the representation of women and their experiences in the "New Generation Films" and their derivatives in Malayalam cinema. These films can be seen as reinterpretations or rewrites of the prevailing representations of women in mainstream cinema. By adopting metonymic elements, they open avenues for correction and retelling, offering alternative narratives that challenge and reshape the dominant portrayals of women. The study attempts to read these re-representations as feminist translation.

1.6.3. Feminist Translation

Feminist translation is defined as a radical framework wherein individuals are not merely represented through language but actively shaped by it, constituting a transformative process generating new meanings. Barbara Godard emphasizes that the feminist translator, rejecting a passive role, positions herself as an engaged reader and a co-producer of meaning (*Translation, Semiotics, and Feminism* 3). In Godard's perspective, the feminist reader actively resisting dominant ideologies and producing alternative interpretations is, therefore, a translator within feminist translation theories. This process, involving the production of interpretations and

reworking of meanings, subverts the monologism of dominant discourse (ibid. 44). The historical erasure and silencing of women's voices in Malayalam cinema, as noted by Pillai, becomes apparent when evaluating the representation of gendered and embodied spaces on screen, revealing unequal power arrangements. Maria Tymoczko and Tejaswini Niranjana explore the power dynamics in translational operations, with Tymoczko viewing translation as metonymy, allowing correction and retelling of marginalised texts (2014). In this context, the “New Generation Films” in Malayalam cinema, reinterpreting representations of women, can be considered feminist translations, contesting prevailing narratives. Tymoczko's metonymic approach aligns with the corrective nature of these films. According to Godard, feminist translation aims to voice the unheard and displace dominant discourse through repetition (*Translation, Semiotics, and Feminism* 46). The study extends these considerations to the realm of "New Generation Films" as metonymic reinterpretations challenging mainstream representations of women, proposing an analysis of these films as instances of feminist translation.

1.6.4. Subtitling and Feminist Translation

The representational shift in Malayalam cinema, that emerged around 2010, crosses path with the introduction of subtitling in films with *Bangalore Days* (2014) becoming the first Indian film to be released in theatres with English subtitles. How the retelling/re-representing of the gendered spaces and embodied spaces in these films are expressed in subtitles evoke an academic interest. The academic focus on the subtitling practices in Malayalam cinema is a recent phenomenon. Minu Sara Philip's doctoral dissertation (2017) has attempted to overview how the Malayalam cinema industry has approached subtitling as an audiovisual translation strategy. Philip's attempt is to study how various aspects of cinema such as film songs, humour etc. are translated into subtitles, focusing on the idea of fidelity in translation. Muhammed Ali E.

K., in his doctoral research, investigates how the subtitling strategies in Malayalam cinema “influence the communication of cultural, political and ideological meaning of films and determine the way audience watch them” (5). Ali deals with culture specific references as a broader category. This study, however, explores specific questions on body in exploring how the representation of embodied and gendered spaces in select films are expressed through subtitles.

1.7. Chapter Organisation

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this dissertation has four chapters. The second chapter is titled “Subtitling and Indian Cinema with a Focus on Malayalam Industry.” The chapter is organised in two parts. The first part of the chapter traces the history of subtitling. It gives a brief overview of the emergence of audiovisual translation, particularly film translation, and its branching out. It discusses the arrival of subtitling and how subtitling became the most sought out audiovisual translation strategy for films. This part explores the introduction of subtitling in Indian cinema and the proliferation and popularisation of subtitling in Indian cinema, with a focus on Malayalam cinema industry, after the emergence of OTT platforms.

The second part of the chapter explores AVT with respect to subtitling as an academic discipline. It outlines the studies that have emerged interfacing gender and AVT, with a critical focus on subtitling.

The third chapter contextualises gender, space and embodiment. It is titled “Gender and Space: Embodiment and Representation in Malayalam Cinema”. This chapter studies how “the body” emerged as a focus of academic interest. The discussions in the chapter underscore that in order to understand the questions of power and oppression, it is imperative to address the discourses and representations of the body. This chapter identifies the body as a site where

culture makes its inscriptions, and argues that such cultural inscriptions forms identities and differences. Thus, gender may be seen as inscriptions on bodies. By embodying societally determined gender roles we reinforce cultural ideas in shaping our bodies. And then these bodies perpetuate the cultural ideal. Judith Butler (1990) defines gender as performative, constituted through repeated acts that are part of a discourse. She argues that as individuals perform and articulate gender through linguistic frameworks, language shapes these discursive formations. Susan Bordo (1993) postulates that cultural discourse shapes our perceptions of the body, particularly with respect to gender. Bordo contends that body itself becomes a site of performances as every bodily practice is a performative act. Emphasising gender as discursive and performative, Butler and Bordo highlight how they impact sociocultural institutions.

In everyday life, embodiment manifests as tangible and communicative bodies, experienced through lived interactions. The encounters of embodied and gendered self occur not only at the crossroads of diverse subjectivities but also at various junctures of political consciousness and location. Embodiment is about subjectivity, agency, political consciousness and experience.

Women's political and social worlds are defined in terms of home, family, maternity and workplace and their lived experiences through various phases of their lives. The chapter studies how these phases of women's lives and their sociopolitical worlds are represented in popular culture, particularly in cinema. The chapter overviews the representation of gendered embodiment in Malayalam cinema.

The fourth chapter, "Embodiment and Representation: A Study of Select Texts", studies ten Malayalam films released from 2014 to 2021. The select films are *Bangalore Days* (2014), *Rani Padmini* (2015), *Ramante Edanthottam* (2017), *Godha* (2017), *Mayanadhi* (2017), *Take Off*

(2017), *Uyare* (2019), *Kumbalangi Nights* (2019), *Varane Avashyamund* (2020) and *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021). The chapter has two parts. The first part of the chapter attempts to critically read the representation of varied forms of embodiment in these film texts. The chapter offers a descriptive textual analysis of the select films. The second part of the chapter utilises feminist theories of reading to negotiate with the meanings encoded in the representation of gendered spaces and embodied spaces in the select texts. It attempts to establish that such a critical reading, informed by feminist theories, subvert the popular and dominant forms of knowledge and pleasure. The chapter analyses how critical reading offers possibilities to understand the transformation of gendered and embodied spaces as represented by the select films. It also unveils how dominant expectations of gendered performances are rewritten in these narratives. Reading of the select texts also helps to understand the revision of old texts from a new and critical directions. The chapter studies how the subversive reading offers a feminist critique of popular Malayalam cinema's representation of embodied and gendered spaces. It argues that the reworked meanings that emerge through the critical and subversive reading establish becomes a form of feminist translation.

The fifth chapter is "Subtitles, Malayalam Cinema and the Manifestation of Embodiment." . The chapter analyses how embodiment of gender and space, as represented in the select films, is expressed through subtitles. The chapter aims at studying how much of the embeddedness of the gendered spaces is articulated through the subtitles. It critically examines what happens when embodiment in all critical nuances is not articulated. It discusses the potential of subtitles to capture the "unheard/unseen." The chapter attempts to problematise the politics of the texts for initiated and uninitiated readers/viewers.

The sixth chapter, “Conclusion”, summarises the observations of the study. It discusses the challenges and limitations of the study in investigating the research problems. It also outlines the future possibilities to explore the representation of embodiment through subtitles further.

Chapter 2

Subtitles and Indian Cinema with a Critical Focus on the Malayalam Industry

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part I of the chapter delves into the historical trajectory of subtitling in Indian cinema, with a critical focus on the Malayalam film industry. The intent of this part is to critically investigate the introduction, growth and development of subtitling as a branch of audiovisual translation and, to study the role of subtitling as an academic discipline within Translation Studies.

The second part is devoted to understand the intricacies of the gender representation within audiovisual translation with a specific focus on subtitling practices. This part sets out a critical inquiry into the existing gaps in the interface of gender and audiovisual translation scholarship. The objective of this chapter is to study the significance of audiovisual translation methods in reading the representation of gender, gender performances and embodiment of gender on screen.

Part I

2.2. History of Audiovisual Translation

Ever since the advent of cinema at the end of the 19th century, audiovisual productions have been not only a major source of entertainment for audience all over the world but they have also been used as an innovative way to communicate ideas, to sell products, to

promote artistic material, and to transmit all sorts of information. From the very beginning, films and other audiovisual products (television series, documentaries, videogames, and the like) have crossed borders and travelled across countries to reach global audiences, thus overcoming cultural and linguistic differences. Given that not all viewers can enjoy the audiovisual material as originally envisaged by its director or creator, successful communication in this regard has only been possible thanks to translation

(Diaz- Cintas 3)

From the very early years of cinema, the industry had employed people to explain the content on screen. Until the mid or late-1910s, such a practice was active in the United States and Europe. They were called ‘bonimenteurs’¹ in France, ‘conferenciers’² in Quebec and ‘benshis’ in Japan (O’Sullivan and Cornu 16). O’Sullivan and Cornu refer to Nornes to find that among all the film interpreters, the ‘benshis’ were who could capture the attention of researchers the most due to the cultural and historical specificities of the country. (ibid. 16). The translation of foreign films into English could also be found during the 1900s in the USA where “titles were read from the screen aloud and translated into a dozen languages” by the film explainers (Brownlow 11). The technology of synchronised sound³ was first introduced in American films. Hollywood talkies witnessed a rapid increase in viewership outside their original linguistic region, demanding solutions to effectively maintain their distribution worldwide. Since the

¹ Meaning “yarn spinners”

² Meaning “lecturers”

³ Synchronised sound refers to sound that correspond to the action on screen

talkies⁴ started in America, the initial process of subtitling was done from English to other languages (Low 91).

The practices developed across the world to enhance the worldwide distribution of films can be broadly categorised into two:

...adding written texts in the form of titles superimposed onto the film or projected on an adjacent screen; or replacing the original dialogues with lines spoken in languages that could be understood by local audiences. Adding titles that could be read simultaneously with hearing the characters speak became known as subtitling. Changing the spoken language of the film was achieved through two main strategies: the ill-fated multilinguals and the much more enduring dubbing process

(ibid. 18).

Multilinguals⁵ cost huge amounts to the production team. Since the storyline was standardised, they soon ceased to satisfy the target audience as they could not cater to the cultural diversity. Multilinguals were short-lived due to these adverse factors. Dubbing is defined as “replacing the original dialogue and actors’ voices with new lines in the languages of the countries where the film was to be released” (ibid.). The development of audiovisual translation varied from country to country. Many European countries and the USA, where the major film industry had already been established, preferred dubbing. Countries with smaller film infrastructures whereas favoured subtitling. “Subtitling may be defined as a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that

⁴ Talkies refers to films with synchronised speech and sound. The first talkie is *The Jazz Singer* (1927)

⁵ “...the same story and dialogue would be shot in a number of languages, using the same technical crew, but changing the cast for each different language” (O’ Sullivan and Cornu 2012 18).

endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off)” (Diaz- Cintas and Remael 8). In addition to these strategies, intertitles⁶ were also in practice during the early transition phase, when talkies from countries that do not speak English found circulation in English-speaking countries. Intertitles were employed in several Hollywood films where incidental foreign language dialogues were used. The Film Society in Britain also experimented with intertitles. However, O’Sullivan and Cornu observe that the practice of intertitles was only for a brief span of time (18).

2.2.1. History of Subtitling

The extant documentation concerning the early translation practices employed in subtitling during its formative years is notably scant, thereby posing challenges in identifying the pioneers of early subtitling practitioners and their approaches. The title cards⁷ used for narrative exposition in silent cinema can be traced back to as antecedents to contemporary subtitles. These title cards were interspersed between scenes, as precursors to the interplay between visual and textual elements.

O’Sullivan and Cornu find that “subtitling may have begun in the United States with Herman Weinberg, who certainly claims credit for being the first working subtitler in New York; the first film he subtitled was *Zwei Herzen im 3/4 Takt* (Two Hearts in Waltz Time) by Géza von Bolváry in 1930” (ibid. 21). The major markets of Hollywood films were European countries,

⁶ Intertitles are pieces of filmed text inserted into a film. They were prominent during late 1980s to late 1920s when films lacked synchronised sound.

⁷ List of titles were shipped from Hollywood along with the prints to the various distributors, who would translate them and distribute in studios (O’Sullivan and Cornu 16).

thereby catalysing the inception of subtitling strategies within these countries. Initial cinematic works that employed subtitles are noted for their sparse use of subtitles.

Freire notes that films subtitled into English for audiences in the UK and the USA and films distributed in Brazil with Portuguese subtitles during this early period characteristically contained only a minimal number of subtitles. They intended to convey only succinct summaries of the spoken content (191). However, the foreign films subtitled in French were soon found to exhibit a higher density of subtitles. O'Sullivan and Cornu refer to Suzanne Chantal's⁸ observation that practises among subtitlers varied significantly. Some opted for a minimalistic approach with concise subtitles, whereas others aimed for a more comprehensive subtitling strategy, translating all spoken dialogues into subtitles (21). The initial forays into English subtitling in the United Kingdom are believed to have been undertaken with the films *Kameradschaft* (directed by G.W. Pabst, 1931) and *Mädchen in Uniform* (directed by Leontine Sagan, 1931), which were introduced with subtitles in 1932.

2.2.2. History of Subtitling in India

The choice between dubbing and subtitling in audiovisual translation is not governed by universal criteria but rather by country-specific or industry-specific considerations. Factors such as the target audience, their linguistic and cultural preferences, and the industry's economic viability play significant roles in determining the preferred strategy. In many European countries, subtitling is favoured due to the predominantly monolingual population. However, the situation differs in India, where films are produced in approximately 40 languages annually. In the year 2022 (which is the last updated year on the website), 39 Indian languages have produced films

⁸ Suzanne Chantal is a seminal figure in the field of French subtitling active during the 1930s

(*Film Federation of India*). In India, remakes are more prevalent than dubbing and subtitling. Additionally, dubbing is a common strategy within the film industries of southern states in India (Paul 2017).

The origins of employing audiovisual translation strategies, particularly dubbing and subtitling, could be traced back to the television's introduction in 1959. *Doordarshan* telecasted a regional movie every Saturday, apart from the Hindi movie they regularly showed on Saturdays and Sundays during the 1980s and 1990s. These films, mostly the recipients of the National Film Award, were telecasted with English subtitles (Chintamani 2016). In 1993, *Doordarshan* screened the movie *Salaam Bombay!* (1988) with multilingual subtitles at the same time. Paulami Sengupta notes, "The dubbing and subtitling industry in India was founded due to the television business' need to leverage a variety of content from within different markets in the country. Indian viewers first tasted dubbed content thanks to Discovery World. In the early 90s, dubbing was predominantly restricted to kids' animation content by Disney. This was then picked up by private broadcasters as a fixed slot for kids" (2018).

The evolution of subtitling in India has been gradual, with early limitations. Shephali Bhatt says that when producers such as Warner Bros. started adding subtitles to their English films for India, "some of these subtitling happened locally because back then, subtitles were laser-printed at the bottom of a film's reel, letter by letter, frame by frame. So, the process depended on how many film prints a distributor could sell. The scope was limited. India was essentially a dubbing market. Subtitling was a last-minute job, rarely given to professionals. Writers who didn't know any better would attempt literal translations" (2019).

The appearance of complete subtitles in movie theatres is a very recent phenomenon in India. *Bangalore Days* (2014), a Malayalam movie, is the first film to be released in theatres with English subtitles. *Sultan* (2016) is credited as the first Bollywood movie to be released with subtitles. Minu Sara Paul notes in her thesis that many of the multiplex chains in India consider subtitling very important. She quotes the CEO of PVR Pictures to point out the fact that the audience for Malayalam and Marathi films is growing evidently in the context of Delhi as they come with English subtitles (17).

The rise of OTT platforms has further fuelled the growth of the subtitling industry in India, as producers and distributors seek to reach a diverse audience across different linguistic backgrounds. Subtitling serves as an effective means to bridge language barriers at a nominal cost, catering to both early migrants and viewers from other states who may not be well-versed in the language of the film (Babu 2019).

2.2.3. History of Subtitling in Malayalam Industry

The relatively lower cost of subtitling compared to dubbing often leads smaller industries to choose subtitling as their preferred method of audiovisual translation. In India, many regional film industries, including Malayalam cinema, tend to favour dubbing over subtitling. However, in theatrical releases, Malayalam films utilise subtitling more frequently than dubbing. The trend began with the release of *Bangalore Days* (2014), which became the first Malayalam movie to feature subtitles.

Anjali Menon, the director of *Bangalore Days* (2014), discusses the preference for subtitling over dubbing in her blog post titled “Translate Please!” (2009). While many films receive subtitles for panorama or film festival screenings, theatrical releases often lack subtitles. Menon made a deliberate choice to release *Bangalore Days* with English subtitles in theatres

outside Kerala. According to Saraswathy Nagarajan's article "Rise and Fall of the Stars" (2015), *Bangalore Days* was a resounding success, particularly in metro cities where it was screened with subtitles. Similarly, Aravind Nambiar, a distributor, described the film in the Hindustan Times article "2014: When Little Gems Outclassed Big Guns in Southern Cinema" (2014) as the most widely viewed Malayalam film of recent times, emphasising its success both domestically and internationally, aided by English subtitles.

Following the success of *Bangalore Days* (2014), *Premam* (2015) achieved even greater success outside Kerala, drawing large audiences, particularly among Telugu viewers who eagerly queued up for the film with English subtitles (Ashwin). The popularity of these films has extended the careers of their actors beyond their primary audience, showcasing the strength of subtitling in expanding the reach of Malayalam cinema. Recognising this potential, most Malayalam films released outside Kerala are now subtitled. Examples include *Vikramadityan* (2014), *Njan Steve Lopez* (2014), *Ennu Ninte Moideen* (2015), *Kohinoor* (2015), *Charlie* (2015), *Kali* (2016), *Jacobinte Swargarajyam* (2016), *Kammattipaadam* (2016), *Pulimurugan* (2016), *Oru Mexican Aparatha* (2017), and *Godha* (2017).

2.3. Over the Top Platforms (OTT) and the Growth of Subtitling in the Malayalam Industry

The scenario of film translation in India, particularly for films from Southern film industries, is undergoing a significant transformation with the advent of streaming platforms. Historically, Indian film industries have favoured dubbing over subtitling. However, a survey published by *The New Indian Express* on 7 July 2019 reveals a shift in preferences. According to the survey, "a large majority of Indian video consumers prefer watching subtitled content to

dubbed versions ... more than seven in ten people in India (72%) prefer watching content in languages other than the ones they speak or understand with subtitles” (Sharma 2019).

Additionally, the survey found South India exhibits the greatest preference for subtitled content among all regions, with 82 per cent of respondents favouring subtitles.

Shephali Bhatt observes that in the last two years, global streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime have disrupted the subtitling scene in India. These platforms aim to expand their audience base by localising their existing content primarily in English. Subtitles have emerged as the initial step in this direction due to the significantly lower cost compared to dubbing. Bhatt notes that the majority of subtitling work in India involves translating content from seven major regional languages to English (2019).

Anne Philip, in an article for *LiveMint*, highlights the increasing discovery of Malayalam films on OTT platforms, particularly during the lockdown period. The official entry of *Jallikattu* to the 2021 *Oscars* marked a period of renewed interest in Malayalam cinema (2021). Philip notes that Amazon Prime Video has added seven originals and several direct-to-streaming Malayalam films since mid-2020. She quotes industry insiders to emphasise the steady growth in the audience for Malayalam films outside Kerala and the pivotal role of subtitles in facilitating this growth (ibid.).

Shyam Pushkaran, a National Award-winning screenwriter, emphasises the importance of nuance in film translation, stating that “for writers and filmmakers, nuance is critical” (Philip 2021). Dr. Indumathi S, an academician and researcher in film studies says subtitles “enhance cinematic experience” (Indumathi cited in Prince 2021). She identifies subtitles as a crucial factor in understanding visual storytelling and stresses the importance of concise and clear subtitles to prevent interference with the comprehension of the film (ibid.). Suresh Babu, who is

part of the team that did subtitling for *The Great Indian Kitchen*, identifies several challenges in film subtitling in the Malayalam industry. He points at the absence of a professional team to write subtitles in Kerala who understands the objective of subtitling to “provide context according to sound, mood and emotion of the dialogue” (Babu cited in Prince *ibid.*). These limitations are still prevalent and impact readers'/viewers' reading of the films.

Part II

2.4. Gender and Audiovisual Translation

Audiovisual translation has increasingly gained scholarly attention as an important subset of Translation Studies by the 2000s. Marcella De Marco draws from Zabalbeascoa to state that Audiovisual Translation intersects with other translation forms, underscoring its importance within the theoretical framework of Translation Studies (2012 64). The works of (1989), Díaz Cintas (2001) and Fuentes Luque (2000) marked the initial efforts to approach AVT from a cultural and sociological perspective, laying the groundwork for the integration of AVT within broader academic discourses on film and media studies. Building on these developments, “Fodor (1976) explores the psychological factors that affect the perception of asynchrony in dubbing, Ivarsson (1992) deals with the psycholinguistic factors that influence subtitling translation, and Hatim and Mason (1997), Ivarsson (1992), Hatim and Mason (1997), after exploring the loss of explicit markers of politeness in subtitles, call for further research into the audiences' reactions when they are confronted with different perceptions of interpersonal dynamics conveyed by subtitles” (*ibid.*). De Marco refers to the research areas of the translation of children's programmes, video games, and the application of language learning in AVT to showcase how the arenas of AVT research have expanded (*ibid.*). Polysystem Theory and the

Manipulation School have positively impacted the interest in AVT research “beyond the mere technical process” (ibid. 65). These theories facilitate a deeper comprehension of how translation functions within the larger cultural and media systems, thereby influencing AVT strategies and practices. De Marco observes, “Díaz Cintas (1997, 2004a, 2005) has successfully applied the premises of Polysystem Theory and of the Manipulation School to the field of screen translation, thus marking visibly the transition from the literary to the audiovisual world” (ibid.). Cultural considerations continue to play a significant role in AVT research, with scholars like Karamitroglou examining the norms influencing the choice between subtitling and dubbing in specific cultural contexts. Additionally, the work of Danan and Ballester reveals how ideological and political factors, such as nationalism and censorship, critically shape AVT practices in various countries (ibid. 66).

The application of feminist theory and criticism to AVT is relatively recent, burgeoning only since the early 2000s (Flotow and Josephy-Hernández 297). The scrutiny of media through a feminist lens, however, is not new. “Questions connecting feminism and media studies were first raised in the 1960s and 1970s and focused on the skewed representation of women’s lives in the media. The works of Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, and Teresa de Lauretis have extensively critiqued how gender is constructed and represented in cinema (ibid.)

Mulvey explores the concept of scopophilia⁹ and its gendered implications within the conventional narrative film. Mulvey observes that conventional narrative cinema perpetuates male dominance by positioning women as objects of visual pleasure. Mulvey’s analysis finds that the narrative film endeavours to perpetuate the ‘male gaze’ and thereby caters to male voyeurism, a process that foregrounds and maintains male dominance. It reduces women into mere body

⁹ Sexual pleasure derived from watching others and often their sexual activities

parts and compels women audience to be trained to enjoy ‘being-looked-at-ness’ (833). Kaja Silverman focuses on the acoustic aspect of the cinema. Her *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988) studies how women’s voices and speech are often relegated to roles that reinforce gender stereotypes. Silverman finds that where ‘the female voice is as relentlessly held to normative representations and functions as is the female body’ (viii). She says women’s authoritative and assertive voices are hardly represented in conventional cinema, especially in the voice-over narration. Teresa de Lauretis, on the other hand, focuses on how lesbian desire is represented in cinema, challenging the male/female binary. She explores the conflicts and divergence between the ‘real’ and ‘represented’ women and dismantles the image of a universally valid woman (1987). Despite these attempts to critically investigate various gender questions in cinema, the explorations into the gendered aspect of audiovisual products, particularly the question of what is translated began only in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Flotow and Josephy-Hernández identify three major approaches that have focused on gender and audiovisual translation (300). They are:

- Anglo-American audiovisual products and their translation into Romance languages
- The differences between subtitled and dubbed versions of Anglo-American source texts
- Gay and queer source text materials and their treatment in translation

The first approach studies the fidelity and accuracy of translated feminist content and nuance, focusing on English films and TV series, mostly referred to as ‘chick flicks’. The AV texts under scrutiny are *Sex and the City* (1998–2004), *Ally McBeal* (1997–2002), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), *British Bridget Jones’ Diary* (2001), etc. Delia Chiaro (2007), Diana Bianchi (2008), Anne-Lise Feral (2011a, 2011b), Marcella De Marco (2006, 2012) and Alessandra De Marco (2013) are the chief architects who lay their focus on exploring the English

originals and their French, Italian and Spanish translations to assess the accuracy of the translation (ibid.)

The third approach studies how the linguistic expressions of the non-binary genders are translated. The source texts are invariably in English. The academics who study the translations deal with Romance languages, which have grammatical gender, whereas English does not. It is found that English has developed an abundance of queer vocabulary and therefore, finding equivalents in the target languages is mostly impractical (ibid. 302).

Flotow and Josephy-Hernández also refer to several individual articles that attempt to examine the intersection of gender and AVT. They found three studies significant to be mentioned (ibid. 302- 303). They are:

- The study of the representation of transexual identity, and its translation in the Greek film *Strella* (2009) by Asimakoulas (2012).
- Study on the gender stereotyping in the Japanese anime series *Cowboy Bebop* (1998–2003) and its US translation by Hiramoto (2013). Hiramoto analyses their scripts.
- Research on the portrayal of gender in the subtitled, dubbed and fansubbed versions of Kon Satoshi's film *Perfect Blue* (1997) by Daniel E. Josephy-Hernández (2017).

They also mention the German dubbing of James Bond movies by Nicole Baumgarten (2005) and the work on the meaningfulness of voice quality with regard to the larger gender question in the AVT research by Charlotte Bosseaux (2008). Flotow and Josephy-Hernández conclude that despite considerable progress, the research in AVT still has significant gaps, particularly in terms of descriptive studies and historical analyses that focus on how gender and gender representations are treated across media and cultures. They note that the impact of dubbing and subtitling strategies on the representation of gender for different audience

demographics merits further investigation. As such, AVT offers a fertile ground for expanding our understanding of how gender is constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed through the complex processes of cultural translation, contributing to broader discussions about gender, media representation, and cultural exchange (ibid. 306).

2.5. Gender and Subtitling

The previous sections have discussed how the interface of Audiovisual Translation and Gender Studies has emerged with an emphasis as an area of academic interest. Descriptive studies that specifically focus on intersecting gender studies and subtitling are practically untraceable. India being an industry that encourages remaking and dubbing more than subtitling, as the literature has shown, descriptive studies foregrounding subtitling started emerging only in the 2010s. The Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies at the University of Hyderabad, India conducted a workshop, GIAN, in 2018. That was the first academic endeavour in India into subtitling. There have been studies on advertisements, videos, and other AV materials. However, most of these studies do not use AVT strategies. The texts are treated as multimedia texts. The academic ventures into such texts investigate into the texts as either intersemiotic translation or interlingual translation. Priyanka Rachabattani's doctoral dissertation, *Audiovisual Translation in India: A Case Study of Cultural Context and Language Used in TV Advertisements* (2020), analyses the translation of cultural elements in audiovisual advertisements, with a specific focus on the television advertisements translated from Hindi to Telugu.

Two doctoral dissertations have come in 2017 and 2019 respectively, studying subtitling practices in the Malayalam industry. They are *The Foreign in the Familiar: A Study of Subtitling*

with Particular Reference to Malayalam Cinema (2017), submitted to The English and Foreign Languages University and *Text on the Screen: A Study of Cultural Transfer in the Subtitles of Selected Malayalam and English Films* (2019) submitted to Maulana Azad National Urdu University. The former offers a broader analysis of subtitling practices in Malayalam cinema, whereas the latter studies specific AV texts to understand the translation of cultural codes through subtitling with respect to Muslim community. This could be identified as the first such endeavour to locate identity markers in subtitling practices of the Malayalam industry. Ashwin Kumar D B V N's ongoing research at the Centre of Applied Linguistic and Translation Studies at the University of Hyderabad studies the television series *Madam Secretary* (2014 -2019), focusing on the strategies used by subtitlers in addressing metaphors in Telugu subtitles. However, both studies do not discuss gender questions within subtitling. My research is an attempt to critically investigate how the representation of gender and embodiment is translated through subtitles with a critical focus on Malayalam Cinema from 2014 to 2021.

2.6. Conclusion

The literature shows that there exists a gap in the realm of descriptive studies that foregrounds the interface of gender and AVT. This study is an attempt to understand and problematise how the production of meanings and dissemination of knowledge are impacted when subtitling as an AVT strategy interacts with the representation of embodiment of gendered spaces. The study focuses on Malayalam cinema, which has been witnessing a transformation in the representational patterns of gender, gendered spaces and embodiment since the 2010s. With the proliferation and popularisation of OTT platforms

Chapter 3

Gender and Space: Embodiment and Representation in Malayalam Cinema

3.1. Introduction

The research gap identified in the previous chapter points at the lack of descriptive studies that connect subtitling and gender studies. As this study sets out to understand how representations of embodiment of gendered spaces are translated through subtitles, it is imperative to contextualise gender, space and embodiment. Therefore, this chapter attempts to contextualise gender, embodiment and space with a specific focus on Malayalam cinema. It maps the emergence of the body as the centre of feminist geography as an academic interest. The sections on the embodiment of gender and embodiment of spaces explore how feminist geography reshapes our understanding about space, gender and the body. By situating the body at the centre of its analysis, feminist geography draws the intricate interplay between embodied experiences and broader sociopolitical processes, challenging the traditional understanding of space and knowledge. Feminist geography offers insights into the ways in which gender and space construct and are constructed by each other. The chapter studies the body as a site where culture and society carve their inscriptions. The chapter explores into the play of gendered spaces and embodied spaces to understand how they produce and are produced by gender performances.

The endeavour of this chapter is to analyse how the representation of body, embodied spaces and gendered spaces are approached by popular culture, specifically cinema. The chapter foregrounds the analysis of how the embodiment of gendered spaces has been represented in popular Malayalam cinema, emphasising on women. The chapter attempts to mark the

establishing of gender stereotypes. A section is devoted to trace the transitional phase of popular Malayalam cinema in revising these representations as well. This chapter's venture is to contextualise the interplay of gender, space and power in the representations of Malayalam cinema.

3.2. Embodiment of Gender and Space

3.2.1. Feminist Geography: A Brief Outline

The placing of the body right at the centre of social theory has perhaps been one of the most exciting moves in contemporary theoretical endeavours . . . questions of the sexed body – its differential construction, regulation and representation – are absolutely central to an understanding of gender relations at every spatial scale.

(McDowell 68)

Feminist Geographers started critically engaging with the approach to knowledge as singular and unified in the 1990s. During this period, feminist discourses began to challenge the idea that knowledge is neutral, singular and disembodied (Nelson and Seager 4). Feminist geography, in particular, explores the body as a locus of power, recognising that it has often been used to naturalise dichotomies. By acknowledging body as both a 'material and symbolic site', feminist geographers seek to disrupt these naturalised binaries (ibid. 2). 'Material and symbolic sites' are situated in the intersections of power, which manifests in different forms. Feminist geography, rooted in the concept of the body, connects personal and everyday experiences to broader sociopolitical and cultural contexts.

Any study of the body cannot be dissociated from the tapestry of its lived experiences. Bodies are not mere physical entities but are the very material through which we navigate and comprehend the intricacies of gender. The lived experiences of human beings are encapsulated through embodiment. Embodiment is the manifestation of how cultural ideals of gender, ingrained in a given society, shape expectations about and influence the form of the body. The relationship between bodies and their cultural contexts is a bidirectional one. It is a dynamic interplay between biology and culture. When individuals embody societally defined gender roles, they are actively reinforcing cultural ideals, acting as agents in the perpetuation of social norms. This embodiment simultaneously plays a transformative role by shaping bodies both temporally and permanently (Connell 2002).

Feminist scholars underscore its manifestation as a site where presentations of identity and differences are inscribed. They emphasise the body's role as socially and culturally constructed spaces where power dynamics, discourses and differences enact and get contested. According to Seemanthini Niranjana, “The body, even as a biological entity, is never simply given, but is always mediated through the socio-cultural, such that even one’s own experience of the body is invariably through this register. The moral injunctions and norms that are seemingly part of the social realm are, in fact, inseparable from a culture’s imagining of the body (59).

3.2.2. The Body as a Site

The turn in feminist consideration of body as a locus of inquiry, resistance, and subjectivity parallels Michel Foucault’s exploration of body as a site where power relations are inscribed and contested (1995). Foucault’s examination of the body has at least three characteristics that intersects with Feminist preoccupations:

First, both Foucault and feminism reject dualism and the binary thinking that accompanies it... Second, Foucault politicises the body, and his notions of disciplinary practices and micropower are useful tools for feminist analyses of the body, especially to illuminate the patriarchal power of feminine cultural norms... Third, Foucault prioritises the body; the body and its investment by power are significant issues for Foucault. One of the effects of power on the body is subjectivity; thus, questions of subjectivity are inseparable from questions of the body. So, for Foucault as for feminists, subjectivity is always embodied

(McLaren 81- 82).

While Foucault's perspectives on body have been deemed paradoxical by Feminist theoreticians, McLaren says that it is only by acknowledging the complexity with which Foucault conceptualises the body that one can comprehend the disciplinary practices which shapes the body, because Foucault emphasises on the shaping of the body by social norms and constituting subjectivity (ibid. 83). Foucault suggests that the body is not a mere physical entity, but a canvas upon which sociocultural inscriptions are engraved. These inscriptions are shaped and interpreted by language.

Language plays a crucial role in how we interpret and understand the engravings inscribed on the body. However, these carvings are not fixed. They are subject to change and dissolution by ideas. Ideas, ideologies and cultural norms influence how we interpret and make sense of the inscription engraved on our bodies. Foucault says, "The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and

history” (148). Foucault’s concept of genealogy seeks to uncover the process through which knowledge, power, and social practices are produced and maintained. By situating genealogy within the articulation of the body and history, Foucault emphasises the interconnectedness of these elements in shaping our understanding of the self and society.

Foucault’s concept of “microphysics of power”, which elucidates how power operates on individual bodies through institutions and practices, sheds insights into how gender norms are enforced and resisted at both macro and micro levels of social interaction. He calls upon to reconsider power as just a force or violence and instead see it as a complex system. He contends that all knowledge is influenced by power in some way. Foucault also challenges the idea that knowledge is all about individual thinking, suggesting instead that it's deeply tied to the way society works. He introduces the concept of the "body politic," which means looking at society as a whole system where power and knowledge are connected and affect how people behave (McLaren 86).

Feminist scholars such as Susan Bordo and Sandra Lee Bartkey have drawn on Foucault’s concepts to extend the notion of body as a site where cultural norms engrave their inscriptions. Their analyses underscore that “cultural construction of the body is always gendered” (ibid. 92). Bartkey extends Foucault’s discourse on disciplinary practices to explore female identity and subjectivity and how proper feminine bodies are constructed by patriarchal structures. She examines the mechanisms through which cultural norms dictate and shape women’s bodies to conform to prescribed notions of femininity (ibid. 93). Bartkey explores the disciplinary practices specific to women in her essay, “Foucault, Feminism and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power”. She divides them into three categories: “(1) practices that aim to produce a body of a certain shape and size, (2) practices that elicit a certain repertoire of

gestures, and (3) practices that encourage bodily adornment. Bartky skilfully demonstrates the ways that these practices form and shape the feminine body. She points out that these disciplinary practices collude with oppressive patriarchal structures” (ibid. 93).

3.2.3. Embodied Space

The concept of embodied space encapsulates a multifaceted understanding of human existence emphasising on the interplay between the physical body, lived experience, and the spatial environment. Embodied space represents the convergence of human consciousness and materiality, where subjective experience takes on tangible form. Our perception of space is inherently tied to our bodily presence and emotional states. Setha Low says, “The concept of embodied space, however, draws these disparate notions together, underscoring the importance of the body as a physical and biological entity, lived experience, and a centre of agency, a location for speaking and acting on the world” (11). Low further says that our experience of spaces of the spaces we inhabit fluctuates with our sense of self. “The space occupied by the body, and the perception and experience of that space, contracts and expands in relationship to a person’s emotions and state of mind, sense of self, social relations, and cultural predispositions (ibid. 11).

T. Turner emphasises that the body is the socially constructed nature of bodily experiences and highlights how societal norms and power dynamics shape our understanding of gendered spaces. The body, in his conception, emerges as a site of contestation and negotiation within the power structures (112). Bryan Turner states that human beings “have bodies” and “are bodies”. He says that our everyday life is shaped by our corporeal existence. Our bodies mediate our interactions with the world (12).

Mary Douglas views it as the “two body” comprising the social and physical (1970). The physical body refers to the biological aspects of human existence, whereas the social body encompasses the ways in which bodies are imbued with cultural meanings (ibid.).

Scheper-Hughes and Locke see it as the “three body”, adding political dimension to the understanding of embodied existence. In addition to the physical and the social bodies, they introduce the concept of “body politic”. The “body politic” explores the ways in which bodies are regulated and disciplined by institutions and ideologies. It refers to the broader systems of power, governance and social control in which bodies are implicated (1987).

John O’Neill further expands these concepts by adding two more aspects of the body; the consumer body and the medical body (1985). The consumer body discusses the ways in which bodies are commodified and consumed within capitalist economies. The medical body pertains to the ways in which bodies are understood, treated and managed within medical discourses and practices. These approaches to the body as a multiplicity offer a critical understanding of the ways in which bodies are situated in sociopolitical, economic and cultural processes.

Donna Haraway emphasises on the role of human labour in shaping physical and social bodies. Haraway argues that bodies are actively constructed through a process of self-creation within social contexts. Her framework focuses on the importance of location within the web of social connections, and positions the body as a site of action and agency within the larger socio-political structures (1991). Marcel Mauss, as well as Csordas, have explored the body’s relationship with culture and society. They view the body as the “original tool with which humans shape their world and the substance out of which the world is shaped” (Low 13).

3.2.4. Gendered Spaces

Geography plays a crucial role in shaping gender relations, contributing to the production and reproduction of both physical and symbolic geographies. The spatial dimension is inseparable from the social fabric, with economic and social structures intertwined with geographical organisation. Henri Lefebvre's assertion that "(social) space is a (social) product" lays the groundwork for understanding the relationship between space and society (26). He argues "social relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space. Their underpinning is spatial" (ibid. 404). Space is not merely a passive backdrop but actively shapes and is shaped by social relations. Every mode of social organisation generates a distinct environment reflective of its inherent social relations. Societies not only materialise into built forms but also reproduce themselves through the spatial configuration they create. Thus, space serves both as a medium and a product of social relations, exerting influence on social dynamics.

Doreen Massey says "The space is in that very material sense, socially constructed...And since social relations are bearers of what is at issue is a geography of power relations in which spatial form is an important element in the construction of power" (31). Spatial arrangements are shaped by human interactions, institutions and ideologies. From architecture to land use, spatial configurations are influenced by socio political norms and cultural values. This process of social construction imbues space with meaning, symbolism and power dynamics that reflect and reinforce broader social structures and hierarchies. Social relations are bearers of power within spatial contexts. They serve as a conduit through which power is exercised, negotiated and contested. Spatial arrangements, then in turn, play a crucial role in the construction and perpetuation of power relations within society. Spatial forms become a tangible manifestation of

power dynamics by influencing the distribution of power and privilege across different social groups and thereby determining access to resources, opportunities and social networks.

Massey finds that the symbolic meanings of spaces/places disseminate gendered messages. She says, "... spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood" (ibid. 179). The gendered construction of spaces separates women and men. It enforces gender hierarchies by perpetuating women's subordinate status. Daphne Spain draws on McDowell, Foord and Bowlby to argue that the feminist geographical analysis of gender and space recognises the construction and defining of femininity and masculinity is specific to places such as home, community, workspace, etc. Spain says that the status of sexes is influenced by the reciprocity of these spheres (1993). The expectations of gendered behaviours are not prescribed in one space but are negotiated at other spaces as well. The feminist geography, according to Spain, explores "the spatial dimension of gender distinctions that separate spheres of production from the spheres of reproduction and assign greater value to the productive sphere" (ibid. 7). The accounts of women's everyday lives talk about the modes through which societal norms and expectations imprint on physical spaces and behaviours of individuals within those spaces. Niranjana says, "The ensuing account of the domains and activities of women, as well as a consideration of the ways women speak about their lives, offer some indications of the modes in which bodies and spaces are gender-marked and sexualised" (48).

For many women, household is the central locus of their activities, encapsulating both the object of their efforts and the primary space of their daily lives (ibid.). However, their spatial experiences range across varied sites. Niranjana points out that employment prospects of women outside the household are most often defined by social factors, rather than economic factors.

“Women who transgress their habitual, ‘assigned’ socio-physical spaces run the risk of being labelled ‘loose virtue’ and are subject to strong censure by older members” (ibid. 50).

3.2.4.1. Home

Home as Niranjana has established is located at the centre of women’s lives (ibid. 48). Household operations are, in a patriarchal society, primarily dominated by men. Men are expected to be the breadwinners, and thereby hold control over the resources. They receive service and conformity in return. Members of the family ratify these positions by “occupying different kinds of spaces within the domestic sphere which determine the individual capacity to act and negotiate, both within and outside household” (Raju and Lahiri-Dutt 156).

Raju and Lahiri-Dutt find that there is no concrete definition of housework. “Housework refers to unpaid work done to maintain family members and/or a home” (Shelton and John quoted in Raju and Lahiri- Dutt ibid.). Though the definition doesn’t refer to any particular gender, how housework is perceived by different genders is different. Home, where domestic duties such as cooking, caregiving, and cleaning are performed, expects women to conform to these responsibilities. These activities shape the boundaries of what is considered a woman’s space. Raju and Lahiri- Dutt says, “...many outside activities and spaces are traversed...during the course of their household work...” by women “cannot be seen as an external space, but rather as an extension of their domestic spaces (ibid. 164). This extension of women’s domestic spheres suggests that the boundary between what has been considered a women’s space and what is fluid, is constructed through the routine activities within these spheres. The mobility of and interaction with these spaces are dictated by their responsibilities at home. Thus, influence and presence of their domestic roles at home, the patriarchally structured home, is extended to the broader society.

3.2.4.2. Marriage

The family for long was seen as “a homogenous unit where all members enjoy the same privilege, experience the same standard of living and share the same life chances and are, therefore, social equals” (ibid. 229). The family as a gendered space signifies how various forms of inequalities and oppressive forces operate, resulting in the subordination and marginalisation of women. The predefined roles within marriage, most often sees husbands as providers and wives as caregivers, reinforcing the gender division of labour. This divide marks the control of resources by men within a marriage and in the family. “As the reproductive responsibilities and associated tasks become confined to home, they were carried out as unpaid work, and as the public was linked with market and paid activities, the gender segregated occupational/domestic roles made women undervalued because they also had less control over material and non-material resources (ibid. 232-233). The extent to which women have access to resources and control over the means of production, thus, defines their status and power.

Within a traditionally defined marriage, the power and decision-making are vested in men. This power imbalance is a direct reflection of societal structures where the physically designated private sphere extends its influence into broader social and economic realms. Raju and Lahiri- Dutt find that the family background of the women hardly influence their power of decision making in India (ibid. 246).

3.2.4.3. Public Spaces

Public spaces are gendered through both formal regulations and informal social norms and power structures. They prescribe how men and women are expected to interact within these spheres. These practices privilege masculine visibility and activities over the feminine ones in

the public spaces, shaping the accessibility and usability of these spaces for different genders. Habermas defines public space as “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed” (49). According to him every citizen should have access to such spaces, ensured by the state, to come together and engage in public discourses (1989). However, the confining of women to distinct spatial realms restricts their accessibility to public spaces thereby reducing their visibility and mobility.

Men, according to Raju and Lahiri- Dutt, explore public spaces as avenues to exchange their ideas and values and, to ventilate their grievances and calms. They enjoy public spaces as their sphere of leisure as well (249). Women, in contrast, approach public spaces as transit routes rather than destinations. Women can access public spheres only when they have a specific purpose. They use these spaces primarily to move between private spaces. Their physical appearance, attire, gestures, modesty etc. play as markers for women in influencing their negotiation of public spheres. Raju and Lahiri- Dutt say “these markers have been established upon the edifices of female sexuality, and are explicitly underlain by efforts to curb this imagined, reckless sexuality” and keep women indoors (ibid. 250).

This confinement of women within the family, marriage and other private spheres, and their exclusion and erasure from public spheres, benefits men in monopolising social and economic resources. Women infringing these spatial boundaries is a threat in two ways according to Dorreen Massey; women might refuse to conform to the domestic roles and they gain access to the public space- ‘a life not defined by family and husband’ (179- 180). Therefore, spatial control is a social control on identity as well.

These factors, enforced by society or co-opted by women, make women’s access to public spaces restricted and conditional. Due to the enforcement of home as their rightful place

and public sphere as dangerous, women may develop preconceived notions of spaces of fear. The societal knowledge imposed on them that public spaces are man's terrain and their presence can lead to dishonour and shame as well as 'questioning of sexual virtues' (Phadke 1511).

Women are constantly reminded of their sexuality and their gendered roles, as defined by the normative institutions and ideologies, in their every attempt at transgressing the spatial boundaries. The responsibility to safeguard the sacredness of these institutions is vested on them, through their performances as 'good and noble' mothers, wives and daughters. Their access and use of public spaces are regulated by these attributes associated with femininity. Raju and Lahiri-Dutt says "such private attributes associated with femininity determine the norms of using public spaces by women, carve out 'legitimate' spaces for her... (251).

3.3. Embodiment and Representation

3.3.1. Representation of Embodiment in Popular Culture

Popular culture, as defined by John Storey, is a mass culture. "It is mass produced for mass consumption" (8). As it is commercially produced and intended to cater to the taste of the masses, popular culture often encompasses and disseminates the dominant values. The representation of the gender, embodiment and gendered spaces often reflects and reinforces societal norms and power dynamics. The articulation of embodiment and gendered spaces by popular culture, through various forms of media, shapes public perception and discourses around gender and space.

3.3.2. Embodiment and Representation in Cinema

Cinema holds a significant position in the arena of popular culture. As a medium of mass entertainment and communication, films have a profound influence in defining social norms,

values and in shaping collective consciousness. Cinema, as a subset of the popular culture, reflects how audiovisual elements intersect with sociopolitical, cultural and economic currents of the time to produce meanings for the masses. Therefore, the representation of gender and gendered spaces in popular cinema, as a mass medium, often reflects dominant social values and meanings associated with gender. Home is frequently portrayed as a women's space where she is expected to be the caregiver to the male members of the family, whereas men are most often depicted in workplaces and public spheres such as markets, bars, and political and social gatherings. These representations reinforce the notion of men as decision makers, breadwinners and custodians of resources, and women as dependent caretakers and homemakers.

Laura Mulvey's critique of conventional narrative cinema shows how popular cinema produces and reproduces patriarchal interests and desires through these films (1975). Mulvey identifies the positioning of women as objects of male desire (ibid. 6). The working of 'male gaze' in the conventional narrative cinema manipulates women by establishing how she is expected to behave and react (ibid.). Mulvey says, "Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen" (ibid. 11–12). In a society of sexual imbalance, popular cinema, produced to be consumed by mass, structures its narrative moments as associated with the active male characters who take the story forward, and moments of spectacle are centred on passive female characters. They exist to disseminate visual pleasure. The male spectators' gaze is directed towards the hero, who is the 'bearer of the look', and through the hero to the heroine, the erotic look', to satisfy his libido (ibid. 13). The female characters' role is to be an object of desire,

reinforcing passivity. The active male/ passive female dichotomy is the established structure of mainstream cinema.

3.4. Embodiment and Representation in Malayalam Cinema

In her introduction titled “Becoming Women: Unwrapping Femininity in Malayalam Cinema” to the volume *Women in Malayalam Cinema: Naturalising Gender Hierarchies*, Meena T. Pillai observes that from the very beginning of talkies in Malayalam, the industry invested in typecasting women characters. These stereotypes catered to the hegemonic function, by reinforcing and naturalising the normative gender roles and gendered expectations (23). Malayalam cinema, in its infant stage itself, attempted to see society and social realities through an objective and realistic lens, and as a result the men were portrayed as ordinary subjects waging against the evil caste and class hierarchies of the social institutions. However, it is paradoxical to observe that the same did not reflect in the portrayal of women characters. One could observe, as Pillai says, “a gross misrepresentation and tokenisation of the female subject in the very process of attempting to represent the woman” if we trace the history of Malayalam cinema (ibid. 27). The varied experiences of the women subject did not find space in the narratives of early Malayalam cinema. Instead, the popular Malayalam cinema focused on depicting only the virtuous and vicious representations of women subjects in its extremity and disregarded the heterogeneity of women’s experiences and their reactions to them. The titles of early Malayalam cinema could be read as pointers towards how they envisage women subjects in their narratives. The titular characters of films such as *Nirmala* (1948) and *Nalla Thanka* (1950) were women who possess absolute virtue and are strictly chaste and pious. In contrast to these representations were women who embody the evils of desire and wealth. Over years this binary was reinforced through the reproduction of these stereotypes. Pillai observes “The heroines of

the 1960s too are steeped in the sentiment of exaltation with a clear demarcation between the heroine and the vamp; the former being portrayed in a romantic and gentle light in contrast to the latter who offers visual pleasure by enabling fetishistic scopophilia. The vamp is the stereotyped representation of the sexualised female body whose identity is contained and crippled by the very act of such representation” (ibid. 30). With its development the popular Malayalam cinema started drawing themes from literature, theatre and folklore. But the representation of women characters remained to be confined in the virgin/whore binary. C. S Vekadeswaran observes, “Sexual display (which in these narratives meant exhibition of the body of the vamp, or rape attempt on the heroine) was a ‘number’ or part of the formula in the films till the 1970s and was marginal to the central narrative. They were either a digression, a fall or a brief turning point in the life of the hero or heroine, which called either for a ‘return to morality’ or heroic ways, or in the latter case, yet another occasion for the hero to exhibit masculinity and rescue the heroine and her body from the clutches of the villain” (ibid. 67).

The number of films that advocate for the institution of family and its moralities surged during the 1970s. There was a strong tendency, as could be noticed in the films of this era, to conform characters to the established norms of dominant ideology. Films such as *Oru Penninte Katha* (1971) could be taken as examples to see how the repressive and hierarchical social forces acted on women and their bodies. They showcased family as the “site best suited for the perpetuation of gendered inequalities” (ibid. 34). The women lead in the film *Oru Penninte Katha* finds even her daughter aligning with the husband who raped her. In *Idavazhiyile Poocha Mindapoocha* (1979), we see a woman is outcast and stamped as a strumpet for developing a romantic affection for her husband’s friend. Malayalam cinema has shown numberless representations of men engaging in extramarital relations and returning to the family upon

certain revelations. When they are depicted as being forgiven and embraced by the family, women who are portrayed in the same place are treated with harsh moral judgements and most often punishments. Films like *Olavum Theeravum* (1979) established women's bodies as the sites where family's moral values and dignity are inscribed and therefore the responsibility to safeguard these values are solely vested on them. Therefore, it was depicted as if it were justifiable for them choosing to commit suicide after being raped, in defence of their family's dignity.

The 1980s marked a shift in Malayalam cinema, with a focus on commercial strategies that relied on objectification and commodification. This switch contrasted with the progressive and anti-feudal social movements prevalent in the society during the period. Even the character of Unniyarcha in *Vadakkan Pattukal* (Ballads of North Malabar), the most popular folklore of Kerala, who is known for her commanding power and heroic struggles, was rewritten to fit in the stereotype of deceitful and frail woman under the guise of a sensual body in *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* (1989). One of the most quoted dialogues of the movie, which was reused and mimicked in several films which came later (such as *Happy Wedding* (2016)), denounces the whole woman gender as hypocritical and treacherous. There were directors who attempted to introduce innovative themes and narrational strategies to Malayalam cinema in the 1970s and 1980s. However, as Pillai observes “the patriarchally conditioned language of Malayalam cinema or the bastions of its narrative logic has not been stormed or shaken by these efforts to any sustained effect or duration (ibid. 36).

Malayalam cinema of 1990s is a celebration of hypermasculinity and its varied forms. The popular films of the period revolved around traditionalist and machoistic hero enacted by actors Mohan Lal, Mammooty, Suresh Gopi etc who conquered the industry with their star

persona. *Devasuram* (1993), *Aram Thampuran* (1997) *Spadikam* (1995), etc. of Mohan Lal; *Kottayam Kunjachan* (1990), *The King* (1995), *Hitler* (1996), etc. of Mammooty; *Commissioner* (1994), *Lelam* (1997), *Pathram* (1999), etc. of Suresh Gopi are few examples. They presented heroes of noble origin fighting against the corruption and moral decay of the society or their family feuds to regain their power or wealth. Their physique is shown in low angles shots to convey their powerfulness and manliness. Their body covers most of the screen with them rendering long dialogues with punchlines. A peculiar feature of the films of this clan is the representation of a female character depicted as apparently strong, opinionated and independent in the first half of the film who later shrink as mere shadow of the hero. Most of these female characters are introduced as educated or employed, as accessing a variety of spaces and asserting their opinions and interests. However, with the establishing of hero the female lead characters get reduced as just their romantic interest. The instance from the film, *The King* (1995), where the invincible hero in the role of a district collector undrapes his extreme contempt for his female colleague, despite she holding equal qualifications showcases how the popular Malayalam cinema of the period shaped its perception of women.

Teaching women a lesson and showing their place became a characteristic of the Malayalam films of the 1990s and 2000s. In his essay “Engendering Popular Malayalam Cinema” in the volume *Women in Malayalam Cinema: Naturalising Gender Hierarchies* (1999), V. C Harris draws an example from the film *Vakkalathu Narayanankutty* (2000) to underline this observation. The hero of the film, enacted by the popular actor Jayaram, beats his younger sister in a hysteric rage when he finds out she doesn’t conform to the traditional sartorial expectations and wears modern outfits. The hero, who advocates for constitutional rights ensured to each citizen and goes to any extent to ensure they are safeguarded, does not hesitate a moment to

unleash his masculine authority over his teenage sister for exercising her freedom to wear her desired outfit. Later, once his anger settles, he explains to his sister that he brutalised her for her own good and the act was out of love. The girl wholeheartedly accepts the explanation and embraces the dictates of the tradition. Harris notes, “What this implies is that the man in the household has a moral right and responsibility, not to say a duty, to admonish, chastise and punish the women (wives, sisters, daughters) for their own benefit” (79).

At every instance where the unsurmountable hero shows women their place, the female body surfaces as a locus where the contempt is most directed at. The abovementioned scene where the brother beats up his sister for wearing modern outfits, the scene from *The King* where the IAS hero rebukes his female colleague citing beauty pageants to hint that despite her distinguished qualifications, she is a mere sexual object, or the sequence where the brother in *Hitler* marries off his sister to the man who raped her in order to protect the honour, it is conveyed over and over again that women are nothing more than mere objects of desire or tools to set scores in men's battles. *Ravanaprabhu* (2000), the sequel to *Devasuram* (1993), showcases how Janaky, the female lead, is kidnapped by the hero to subdue her father who has captured his ancestral property. Thus, it is portrayed as disparaging when women venture into public spheres and choose their own careers. Women, even those who own three postgraduate degrees such as Anuradha in *Narasimham* (2000), were made to realise that their sole purpose of being is only to serve men. Men entrusted themselves with greater moral responsibility to protect the sanctity of their families by constantly teaching the women about their status.

3.4.1. Menstruation and Teenage

The onset of menstruation marks the transition of a girl into womanhood. As the body experiences physical changes during this time, this phase becomes the juncture where gender roles are emphasised. Beauvoir details puberty as the stage where a girl starts feeling horror and shame about her body (333). Certain societies consider menstruation as a taboo. In such cultures women are restricted from entering public spaces, religious spaces, kitchens etc. In Kerala, menarche is known as *therandukalayanam*¹⁰. The role of cinema was instrumental in propagating and preserving the menstrual rituals and the superstitions surrounding the ritual even when the practice was declining across castes. Movies such as *Karakanakkadal* (1971), *Thulavarsham* (1976), *Pavithram* (1994) etc give out detailed representation of menarche rituals. *Pavithram* portrays the onset of menstruation through flowing broken pieces of mirror in the river. Meenakshi's, the protagonist's, growing up into adolescence is shown as the point where catastrophe begins in the family.

3.4.2. Marriage and Sexuality

Marriage initiates the transformation of wifhood in a gendered way. The female body has been the site of contest since the very beginning as the social and moral norms never allowed her any freedom or agency to experience her sexuality purely as a human body. Her body has been further negated and put under strict vigilance under the institution of marriage. Kapadia observes that women's bodily status changes after marriage in many cultures. Certain religious scriptures view the wife's body as part of her husband's body, merged together. After marriage, a figurative conversion of the body as 'belonging to somebody else' begins. Sexual intercourse is,

¹⁰ *Therandukalayanam* is a ceremony performed by several caste groups in Kerala when a girl reaches menarche. The girl is treated as a bride, ritually cleansed and sent to a room which does not have any windows. She has to spend her menstruating days in the room. The practice was in existence in elaborate form till the mid-20th century.

thus, seen as a tool to check women's free exploration of her sexuality (105). The instance in the 1998 film *Summer in Bethlehem* could be seen as how cinema represents the transformation of woman and her body with marriage, with or without her consent. Abhirami, the female protagonist, is forcefully wedded by Dennis upon the persuasion of Niranjan. Niranjan, her love interest, understands Abhirami decided to end her life at the same moment Niranjan, who is awaiting capital punishment, is hanged. Niranjan persuades Dennis, her friend, to marry her. However, Abhirami is neither part of this discussion nor is her consent a consideration. Dennis, following Niranjan's last words, weds her forcefully. In the very next scene, we see a gleeful Abhirami who has embraced traditional expectations associated with marriage by abandoning her tomboyish self. Similarly, in *Oru Mutham Manimutham* (1997), the female protagonist who is an aspiring model, takes assurance from her would-be that her career will not be affected by marriage and she will not bear children to fulfil the requirements of her career. However, various manipulative methods are employed on her by her husband and his relatives to conform her to their expectations of an ideal wife. The moment she gets pregnant, that too after a nonconsensual sex, it is portrayed as she is suddenly displaying maternal instincts.

Dominant movies, whose themes revolve around divorce, talk of the wives as either as villainous or as victims of extreme injustice. In most of such movies the narrative reunites them disregarding the facts that whether the marriage was toxic or unbalanced. The movie *Avidathepole Ivideyum* (1985) depicts a husband who is intolerant to his urbanised wife. Her independent opinions and choices are seen as matters to be objected to. He disapproves of her career and does not allow to socialise. Yet the movie states the root of the problem is the wife's ignorance, not the husband's toxicity. The movie *Kaliveedu* (1996) portrays a husband who attempts to teach his wife, who insists on equal treatment and shared responsibilities, how an

obedient and submissive wife should be by getting his colleague's wife to pose as their domestic help who performs the household chores wearing a smile on the face. *Njangal Santhushtaranu* (1999), in similar ways, mock the woman who enters wifedom without learning how to do household chores.

Popular Malayalam cinema instructs that women, no matter how they are treated, should remain obedient and subservient to her husband and his family. Such cinematic culture establishes that adultery and abuse by men are normal and good wives should be able to ignore such frailties. If not, they should learn to redirect their husbands to commitment and loyalty through their servitude. *Chanchatam* (1991) depicts a woman who is compelled to leave her marriage due to her husband's adultery. Yet the film makes the woman apologise in the end for her choices and takes sides with her husband. Movies such as *Kuttettan* (1990), *Vasthavam* (2006), *Cocktail* (2010), *Bhavuttiyude Namathil* (2012) etc. portray men who indulge in infidelity but unite with their wives realising their sacrifice, innocence and selflessness. Whereas, women are severely punished if they are found engaging with men outside their wedlock, as we can see in films such as *Nirakkootu* (1985), *Mukham* (1990) etc.

3.4.3. Motherhood

Mainstream cinema uses children as a reason to bring back women to marriage. The movie, *Pookkalam Varavayi* (1990) depicts a couple who are separated due to incompatibility. The movie portrays divorce as the reason for children's unhappiness and estrangement. The child in the movie runs away with the school bus driver. She finds his family where members are emotionally connected, a solace to escape the agony she experiences in her fragmented family. Similarly, the teenage daughter's affair and accident in *Veruthe Oru Bharya* (2008) become a reason for the wife, who has been long neglected and humiliated in marriage, to return to the

family. *Innathe Chinthavishayam* (2008) portrays three women who leave their marriages due to valid reasons; one has a suspicious husband, the second suffers from infidelity of her husband and the third one is denied her career opportunity by the in-laws. The narrative compels the women to go back to their marriages for the sake of their children. The male protagonist of the movie, in his endeavour to unite these families for his vested interest, states that divorce can never be a solution, and it is selfish to think about oneself as family should be considered priority.

3.4.4. Independent and Feminist Women

Malayalam cinema has been looking down upon women who exercise their agency and express their opinions and views freely. The representation of women who are assertive and articulate are as villainous or wicked. Women who wear modern outfits and apply cosmetics on their bodies are represented as threats to the institution of families. The movie *Amma Ammayiamma* (1998) depicts a woman character who is strict about financial management and disapproves of extravagance. The character is made to pose in that way to teach the male protagonist's wife how a woman should not conduct herself. The female IAS officer in the movie *The King* (1995) is humiliated for wearing makeup and being assertive by her colleague. Despite holding the same qualifications, she is even used for honeytrap. The intelligence or education of the women characters do not earn them respect unless they are submissive to their male counterparts in these clan of movies. McCabe et al. say "...makeup is a reflexive agent that paradoxically provides women both a source of identity formation and self-confidence and a means of feeling ready to engage in the world" (3). They further point out "not only perception of physical attractiveness does play a critical part in women's makeup practices but also the practice of makeup itself serves as a vehicle for self-transformation in connecting inner and outer

beauty. In makeup rituals, women carve out time for themselves where they become reflexive and keenly aware of who they are internally and externally” (5). The cinematic tradition of Malayalam industry has been denying women the opportunity to realise themselves through dedicating time for self-attention and rather enforcing the ideas of self-effacement and sacrifice as ideal practices women should follow. The women characters who attend to themselves and assert themselves in movies such as *Agnidevan* (1995), *Pakshe* (1994), *Valsalyam* (1993), *Kochu Kochu Santhoshangal* (2000), *Kaliveedu* (1996) etc. are punished and taught a lesson. They are denied of conjugal, sometimes even maternal, rights and subjected to emotional and physical torture in the endeavour of male protagonists to transform them as ‘good’ women.

Popular Malayalam cinema has propagated contempt towards women who wear makeup and develop their independent social circles by constantly representing them as farce. Cinema has an undeniable role in distorting the spirit of Feminist movements by showcasing such informed groups as misandrists. These groups of women are represented as wearing sleeveless blouses, and salwar kameez, petting dogs, speaking English and applying cosmetics on their bodies. The character of Vishalakshi in *Amma Ammayiamma* (1998), the grandmother in *Streedhanam*, the group of women in *Njangal Santhushtaranu* and *Kaliveedu* and such like are labelled as “society ladies” are given villainous or comical shades to imply at their unworthiness. The insecurity of the hegemonic male about losing his authority and power could be seen articulated through mocking and humiliating or often aggressive and toxic husbands or other male characters. McCabe et al. say “women’s emotional state changes during makeup rituals from feeling dishevelled and unprepared for upcoming social activities to feeling confident, beautiful, happy, and prepared for ensuing events” (7). When compelled to discard them midway it disrupts enthusiasm and confidence. In movies such as *Veruthe Oru Bharya* (2008) the female

protagonist is forced to take off makeup and participate in an excursion programme in her ordinary and dishevelled appearance by her husband. Women's confidence and independence are represented as a threat to the institution of family where men have been enjoying absolute supremacy. Such representations are produced and reproduced by Malayalam cinema and established such women as villainous or mere farce.

These films act as a blueprint for the expected conduct, attire, mannerisms, and preservation of tradition and culture for the quintessential Malayali woman. They play an undeniable part in shaping and mirroring the societal perception of women. The portrayal of women as non-contributors with restricted roles beyond their households has contributed to the perpetuation of stereotypical depictions and limited role definitions for women, thus presenting a one-dimensional perspective of their existence. The various roles women assume and the multiple identities they embody remain largely unrecognised and uncommunicated. Thapan draws from Kuhn to argue "through visual and textual images, then, women not only receive messages about themselves as embodied, feminine beings but also as consumers of both products and of themselves as objects for consumption. 'Meanings do not reside in images, then: they are circulated between representation, spectator and social formation' (Kuhn quoted in Thapan 65). The image therefore does not reside in a vacuum but in the cultural context of spectatorship as well as in the 'institutional and social/historical contexts of production and consumption'" (ibid.).

3.5. 'New Generation Films' and the Representation of Embodiment

Presently, Malayalam cinema is celebrating an extraordinary rise of a distinctive cinematic genre popularly referred to as 'New Generation' films. Since 2010, Kerala's film

industry has been experiencing a wave of inventive films that are characterised by their innovative themes, aesthetic choices, and depictions. “New-generation Malayalam cinema,” a coinage used to identify films made after 2010 in Kerala, introduced innovative changes in the Malayalam cinema ecosystem through experiments in film language, form, and storytelling. The new-generation films are inclusive in their efforts to create conversations around caste, gender, and other marginalised communities that lacked representation in the mainstream cinema of the preceding decades” (Ray and Mochish 1).

The ‘New Generation’ films attempted to represent women as individuals, breaking away from the stereotypical portrayals, with a focus on their right to choose how their life would be. These clan of movies also provide women a space to articulate their unhappiness and discontent with the social institutions and their ideologies. Many of these films received mixed responses and often criticism for their discussion on sexuality, individual freedom and positive representation of divorce.

The transition from stereotyping of women and objectifying women’s bodies to subverting the ideas of virginity and chastity could be traced in movies such as *Beautiful* (2011), *Trivandrum Lodge* (2012), *Ee Adutha Kalathu* (2012) etc. The film *Beautiful* talks about extramarital relationships in a positive light in its introduction where even female characters are depicted freely and guiltlessly discussing their affairs. The film also attempts to mock the concept of virginity through the character Kanyaka (meaning virgin), who had multiple sexual partners. *Ee Adutha Kalath* also revolves around an extramarital affair and unconventional interpersonal bonds. *Trivandrum Lodge* offers a tinge of female gaze in the depiction of Dhvani’s and Sereena’s friendship where they discuss their sexual fantasies, mock at the institution of marriage and scorn at normative beauty standards. Though the overall politics of

these movies often become self-contradictory such as in the 2012 movie *Spirit*, attempts to explore women as individuals could be witnessed in this phase.

Traffic (2012) is most often referred to as the film that took Malayalam cinema to a new direction. The movie opens with a woman at a police station explaining how she had to end up colliding with a bike in an attempt to escape from eve teasing by certain riders. The unnamed woman expresses her concern over the accident she had to create and at the same time tries her maximum to uphold her right to resist gender violence. *Traffic* also depicts a character, Aditi, who is a divorcee. She, breaking the restrictions around a divorced woman, pursues love with a man younger than her. Aditi, marking a stark difference from the past representations of divorced women, enjoys the company of her boyfriend in the public spheres such as markets, beaches and cafes. Her new found happiness and company are depicted in positive lights.

The film *Salt and Pepper*, a 2011 release, depicts female friendships that revolve around a beauty parlour/apartment. Maya, one of those women, is a dubbing artist who works in a predominantly male industry. She fights unsolicited sexual invitations in the workspace. She declares herself as feminist thereby becoming the first ever heroine who expresses their feminist politics in Malayalam cinema. *Salt and Pepper* also explores female bonding over alcohol. Departing from the representational patterns of Malayalam cinema where women who call themselves feminists, access public spaces, and consume alcohol represented as farcical and villainous, *Salt and Pepper* portrays such women as exercising their individual interests. Ashiq Abus' another directorial venture, *22 Female Kottayam* (2012), showcases the journey of Tessa Abraham, an ambitious nurse settled in Bangalore. She guiltlessly discloses that she had sexual relationships in the past when she starts a romantic relationship with Cyril. When she is raped by

Cyril's boss, she is not shown as overpowered by neither contrition nor moral conflicts. She treats it as an "attack by a mad dog".

Thira (2013), directed by Vineeth Sreenivasan, is entirely centred on the character Rohini, who is a social activist. Rohini runs a shelter home, for girls who are destitute as a part of her house. She has always been the target of illegal human trafficking groups. Rohini walks into places alone that are dangerous, criminal, and felonious to get the abducted women back. Rohini's journeys are lone and fearless. The backdrop of the film is cities in Karnataka and Goa where in the crowd no one notices the trafficking. Rohini makes her way through these crowds. Though a Malayalam film, the characters in *Thira* speak different languages. Rohini is a multilingual who is able to converse and negotiate in all the south Indian languages along with Hindi and English. Rohini is placed in stark contrast to an all-male crowd with clarity in the midst of the tumult. There have been female characters who hold positions as superior police officers, ministers and civil servants in Malayalam. They have been portrayed either as egoistic, arrogant, and flaunting women who should be taught where their position is; or as mere puppets of the heroes. Movies like *The King* (1995), *The Truth* (1998), etc. could be taken as examples where the hero reminds the female officers of his same rank that "they are just women" (*The King*). The movie *Thira* doesn't have a hero. Rohini is assisted by a number of men but her central position is never challenged.

3.5.1. Transformation in the Representation of Embodiment of Gendered Spaces

These movies, which came under the umbrella of 'New generation films', attempted to bring the voices and bodies of the marginalised, particularly of women, to the centre. Women gradually stopped being represented as a second fiddle to the hero or merely as heroes' love interests. There have been efforts to articulate the multitude of female subjectivity on screen.

These films draw how liberated women and their interactions are, rather than reproducing the stereotyped portrayals. A significant shift in this regard is the spaces these women subjects occupy and their exchanges happen across. From the confines of the household, she has started accessing public spaces. The representation of women as good wives and noble mothers whose selflessness and sacrifice brim from the screen is being erased. The novel depicts women accessing a variety of spaces, in addition to the domestic, women interact with in everyday life, including cultural ones.

One major shift could be traced in representing women situated in workplaces. Earlier women leads who are mostly from economically poor backgrounds were shown as having to go out and work. There was a defined set of jobs which were assigned for women characters; stenographers, teachers or clerks. This typecasting of women doing jobs in offices or school settings, supposedly safe environments, have undergone a noticeable shift during the 2010s. Women characters are placed as doing jobs in the IT sector (*Rithu*), entertainment industry (*Traffic*, *Ee Adutha Kalathu*, *Spirit*), Engineering companies (*Cocktail*) etc. These spaces are shown as places where different genders mingle together and interact beyond gossip. They occasionally get together for parties where female colleagues are also part of. Women in these movies share drinks with them at night parties. However, they are not represented in negative shades like the earlier movies.

The representation of casual sex and live-in relationships has also undergone a positive shift. The roommate of Tessa in *22 Female Kottayam* and Sonia, one of the female leads in *Chappa Kurishu* are shown as having sexual relationships with married/betrothed men. Yet the narratives do not place any moral judgements on them. The live-in relationship in *22 Female Kottayam* and sexual explorations in *Rithu* are also treated as 'natural' and 'normal'. *Rithu* also

portrays a homosexual character without any derogatory undertones Malayalam popular cinema has propagated over years.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter contextualises gender, space and power. The detailed discussion on gendered spaces and embodied spaces is used to shed insights into the representation of gendered embodiment in Malayalam cinema. The chapter discusses various spaces, and how gendered meanings are inscribed on them through individual performances. The chapter also studies how women's body, sexuality and choices are conceived and represented by the popular Malayalam cinema. The different phases in women's lives and their portrayals in the mainstream Malayalam are illustrated with examples.

The chapter notes that the movies that came after 2010 differ from the earlier films in many aspects. These movies set their backdrops in cities and urban outskirts. There is a remarkable change in the representation of female characters that could be observed in these films. Women are represented as occupying and accessing spaces that were predominantly masculine in the previous eras. These female characters are shown as opting for a variety of jobs in different sectors and share vocational spaces with men. A notable feature is the elimination of moral judgements and categorising into 'good' and 'bad' for life choices. The presence of women in all arenas of society is a prominent characteristic of this clan of movies. The urban spaces and increased access to varied social spheres have contributed in women becoming more aware of their individuality and agency. The confidence and assertiveness embodied by the women characters of these movies is a reflection of it. The next chapter will critically compare the patriarchal stereotypes and normative representations identified in this chapter in contrast

with the representation of embodiment of gendered spaces in the select films of this study to understand if those representations reinforce or challenge the dominant cinematic ideologies.

Chapter 4

Translation and Representation: A Study of Select Texts

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the study has contextualised gendered and embodied spaces. The present chapter is aimed at critically reading the representation of embodiment of spaces represented in the select AV texts. This chapter is divided into two parts. Part I gives a detailed analysis of representations of embodiment of gendered spaces in select texts. It explores how these representations offer a subversion of dominant cinematic depictions of gender, embodiment and space with respect to Malayalam cinema. The section critically investigates how the normative definitions of knowledge and pleasure are challenged and contested through the representations in the select texts. The first part argues that a critical and situated reading of the select texts offers reworked meanings through the transformation of gendered and embodied spaces and their interaction with individual performances. It studies how the transformation, re-representation and rewriting of embodiment of gendered spaces in the select films and the resultant reworked meanings offer a feminist critique of the representational patterns of popular Malayalam cinema.

Part II foregrounds critical reading as a feminist translational strategy. This section studies how the subversion enabled by the critical and situated reading of the select AV texts, figures as a form of feminist translation. It studies how the subversion of dominant cinematic representations become feminist translation by offering a re-representation of women and women's experiences, through the theories and concepts of Feminist Translation Studies.

Part I

4.2.1. *Bangalore Days* (2014)

Bangalore Days (2014) revolves around three cousins; Divya, Arjun and Kuttan aka Krishna P. P. Their involvement and how it is impacted by the new entrants in their respective lives as they relocate to Bangalore make the core of the film. The film also uses subplots to give deeper insights into the lives of Divya's husband Shivadas, Sara whom Arjun falls in love with and, Kuttan's mother.

4.2.1.1. Mobility and Empowerment

The film portrays Divya (played by Nazriya Nazim) strives to establish her own identity and pursue her dreams, despite societal pressures. She aspires to become a business woman who would employ more women in her endeavour. But Divya is caged in her family's traditional expectations of femininity. She is persuaded to agree to a marriage, soon after her graduation owing to the suggestions of their family astrologer. Immediately after the marriage, Divya relocates to Bangalore with her husband. Divya attempts to play the traditional wife to Shivadas, her husband, only to get disillusioned as he is yet not ready to acknowledge her as part of his life. Divya moves around the city with her cousins who have migrated to Bangalore to escape the discontentment in her family life which enables her to see a multitude of possibilities that her rural and traditional family did not allow to explore. Her brief encounter with the city helps her realise how she has been chained by the patriarchal and traditional family from pursuing her dreams.

Tanu Priya Uteng and Tim Crosswell argue that people's mobility is gendered and it continuously produces "gendered power hierarchies" (17). Divya's schooling in Dubai has

shaped her aspirations in a progressive way with an understanding of gendered labour. However, with being uprooted to rural Kerala, Divya loses the possibilities to explore her understandings further and employ them to empower herself. Having to relocate to Bangalore, the doors to discover herself and the world get opened to her again. Uteng and Crosswell find “acquiring mobility is often analogous to a struggle to acquire new subjectivity” (ibid.). Divya enables herself to fight with her family against their high handed decision to seek divorce from Shivadas upon knowing their marriage has failed to cater to the family's expectations. She leaves her house, returns to Bangalore and resumes her studies which have been hindered by marriage and migration. David Kronlid argues: “being socially and spatially mobile is generally seen as one central aspect of women’s well-being” (30). Divya’s determination to take up the responsibility and authority of her life on her own on her return to Bangalore leads her to find a new and independent meaning to her life. From a frustrated and disillusioned woman who desperately attempts and fails to please her family and husband, Divya finds peace, contentment and purpose for her being.

4.2.1.2. Disabled Body as a Site

Sarah (played by Parvathy Thiruvothu) is a disabled woman who works as a radio jockey in a popular FM channel, and gives motivational speeches to school children. “Disabled women struggle with both the oppression of being women in male-dominated societies and the oppressions of being disabled in societies dominated by able-bodied” (Wendell 105). However, Sarah’s characterisation challenges these traditional notions. She is represented as a contrast to the dominant perception of female disabled bodies as “dependent, incomplete, vulnerable, and incompetent bodies” (ibid. 261). She moves around on her automated wheelchair without any caretaker. Sarah possesses more wisdom than any other character in the film. Windall says, in the

dominant perception, “The public world is a world of strength, the positive (valued) body, performance and production, the able-bodied and the youth. Weakness, illness, rest and recovery, pain, death and the negative (de-valued) body are private, generally hidden, and often neglected” (ibid. 111). However, Sarah’s mobile body, which is always on the move, challenges these perceptions.

Contrary to the popular representation of disabled women in Malayalam cinema (*Meerayude Dukhavum Muthuvinte Swapnavum* (2003), *Mazhayethum Munpe* (1995), *Oomappenninu Uriyadappayyan* (2002), etc.) where the female protagonists navigate through humiliation, pity and apathy, Sarah is portrayed as confident, independent and a recipient of immense love and encouragement from her environment. “Cultural stereotypes imagine disabled as asexual, unfit to reproduce, overly dependent, unattractive- as generally removed from the true sphere of womanhood and feminine beauty” (Garland-Thomson 17). Popular Malayalam cinema has most often shown disabled women as asexualised and also as hindering the sexual/romantic lives of their caretakers (brother/cousin/former romantic partner/fiancé etc.). They are often shown as an easy target for sexual assaulters. Sarah’s portrayal contends these popular representations as she actively engages in romantic exchanges with Arjun. Sarah’s disability does not come between them as an obstacle, rather it inspires Arjun to find meaning in his own life. Sarah’s determination and confidence encourages him to have goals in life. Their relationship gives him emotional stability and thereby makes him considerate of his cousins’ emotional journeys.

Sarah’s mother, even though appears on screen for a brief time, establishes how Sarah’s is her source of pride, not a burden. Her mother asserts how she wishes the best in everything for her daughter. They plan to relocate to Australia as they find the country has better infrastructure

for disabled bodies. Sarah's colleagues, relatives and environment are inclusive and progressive. Arjin's cousins as well promise her mother that they consider Sarah not as a dependent but as an integral and important part of Arjun's being.

4.2.2. *Rani Padmini* (2015)

Rani Padmini talks about Rani, a tomboyish woman who is brought up in a city and Padmini, a naive housewife uprooted to the city from a village in Kerala. They chance upon each other when travelling to Leh. The film is about how they evolve in each other's company to fight patriarchy and other systemic discriminations.

4.2.2.1. Challenging Traditional Gender Roles

Rani Padmini challenges traditional gender roles and expectations imposed on women. The film portrays Rani (played by Rima Kallingal) as a free-spirited and independent woman who is forced to take a road trip to escape the threats of a gang of goons. Rani's character defies societal norms by rejecting the notion that women need to be dependent on men for their happiness or fulfilment. Rani is the breadwinner of her family which consists of only women members. Lynn Carr points out that tomboys receive more acceptance as they showcase the socially rewarded "masculine" characteristics or behaviours (5). For Rani, whose father is dead and does not have male siblings, displaying herself as 'boyish' becomes necessary to draw acknowledgement from her family. The scene, where her mother laments their ill-fate of not having a son to bear the responsibilities of the family, brings out the pain and rage of Rani for not being appreciated and recognised for the efforts she puts in for her family from huge debt.

Rani's "tomboyishness" can also be seen as a way she adopted to ensure safety. Having a family that consists only of females with a huge financial crisis, Rani is forced to do multiple

jobs and engages with lenders/bankers on a regular basis. The fear of being suppressed or manipulated if appeared “feminine” and the possible threats against women who do not have male support have led her to display herself as boyish and thereby aggressive. Carr, in her study, finds that “...for some tomboys part of rejecting femininity involved a retreat to the perceived safety of masculinity” (ibid. 13). Carr further says that for some of them the “emotional repression of “toughness” associated with masculinity” is important (ibid. 14). To Padmini’s family friend she introduces herself as Padmini’s “bro” rather than saying she is a friend. In interacting with men, who have already tricked her friend by showing apparent support in making her choices and then sending divorce papers through mother, Rani feels it is important to present herself as “tough” and indomitable. Having witnessed her mother’s and Padmini’s vulnerability and how they have suffered, Rani feels to maintain her “tomboy” character to win the patriarchal world. Her journey reflects the empowerment that comes from breaking free from traditional gender roles and embracing personal agency.

4.2.2.2. Tomboyishness as Queerness

At multiple instances in the film Rani challenges the feminine gender expectations. Rani responds to a local journalist who was trying to flirt with Padmini that they are a lesbian couple who have come for their honeymoon. While resting amidst trekking she puts a strand of her hair over face as a moustache and approaches Padmini. Padmini turns her off, asking her to behave like a woman. Carr notes that “tomboyism is often associated with lesbianism” (ibid. 5). Though the film does not discuss Rani’s sexuality, it gives instances of Rani’s non-conforming nature. She constantly retorts to the gendered expectations and challenges the anticipated feminine responses by giving sharp or witty replies.

4.2.2.3. Embracing Individuality and Self- Discovery

The film emphasises on the importance of embracing one's individuality and embarking on a journey of self-discovery. Rani and Padmini represent two contrasting personalities with distinct desires and aspirations. As they travel together, they confront their fears, rediscover their passions, and redefine their identities. Uteng and Cross argue that "acquiring mobility is often analogous to a struggle for acquiring new subjectivity. This reality is in a continuous state of flux, leading to the changing of contours in the relationships between genders, mobilities and shifting subjectivity" (17). Padmini, a woman who has always been confined to the boundaries of family, undergoes a transformative process through the journey to Leh.

4.2.2.4. Female Camaraderie and Solidarity

The film celebrates the bond of female camaraderie and solidarity. Rani and Padmini, despite their initial differences, develop a deep connection and provide emotional support to each other. Their friendship becomes a source of strength as they navigate through challenges and confront societal expectations. Academic investigations have shed light on the centrality of talk to women's friendships. The camaraderie of Rani and Padmini sets forth with Rani letting Padmini release her worries as stories. They start sharing stories both in realistic and metaphoric forms. Eileen Green draws from Jennifer Coates to argue that "the shared intimacy of women's talk and the sense of connection which it engenders, construct a 'collaborative tool' for exploring the world" (179). For Padmini, who has not been let to explore the world outside, the company of Rani becomes a means to pursue it even though her primary purpose was to resolve her family conflict. Green states that the shared conversation in women friendships can often act as "resistance discourses, i.e., those which challenge dominant (androcentric) discourses and offer alternative ways of being a woman" (ibid.). The stories they construct to share in their leisure

time and travel to Himalayas unfold as how the construction of gender and gendered existence is inscribed in their beings. As Green says: “within one conversation women may be simultaneously resisting gender stereotypes and acknowledging the power of dominant discourses which construct masculinities and femininities” (ibid. 179). Rani narrates a story of a young girl with metaphors loaded to imply how she has been instructed to learn tolerance being a woman. Padmini’s story foregrounds a woman, who possessed enormous strength and bravery. Padmini’s imagination of a woman is characterised as having authority and assertiveness, whereas Rani narrates a vulnerable and sensitive girl child. Both stories imply their inner conflicts and alter egos shaped as their characters. These stories become the foundation of their friendship and they explore their suppressed layers of personalities as their journey progresses.

Green also says: “women-only company affords women the chance to ‘let their hair down’ and ‘behave badly’, i.e., outside the limits of ‘normal, acceptable, womanly behaviour’” (ibid. 181). Rani often resorts to behaviours that deviate from the normative in the company of Padmini. At one instance Rani elopes with Padmini’s jewellery bag leaving a note. Padmini chases Rani down and retrieves the bag. However, their companionship remains unshattered as both women acknowledge their respective struggles. Rani, at another instance, tends to get intimate with Padmini, though in a playful way. Their company gives them space to unfold their otherwise censored selves. *Rani Padmini* showcases the significance of women’s companionship in retaining self-assurance and fostering self-worth by showcasing how Rani and Padmini confront the challenges of their lives with each other’s company, which otherwise seemed complex and unconquerable to them.

4.2.3. *Ramante Edanthottam* (2017)

Ramante Edanthottam centres around the character of Malini (played by Anu Sithara), who is a housewife. She is married to a film producer, Elvis. Elvis is a philanderer and squanderer. Malini, who has suppressed her dreams and hid her talents, learns to adjust with Elvis's way of living. However, their visit to Raman's Edanthottam, an eco-friendly resort, changes her life. Raman defies societal expectations by rejecting conventional notions of success and pursuing a simpler, more introspective life. Raman's character contrasts with Elvis's overambitious, patriarchal and toxic nature. Malini finds an intellectual and artistic connection with Raman. They continue to be connected even after Malini leaves the resort, keeping it a secret from Elvis. Inspired by Raman's companionship, Malini revives her dancing talent, gradually opens a dancing school and establishes herself as a professional dancer. Elvis finds out her friendship with Raman when Malini meets with an accident. Elvis's toxicity and hypocrisy burst out violently. Malini leaves home. However, she doesn't go to Raman, nor does she come back to Elvis. She goes to her dance school and starts a life afresh. Malini tells both men that she finds happiness in being independent and non-reliant on anyone. Her career and art give her the most joy she was looking for.

4.2.3.1. The Body as a Site

Malini navigates her own journey of self-discovery and challenges traditional expectations of women's roles in relationships. Malini is introduced as her life in a stagnant state with her family and private life are strangled due to her partner's perfidy and aggressive behaviour. She appears dishevelled and weary having to shoulder the burden of household chores and the uncertainty about future. Malini's response becoming exciting and involving could only be seen in the instance where her daughter discusses dance with her. The scenes where Malini

displaying her daughter how to position one's body while dancing explicate the amount of passion and interest Malini carries for dance. The scenes where she is engaged in other domestic activities her body moves in weariness and is shrunken with hopelessness. The representation of Malini's appearance and interactions become elegant once she starts her dancing school. Dance infuses in Malini an enthusiasm and positivity that can be seen absent in the scenes where she is confined to her household. In exploring her talent, Malini also realises the toxicity that is spread over her marital life. Leena Rouhiainen observes that the body's sensuous and emotional capacity can be seen heightened through movement, as a dancing body is more focused on distinguishing how it feels and what it feels internally than usual social functions are (245). Tamara Borovica, drawing from Rouhiainen, says that "dance is hence suggested as a mode of being that facilitates tapping into bodily knowledge to explore one's ongoing relationship with the world" (3). It can be observed that dance taps Malini's awakening to the realisation of how she has been subjugated and her identity as an individual is suppressed in her marriage. Dancing gives her strength to liberate herself from the patriarchal demand of servitude towards her husband despite his unfaithfulness and insensitivity. Borovica finds in her study that dance has the power to open performers to "new flows, such as new ways of knowing with a sense of confusion, ambiguity, and uncertainty but also with strength, desire and passion about what womanhood is" (10).

In the climax scene Malini is shown to have tattooed a butterfly, symbolising her evolution from an immobile and stagnant and grim "pupa" to an independent and radiant individual. According to Nina Nyman women's tattoos can be seen as an expression of their right to express themselves and right to their own bodies (75). She further argues "if women's bodies are regulated by social rules, then making active decisions about those bodies make embodiment

an emancipatory act” (ibid. 80). Malini’s tattooing of her body is to emphasise her emancipation from the chains of her marriage. Nayman says, “Through tattooing, the place in which one is located is embodied, both physically and mentally” (ibid. 80). The tattoo of butterfly inked by Malini is portrayed to indicate she is flying to liberate herself.

The film depicts her agency in making decisions about her life and relationships, highlighting the importance of female autonomy and the rejection of patriarchal control.

4.2.3.2. Redefining Love and Relationships

The film offers an alternative perspective on love and relationships by focusing on emotional compatibility, mutual respect, and personal growth. It rejects the idea that romantic relationships are solely defined by societal expectations and superficial factors. Malini befriends Raman and they grow closer. They become inspiration to each other to explore their hitherto veiled layers of subjectivities. However, their relationship never takes the shape of any institutionalised forms of bond. When Malini leaves her husband's home, despite taking shelter in Raman’s place, she finds an independent living for herself. Contrary to the representations of popular narratives where the end note is when the hero and heroine unite, *Ramante Edanthottam* represents two individuals who have set out to explore their individual journeys taking inspiration from the love and respect they share.

4.2.3.3. Nature and Embodied Experience

The film's setting, an idyllic plantation, serves as a metaphor for the characters' journeys of self-discovery and the embodiment of their emotions. The lush natural surroundings provide a space for introspection, healing, and personal growth. Malini’s first interaction with Edanthottam, an ecofriendly resort set up by Raman amidst Miyawaki plantations, awakens her to the violent and toxic nature of her marriage. Malini stays back at the resort when her family

and friends go to visit a film shooting. She goes for a walk with Raman through the Miyawaki greenery. Raman's approach to and treatment of nature makes her realise how she is being mistreated and disrespected in her marriage. She tells Raman that finding soulful connections in life is the hardest challenge she has ever faced. Malini visits Edanthottam again without informing Elvis. Her interactions with the greenery, cultivation and the cohabitation of humans and animals in the Edanthottam make her understand what respect and understanding mean in life. The film dedicates a song sequence capturing Malini's long walks through the forest, playing in the lake and taking part in the agricultural activities of Edanthottam. Malini is seen most joyous when she is in Edanthottam and exploring forest and water bodies. Malini's body glows as she interacts with the environment of Edanthottam. Edanthottam and its greenery and water bodies play a pivotal role in Malini's awakening to self-liberation and her journey towards empowerment.

4.2.4. *Take Off* (2017)

The film follows the journey of Sameera (played by Parvathy Thiruvothu), a nurse who migrates to Iraq during the war. She comes from an orthodox Muslim family. Sameera is a divorcee and has a son, whose custody is split between the separated parents. As the eldest daughter, the family's financial burden is vested on her. Sameera navigates through the discrimination and restrictions she receives as a divorced woman from the community, unsolicited sexual advances in the workplace and the insufficient income from her job. Sameera suffers from depression due to various social and financial conditions she endures. She decided to marry Shaheed, her colleague who has long been having a romantic interest in her. Sameera becomes pregnant again. Sameera moves to Iraq, with a team of nineteen nurses including Shaheed. As they reach the country, they realise Iraq is going through attacks from ISIS. Faizal,

Sameera's former husband, sends their son to Sameera amidst the war. The kid initially finds it shocking to acknowledge Shaheed and his mother's pregnancy. As the ISIS attacks escalate, Shaheed goes missing. Sameera approaches the embassy where she meets Manoj, the Indian ambassador. The area, where their hospital is located, falls into ISIS hands. Sameera, as advised by Manoj, leads the team of nurses by teaching them basic religious rules to disguise themselves as Muslims. With the intervention of the central and state governments and certain informal channels, ISIS agrees to free the nurses. Meanwhile, due to Sameera's perseverance, she finds Shaheed among ISIS detainees. She pleads and rescues Shaheed. They are brought to Kurdistan and the embassy takes them from there and sends them back to Kerala..

4.2.4.1. Veiled Body as a Site

Sameera's marriage to Faizal is a charity wedding as her family is deprived of the financial privileges to arrange marriage for her. Sameera has done nursing and the education loan is paid from her salary. Her salary is the only source of income for the family too. However, Sameera's in-laws, who are settled in an Arab country, do not approve of her working outside home. Sameera, on the contrary, is carefree about rigid religious dictates within the house. She moves around without covering her head, eats when men dine, and often skips performing namaz. Sameera's carefreeness troubles the elders of the family. Faizal gives her hints that his parents are disturbed by her disregard towards religious practices. One day when Sameera goes out for work, her mother-in-law asks another female member of the family to send a hijab to Sameera. Winchelen says the religious foundations of wearing hijab comes from the Qur'an's emphasis on women being modest. "Say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty. They should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty" (Qur'an quoted in Winchelen 207). The insistence of covering the head,

particularly when woman crosses men or when she is in public spheres, necessitates to understand veiling as a ‘situated embodied practice’ (Secor 7). The practice of veiling often restricts women’s accessibility and mobility. The act of sending a hijab to Sameera through another veiled daughter-in-law is a religiously encoded reminder that her public life is restricted. It is a reminder of ‘modesty’ expected from her. “In Islam, the human body is regarded as a cause of shame that must be hidden and covered...A woman’s body is imbued with sexuality: bodily movements and the style, shape and colour of female clothing have the potency to instigate male sexual arousal” (Siraj 717). The film shows how her in-law family feels threatened by Sameera’s bodily movements, her subtle romantic exchanges with Faizal and in her work life. The disapproving glances of the father-in-law when Sameera eats along with men by serving herself from the same dining table, and when Faizal forgets to wake up for Fajr¹¹. Sameera’s sexualised appearance causes unsettling for the family’s pious and restrained environment. The Qur’an says the believing women:

... should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband’s fathers . . . and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments.

(Qur’an 24 30 –31)

Though Qur’an dictates men also to lower their gaze and be modest and prescribes how men should wear their clothing, the practice is starkly different for men and women in their experiences of their bodies. The proposed social lives for men and women as designed in normative and patriarchal societies give more emphasis on women’s modesty. Women’s

¹¹ The prayer performed by Muslims before sunrise in remembrance of God

identities are hidden and their sexualities are thereby restricted, thereby their mobility and agency being regulated. Sameera's carefreeness in refusing to abide by religious doctrines is a form of resistance to the patriarchal religious prescriptions.

However, Sameera's religious choices are shown as specifically situated and contextualised. Though Sameera denies to wear hijab when she was in her husband's house, her return to Kerala after divorce affects her choice of not wearing the veil. When her uncle comes to visit her, at home and at the hospital canteen, Sameera covers her head before meeting him. Her economic status has a greater impact on her resistance to patriarchal and religious prescriptions. When better salary and living infrastructure is affordable, Sameera confidently employs her agency to negate religious doctrines that she thinks restricts and desexualises her. As she loses the better paying job and struggles to meet the financial demands of the family, Sameera often covers her head when she has to encounter male members of the family, particularly her maternal uncle. Sameera's religious choices are affected by her financial status.

Mohammed Sanjeer Alam observed that women in Islamic settings are more prone to social disadvantages, especially in the Indian context (208). Sameera's compulsion to migrate for a better paying job to support her family is constantly hindered by her male relatives. Her status as a young divorced woman is cited as the reason by her maternal uncle for the family's disapproval for her migration. The extended family wants her to remarry as there is no provision to migrate and work for a young and unmarried woman in their community. When her colleagues from other religious communities, who are unmarried, find it smoother to arrange their migration, Sameera's religious setting disallows her to choose a better career option. Sameera's veiling of her head whenever she meets her uncle is to appear as desexualised as possible to convince the family head for his approval. Alam says "women in Islamic settings occupy a

distinctive and separate position that effectively denies them autonomy” as “Islam is more patriarchal than other religions” (ibid.). The uncle denies them permission to sell the property, despite it being owned by Sameera’s mother, by virtue of his position as the patriarch. He effectively places the condition before Sameera that without getting remarried Sameera’s migration is impossible, thereby eliminating her agency in decision-making. Sameera agrees, but resists the overarching patriarchal power by choosing her groom by herself.

4.2.4.2. Mothered Body as a Site

Sameera’s second marriage is to Shaheed, her colleague who has long been nurturing a romantic interest in her. She soon finds herself pregnant. Sameera, with heightened pressure on her to navigate family and migration, decides to abort the pregnancy and approaches a gynaecologist. Roth C. and Paton D. say, “The politics of fertility control often involves the micropolitics of everyday life” (888). The pregnancy is controlled and surveilled by the ‘power relations among family members, organised along gendered and generational lines’ (ibid.). Sameera’s husband objects to her decision to abort the pregnancy strictly. She explains her concerns to the gynaecologist that her migration and career may be adversely impacted by the pregnancy. She is also concerned that her elder child, born in her first marriage, may find it distressing as she has not discussed her remarriage with him. Shaheed, who appeared as understanding and supportive, turns derisive regarding her concerns about her career and her son. He declares she is attempting to kill the second child for her first one. The gynaecologist also does not show any sympathy towards Sameera, whose struggles she is aware of. She even lectures Sameera to avoid taking sleeping pills and medicines for depression. Shaheed’s mother, who was apprehensive of his marriage to a divorcee, arrives hearing the news of pregnancy. She objects to Sameera's migration during the gestation period and asks her father to cancel the visa.

Shaheed's mother is portrayed as embedded with more voice in the matter than Sameera's parents as she belongs to the paternal setting. "Women's increasing authority as they age has, in many situations, been made possible only because their greater power depended on them ensuring that younger women comply with patriarchal norms and constraints" (ibid.) Sameera, here, is denied of her autonomy as the primary decision-maker as her maternal behaviour.

Upon migrating to Iraq, Sameera is found delimited by her former husband's and current husband's expectations of motherhood. Faizal flies down to send her son amidst the ISIS attack in Iraq, as his family's financial situation is crumbling. Sameera is forced to hide her pregnancy from her son as the child is unaware of her marriage to Shaheed. Fertility...has always been a locus of conflict and struggle. (ibid.). Though Sameera fails to exercise her bodily autonomy to the patriarchal powers, the representation of how Sameera perceives these power arrangements challenges the popular portrayal of pregnancy and motherhood. The conflicts and struggles of maternity and pregnancy are not glorified. The gestating body of Sameera serves as a site where gendered and generational power relations operate in their attempt to regulate her autonomy and independence. The power struggle is captured by the narrative through her lens and is portrayed in microdetails as she navigates through.

4.2.4.3. Sisterhood and Solidarity

Soon after their arrival in Tikrit, Iraq, the ISIS attacks escalated in the area. Shaheed moves to Mosul as he understands Sameera's elder son needs time and space to understand and process the new family situation. He joins the army medical team in Mosul, from where he goes missing as the place falls into the hands of ISIS within a day. Sameera approaches the Indian embassy for assistance. Meanwhile Tikrit also gets captured by the terrorist group. The ISIS

group uses the nineteen Indian nurses stranded with them as human shields and decides to shift them to their headquarters in Mosul. Sameera's correspondence with the Indian embassy helps them in designing how to manipulate the terrorist group. Sameera teaches her fellow nurses the basics of Islamic practices as the embassy has advised them to disguise as Muslims. The very doctrines that turned these groups into religious extremists and terrorists are used by these nurses to trick them and thereby rescue themselves from their capture. The sisterhood they share, regardless of their religious settings, and their mutual trust and solidarity are shown as the pivotal force in combating ISIS terror.

"The importance of female kin and friendship networks to women's wellbeing" is effectively represented in the film, especially in their workplace (Green 175). Sameera is always supported by her fellow female colleagues and vice versa. Their leisure times, which is dominantly perceived as "uncommitted time" (ibid.), play a crucial role in shaping their solidarity to fight their everyday oppressions and the ISIS terror.

4.2.5. *Mayaanadhi* (2017)

Mayaanadhi talks about the intricate journey of Aparna (played by Aishwarya Lekshmi) and Mathan, who once were in love. They broke up due to a financial fraud committed by Mathan. Aparna, the provider of her family, is a struggling actor. Mathan continues to be a con and gets involved in the murder of a policeman. Though broken up, they love each other. Mathan keeps coming back to Aparna. However, she refuses to materialise their feelings as her trust in him has shattered.

4.2.5.1. The Agencied Body

Aparna is introduced as attending an audition for the role of heroine in a prestigious banner. As she renders her introduction, the selectors tell her that she is considered only because of her association with the popular actress Sameera. Aparna, who was giving a formulaic performance, is told to be original if she really aspires to be in films. Having hurt her ego, Aparna sheds the fake persona she was wearing and becomes extremely honest with saying she is much more talented than her friend Sameera. She concludes “more than anything else, I deserve a better life”(19:52- 19:53). Aparna was victim of a financial scam played by Mathan in college, due to which she had to discontinue her Engineering graduation. Since then, she has been working in multiple ways to pay the debts and support her family. However, these struggles could never force her to give up her dreams and determination to achieve them. She leads an independent life, living separate from the family in the same city. Aparna is shown as walking through the deserted city at midnight to make her way to her flat after programmes. She buys food and does the negotiations by herself. Rosalind Gill says that empowerment needs to be understood broadly and “mundane activities are championed as proud, bold assertions of independence from oppressive patriarchal hegemony” (Barbara Klein quoted in Gill 36). Aparna’s everyday activities and responses are represented to establish her as an independent women agency very much. Whenever she has to be at the mercy of Sameera, her face drops, and she refuses to count her remuneration in front of Mathan.

She, regardless of the financial struggles in her life, does not get lured by luxury coming through wicked ways. When Mathan offers her a comfortable life with the money he is about to get, she shuts the door on his face realising it is through some fraudulence he has done.

Appu remains honest and truthful to herself and the people around her. When Mathan asks her for commitment, she clearly denies it even after moments of physical intimacy. When her mother arrives unexpectedly and sees them together after a night of intimacy, Appu does not try to hide what has happened. Both Mathan and her mother call her a “prostitute” for having sexual pleasure outside of wedlock. Neither the financial problems nor the moral pressure makes her yield to unwanted commitments in life. She is narrated as a strong woman who navigates her own path, making choices that prioritise her own wellbeing.

The film subverts traditional gendered power dynamics by presenting Aparna as a character who challenges societal norms and refuses to be defined solely in relation to men. Appu’s father is no more. When her mother sees Appu and Mathan together at their house, Appu sits at the handle of a “Charukasera” (easy chair), traditionally used by the head of the family in patriarchal households. *Mayaanadhi* presents a progressive view of gendered embodiment by emphasising the importance of individual agency and autonomy.

4.2.5.2. The Desiring Body

Aparna is shown as unabashed in exploring her sexual desire. When her past is unveiled at the question of her flatmate about Mathan, the flashback opens with their intimate moments in a cybercafé. Appu and Mathan, passionately kissing, are caught by the café owner and are asked to get out. However, Appu showcases the ecstasy of pleasure on her face, which beams in joy rather than embarrassment or disgrace. Appu represents women who are aware of their bodily desires and their rightfulness in exercising it. Their love making sequences in the car also emphasises Appu’s confidence and self assurance in pursuing her desires wherever she is. Thus, *Mayaanadhi* offers a portrayal of a woman who, in contrast to the “...once sexualised representations of women ... as passive, mute” is “presented as an active, desiring sexual

subject...” (Gill 42). When Mathan asks, when he meets her after years, if he can kiss her, Appu says “not yet”. Though she refutes any possibility of rebuilding their broken relationship, Appu is unhesitant to continue exploring bodily pleasures with him. She is not chained by the normative expectations of women to have sexual intimacy only with their married partner after wedlock.

When she gets a filmic opportunity after her long wait and struggle, an excited Appu calls Mathan home. They eventually have sex at Appu’s house. Mathan, who reads her actions as a positive nod to his future plans of getting married and relocating to Dubai asks affirmation. Appu categorically states “sex is not a promise” and that she was aroused due to her overwhelming excitement about getting the film offer. Gill presents a remarkable observation that a significant aspect of shifting from “objectification to sexual subjectification” is that it is framed through the discourse of freedom and choice (ibid. 42). Appu refuses to define her sexual autonomy in relation to Mathan. Regardless of the existence of their relationship as partners, Appu finds it rightful to fulfil her sexual desires with him. She has already denied his plans of getting married to each other, that too several times. When Mathan thinks it is convenient to bring up the discussion again as she engaged in a sexual act with him, Appu clearly tells him not to mix both choices together. In doing so, Appu also emphasises on her right to seek pleasure in whichever ways she prefers. Gill says “...the notions of choice and ‘pleasing one’s self’, i a discourse of feminine empowerment (ibid. 43). Appu does not hesitate to indulge in pleasure and joy when she gets a film opportunity, which she has been waiting for a long time. The opportunity is not only for her artistic self, but also a great financial support. She is not concerned by the notions of chastity associated with engaging in physical intimacy. She loves Mathan, however, not convinced to institutionalise their intimacy. Mathen, on the other hand, is desperately working

towards institutionalising their relationship. Appu does not corroborate with society's approval. She is intended to explore herself. "Women are presented as not seeking men's approval but as pleasing themselves, and, in so doing, they 'just happen' to win men's admiration" (ibid. 42). Mathan, for this very reason, is not repelled by her reactions. He keeps coming back to her. Appu's confidence and conviction is greatly admired by him. He, an unsure and vulnerable self, finds shelter in her.

Appu, who proclaims sex is not a promise, is condemned by both her mother and Mathan as promiscuous. However, the narrative does not punish her. She finds her dream career, and in the climax scene, Appu is seen enacting an intricate role in a film. Gill draws on Mulvey and Kaplan to say, "...women's sexual agency is flaunted and celebrated, rather than condemned or punished. This marks a significant disruption to older, more established patterns of visual culture in which no such active sexuality was permitted to women without grave consequences" (ibid. 52).

4.2.6. *Godha* (2017)

Godha presents a female protagonist, Aditi Singh (played by Wamiqa Gabbi), who defies societal expectations by pursuing a career in wrestling. The film challenges the notion that sports are primarily a masculine domain and explores the struggles and triumphs of a woman who challenges societal norms through her physicality.

4.2.6.1. Sporting Body as a Site

The representation of gendered embodiment in *Godha* goes beyond physicality and explores the empowerment and agency of its characters. Aditi's journey of self-discovery and her commitment to her passion for wrestling serve as symbols of empowerment, breaking free from societal expectations and gender roles. Despite the harsh discrimination and aggression she faces,

Aditi remains single-minded about her goal to establish herself as a wrestler and doesn't allow the discouragements affect her determination. Guthrie argues that women's embodiment can be greatly changed by martial arts, which involve an empowering development of mental and physical agency (107-119). Training as a wrestler from a very young age enables Aditi to resist the severity of discrimination with her will power. The grooming that has empowered her to sense the calculations of the opponent and prepare herself to defend the moves becomes her strength in identifying obstacles in life and reacting to them.

Nancy Theberge finds that "the potential for sport to act as an agent of women's liberation, rather than their oppression, stems mainly from the opportunity that women's sporting activity affords them to experience their body as strong and powerful and free from male domination" (11-12). She refers to Mackinnon to emphasise that "women's sporting practice can challenge gender inequality by challenging sexual stereotypes and patriarchal control over bodies" (ibid. 12). Aditi's struggle against the attempt of male members to subordinate her to familial roles, her escape from home state to Kerala to take shelter at a male friend's family which is hardly known to her and initiate training under a coach who is not a professional are all can be seen as stemming from the confidence she has earned as a result of her grooming as a wrestler from a very young age. The sport has inculcated confidence, self-esteem in her and has empowered her to challenge the possible discriminatory acts against her. Aditi, in refusing to accept the dictate of male family members and Anjaneya Das to subdue to the roles that have been assigned by the patriarchal societal system to women, subverts the sexual stereotypes and instates control over her body.

4.2.6.2. Subverting Stereotypes: Romance and Relationships

The film also subverts traditional gendered expectations within romantic relationships. Aditi, as she has to flee from her home and native place to escape from being forced into marriage, resides at Das's house throughout her training period. Das, who has mistaken her friendliness for romantic interest, gets irritated with her complete involvement in wrestling training and grows insecure about her grooming with male wrestlers. Das explains his discomfort to Aditi by saying that good girls don't wrestle with boys, and he doesn't like it. Aditi reacts sternly to Das, unlike the heroines who blush in secret at their intimate male friend becoming possessive about them in Malayalam cinema has been producing. She responds to him that, for her, wrestling is everything, and she would not care for anyone who tries to control her and stand in her way to improve her skills, even if it is her family. Hurt, Das explicitly expresses his love, but Aditi turns down his proposal with a strong physical gesture.

Aditi is seen in this scene as challenging not only the derogatory remarks by Das, but also the devaluing of women wrestling itself. Das comes from a village where wrestling is treated not just as a sport but as part of a culture and tradition. His father and all the elders around him are connected to wrestling in some or other way. Das himself was once trained as a wrestler. Despite these factors, Das is not hesitant to devalue Aditi's commitment towards wrestling bringing the binary of good girl/bad girl implying she is engaged in a non feminine activity which a woman from a "cultured" background would not have opted for. Aditi questions his division of girls as good and bad. She warns him from intruding and commenting on her personal choices. Das's further attempt to propose to her and thereby hoping to get his hands on her life goals is also rebuffed by Aditi. Aditi continues her strive towards establishing herself as an acclaimed wrestler without yielding to Das's romantic proposal, but continuing to train under his father.

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4.2.7. *Uyare* (2019)

The film presents Pallavi (played by Parvathy Thiruvothu) as a resilient character who triumphs over adversity. After an acid attack, Pallavi undergoes physical and emotional struggles, but she refuses to let her circumstances define her. The film portrays her resilience as she rebuilds her life and pursues her dreams, emphasising the power of inner strength and determination in the face of gendered violence and trauma.

4.2.7.1. Disfigured Body as a Site

Uyare portrays Pallavi's journey of reclaiming agency and shaping her own identity. Pallavi, despite being ambitious and spirited, is most often shown succumbing to Govind's, her boyfriend's, expectations of her to be a submissive and compliant woman. His obvious

displeasure with Pallavi dancing in public and wearing dresses of her choice develops a fear in Pallavi to discuss her interests and needs with him. Govind uses self-harm and emotional blackmail as his strategies for disciplining Pallavi to make her come his way. Pallavi resorts to hiding and lying about the progress of her life from Govind so as to escape from his abuse, at least temporarily. However, the relocation to Mumbai has impacted her personal relationships and support system in an empowering way. Her intense training as a pilot enhances her confidence and self-assurance. Pallavi's transformed subjectivity finds it unbearable to tolerate the toxicity of Govind, and she breaks the relationship on the night he abuses her and slut shames her on the street. Govind attacks Pallavi the next day by throwing acid on her face.

Kuriakose et al. point out: "...violence against women operates within a particular political context and social relation marked by structural gender inequalities... Gendered differences are sustained through normalised violence on individuals or groups in subordinated situation in the power relation" (67). They say: "gender-based and sexualised violence are 'normalised and performed through material and symbolic acts that are carried out in regular life through ordinary networks' making them 'routine violence'" (Chatterjee quoted in Kuriakose et al. 67). The symbolic violence operated through language and silence against Pallavi in everyday life is not read as violence proper, rather they have been overlooked and normalised as extension of excessive love and possessiveness. The 'routine' violence did not take a material form as long as Pallavi was obedient and submissive.

Despite the physical and emotional scars, she refuses to be defined solely by her appearance. The film explores her transformation from a victim to a survivor who challenges societal expectations and embraces her true self.

4.2.7.2. Female Camaraderie and Solidarity

Uyare emphasises the importance of supportive relationships and solidarity in the face of gendered violence. Pallavi's friend Sariya D'Costa (played by Anarkali Marikkar) stands as a pillar of strength and support, offering unwavering encouragement throughout her journey. It is Sariya who constantly reminds her that relationships are only one part of life and not the entire life. Sariya, by satirising how Pallavi is trying to fulfil Govind's expectations, tries to remind her that she is succumbing to the traps of patriarchy. Eileen Green tells by drawing from F. Gray, that “women’s parody of traditional stereotypes can also become a subversive force” (181). Sariya laughingly describes how she broke up her relationship when it compelled her to conform to traditional expectations of an obedient and submissive woman, in giving Pallavi the courage to claim her agency in the relationship. Green says

Women drawing upon feminist discourses, for example which cite socialisation rather than biology as the mechanism through which women learn to undervalue themselves, often use a joking style to acknowledge the discrepancy between feminist ideas and what is commonly accepted as ‘real world’. Within one conversation women may be simultaneously resisting gender stereotypes and acknowledging the power of dominant discourses which construct masculinities and femininities

(ibid. 179)

Sariya cites her breaking up in a humorous tone to hint at the toxic nature of the relationship Pallavi is trying to defend. Sariya, throughout the film, maintains her sarcastic and humorous reactions to challenging situations. It is Sariya who invites Pallavi to Delhi to visit a

restaurant run by acid attack survivors to support one another. Their camaraderie and solidarity give Pallavi strength to fight her situation, both legally and socially.

4.2.7.3. Redefining Beauty Standards

The film confronts societal beauty standards and the objectification of women. Pallavi's facial scars serve as a poignant symbol of the violence she endured, but the narrative rejects the idea that physical appearance determines a woman's worth. Pallavi, on her way back from Delhi, meets Vishal Rajashekharan, the Executive Vice President of Cloud 9 airlines. Vishal had met Pallavi before when she was a pilot trainee. Pallavi's disfigured face shocks Vishal. He offers her help in case she needs any. She asks him if he can recruit her as an air hostess. Though Pallavi asks for air hostess job only to silence Vishal, he gives it a serious consideration. He effortfully convinces the board of the airline company, which is headed by his father. Pallavi joins their air hostess team.

Pallavi's joining as an air hostess challenges the conventional notions associated with how beauty is perceived. Vishal tells the media that it's high time to redefine the standards of beauty when they ask him if this job mandates 'beauty'. He tells them that Pallavi has intelligence and empathy, and these qualities are of prime importance to him. Pallavi serves as an air hostess in Cloud 9, and the film shows how her workspace is sensitised towards her. As Vishal affirms, when someone throws acid on the face of a woman with promising intellect, it does not end her future and career. Pallavi's determination of not confining herself as victim is supplemented by Vishal's firm stand to revisit the normative criteria of occupational and social status.

4.2.8. *Kumbalangi Nights* (2019)

Kumbalangi Nights revolves around the children of Napoleon and how they navigate through estrangement, discrimination and societal pressures to realise their paths and purpose of life. The film introduces four distinct male characters, each grappling with their insecurities and vulnerabilities. Through their journeys, the film emphasises the importance of emotional intelligence, empathy, and breaking free from societal pressures to conform to stereotypical expectations of machismo. The children of Napoleon, Saji, Bony, Bobby and Franky live in a house that is only partially built. Saji and Bony are related through the marriage of Saji's father and Bony's mother. Bony and Franky are born out of this marriage. However, Napoleon passed away, and their mother left in pursuit of spirituality. The boys are unemployed and directionless, except for Franky. Franky is supporting his education through fellowship and dreams for a better future.

Though their introduction begins with the brothers fighting with each other out of frustration, it is soon revealed that each one is struggling to deal with their own insecurities. Saji is dependent on his friend, a migrant from Tamil Nadu, for his day-to-day living. Bony is dumb and is part of a local dance troupe. Bobby is unemployed and does not have any motivation in life. He suffers from emotional problems that are growing due to the lack of presence of his mother while growing up. As Bobby is born in the wedlock of Napoleon and his mother, with Saji and Bony as their respective sons, the complexity of family ties has most affected him. Franky is a school-going boy, who detests the estranged environment of the house. He aims at building a better future and invests in studying.

4.2.8.1. Redefining Masculinity

Kumbalangi Nights presents a nuanced portrayal of masculinity, challenging traditional notions and associated toxic behaviours. Bobby, of the four brothers, desires to conform to a normative family structure with frequent machismo exhibitions. When his only friend, Prashanth, introduces his girlfriend, Sumisha, to Bobby, he immediately resorts to body shaming. Though sugar-coated, the tendency to ridicule his own friend arises from Bobby's jealousy that, despite being handsome according to conventional beauty standards, he is not pursued by any woman. Sumisha, understanding Bobby's subtle taunt, replies with a similar jibe at Bobby to establish that his idea of beauty is flawed. Prashanth, who is also jobless, is motivated by Sumi to pursue a career. Bobby cannot digest that a woman can inspire a man and direct him to find a purpose. He shames their relationship again, saying, “ഒരു ചായ കുടിക്കാൻ വേണ്ടി ആരും ചായക്കട തൊടങ്ങൂ”¹² a misogynistic and lewd usage in Kerala which implies women are only objects of sexual pleasure. Prashanth gives him a long look and states he wants to start “living”. Prashanth and Sumisha and their relationship, though constantly confronting the patriarchal and masculine thoughts in him, has a greater impact on Bobby's perceptions. It is through Sumisha that Bobby meets Babymol. When Bobby advances to kiss her despite her denying consent, she reacts sharply. While leaving the space, he angrily states, “ഞാനേ ഒരാണാണ്”¹³ to which Babymol responds “get lost”. When Bobby storms out of the theatre, the movie they are watching is shown as *Arjun Reddy*, a movie that received severe criticism for its glorification of toxic masculinity. The narrative juxtaposes Bobby's behaviour and the movie, which represents toxic masculinity, to convey how he has embodied the elements of toxic behaviours. The movie *Arjun Reddy* (2017) contains scenes

¹² ഒരു ചായ കുടിക്കാൻ വേണ്ടി ആരും ചായക്കട തൊടങ്ങൂ?
 oru tʃa:ja kutikka:n ve:nti a:re:m tʃa:jakkata tɔʔaŋŋu:?
 Who starts a café to have just a tea?

¹³ ഞാനേ ഒരാണാണ്
 ja:ne: ora:ŋa:n
 I am a MAN, mind you)

where the titular hero publicly kisses his love interest. In their article on *Kabir Singh* (2019), a remake of *Arjun Reddy* (2017), D. Ganguly and R. Singh observe that “...kissing amidst an approving audience is an act of daring and also of fearless possession. He does not ask for consent, and neither does he wait for it.” They say that an overtly masculine script establishes that a man ‘cannot learn to be a man without learning how to transact with women’ (Mosher and Tomkins quoted in D. Ganguly and R. Singh 11). The women character in *Arjun Reddy/Kabir Singh* endures the macho hero’s actions without any protest. However, Babymol reacts sharply. Bobby, who has normalised the ideas of heteronormative enactments of masculinity, is taken aback. Further efforts of Babymol bring about changes in Bobby. However, the meeting with his mother becomes a decisive point.

Leelamma, their mother, has left home long ago and is part of a spiritual team. Upon deciding to marry Babymol, Bobby finds their house as an incomplete and inappropriate space to bring a woman to. He initially considers relocating as Bony also brings his Afro-American girlfriend home. He feels having a ‘head of the family’ can make their house look like a family. When they meet their mother, they realise that Leelamma is emotionally detached from them. She denies the possibility of her coming home and staying with them even for ten days. She tells them she can only pray for their best. A disheartened Bobby, while talking to his brothers, resorts to cursing the disconnection shown by their mother. He calls her “crazy” and “selfish”. Saji, their father’s eldest son, interrupts Bobby and asks him not to curse her. He says that when they are not ready to do anything for one another, expecting their mother to be selfless is unfair. He recollects her struggles when she came to the house after marriage. Saji tells Bobby that she might have gone exhausted with all those sufferings and needs rest at this age. He tells him to be respectful of her

decision. Thereafter Bobby is shown as shedding his normative ideals and embracing the nonconformity of their household.

The transformation of Bobby is one of the major representational strategies through which the film challenges the masculine behaviours that are established and glorified by popular cinema. When Bobby finds Bony has brought his Afro-American girlfriend home and learns Saji is bringing his late friend's wife and newborn also there, he questions the absence of a patriarch to control them.

4.2.8.2. Unveiling Toxic Masculinity

Babymol's sister, Simi, is newly married to Shammi. Shammi is introduced as relishing in his own mirror image of a clean-shaved face. While looking in the mirror, he notices a bindi. He, shifted after marriage to a family that consists only of women, removes the bindi with the sharp edge of the razorblade and flushes it in the washbasin till it gets drained. Once it disappears, he washes his hands, looks at the mirror and declares "Raymond: the complete man" (0:08:11 - 0:08:21). 'The ideology of hypermasculinity valorises masculine traits and negates feminine aspects' (Ganguly and Singh 18). Hypermasculinity, according to Mosher and Tomkins, disregards feminine qualities and amplifies masculine traits to fulfil the objectives of 'hostile dominant goals motivated by the effects of excitement, anger, disgust and contempt' (64). Shammi creates an atmosphere of terror around the house for boys who play in the neighbourhood. Simi, who gets perplexed by his reactions, is made fun of by him. He constantly asks her, "why are you so scared?" or "how much will you be scared?" to Simi to establish that Simi is scared of him. Donald P. Levy explains that hegemonic masculinity involves men actively engaging in establishing the hierarchical positioning of themselves and entailing the subordination of women (2099- 2101).

He assumes the position of his late father-in-law by himself and believes he has acquired absolute authority over the family. He asks his mother-in-law, in the pretext of eating together, if he can move his chair to the centre. The space, supposedly meant for the head of the family to sit, infuses in him a sense of authority and power. R. W. Connell describes masculinity as the ‘configuration of gender practices which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (77). Shammi demands to know everything that goes on in the life of Babymol, his wife’s sister. He shamelessly interferes while Babymol and Simi have a private conversation. Despite them indicating their discussion is exclusive and private, Shammi insists on disclosing. Donaldson says that hegemonic masculinity functions as an ideal for men who strive to embody its features every day (644). It offers institutional privileges and power to them and that very factors make it a sought after identity. Connell calls it a ‘patriarchal dividend’ for embodying power and privilege within social structures (64). When Babymol showcases discontent about how Shammi has thrown out the guest from the homestay, Shammi orders her to stop the homestay venture as such. He cites that if anything goes wrong, people will ask only Shammi, implying the hierarchical rank in the family he holds, which assumes responsibility for the women.

Shammi slams his wife’s uncle for being a house maker. The uncle, who takes pride in how he ignored the gossip about him for shifting to his wife’s house and for his culinary skills, advises Shammi also to be dismissive about what others say. Shammi feels his manliness is humiliated and retorts to Uncle, saying he is not a “jobless housemaker”. He chuckles in the pleasure of instating his masculinity over their uncle. Kimmel explicates that performing actions that signify manhood under the observation of other men emphasises the embodying of one’s

masculine status and the assertion of its authenticity (238). Shammi ridicules Saji and Bobby, who come to discuss Babymol's and Bobby's marriage, for their unconventional family environment. He calls their house a "lodge" where no dignified family would like to marry their girls. He calls himself the only reliance of three hapless women. He also qualifies himself as heading a modern family that permits girls' freedom to an extent. However, he condemns the law of the land, which gives freedom to women to choose their life partners, calling it very unfortunate.

4.2.8.3. Masculinity as Performance

Mosher and Tomkins explain that masculinity is a performative act. Since it is fragile and can be challenged at any point, they point out that it compels men to resort to overcompensating through inflated acts at every juncture the man feels his masculinity is at threat (61). Shammi does the same, though, terrorising the neighbourhood boys, establishing fear in his wife by constantly stating it and assuming authority by evicting the guests in the homestay and ordering them to shut it down. When Shammi senses his decision will be violated and Babymol will not subscribe to his authority, he wakes the whole family in the middle of the night. He even attempts to wake up their aged mother, who has slept after taking medicine. In the pretext of holding a discussion, Shammi wants to enforce his power of being the elder male member, who is the worldliest and, thus, the authority to make decisions for all of them. Shammi, throughout the conversations, tries to establish Babymol as ignorant and driven by the representations of romance in films. Kimmel notes that 'one of the centrepieces of that exaggerated masculinity is putting women down' (191). Shammi questions Bobby's family background and financial situation, stating he has no privilege to share equal space with Shammi. Vandello et al. points out that, according to the studies on masculinities, the 'real man' should be heterosexual and

mentally and physically strong, and they should be displaying excellence in financial and occupational status (1326–1327). It reaches its peak when Babymol refuses to conform to his authority. ‘Being born to one father’ is a qualifier macho character in popular Malayalam cinema used to hail themselves or challenge their male opponents. Shammi, too, uses the same to differentiate himself from Bobby and his brothers, saying the major difference is that he is born to ‘a single father’.¹⁴ In contrast, Bobby and his brothers have many fathers. However, to his rage, Babymol states that it is technically impossible to have many fathers, and everyone has only one. Having lost the argument and his male ego hurt, Shammi resorts to abuse. He questions her upbringing as a woman and insults her for not possessing feminine modesty. When Simi, his wife, asserts that Shammi cannot mistreat Babymol, regardless of his familial rank, he mysteriously shuts down and turns towards the wall after moving to a corner. Michel Kaufman elucidates that shaming becomes an indicator of failed masculinity for macho men. When their overperformance and inflated actions fail, that leads to psychological violence against themselves (12). Shammi goes into complete withdrawal for more than fifteen minutes straight. When the women turn back after calling his friend to decipher his actions, Shammi stands right behind them with a mysterious expression and, in a moment, starts unleashing violence. Vindello et al. say that to be a ‘real man’ embodying violence is essential, and the act of public violence validates their masculinity (1326-1327).

Shammi, after unleashing brutal violence over the women of the house and later on the Napoleon brothers, challenges them, saying, “ഷമ്മി ഹീറോ ആടാ ഹീറോ”¹⁴. However, the film concludes with Shammi as a villain. Not only in the climax but in Shammi’s every act of hypermasculinity and hegemonic masculinity is represented as wicked. With Babymol and the

¹⁴ ഷമ്മി ഹീറോ ആടാ ഹീറോ
 şammi hi:ro: a:ʔa: hi:ro:
 Shammi is the hero, mind you

Napoleon brothers constantly coming in contrast to Shammi's acts, the film uncovers and challenges the toxicity and machoism glorified by popular Malayalam cinema. When the Napoleon brothers reach to rescue Babymol and her family from Shammi, their mother pleads with them to call the police, saying Shammi is sick. The hegemonic and normative family structure Shammi attempts to enforce is established as untoward. The nonconformist family of the Napoleon brothers is represented as progressive and, therefore, embraceable.

4.2.8.4. Women Characters in *Kumbalangi Nights*

The film offers a portrayal of strong women characters. Sumisha, Bobby's friend Prashanth's girlfriend, challenges Bobby's concept of masculinity in their very first conversations. She refers to Vinayakan, an actor who comes from a dalit community and has established himself in heroic roles when Bobby ridicules Prashanth's physical appearance. Bringing dalit masculinity into the centre, represented as marginalised masculinity in popular Malayalam cinema, the character of Sumisha combats the dominant perception of masculinity and handsomeness.

Babymol, whose influence transforms Bobby, is an independent and opinionated woman. She is fearless in her expressions and critiques. She tells Shammi, her brother-in-law, that his act of throwing out their guest in the homestay is deplorable. She disregards her mother's attempt to silence her while expressing her dissent to Shammi. She emphasises the need to have boundaries and privacy when Shammi attempts to intervene in her conversations with her sister. Babymol is shown as attempting to challenge and resist Shammi's almost every attempt to bring patriarchal structure and prescriptions into their family. When Shammi ridicules Bobby and his brothers as being born to 'multiple fathers' and flaunts his greatest quality of being born to a single father, Babymol unambiguously tells him that it is biologically impossible to have multiple fathers.

Through her retort, Babymol dismantles the popular phrase of ‘ഒറ്റ തന്തക്ക് പിറന്നവൻ’¹⁵, which qualifies a hero as indomitable and respectable, as nothing great to be flaunted.

Simi, initially shown as fearful and subservient to Shammi, emerges strong when she orders Shammi not to address Babymol with disgraceful words. She firmly states that whatever sort of brother he is, he cannot abuse Babymol. Simi’s emergence as firm and steadfast in her challenge to Shammi’s aggression and abuse becomes pivotal in unfolding the pathologic layer of Shammi’s toxic masculine performances.

Sumisha, Babymol, and Simi play significant roles not only in challenging and exposing hegemonic and toxic masculinity but are also pivotal in bringing subordinate masculinities to the centre from the peripheries.

4.2.9. *Varane Avashyamund* (2020)

Varane Avashyamund revolves around Neena, a middle-aged divorcee and her daughter Nikita (Nikki). The film talks about how their relationship is impacted by their new neighbours in the flat complex, Bibeeesh (Fraud), Akashvani and Major Unnikrishnan.

4.2.9.1. Intersectionality of Gender and Age

Varane Avashyamund also explores the intersectionality of gender and age, portraying the experiences of older women. The character of Neena, a single mother and a widow, seeks companionship and finds love later in life. Tiina Vares notes that representations of elderly romance and sexuality were not desirable for the popular or mainstream culture. Older people’s lives are represented as asexual. Many often, the portrayals of their desires and sexual activeness

¹⁵ ഒറ്റ തന്തക്ക് പിറന്നവൻ
otta tantakk pirappavan
Born to a single father

are portrayed with a stroke of humour or joke (1). Neena is visualised in stark contrast to such mainstream representations of a middle-aged mother. Neena's explorations of romantic relationships as a young woman are discussed with respect and admiration by other characters, especially by her male cousin. Neena is presented as charming and attractive. Even young men praise her for her beauty. Vares draws from Susan Sontag to point out that there is a gradual reduction in the 'sexual value' and attractiveness in women with ageing (ibid. 11). Neena's visualisation challenges this popular notion of 'sexual disqualification' (ibid.). When she finds a potential companionship in Major Unnikrishnan, Neena pursues it, disregarding the rumours around the apartment and the obvious disapproval from her young daughter. Her storyline challenges the notion that love and romance are reserved solely for younger individuals, celebrating the agency and desires of older women.

Neena's flatmate, Akshavani, is a tele serial artist who lives with two boys, who are orphaned and unrelated to her. She has found the request of the boys' aunt to get a caretaker as an opportunity to escape from her widowhood. Despite being a retired employee from All India Radio, she takes up the caretaker job as it helped her to come and live in becamevourite city. She becomes gotice artist and later gets offers to act in Tamil television serials. Jai Ginn and Sara Arber say that navigating a new significance in old age can happen at an "intermediate level between that of the broad cultural scale and that of the individual personality" (330). They further state that it is imperative to allow interactive spaces for younger and older generations to transcend traditional expectations and generation gaps in combating the conventionally produced sense of self in and values that (ibid.). The film explores such a space for Akashavani to explore her individual personality by relocating to her dream city. The bond evolved between Akashavani, Neena, and Nikita transforms Nikita, the young daughter of Neena, in such a way to

reflect on her mother's aspirations and individuality. Akshavani's narration of her life journey helps Nikita rise above her narrow outlook on older generations of women. Akashavani explains to Nikita to be open-minded about relationships that come in one's way. She elucidates why it is necessary to focus on one's happiness rather than following the rigid norms of tradition.

4.2.9.2. Empowering Female Camaraderie

Varane Avashyamund emphasises the power of female friendships and solidarity. The characters of Neena and her student, Chinnu, form a strong bond and support each other through life's challenges. The film highlights the importance of women uplifting one another, breaking stereotypes, and defying societal limitations placed upon them. Chinnu, the free-spirited artistic girl from the Indo-French Cultural Centre where Neena teaches, becomes Neena's ally in resolving her confusions and conflicts surrounding her relationship with Nikita and Unnikrishnan.

Neena's relationship with her neighbour, Akashavani, brings comfort to both women, the former being a divorcee and the latter a widow. Both have relocated to a metropolitan city from semi-urban places in Kerala. Understanding the loneliness and the challenges in choosing unconventional life journeys, they become pillars for each other. Akashavani's presence in her life becomes decisive in resolving the conflict with Nikita, her daughter, who finds it unacceptable that her middle-aged and divorced mother initiates a romantic relationship of her own when the daughter is at a marriageable age, according to societal norms.

While Nikita finds it conflicting to accept and understand her mother, she comfortably befriends Dr. Shirley, the mother of her fiancé, whom she finds more adherent to societal practices. Shirley apparently caters to her needs as the mother figure whom she dreamt of, whereas Neena heads to her workplace. When her fiancée breaks the relationship upon knowing

Nikita's mother is planning to marry again, it is Shirley who comes to comfort her. The scene unravels the progressive layer of Shirley, who accepts Neena's choices and journey. She tells Nikita not to come to her 'home', shattering Nikita's idea of an all-encompassing space and 'complete family'. Shirley says neither her husband nor her son will understand the unconventionality of Nikita's and her mother's life journey and thus, it is better for Nikita not to choose her son over her mother's wishes. Though they dropped the marriage possibilities, Nikita and Shirley continued to be friends and later befriended Neena as well. The female camaraderie empowers these women to follow their choices and remain self-assured about breaking societal expectations about women's lives.

4.2.9.3. Challenging the Normative Beauty Standards

Chinnu is a stout and colour-skinned girl. However, she doesn't hold any insecurity regarding her physical appearance. She confidently rejects the claim of her mother's friend, who runs a weight loss clinic, that losing weight would bring better marriage/romantic prospects. Her relationship with her body is entirely based on her own personal choices, not on any societal expectations. Her self-assurance about her physique helps her let Neena also experience her beauty.

Neena, even at her middle age, is enchantingly dressed up. Neena's appearance and embodiment of femininity break the ways in which middle-aged mothers are represented in popular Malayalam cinema, where mothers of young woman/man are either invisibilised in the unending chores of the household or vilified/ridiculed for their public lives.

4.2.9.4. Negotiating Feminine Identity

The film also explores the negotiation of feminine identity through the character of Nikita, aka Nikki. Nikki is an independent, modern woman who is employed in a private

company. However, she grapples with societal expectations and finds herself torn between fulfilling traditional gender roles and following her dreams. Growing up, parented by a single mother, Nikita dreams about a perfect family. She feels that the cause of their struggles is her mother's love-marriage, due to which they did not have any support from the extended family. She rejects any possibility of romantic relationships in her life and looks for marriage proposals through registered matrimonial companies. Nikita always subtly criticises her mother's love life whereas Neena had several romantic affairs at her younger age. She finds it conflicting to accept that her mother still invests in public life. Even when she acknowledges her mother's bravery and strength in bringing her up as a single parent without any support system, Nikita expects her mother to conform to the image of a dutiful and compliant middle-aged woman the way society defines motherhood in middle-age. Her criticism sharpens when a potential marriage prospect is lost due to her mother's courtship with their neighbour. The older women of their apartment compel Nikita with their life stories to look at life beyond traditional social and familial roles. The character's journey reflects the challenges many women face in balancing their aspirations with societal pressures.

4.2.9.5. Challenging Stereotypical Masculinity

Major Unnikrishnan, played by Suresh Gopi, is a retired military officer who embodies strength and discipline but also showcases vulnerability and emotional depth. The character subverts the idea that masculinity must always be stoic and unemotional, highlighting the importance of embracing and expressing one's emotions. Unnikrishnan approaches a therapist to primarily treat his anger issues. However, the therapy allows him to understand the root of his emotional issues. The therapist says keeps the moustache only to appear as fearless, but he is a vulnerable being inside. This statement is made to challenge the notions of fearlessness,

invulnerability and stoicism associated with masculinity. *Varane Avashyamund*, following *Kumbalangi Nights*, advocates to do away with the preconceived notions around therapy and professional mental health support, where emotional problems are viewed as weakness and undesirable in men. These portrayals challenge the popular masculine representations by centralising their agonies, their cravings for emotional support and psychological conflicts. Their tears and sobs are not hidden from the narratives or juxtaposed with sequences of aggression and violence unleashed by them.

4.2.10. *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021)

The Great Indian Kitchen (TGIK from hereafter) revolves around the journey of a newlywed woman, taking place in a traditional Hindu Nair¹⁶ household. The film unravels her transformation, within the cinematic narrative, from an ostensibly liberated upbringing in her NRI parents' home to the boundaries of an orthodox married household.

4.2.10.1. The Kitchen as a Symbol of Gendered Roles

TGIK discusses how married life unfolds for a woman in a traditional arranged marriage, culminating in estrangement and divorce. As the film's title suggests, much screen space is devoted to the protagonist's life around the kitchen. The wife and all other women in the film, all unnamed, are engrossed in the kitchen, performing various tasks. The uprooting of the female protagonist from an apparently modernised family of an NRI parent to a traditional and conservative environment is indicated by the architecture of both houses. The kitchen in the in-laws' house is situated at a distance from other common areas of the house, thereby limiting

¹⁶ "Nair is a matrilineal community that constitute a large section of landed elite in Malabar" (3-4). The matrilineal kinship and descent were ended in 1933 by the Madras Marumakkathayam Act. This resulted in the "realignments of power along the lines of gender, generations, and changing access to property and authority..." (283) The film subtly reveals its backdrop, particularly highlighting the North Malabar setting of the in-law's family, through the presence of 2019 Lok Sabha election posters, featuring candidates.

the interaction of the women, who are preoccupied with cooking and related tasks, with male members of the house. The culinary preferences of the men, as detailed by the mother-in-law in the initial sequences and later by themselves, stop the kitchen from getting modernised. The father-in-law demands the rice be cooked on the hearth, chutney be done in grinding stone, and his clothes be washed manually. The husband insists on having chapatis for dinner. The women perform even the simple acts of giving a toothbrush and placing the men's slippers beneath their feet. After serving the men, the women swiftly vacate the veranda and other open spaces, while the men never enter the kitchen or the backyard, markedly differentiating and demarcating gendered spaces inside a household.

As the film progresses, the women are reduced to mere hands which tirelessly perform a multitude of chores. This relentless repetition is symbolised by their wedding rings and bangles. The initial scenes of delicious meals give way to leftovers scattered on the dining table, remnants of the men's meals.

Women, including girl children, are not permitted to dine with the men. Arjun Appadurai observes, "While the male children are encouraged to continue to demand deference in culinary etiquette, female children are increasingly socialised into the subordinate, service role that they must learn to occupy as future daughters-in-law" (6). When men enjoy meals lavishly, women do not even have clean and hygienic spaces to eat. Appadurai says, "Domestic food transactions express the superiority of men largely through their priority in being served food, the positions they physically occupy, and the disengagement from the cooking process" (ibid. 5). The wife is displeased for being compelled to eat amidst leftovers and waste; however, the mother-in-law seems habituated and unbothered about the dirt around. The displeasure and discontent solidify

on the wife's face, and she is haunted by the murky smell of kitchen waste even during sexual intercourse.

As the mother-in-law leaves, carrying a mini kitchen in her luggage, the house becomes solely the wife's responsibility. The kitchen, where the woman is tied almost entirely, becomes what Simon de Beauvoir calls a space of "immanence" (98). The domestic labour she is slammed into "locks her in repetition and immanence; day after day, it repeats itself in identical form...It produces nothing new" (ibid.). The film shows the wife performing the same tasks, including cooking, cleaning and engaging in sex, repeatedly for about forty minutes.¹⁷ Beauvoir refers to Bachelard to argue that the Sisyphean struggle of a housewife is the one against the unconquerable dirt (ibid. 537). She repeatedly requests him to bring a plumber; however, he does not find it urgent or even necessary. The rotten smell of the murky water follows her till night, even during sex, and she gets nauseous.

Beauvoir says, "washing, ironing, sweeping, routing out tufts of dust in the dark places behind the wardrobe, this is holding away death but also refusing life: for in one movement time is created and destroyed; the housewife only grasps the negative aspect of it" (ibid. 541). The decay of the rotting kitchen leftovers is repeatedly visualised in juxtaposition with the wife gradually losing her liveliness and love.

4.2.10.2. The Shared Space of Bedroom: Sex and Desire

The bedroom, the only space she shares with her husband, also offers no atmosphere for intimacy or connection. Conversations are absent, and the exchanges are one-sided, mostly with

¹⁷ The wife toils relentlessly, cleaning the filth and dirt of the kitchen, wiping the dining table where men have spitted the chewed drumsticks and changing the wastewater leaking from the broken pipe and clogged sink. When the kitchen sink is clogged, her pleas for her husband's help fall on deaf ears.

the husband exerting his conjugal authority over the wife. The shots of their sexual acts are taken in top-down mode, with the wife being laid down and not involved in the act of sex. She is incessantly distracted by the memory of the dirt she is dealing with. Her mentioning of the pain of penetrative sex, devoid of any foreplay, shocks the husband and is met with humiliation and disapproval. Holland et al. observe, “to reveal sexual knowledge and express sexual desires threatens a girl’s reputation” (4). She struggles to find a language that allows her to speak about her sexual experience; as Holland et al. find, “the dominant culture has no acceptable language for discussing sex”. They say, “a modest feminine reputation requires a young woman to construct a disembodied sexuality. The woman becomes a passive body, rather than actively embodied” (ibid. 4).

4.2.10.3. Body as a Site; Menstruation and the Notion of Impurity

The only time the wife is disengaged from household and sexual labour is when she is menstruating. The concession is not out of consideration but due to the concept of impurity during the menstrual period. “During a woman’s menstrual period, she is totally isolated and is especially barred from any contact with the hearth” (Appadurai 9). She is instructed not to cook or touch utensils and other accessories. Chitra Karunakaran Prasanna observes:

The practice of treating women as unclean during menstruation can be observed across India, where women face restrictions in mobility during menstruation not just in the domestic sphere (home and surroundings) but also in the public sphere (mainly in places of worship). In the private sphere of domestic life, the nature of restrictions includes denial of body contact within the house, denial of sexual intercourse, denial of entry to the kitchen or worship rooms in the house, segregation in terms of separate beds or rooms or even separate habitation where women have to stay away from the house etc.

(92)

The narrative takes a turn with the Sabarimala pilgrimage season starting, and the men of the house decide to observe the rituals. However, the wife, due to her upbringing in an NRI parents' household, is ignorant of the rituals and practices and ends up violating many of those to the displeasure of the men. Intensifying their discontent, she enters her menstrual period during the pilgrimage season. An aunt is urgently summoned to address the domestic and religious needs of the men during her menstrual period. This aunt embodies the traditional ideals of a woman in a patriarchal household, dressed in traditional Kerala attire and performing household chores as if they were acts of devotion. The wife is asked not to step out of the small and dark room where she is confined. She is barred from using any bedding or common vessels. The aunt clearly instructs her not to come out or see anyone. The wife is instructed to wash everything she has used during her menstrual period in flowing water to cleanse their impurity. Prasanna says: "Women also institutionalise these taboos, passing them on to successive generations through the process of socialisation. The violence is manifested in the silencing of a natural aspect of femininity by inculcating guilt and shame in women, which lasts for a lifetime" (ibid. 92). In an attempt to rescue her husband from a motorbike accident, the wife happens to touch him, which triggers his abusive response. However, he seeks ritualistic solutions to keep his asceticism intact. While men get opportunities to make religious amends, women are forced to abide by the rules and norms of yesteryears.

The bitterness within the family regarding the wife's disregard for customs and rituals intensifies as she shares a video advocating women's entry into the Sabarimala temple. This act enraged the religious group headed by her father-in-law. The wife refuses to delete the video, creating extreme dismay for the husband. In contrast to the silence and submissiveness she

embodies throughout the film, the wife yells at the husband when he attempts to coerce her to delete the video. This silence, notes Kristine De Welde, drawing from Urban Walker, “was inextricably linked with traditional gender roles and adherence to cultural narratives of femininity...” (20). De Walde says, “The ability to summon their voices and yell deeply and assertively... been compromised by a doctrine of silence” (ibid. 19-20). Regaining her voice enables the wife to see how generations of women have been exploited and denied their choices, dreams and fundamental rights.

In the penultimate shot, we see the wife in close-up shots with determination to leave the in-laws’ house. She has removed the nuptial thread. Enraged with being ordered to serve tea for the priests, she pours the wastewater from the leaked kitchen sink. When the husband and his father storm at her to beat her, she throws the murky water on their face. De Welde says, “self-defence as a system of techniques and as a way of life subverts dominant gender patterns through an internal critique of them” (ibid. 4). She walks out as the men stand in shock, and the priests continue their rituals. She passes those women who protest against the Supreme Court verdict, allowing young women’s entry to the Sabarimala temple, symbolising that progress is achieved only by destroying the conventions.

In the epilogue, we see the woman achieving her dream of being a dancer with confidence by choreographing an intense theme of women’s resistance, opposite to her husband, who now got his divorce and married again, following the same pattern.

4.2.10.4. Subversion of Societal Norms and Critique of Patriarchy

The only character named in the film is Usha, the domestic help. Even when shown doing all the household chores like all other women in the film, Usha is the only one making an earning out of it. Thus, domestic labour for Usha is neither an emotional burden nor a devotional activity,

rather, it is like any other vocation. She tells the wife she does not follow the conventions of staying isolated during the menstrual period. Usha and her daughter are the only people who come closer to the wife in her isolation during menstruation. Usha's shots are taken in the opposite direction to other women when performing household tasks to emphasise the difference.

A Dalit woman, Usha is aware of the exploitations and discrimination society inflicts on them. She subtly critiques the practices, saying one has to be smart to survive. When she says she works even during her menstrual period since she has to afford her children's education, the wife exclaims that it is an extraordinary measure any woman could take in her life. Even while observing the rituals, Usha's daughter does not turn discriminatory or practice rituals that endorse untouchability and marginalisation. The kid meets the wife and even touches her, showing empathy and sensitivity.

Part II

4.3. Feminist Discourse in the Select Films as Translation

The previous sections of the chapter have illustrated how spaces are gendered, how bodies become sites where normative and patriarchal power operates and how embodiment reflects the power arrangements in a dominant society. The analyses of the select audiovisual texts show how their representations of gendered embodiment challenge and transform traditional notions of gender. This section argues how a contextual and situated reading of these audiovisual texts becomes a feminist translation.

4.3.1. Reading as Feminist Translation

The active role of readers in interpreting texts parallels the work of translators, as both engage with linguistic and cultural contexts to construct meaning. George Steiner argues that reading, as it opens possibilities to recreate and reinterpret texts, is an act of translation (27). Maria Tymoczko's assertion that "every writing is a re-writing" further expands this notion, suggesting every act of reading is inherently creative and interpretive (41). It implies that texts are not static artefacts but a process open to transformative forces. The cultural, social and political setting of the reader and the reading change the interpretation and understanding of a text. Thus, reading is a form of rewriting where the reader actively participates in the creation of meaning. This approach to reading aligns with Barbara Godard's proposition that a [feminist] translator is an active reader becoming a writer, a co-producer of meaning rather than a passive amanuensis" (3).

As the relationship between the act of meaning making and the reader becomes clearer, it is important to note the shift from a "textual reader to a contextually situated reader" (Littau 122). The concept of a universal/textual reader is eroded by the emergence of identity studies, such as women's studies, postcolonial studies, ethnic and minority studies and queer studies, from the 1980s onwards (ibid.). The focus is shifted to the "differences of reading produced by women, gay or lesbian, or readers of ethnic minorities' (Bennett 4). Judith Fetterly argues that the textually implied reader is male. She further says androcentric works 'co-opt' female readers 'to identify against themselves' (xii). This makes female readers to be 'ascending readers' and results in *immasculation* them (ibid. xx- xxii). The process of *immasculation* hinders their critical engagement with texts and makes them oblivious to identity markers such as gender, caste, class, race etc. Therefore, Fetterly urges readers to be 'resisting readers' in order to contend with

dominant and normative discourses and ideologies within texts. Thus, an informed and situated reading of the select AV texts allows readers to critically interact with the representations of the embodiment of gendered spaces. This critical engagement produces reinterpretations of the portrayals of gendered spaces and embodied spaces that has been produced by Popular Malayalam cinema over decades. A ‘resistant’ and ‘renegade’ reading possibilities to reimagine patriarchal stereotypes and normative gender roles and offers a feminist interpretation of the select texts.

4.3.2. Rewriting as Feminist Translation

The clash of discourses and ideologies generates new narratives. Here, the process of contextual reading, exemplified by feminist translation, emerges as an act of reinterpreting the traditional normative positions (Pradeep and Das 39). Translation, in feminist imagination, is regarded as a process of rewriting where the questions of power, ideology and manipulation are involved (Lefevere 1992). Alvarez and Vidal say that translation implies an unbalanced power. They say, “Translation is ... a complex process of re-writing that runs parallel both to the overall view of language and of the ‘Other’ people have throughout history; and to the influences and the balance of power...” (4). They further say, “Translation is an excellent vehicle for conveying the typically Foucauldian binary essence of the opposition power/knowledge: power is intimately related to knowledge, information, and especially to how that information is conveyed and the way of articulating a wide range of discursive elements...” (ibid. 6).

The AV texts under study juxtapose the conflicts of patriarchal power arrangements with feminist discourses. *Bangalore Days* (2014) shows how normative expectations of a married woman is constantly challenged by Divya. The superstitious and orthodox mother of Divya comes in stark contrast with Kuttan’s mother, who craves city life and modernisation. Kuttan’s normative

expectations of a submissive and docile partner with a rural upbringing is shattered within the narrative, and he eventually gets married to a foreigner. The urbanised, liberated, and agencied women win over the normative and patriarchal stereotypes. In *Rani Padmini* (2015), the conflict between patriarchal and feminist ideologies is brought through the opposition between Padmini and Lalithamma, her mother-in-law. Lalithamma embodies the brutishness of patriarchy. Rani and her mother also showcase the conflict of normative expectations and feminist practices. *Ramante Edanthottam* (2017) does not have a concrete character that comes in contrast with Malini. It portrays the conflicts through its male leads, Elvis and Raman and represents Malini's emergence as an independent and agencied woman' navigating both regressive and progressive masculinities. *Godha* (2017) also emphasise how Aditi navigates the normative expectations and patriarchal violence acting on her from various institutions: her family, friendships and wrestling as a predominantly masculine sport. *Take Off* (2017), similar to *Godha*, represents how various forms of normative power acts upon women's everyday lives. The prescriptions of patriarchal family, religion and normative expectations of motherhood attempt to coerce Sameera and destroy her willpower. However, it is her determination and courage that contends with abstract and concrete power formations around her. *Mayaanadhi* (2017) shows how Appu is trapped between normativity and feminist ideas. Though concrete forms of patriarchal forces exist, such as conventional family settings, within the narrative, it is the inner conflict of Appu and how she converges these contrasting discourses that form the core of the film. In *Uyare* (2018), The malicious and violent layers of how hegemonic and toxic masculinities work within families are exposed in *Kumbalangi Nights* (2019). The women characters battle with the employment of hegemonic powers on their bodies and choices. *Varane Avashyamund* (2020) shows how Neena and Akashavani shatter normative expectations of middle-aged and old-aged women,

respectively. Neena contests the dominant notion of the middle-aged female body as asexual. Akashavani challenges the conventional concept of family as she nurtures her association with two boys who are unrelated to her as her family, despite having kids and grandchildren through marriage. *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) juxtaposes the wife's despise towards the monotony of household chores and patriarchal oppression with the servitude performed by the aunt as it is her divine duty. The wife's confinement during her menstrual period is shown in alternative sequences with the detailing of the activist who advocates for young women's entry into the Sabarimala temple. As the wife walks out of her oppressive and regressive marriage, her walk into the world of liberation and empowerment is shown in contrast with the women protesting against the Supreme Court Verdict permitting young women's entry into the Sabarimala temple.

The power conflicts within these narratives among various power structures offer reworked portrayals of women and women's experiences. The battling of normative and patriarchal ideologies with feminist discourses necessitates the readers/viewers to construct feminist consciousness to understand the rewritten female subjectivities. These reworked subjectivities also signify the metonymic aspect of translation that allows "correction and retelling of marginalised texts for its original audiences" (Tymoczko 47). The representations of power conflicts between patriarchal and feminist discourse are retellings of the popular representations of the embodiment of gendered spaces in Malayalam cinema. What the select films offer is a corrected version of the narrative where the marginalised subject is empowered and centralised. The male gaze in the popular cinematic narrative is reworked and a female gaze is enabled in these films, which in themselves become feminist translations.

4.3.3. Transformation as feminist Translation

A significant shift the select text showcases is the transformation of women characters with the progress of the narrative. Feminist discourse serves as a political endeavour aimed at creating new meanings, focusing on the transformation of subjects through language (Godard 617). Divya in *Bangalore Days* is initially shown as trapped and tricked by patriarchal and religious ideologies. Her dreams of higher education and starting a business are hindered by an arranged marriage. As the narrative progresses Divya understands the oppressive forces acting on her and liberates herself from them. She not only emerges as a self-reliant woman from a naïve and dependent housewife but also enables Shivadas, her husband to address his conflicts. *Rani Padmini* shows Padmini, who is initially excited to identify herself as the obedient daughter of Shankaran Vaidya realising these labels are only a trap to confine women within the household. She embarks on a road journey which empowers her and unchains her from the clutches of oppressive powers of patriarchy. Malini, similar to the journey Padmini goes through, comes out of a toxic marriage and establishes her independent self and being. *Uyare* shows how Pallavi disentangles herself from a toxic relationship. Her decision to separate triggers Govind to throw acid on her face. The disfigured Pallavi loses her dream occupation as pilot since the acid attack damages her eyesight. However, she emerges from a victim to a fighter who challenges the normative beauty concepts and finds a career as air hostess. She fights a legal battle, despite her working-class setting, and achieves judicial justice. The representation disabled and disfigured women as dependents and objects of sympathy and pity are disregarded and these films offer a transformative representation of them as fighters and combatants. When new meanings are generated and representations are constantly reshaped in language, the process

becomes translatable. Godard says “feminist discourse presents transformation as performance as a model for translation (12).

4.3.4. Subversion as Feminist Translation

According to Godard the endeavour of feminist discourse is to “subvert the monologism of the dominant discourse” (44). These films centralise women characters who are pushed to peripheries or represented as villainised in the Popular Malayalam cinema. The popular Malayalam cinema has always glorified and celebrated women who submit themselves to the patriarchal doctrines. The previous chapter has discussed how the popular cinema constructs the stereotypes of submissive and contesting women. In the select films women, who distance themselves from the normative vision, are placed at the centre of the narrative, thereby offering alternative readings of the dominant representations. The portrayals under study challenge the uneven power arrangements in dominant narratives. The battling of normative and feminist discourses effectively subverts the patriarchal ideology and discourses and give way for feminist representations to win over. The dominant cinematic conventions have, for long, erased women’s perspectives. Disabled women are shown as pitied objects. Young and able-bodied women are always represented as objects of desire. Middle-aged and older women are desexualised in their representations and confined to the roles of noble and dutiful mothers or grandmothers relishing in nostalgic memories. The select texts challenge these perceptions where disabled women and aged women are shown as having sexual agency. They no longer evoke pity or contempt. Women’s sexual agency is emphasised in the select films, where possibilities of deriving scopophilia is dismantled through strategies of ‘distantiation’ (Littau 131), ‘passionate detachment’ (Mulvey 18) or ‘act of making strange’ (Bobo 24). These films enable a critical distance between the reader/viewer and them to enable the above practices to critically engage

with them. These techniques disallow them from the possible *immasculation* and allows them to generate feminist meanings from the act of subversive reading, which in itself becomes feminist translation.

4.3.5. Visibilising the Unseen/Voicing the Unheard

Barbara Godard has emphasised that “feminist discourse is translation in two ways; a notation of gestural and other codes from what has been hitherto unheard of, a muted discourse, and as repetition and consequent displacement of the dominant discourse” (46). Woman who loathes domestic chores and aspires to find a career, woman walking out of wedlock and not returning to the institution even for her child, Women who embark on road trip and experience a transformative and empowering journey, disabled women disagreeing to be dependent and objects of sympathy, old age women finding romantic partners and younger companies and yet the narrative standing by them is a representation the popular Malayalam cinema has not been familiar with. Meena T. Pillai finds “Film after film in Malayalam has created the image of a woman who loves to cook and clean, wash and scrub, shine and polish for her man (*Meleparambil Aanveedu, Valsalyam, Mayamayooram, Kumkumacheppu, Kudumbapuram, Thillakkam, Kuruppinte Kanakkupusthakam, Nayam Vayakthamakkuka, Rakkuyilin Ragasadassil*)” (19). The ideal women, as established by popular Malayalam cinema, are the characters of Shobha and Chinnamma in *Bangalore Days*, Lalithamma and Rani’s mother in *Rani Padmini*, Shaheed’s mother in *Take Off*, Aparna’s mother in *Mayaanadhi* and the character of aunt in *The Great Indian Kitchen*. “The obvious enjoyment of these women in offering their servitude to men takes on a new signification and serves as a marker of the power of culture to impose its structures on the woman as representation. Thus, that it is nearly impossible for a

woman to command power in the family hierarchy elsewhere is neatly established through the differential assigning of tasks according to gender” (ibid. 19).

In the select texts, we see women who despise the servitude to patriarchy in general and men in particular. These narratives offer to visibilise their perspectives and voice their experiences. The key venture of feminist discourses is to reclaim the language and disengage it from patriarchal imaginations. Thus, feminist discourse attempts to deconstruct the patriarchal language and strive to make women visible linguistically. In allowing the visibilising of women and their experiences, which has not been centralised for centuries, these films offer a feminist translation of the dominant cinematic language.

4.4. Conclusion

The representations offered by the select films challenge the images produced and reproduced by the Malayalam cinema. The embodied gendered spaces, as portrayed in these films, urge us to look at representations from a gender lens, thereby subverting the knowledge and aesthetics mainstream cinema has been perpetuating. The chapter that the novel way of representation offered by the select films is a reinterpretation of the gender roles and performances which have been familiarised and established by the dominant cinema. The reinterpretation becomes a feminist translation by creating a rupture in the aesthetics set by the Malayalam cinema over centuries and a displacement from the representations that have been produced over time.

Chapter 5

Subtitles, Malayalam Cinema, and the Manifestation of Embodiment

5.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to analyse the expressive capacity of subtitles to capture the notion of embodiment. The chapter studies how gendered space, the notion of embodiment and the embeddedness of gendered space are articulated through subtitles. The chapter critically investigates how the representation of gendered embodiment is conveyed; and what is left unsaid. The chapter aims at reading the potential or possibilities of translating the unheard. The chapter also attempts to problematise the politics of the texts that are invisible.

The chapter analyses the representations of embodiment from the third chapter in juxtaposition with their subtitles. Through the analyses, the chapter endeavours to study how the embeddedness and embodiment of gendered spaces are articulated in subtitles.

5.2. Analyses of Subtitles and the Manifestation of Embodiment in Select Films

5.2.1. *Bangalore Days* (2014)

Bangalore Days (2014) is a landmark in the history of subtitling with respect to the Malayalam cinema industry. It is the first film in India to be released in theatres with English subtitles. The film received popular and critical acclaim for the novel representation of characters and their interactions. *Bangalore Days* portrays a variety of women characters from different spectra of society.

Divya is a business aspirant whose education is halted by her family to get her married. Divya complies with the normative expectations of her, and sheds her ambitions to become a businesswoman. Upon moving to Bangalore with her husband, she tries to cater to the traditional expectations of her as a wife. When her efforts fail, and she realises that her partner does not have any interest in sharing an emotional bond with her, Divya returns to her parents' home. Divya is shattered seeing how her marriage, arranged by her family to ensure all familial and religious criteria are met, has collapsed. Divya snaps at her mother for not letting her grow independent.

Character	Dialogue and Subtitles
Divya's Mother	അടുക്കളേൽ കേറാത്ത കുട്ടിയാ, atukka e:l ke:ra:tt̪a kuttija: A complete novice to kitchen ഇപ്പോ ദോശ ചുടാനെങ്കിലും പഠിച്ചു. ippo: d̪o:ʃa t̪ʃuʈa:nenkilum paʈʰit̪ʃu Now you have learnt to make pancakes ക്രെഡിറ്റ് ദാസിനാനേ! kredit d̪a:siɳa:ne: The credit goes to Das, okay.
Divya	ദോശ ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്നേ ഞാൻ. എന്നിട്ട് അതിന്റെ ക്രെഡിറ്റ് പോലും എനിക്കില്ല.

	ḍo:ʃa un̪ʈa:ka:n̪ne: na:n̪...enn̪itt̪ aḡinte kred̪it po:lum en̪ikkilla It is me who is making the pancakes. But I don't get credit.
Divya's Mother	നിന്നെയി അടുക്കളയുടെ പരിസരത്തുപോലും മുമ്പെ കണ്ടിട്ടില്ലല്ലോ n̪inn̪neje; aṭukkalajute mun̪ne kaṇṭitt̪illallo: You are not even seen in the vicinity of kitchen അതുകൊണ്ട് പറഞ്ഞതാ aṭukon̪t̪ paraṇṇaṭa: That is why told like that. ദാസ് എങ്ങനെയാ...നീ വെച്ചുണ്ടാക്കുന്നതൊക്കെ ഇഷ്ടാനോ ḍa:s en̪ṇaṇeja:... n̪i: vet̪ʃ̪ʃ̪un̪ʈa:kkun̪ṇaṭokke iṣṭa:ṇo: Does Das like your cooking?
Divya	ആഹ് എനിക്കറിയില്ല a:h en̪ikkarijilla Ah! I don't know അയാൾടെ മനസ്സറിയണെങ്കിൽ വല്ല ജ്യോത്സനെയും വിളിക്കേണ്ടി വരും aja:l̪te manassarijaṇenkil valla ḍ̪ʒjo:ṭsaṇejum viḷikke:n̪ti varum

	You need an astrologer to know what's in his mind
Divya's mother	നീ വന്നപ്പോ തൊട്ട് ഞാൻ ശ്രദ്ധിക്കട്ടാ... ni: vannappo: tott na:n fradd⁶ikkja: From the time you came... എന്ന് ചോയ്ച്ചാലും ഒരു തർക്കുത്തരം. ent tfo:jtftja:lum oru tarkkuttaram ...I've been noticing this tendency to argue back അവിടേം ഇങ്ങനെ തന്നെയോ! avite:m innane tanneja:ho:! Do you behave in the same way there also? വെറുതേ അവരെക്കൊണ്ട് ഓരോന്ന് പറയിപ്പിക്കല്ലേ. verute: avarekkont o:ro:nn parajippikkalle: Don't create a bad reputation വളർത്തു ദോഷം ആണെ പറയൂ. valarttu do:sam a:nnē: paraju: They'll say that you are not brought up well

Divya	വളർത്തു ദോഷം ഉണ്ടല്ലോ... va[arttu do:ṣam unjaḷlo:... That's obviously the problem അടക്കോം ഒതുക്കോം ... aṭakko:m oṭukko:m... The discipline and serenity... നിങ്ങളു പറയുന്ന ഒക്കെ അനുസരിച്ചതാണല്ലോ ഇപ്പോ ഇങ്ങനെ niṇṇaḷu parajuṇṇe okke aṇusariṭṭiṭṭa:ṇallo: ippo iṇṇane By obeying to everything what you told, it is like this
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(1:50:39- 1:51:04)

Divya, who has been controlled by her traditional and superstitious parents in each step of her life, learns to question her upbringing after moving to Bangalore. She realises the indoctrination of institutions of family and religion has destroyed her happiness and taken away her freedom. She tells her mother that allowing such disciplining has resulted in the ruining of her life. This is the first instance of Divya voicing her disapproval to her family. This conversation marks Divya's transformation, and the annoyance and discontentment are aptly captured through the subtitles.

Divya leaves home, sells her jewellery and returns to Bangalore. She tells Shivadas that she wishes to share the house only as a flatmate and demands he terminate the house-made. The

house-made, Chinnamma, has been Shivadas's caretaker since childhood. Chinnamma is the one who creates disharmony between Divya's and Shivadas's family by gossiping about Divya. She frequently calls Shivadas's mother and informs her that Divya doesn't meet any traditional expectations of a wife. The command to terminate Chinnamma, despite going through an estrangement with Shivadas, establishes Divya's personality. Shivadas smiles tenderly at her transformation into an assertive individual.

Divya's cousin, Arnjun, is in love with Sarah. Sarah is a radio jockey with locomotive disability. "...the depiction of persons with disabilities has been consistently below par in Malayalam cinema. Disability depictions often vacillate between a comic interlude, underplayed heroism, liability and burden" (Menon 2019). However, Sarah is portrayed as "independent, free-spirited and positive. And you see a strapping young man (Dulquer Salmaan) pursuing her and falling madly in love with her, thereby giving the image that a woman with a disability has feelings, needs and dreams like everyone else and she needn't only aspire to marry someone with a similar disability", says Ashla Rani, assistant to Dr M. R. Rajagopal, who works with people with disabilities (Asha Rani quoted in Menon 2019). Sarah's mother, in her conversation with Arjun, talks very proudly about her daughter

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Sarah's mother	സാറ ഈസ് ആൻ അംബിഷസ് ഗേൾ, യു നോ Sarah is an ambitious girl, you know. sa:ra i:s a:n ambi:ʃas ge:l, ju no:.

ഓസ്ട്രേലിയയിൽ നല്ലൊരു യൂണിവേഴ്സിറ്റിയിൽ സ്കോളർഷിപ്പ് കിട്ടിയിട്ടുണ്ട്

o:st̪rēlijajil ɢalloru jnive:siɽijil sko:l̪aɽɕip kitt̪ijittunt̪

She has got a scholarship in a prestigious university in Australia.

അതോണ്ട്, ഞങ്ങൾ അങ്ങോട്ട് മൈഗ്രേറ്റ് ചെയ്യാൻ ആലോചിക്കാ

aɽo:nt̪ naɳɳal aɳɳo:t̪ maigre:t̪ t̪fejja:n a:lo:t̪ikka:

So, we are thinking of migrating

സൈറയെ പോലൊരു കുട്ടിയായുമ്പോഴേക്കു മിക്ക പേരന്റേയും അതൊരു പ്രാദാബ്ധമായി കാണാറുണ്ട്

sa:raje po:loru kut̪t̪ija:kumpo: mikka pe:raɳt̪sum aɽoru pra:ra:bd̪ama:ji

ka:ɳa:ruɳt̪

For many parents, children like Sarah may be a burden

പക്ഷേ എനിക്കങ്ങനെയല്ല

pakɕe: ep̪ikkanaɳɳejalla

But, not for me

എന്റെ സൈറക്ക് ഓരോ കാര്യത്തിനും ബെസ്റ്റ് ഞാൻ തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്തിട്ടുണ്ട്

eɳte sa:rakk o:ro: ka:rjatt̪ip̪um best̪ na:n̪ t̪erap̪net̪utt̪ittunt̪

I have chosen the best for my Sarah in every aspect.

അതിൽക്കൊറഞ്ഞതൊന്നും എന്റെ മോൾക്ക് ചേരില്ല

	aṭilkkorannaṭṭonnum ente mo:lḳk ṭj̣e:rilla Nothing less than that would suit my daughter.
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(1:56:41- 1:58:01)

The confidence and assertion with which Sarah's mother speaks is unparalleled in the depiction of disabled bodies, especially of women in Malayalam cinema is familiar with.

Divya's aunt, is Kuttan's mother, though depicted with a comic tinge, shows a departure from the characterisation of mothers Malayalam cinema is used to. She is neither villainous nor selfless. She expresses her desires and dreams to escape from the traditional house in the village to Bangalore and later to the U. S. When her husband suddenly goes missing, she tells her son, Kuttan, that she no longer wishes to remain in an undeveloped village.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Kuttan's mother	പട്ടണത്തിൽ പഠിച്ച എഞ്ചിനീയർ ആണെന്ന് പറഞ്ഞിട്ടാ എന്റെ വീട്ടുകാർ നിൻറെ അച്ഛനെ എന്തെക്കൊണ്ട് കല്ല്യാണം കഴിപ്പിച്ചത് pattṇaṭṭil paṭḥiṭṭj̣a eṇḍ̣ḍ̣ini:r a:ṇenn̄ paranniṭta: ente vi:ṭṭuka:r ṇ̄inte aṭṭṭh̄ane eṇṇekkonn̄ ketṭiṭṭj̣aṭ My family married me to your father because he was an engineering graduate from the city. അങ്ങേയ്ക്കു കാരണം ഈ മുടിഞ്ഞ തറവാട്ടിൽ ജീവിതം തൊലച്ചവളാ ഞാൻ

	an̄neru ka:raṇam e: muṭṭinna ṭarava:ttil d̄i:viṭam ṭolat̄ṭṭavaḷa: na:ṇ My life was ruined in this traditional house because of him. ഈ നരകത്തിനു കരകേറാൻ കിട്ടിയൊരവസരമാണ് മോനേ...നീ ആയിട്ട് അതില്ലാണ്ടാക്കരുത് mo:ṇe:... ṇi: a:jiṭṭ aṭilla:ṇṭakkaruṭ This is an opportunity I got to escape this hell. You please don't spoil it. ഞാൻ നിന്റെ കൂടെ ബാംഗ്ലൂറേക്ക് വരികാ na:ṇ ṇiṇṭe ku:ṭe ba:mgḷu:re:kk varika: I am coming to Bangalore with you
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(1:49:28- 1:49:40)

The city life transforms her remarkably. From the traditional Kerala attire *mundu and veshti* she upgrades to salwar kameez, kurta and towards flying to the U.S to jeans. The multilingual social circle she develops in Bangalore helps her learn Hindi and English, even though in a fragmented manner. However, the mother's character is not given the positive and progressive treatment Divya and Sarah receive. Her ambitions and interest towards the modern way of living is portrayed as a farce. The subtitles, on the contrary, do not evoke humour but capture her discontentment with being chained in a village.

Kuttan's criticism of her transformation and contempt for her connection with other flatmates get more prominence in the representation that his mother's breaking away from tradition is a comical depiction. In one of their conversations Kuttan and Divya mock how Kuttan's mother subtly puts her wish to travel to the U.S.

Kuttan's attitude towards his mother becoming adaptive of urban life and ways of living is contemptuous. By projecting his contempt and representing it as a tool to evoke laughter, the film contradicts its gender politics.

5.2.2. *Rani Padmini* (2015)

Rani Padmini opens with the scene of Padmini's monologue where she critiques the disciplining of a girl child in the family. Her voice is a mixture of confusion and contention. Before setting out on a road journey to meet her husband, who has left her, the monologue is to infill confidence in herself. When she contemplates how society will treat her for her husband leaving her, she also reflects on how she treats herself. Padmini's inner voice which struggles to balance her obedient and independent selves, sets off the film.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Padmini	ചിത്തപ്പേര് കേൾപ്പിക്കരുത് tʃi:ttappe:r ke:lpikkaruʈ Don't tarnish your name. കാട്ടുപറമ്പത്തെ ശങ്കരൻ വൈദ്യരുടെ മോളാണ് നീ ka:ttuparampatte ſaṅkaraṇ vaiddjaruʈe mo:lɑ:ṇ ne: You are the daughter of Kattuparambath Sankaran Vaidya. അടക്കോം ഇതുകൊം ഉള്ള കുട്ടി

	aṭakko:m oṭukko:m uḷḷa kuttī The obedient and docile child. Child! ഹമ് കുട്ടി...പൊട്ടിയാണ് നീ ham... kuttī... poṭṭiija:ṇ ne: You are a stupid നിന്റെ കെട്ടോൻ നിന്നെ വിട്ട് ഹിമാലയത്തിലേക്ക് പോയി ആഹാ ṇiṇṭe kettjo:ṇ ṇiṇṇe vitt hima:lajattile:kk po:ji...a:ha: Your husband has left you for Himalayas! Wow!
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(7:30:00- 08:08:00)

It's her realisation and conclusion that the disasters waiting on the roads may not save from the misfortunes at home that gives her confidence to leave home and embark on a road trip to patch up her crumbling marriage. Padmini's transformation from a confused self to a confident self is articulated through how she renders her dialogues. When she tells Rani that girls are superb and there is no need to try to imitate boys, her voice gains assurance.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Padmini	റാണി... ra: ṇi...

	ആങ്കുട്ടേയെ പോലെയാവാനുള്ള നിന്റെ കൊതി അവസാനിപ്പിച്ചോ a:ṅkuttjjo:leppo:leja:va:ṇu[la ṇṇṇte koṭi avasa:ṇippiṭṭjjo: Rani, shed your façade of tomboyishness. പെങ്കുട്ടോള് സൂപ്പറല്ലേ peṅkuttjjo:ṭ su:pparalle: Women are superb, aren't we?
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(1:53:23- 1:53:31)

Lalithamma, Padmini's mother-in-law, has already made it clear why she wants her son to get married. She says, “ഗിരിക്കല്ല, എനിക്കാണ് കൂട്ട് വേണ്ടത്” (Not Giri, it's I who needs company) and reminds Padmnini when she starts working that it has already been agreed upon that Padmini is expected to work with Lalithamma for the betterment of the family.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Padmini	ജോലി കഴിഞ്ഞ് വന്നാ പിന്നെ ഭയങ്കര വിശപ്പാ d̥ʒo:li kaɻṇṇ vanna: pinṇe b^hajankara viɻappa: The job is too tiring
Lalithamma	ഇത് ഇവിടെ നടക്കിലൂ മോളേ iṭ iviṭe ṇṭaṭkillja mo:le:

	This won't work here, dear! നിന്റെ വീട്ടിലു് വന്നപ്പളേ ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞതാ niṇṭe vi:ttil vannappaḷe: na:n parannaṭa: I had told you when we came to your house ഗിരിക്കല്ല, എനിക്കാണ് കൂട്ടു് വേണ്ടതെന്ന് girikkalla, epikka:ṇ ku:tt ve:ṇṭaṭenn I need company, not Giri. ഇവിടെ ആദ്യം പണിള്ളപ്പോ ivite pu:ru:ttam paṇillaṭṭappo: There is hectic workload at home പോരാതെത്തിനാ ഒരു ജോലിന്ന എനിക്ക് മനസ്സിലാവാത്ത po:ra:ṭeṇṭiṇa: oru d̥ʒo:li:ṇṇa: epikk maṇassila:va:ṭte: I do not understand why to have a job
Padmini	അത് ജോലിക്കു പോയാലേ മനസ്സിലാവുള്ളൂ aṭ d̥ʒo:likku po:ja:le: maṇassila:vullu: That will be understood only by working outside.

Lalithamma	ഒരു റൊട്ടികൂടെ കഴിക്കൂ oru rotti ku:te ka:ikk Have one more roti. എന്റെ കൂടെ ഈ കുടുംബത്തിന് വേണ്ടി നീ നിൽക്കണം ente ku:te i: kutumbattin ve:nti ni: nikkanaam You should stand by me for this family പാർട് ടൈം അല്ല...ഫുൾ ടൈം pa:rtaim alla...full taim not parttime, full time. ജോയിന്റ് ഡിവോസ് അപ്ലിക്കേഷൻ ആണ്... dʒo:jint divo:s applike:ʃan a:n... This is joint application for divorce ഗിരി സൈൻ ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട് giri sain tʃejittunt Giri has already signed എനിക്ക് കള്ള ഒപ്പിടാനൊന്നും അറിയില്ല
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	നീയും കൊറച്ച് അഡ്ജസ്റ്റ് ni:jum koratʃi adʒastejj You should also learn to adjust
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(38:30:00- 39:52:00)

Lalithamma cites how her mother-in-law treated her, and Padmini should also face similar hardship since it's the fate of every daughter-in-law. Lalithamma says her mother-in-law used to torture her when she was healthy. The subtitle rightly captures the mistreatment and exploitation by Lalithamma's mother-in-law. It says the mother-in-law "used walk all over me [Lalithamma]". Though it may appear as a literal translation of the Malayalam dialogue, the phrase effectively communicates the patriarchal authority mothers-in-laws possess. When Padmini expresses how going out for a job can be fulfilling and tiring at the same time, she is threatened with a divorce petition. Lalithamma and her commands embody the evils of patriarchy in their cruellest forms. Her orders are the ways through which the film communicates how a patriarchal institution can discipline women and if they do not abide by the teachings, how to punish them. Despite being a victim of this institution, Lalithamma guiltlessly carries forward the same schooling. Padmini, on the other hand, is portrayed as attempting to fight the evils of this institution and setting out a self-exploration. However, when she meets her husband finally after a series of hardships, she falls back into the marriage without any questions. Padmini states, "വിട്ടിലേക്ക് വാട്ടാ"¹⁸ ("come home" with an implication that she would deal with the conflict in private) when she meets her husband, who has left her with a divorce petition at his mother's

¹⁸ vi:ttile:kk va: tta:

hand. Instead of clarifying the nuance, the film translates the dialogue as it is rendered. It could affect the reading of the text as the decoding need not be a feminist one.

Rani, with stark difference from Padmini's characterisation, is portrayed as a tomboy. Her conversations are also of a masculine tone, through which she attempts to be the saviour of her family and later of Padmini as well. She commands and calls for services from other women in the house. She often uses curse words.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Rani	ഇവിടെ കഴിക്കാനൊന്നല്ലേ ivite kajikka:ponnulle: Isn't there anything to eat?
Rani's mother	ബാങ്കിന് രണ്ടു നോട്ടീസ് വന്നിട്ടുണ്ട് ba:ŋki:nn ran̄tu no:tti:s vannittunt Two notices have come from bank... എടുക്കട്ടേ etukkattē: shall I serve them in plate? പതിനാലാത്തേതി ഇവിടുന്ന് ഇറങ്ങി കൊടുക്കണം

	paṭṭiṇa:la:ṇṭi iviṭuṇṇ iruṇṇ iraṇṇi koṭukkaṇam We are asked to vacate on fourteenth. സന്തോഷായല്ലോ saṇṭo:ṣa:jallo: Are you happy now?
Rani	ആ ചെറു മാനേജറെനിക്ക് ആറുമാസത്തെ സമയം തരാമെന്നു പറഞ്ഞിട്ട്... a: t̪eta ma:ṇe:d̪zareṇikk a:ruma:sat̪te samajam t̪ara:menn̪ paraṇṇitt̪... That scoundrel manger promised me six months and now...
Rani's mother	റാണി r:ṇi Rani! മര്യാദക്ക് സംസാരിക്കൂ marja:d̪akk samsa:rikk Mind your words. പെണ്ണാണെന്നുള്ള ബോധം വേണം

	peṇṇa:ṇeṇṇulla bo:ḍ^ham ve:ṇam Behave like a woman
Rani	ഇപ്പോവിടെന്താ പ്രശ്നം ippo: iviṭeṇṇa: praṇṇam What's the issue now? ബാങ്കിന് നോടീസ് വന്നതോ ba:ṇki:ṇṇ ṇo:ṭṭi:s vaṇṇaṭo: The notices from bank എനിക്ക് പെണ്ണാനുള്ള ബോധവ്യത്യാസത്തോ eṇikk peṇṇa:ṇeṇṇulla bo:ḍ^hallja:ṭṭaṭo: or my nonfeminine behaviour?
Rani's mother	എത്ര പ്രാവീശ്യം പറഞ്ഞാലും തർക്കുത്തരം....തർക്കുത്തരം eṭṭa pra:vaṇṇam paraṇṇa:lum ṭarkkuttaram... ṭarkkuttaram How many times should I tell you not to retort...

Rani's mother laments about not having a male child. She thinks if she had a son, he would have taken care of the debts and other responsibilities. Her reluctance to acknowledge Rani's efforts to save the family from debts as equivalent to what a son could have done angers Rani. Rani's anger and discontent is not always rendered through dialogues. The dialogues are effectively translated through subtitles. But the acoustic is often missed out. The anger, despise, and certain illegible abuses are not captured through the subtitles, which may impact the reading of Rani's undocile personality. Her cranky and unhinged responses are what make Rani's personality distinct.

Rani is uninhibited to talk about homosexuality. She, when asked by a journalist duo, says Rani and Padmini are a lesbian couple to stop their further queries. At a private moment, Rani playfully fixes a moustache with hair and approaches Padmini in a humorous way. Rani's confused sexuality is represented through these scenes.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Ullas Menon	രണ്ട് പേരുകളുടെ ഇപ്പോ എങ്ങോട്ടാ പോണേ raɳɖ pe:rumku:te ippo enɳo:tʃa: po:ɳe: Where are you going now?
Rani	We are a lesbian couple. We are a lesbian couple. ഇത് ഞങ്ങളുടെ ഹണിമൂൺ ട്രിപ്പാ it̪ nannaɖe haɳimu:ɳ trippa: This is our honeymoon trip

(1:19:03-1:19:09)

These exchanges are given in English, though the questions are in Malayalam. To Padmini's husband's colleague, she introduces herself as Padmini's brother-in-law. She says “പദ്മിനീയുടെ അളിയൻ”¹⁹, which is subtitled as “her bro”. The subtitle here conveys a more nuanced representation of Rani's bond with Padmini. It undoes the gendered meaning associated with the word അളിയൻ and offers a more fluid way of addressing friends with whom one can take out their unfiltered self.

5.2.3. *Ramante Edanthottam* (2017)

The film offers a nuanced portrayal of the lead female character, Malini, challenging the patriarchal family system. The journey of Malini from a meek and helpless housewife to an independent and assertive woman is described through Malini's revival of her dancing career and her exchanges with Raman.

Malini's evolution is represented by the change in her body language, her carrying of neat and coloured clothes and her driving. However, her verbal articulation of individuality and self-assurance come towards the end of the film. In a scene where she is shown as tattooing a butterfly on her hand her husband enters and attempts to bring her back home. The scene becomes remarkable for the dialogue Malini delivers.

Character	Dialogues and subtitles
Elvis	എന്തൊക്കെ പൊട്ടത്തരങ്ങളാ മാലിനി നീ ഇതിൽ എഴുതി വെച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്

¹⁹ alijana:

entokke pottattaranṇaḷa: ma:liṇi: ṇi: iṭṭil eṭṭivetṭiṭṭirikkunṇaṭ

What all nonsense you stated in this!

ഇതാണ് ആവശ്യമെങ്കിൽ, എന്നോട് പറഞ്ഞാൽ ഞാനൊരു വക്കീലിനെ ഏർപ്പാടാക്കി
തന്നേനെ

iṭṭa:ṇ a:vaḷḷamenṇkil enṇo:ṭ paranna:l ja:ṇoru vakki:liṇe e:rppa:ṭa:kki
ṭanne:ṇe

If you'd wished for this, I would've arranged a good lawyer for this!`

നിനക്ക് തലയിൽ ബോധം എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞൊരു സാധനം ഇല്ലല്ലോ

ṇiṇakk ṭalajil bo:ḍḍam parannoru sa:ḍḍaṇṇam illallo:

You have no brains at all

പഴയതൊക്കെ മറക്കാനും പൊറുക്കാനും ഞാൻ തയ്യാറാ

paḷajattoke marakka:ṇum porukka:ṇum ja:n ṭajja:ra:

I am ready to forget and forgive the past

നീ പഴയപോലെ അടങ്ങിയൊതുങ്ങി ജീവിച്ചാ മതി

ṇi: paḷajapo:le aṭaṇṇijoṭṭuṇṇi dḍii:viṭṭiṭṭa: maṭṭi

You lead a restrained life like earlier

ഇതെന്താ, ടാറ്റോ

	it̪ɛnt̪a: t̪a:tu:vo: What's that? Tattoo? ആദിക്ക് ആറുമണിവരെ അല്ലെ ക്ലാസ്. a:ɖikk a:ruman̪ivarejalle: kla:s Up to 6 O' clock is Aadi's class, right? പിക്ക് ചെയ്യാൻ ഞാൻ വരാം. നീയും വരണം pikk t̪ɛjja:n ja:n vara:m. ni:jum varaɳam I will come and pick. You should also come.
Malini	എൽവിസ് എന്തിനാ എന്നോട് ക്ഷമിച്ചെന്ന് പറഞ്ഞത്? elvis ɛnt̪ina: ɛnn̪o:t̪ k̪s̪amit̪ɛj̪ɛnn̪ paraɳnat̪? Why did you say that you have forgiven me? അതെനിക്ക് മനസ്സിലായില്ല I don't understand that. അങ്ങനെയൊക്കെങ്കിൽ ഞാൻ തിരിച്ച് എൽവിസിനോടും ക്ഷമിക്കണ്ടേ? aɳɳaɳɛja:ɳɛɳkil ja:n t̪irit̪ɛj̪ elvis̪no:t̪um k̪s̪amik̪kaɳt̪e: If that's the case, shouldn't I also forgive you, Elvis?

	എൽവിസ് എനോടും തെറ്റ് ചെയ്തിട്ടില്ലേ? elvis enno:tum tet tʃejtittille:? Haven't you done wrong towards me? അത് ഇമ്പോർടന്റ് അല്ലേ aɪ impo:rtant alle: Isn't that important
Elvis	അങ്ങനെയൊക്കെ ഞാൻ anjaneja:ti: na:n Hmm..., That's my nature കുടുംബത്തിൽ പിറന്നവളു് ഭർത്താവിനെ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്ന ഭാര്യയായിരിക്കണം kuɽumbattil pirannaval bʱa:rtta:viɳe maɳassila:kkunna bʱa:rja:jiɾikkaɳam A good wife must be a wife who understands her husband
Malini	കഴിഞ്ഞ 12 വർഷം ഞാൻ അങ്ങനെ തന്നെ അല്ലേ ജീവിച്ചത്? kaɻɳna 12 vaɾʃam na:n anjane ʤannejalle: dʒi:viɽɻʃaɽ? Didn't I live like that for the past 12 years?

	എൽവിസിന്റെ ഇഷ്ടപ്ലാതെ എന്റെ ഇഷ്ടം ഞാൻ എപ്പഴെങ്കിലും നോക്കിട്ടുണ്ടോ? elvisinte iṣṭalla:te ente iṣṭam ja:n eppaṭṇkilum no:kke:ttuṇṭo: Have I ever given importance to mine? തിരിച്ച് അലോയ്ച്ചുണ്ടോ എൽവിസ്? ṭiritṭi a:lo:jṭṭiṇṭo: elvis? Have you ever given a rethought? ഇത്രേം കാലത്തിനിടയിൽ എൽവിസിന്റെ എന്തെങ്കിലുമൊരിഷ്ടം എനിക്ക് വേണ്ടി മാറ്റിവെച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടോ? itre:m ka:lattinṭajil elvisinte eṇṭenkilumoriṣṭam eṇikk ve:ṇṭi ma:tiveṭṭiṭṭuṇṭo:? In between these years, have you ever sacrificed any of your desires for me?
Elvis	ഓ! അപ്പോ ഇതുമായി മുന്നോട്ടു പോവാൻ തന്നെയാണ് ഉദ്ദേശ്യം o:! appo: iṭuma:ji munno:ṭṭu po:va:n ṭanneja:n udde:ṭṭam So, you plan to continue like this, don't you?
Malini	സെല്ല് റെസ്‌പെക്ട് എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞത് എനിക്കും ഇല്ലേ

	self respekt enn parannaṭ epikkum ille: Don't I also have self-respect?
Elvis	ആദിയെക്കുറിച്ച് ആലോചിക്ക് a:ḍijekkuritʃʃi a:lo:tʃʃikk Think about Aadi
Malini	അവൾക്കു വേണ്ടി തന്നെയാണ് എൽവിസ് ഇത്. avalakku ve:ṇṭi tannaṇja:n elvis iṭ I've taken this decision only for her. ആ ഫ്ലാറ്റിനുള്ളിൽ അവൾക്കു കണ്ടു വളരാൻ a: fla:tiṇu[lil] avalkku kaṇṭu vaḷara:n In that flat, for her to see and grow, നല്ലൊരു കുടുംബം ഉണ്ടാക്കാൻ പറ്റിട്ടുണ്ടോ നമുക്ക് ഇതുവരെ? ṇalloru kuṭumbam unṭa:kka:n pati:ttuṇṭo: ṇamukk iṭuvare? have we ever made a good family till now? ഇവിടുന്ന് അങ്ങാട്ട് നമുക്ക് അവൾക്കു വേണ്ടി

	iviṭuṇṇaṇṇo:ṭṭ ṇamukk avaḷakku ve:ṇṭi From now on, for her sake, ഭംഗിയുള്ള രണ്ടു ലോകങ്ങളുണ്ടാക്കാം. b ^h aṇṇijulḷa raṇṭu lo:kaṇṇaḷuṇṭa:kka:m we can create two beautiful worlds
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(1:57:24- 1:59:23)

However, the arguments Elvis places are moderated when it comes to subtitles. When Elvis says “അങ്ങനെയാടി ഞാൻ” (That’s how I am), the ‘I’ represents the man in general, not just Elvis as an individual. For decades Malayalam cinema has produced and reproduced dialogues such as “ആണായാൽ ചളിലും ചവിട്ടും കാലും കഴുകും”²⁰ (Men get dirty and then clean themselves) to justify men’s infidelity. Elvis, being an adulterer himself, asserts that dialogue to indicate polygamy is natural in men but not prohibited for women by nature. The subtitle only says, “That’s my nature” making it some personal habit of Elvis rather than a political question of gendered nature. Similarly, where Elvis emphasises “കുടുംബത്തിൽ പിറന്നവള് ഭർത്താവിനെ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്ന ഭാര്യയായിരിക്കണം” (A woman who born in a noble family is the wife who understands her husband) the subtitle says “a good wife”. The dialogue refers to a woman’s upbringing and the role of family in disciplining her in grooming as a good wife. The dialogue is about the role of family as an institution in disciplining a woman. It is not merely about being “good” or “bad”. The concept of “കുടുംബത്തിൽ പിറന്ന സ്ത്രീ” (woman of noble birth), കലസ്ത്രീ²¹ (noblewoman)” etc. have underlying political meanings of purity and pollution. When women who follow traditions are

²⁰ a:ṇ:ja:ja:l t̪el̪i:lum t̪javittum ka:lum kaṛukum

²¹ kulastrī:

referred to as “കുടുംബത്തിൽ പിറന്ന സ്ത്രീ²²”, “കുലസ്ത്രീ”, “തറവാട്ടിൽ പിറന്ന സ്ത്രീ²³” (woman who is born in traditional family”) etc. to indicate their noble birth, “ചന്തപ്പെണ്ണ്” (Market woman) is used as contrasting terminology to refer to women who work in markets. When women who have noble birth maintain their purity by being at their homes and serving only their husbands, working women pollute themselves by interacting in spaces where men and people of different castes and clans also work (Devika 71-72).

5.2.3. *Take Off* (2017)

Take Off narrates the story of Sameera, a nurse hailing from an orthodox Muslim family. The crux of the film is about how she combats the ISIS group while being in Iraq as medical staff. Sameera navigates various ordeals as a divorcee who is forced to separate from her child. She is compelled to remarry as her community doesn’t allow unmarried women to migrate, even for better vocational opportunities. She is pressured to carry a second pregnancy as she marries a man who is not married before her. *Take Off* illustrates how multifarious power structures operate on women’s bodies and their choices in order to conform them to normative expectations.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Sameera	ഇത് എന്താണ് സർ it̪ en̪t̪aːɳ sar What the hell is this? ഇവിടെ നൈറ്റ് എടുക്കാൻ ഞാൻ മാത്രം ഉള്ളോ

²² kutumbattil pirappa stri:

²³ tarava:ttil pirappa stri:

	ivite pait etukka:n pa:n ma:tre: ullo: Am I the only one for night duty here?
Doctor	ലേബർ വാർഡിൽ പേഷ്യന്റ് കൂടുതലാ... le:bar va:rdil pe:sjyans ku:tutala:... There are too many patients in the labour ward ഞാൻ എന്തെയാനാ pa:n ente:ja:na: What am I to do? എക്സ്പീരിയൻസ് ഉള്ള നേഴ്സുമാരെ കിട്ടണ്ട ekspi:rijans ullā ne:ɽsma:re kittante: We don't have many experienced nurses
Sameera	എന്നാലേ... സർ ഉദ്ദേശിക്കുന്ന എക്സ്പീരിയൻസ് എനിക്കില്ല enna:le: sa:r udde:ɽikkunna ekspiri:rijans enikkilla Well...I don't have the kind of experience you mean അതിനു വേണ്ടി വെറുതേ ഒറക്കം കളയണ്ട

	aṭṭiṇu ve:ṇṭi veruṭe: orakkam kaḷajanṭa So don't lose your sleep over that
Doctor	ഞാനെന്ത് ഉദ്ദേശിച്ചെന്നു ഈ പറയുന്നു na:nentṭ uḍḍe:ṭiṭṭiṭṭenna: i: parajuṇṇe: What are you saying 'I meant'? അങ്ങനെ ഒരാളുടെ സൗകര്യത്തിന് ഷിഫ്റ്റ് ഒന്നും മാറ്റാൻ പറ്റില്ല. aṇṇaṇe ora:ḷuṭe saukarjattṭiṇ ṣiṭṭ oṇṇum ma:ta:n patilla We can't change the shift according to one person's convenience
Sameera	സാരിന്റെ സൗകര്യം ഞാനീ ഡിവോഴ്സ് കഴിഞ്ഞ് നിക്ഷേപനതാണല്ലോ ല്ലേ sa:rinte saukarjam na:ṇi: ḍivo:ṭs kaṭṭiṇṇ ṇikkunṇṇaṭa:ṇallo: lle: And my divorce is your convenience?
Doctor	ഏഹ് എന്തോന്ന് e:h eṇṭo:ṇṇ Huh? What?

Sameera	എന്നെക്കൊണ്ട് കൂടുതൽ പറയിപ്പിക്കരുത് ennekkonṭ ku:tuṭal parajippikkaruṭ Don't force me to say more? പിന്നെത്തിനാടോ താൻ കഴിഞ്ഞ നാലാഴ്ച ആയിട്ട് എനിക്ക് മാത്രം നൈറ്റ് ഇട്ടത് pinṇentṭina:to: ta:n kaṣṭina na:la:ṭṭiṣa a:jitt enikku ma:tram nait itṭaṭ Why else would you put me in the night shift four weeks in a row?
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(00:13:04-13:28:00)

The scene introduces Sameera's marital status as divorced. It discusses how women who transgress the boundaries of the private sphere and access the public spaces are looked at as less virtuous. Sameera's divorced status is considered an opportunity for the male doctor to attempt sexual favours. Sameera is given night duty in the hospital for four continuous weeks for these attempts. However, the meaning associated with allotting continuous night shifts under the pretence that there are not enough experienced nursing staff is missed out in the subtitles.

Sameera's retort “സർ ഉദ്ദേശിക്കുന്ന എക്സ്പീരിയൻസ് എനിക്കില്ല” is subtitled “I don't have the kind of experience you mean”. It is a mere word-to-word translation of the original Malayalam dialogue, aiming only to ensure linguistic equivalency. The sociocultural connotations in the conversation are entirely absent in the subtitles, where ‘experience’ refers to sexual experience. For readers who are not informed, the approach towards divorced women in the conventional society will not be available to infer through subtitles.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
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Faizal	ഉമ്മ ആകെ ഡൗണാ umma a:ke ɖaʊ̃ɳa: നിന്റെ ഈ ജോലിക്ക് പോക്കാനും ഓർക്ക് പറഞ്ഞാ തിരിയൂല ɳinte i: d̪ɔ:likk po:kkon̪ɳum o:rkk paraɳɳa: ɖiriɟu:la Umma is not happy about you going to work
Sameera	ഞെ ഇപ്പൊങ്ങനെ പറയാൻ n̪ɛ ippo ɲɳaɳɛ paraɟa:n Why are you talking like that? ന്റെ വീട്ടിലെ അവസ്ഥയൊക്കെ അറിയാവുന്നതല്ലേ n̪ɛ vi:t̪tile avast̪ʰajokke arija:vun̪ɳaɳalle: You know the situation at my place നിക്കാഹിനു മുന്നേ അതെല്ലാം പറഞ്ഞതാണല്ലോ ɳikka:hiɳu mun̪ɳɛ: aɖella:m paraɳɳaɳa:ɳallo: I told you all that before the wedding
Faizal	അന്നങ്ങനെ പറഞ്ഞുന്ന് വെച്ച്?

	anṇanṇane parannu:ṇṇ vetṭi? So what if you did?
Sameera	ശരി, ഞാൻ പോയില്ല feri, na:ṇ po:ṇilla Alright. I won't go ഇക്ക ഒരു കാര്യം ചെയ്യ്. മാസാമാസം എന്റെ ശമ്പളത്തിന്റെ പാതി ഇങ്ങ് താ. ikka oru ka:rjam ente jambalattinte pa:ṭi iṇṇ ṭa: You just give me half of my pay every month ഞാൻ അതുപോക്ക് അയച്ചു കൊടുക്കാം. na:n aṭuppa:kk ajatṭiṭu koṭukka:m I will send it to Uppa എന്തേ അത് പറുവോ? enṭe: aṭ patuvo: Can you?

(18:40:00- 19:05:00)

According to Alam, “While all religions prescribe gender codes that effectively exclude women and subordinate them to men, it is debatable that women in Islamic settings occupy a distinctive and separate position that effectively denies them autonomy” (ibid. 240). Sameera marries Faizal, an NRI, with the understanding that she has to financially support her family. However, the in-law family soon starts showing their discomfort with Sameera going out for work. Their anxieties are indicated through scenes where Sameera eats with the men of the house, missing Namaz, not covering her head with a scarf etc. None of these instances are subtitled. These sequences culminate in the above conversation between Faizal and Sameera in which he categorically objects to her decision to work.

Her constant disobedience to conform to the family’s religiousness, leads to her impregnation. Sameera is compelled to discontinue her work. The impregnation works as a regulatory tactic to control female sexuality.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Uncle	നിന്റെ കാര്യം കുടുംബക്കാരോടൊക്കെ ആലോചിച്ചു ɳinte ka:rjam kuṭumbakka:ro:ṭokke a:lo:tʃitʃitʃu I talked to the family about your job. ബന്ധം പിരിഞ്ഞെങ്കിലെന്താ...ഒന്നുടെ കെട്ടാനുള്ള വയസ്സേ നിനക്കായിട്ടുള്ളൂ എന്നാ എല്ലാവരും പറയുന്നു bandʱam pirinɳenkilenta:...onɳo:te ketta:nulla vajasse: ɳinɳakka:jittuɳlu: eɳɳa: ella:rum parajunɳe:

So what if you are divorced? Everyone feels you are young enough to get married again

അവർ പറയുന്നതിലും കാര്യമുണ്ട്.

avaru parajunnṇaṭilum ka:ɾjamunɿ

And what they say is true

നമ്മുടെ കൂട്ടത്തിലെവരിടെയും ഒറ്റക്ക് പൊറത്ത് പോയി പണിയെടുക്കണ പെണ്ണങ്ങളിലു

ṇammate ku:ɿtattilevitejum otakk poratt po:ji panijetukkunṇa penṇunṇaḷilla

Among our people, women don't go abroad all alone to work

അതുകൊണ്ട് തൽക്കാലം നീ ഈ പോക്കങ്ങ് മറന്നേക്ക്

aṭukonɿ ɿalkka:lam ɱi: i: po:kkanṇ maraṇṇe:kk

So forget about that job for now

ഇനിയീപ്പോ ഇതെന്തിനാ

iṇijippo: iṭeṇṇiṇa:

And I guess this won't be required anymore

ആ വസ്തു... അതവിടെ കെടുന്നോട്ടെ

a: vastu...aṭavite ketanno:ɿte

	Let the property stay intact
Sameera	ഞാൻ ഒന്ന് കെട്ടിയാ നിങ്ങളുടെയൊക്കെ ഈ സങ്കടം തീരുവോ na:n onṇ kettija: ṇiṇṇaṭejokke i: sankaṭam t̥i:ruvo: If I get married, will that make everyone happy? എനിക്കെന്തായാലും പോയേ പറ്റൂ eṇikkent̥a:ja:lum po:je: patu I have to go at any cost അതിനി എന്തെങ്കിലുമായാലും aṭini enteṇṭitt̥a:ja:lum Whatever it takes

(24:26:00- 25:13:00)

Women's empowerment is often measured by their access to education and employment. Alam observes that family may be seen as a site where various forms of inequalities prevail during various phases of women's lifespans. For them, one of the most important such inequalities is the role in decision-making (232). This scene, in continuation with the scene where her maternal uncle visits her family with their objection to Sameera's migration, resonates how the power dynamics stemming from various institutions operate on women. Sameera's

family is drowning in financial problems. Her current salary is inadequate to provide for the family and repay the bank loans. She applies for a job in Iraq, finding nurses are paid better salaries there. This move summons her uncle to their house. The scene depicts Sameera's house struggling to survive the heavy monsoon of Kerala, with multiple water leakages from the ceiling. The uncle is unbothered about how the family's survival objects to Sameera's migration. He cites Sameera's divorce as the reason for her objection to travel. In the above scene, he comes to discuss with the rest of their relatives, who have opined that Sameera is still young, and should be married again. He substantiates their opinion, saying their religion does not allow unmarried women to migrate for work alone. He uses the phrase “നമ്മുടെ കൂട്ടത്തിലെവനിടെയും” to refer to the religious restriction. Neither the dialogue, nor the subtitles specify what the phrase refers to. However, Sameera, who was having a leisure time in the canteen with her friends, immediately covers her head with the scarf as the uncle enters, signalling how her religion plays a regulatory role in her life. The subtitles, by choosing not to translate the dialogues with specificity, conform to normative discourses, thereby diluting the politics of the text. The subtitles corresponding to the scene fail to convey how Sameera's decision is strongarmed by the converged strike employed by religious and patriarchal structures. These institutions, in their desperation to control a divorced woman's sexuality, disregard the whole family's financial struggles.

The discontentment of the uncle is clearly visible in the scene where her father has requested his permission to sell Sameera's mother's property, which is attached to her uncle's. Sameera tells her father his objection is also rooted in the understanding that if they sell it, demand will be reduced for his property. Sameera or Sameera's mother making an independent decision about what to do with their property is what annoys the uncle the most. When he comes to meet her at the canteen, he carries the documents of the property and tries to hide his smirk in

being able to obstruct the selling. He says, “let the property remain intact”. Alam finds that “Muslim women in India as in other Islamic settings, are, therefore, likely to be socially more disadvantaged than women of other religions. One of the implications of being in a disadvantaged position is having less participation in decision-making” (ibid. 240). Sameera’s uncle and her Muslim patriarchal family impede the possibilities of Sameera or her mother accessing the resources and thereby gaining social mobility and empowerment. However, the subtitles do not specify the religious factor and water down the intricacy of multiple normative and dominant institutions and ideologies operating on women.

5.2.5. *Mayaanadhi* (2017)

Mayaanadhi talks about Aparna, commonly addressed as Appu, who dreams to be a successful film actor. Aparna’s father is no more, and her relationship with her mother is a difficult one. She, therefore, stays separate. In her introduction scene Aparna is shown giving an audition for an upcoming movie where it is revealed she is an engineering dropout. However, she expresses remarkable confidence in her calibre and beauty.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Appu	സമീറ എന്റെ റൂംമേറ്റ് ആയിരുന്നു sami:ra ente ru:me:t a:jirunnu Back then, Sameera was my roommate ഇപ്പോ സമീറ വലിയ സ്റ്റാർ ആണ് ippo sami:ra vali:ja sta:r a:η

Now Sameera is a big star

ടെൻ്റ് വരെ ഞാൻ സ്കൂളിൽ ഡ്രാമയിലൊക്കെ വർക്ക് ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്

tent vare na:n sku:li dra:majilokke varkk tfejittont

Until my 10th grade in school

I have worked in plays and dramas

ആൻഡ്, സമീറയെക്കാട്ടിലും എന്തുകൊണ്ടും കഴിവും സൗന്ദര്യവും എനിക്കുണ്ടെന്ന വിശ്വാസം എനിക്കുണ്ട്

a:nd, sami:rajekka:ttilum entukontum kajivum saundarjavum enikkuntenna

vifva:sam enikkunt

And, I have the belief that I am more talented and beautiful than Sameera any day.

ആൻഡ് ഐ നോ ദാറ്റ്, ഇൻഡസ്ട്രിയിൽ എനിക്കൊരു സ്പേസ് ഉണ്ടാവും എന്നുള്ളതും എനിക്ക് നല്ല വിശ്വാസം ഉണ്ട്

a:nd ai no: da:t, indastrijil enikkoru spe:s untavum ennul[atum enikk palla

vifva:sam unt

And I know that, there will be a space for me in the industry,

I am confident about that

	മോർ ദാൻ ദാ:ത, ഐ ദിസേർവ് എ ബെറ്റർ ലൈഫ് mo:r dā:n dā:t, ai dīserv e betar laif More than that, I deserve a better life.
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(19:20:00- 19:55:00)

Aparna does not hesitate to state that she believes she is better than Sameera in all aspects even though she came with Sameera's recommendation. With this very scene, Aparna violates the idea of an ideal heroine who embodies virtuousness. She returns to Sameera's place after the audition without any guilt for saying she could be a better actress than Sameera. However, the subtitles do not communicate her confidence effectively. In both sentences where Aparna asserts how confident she is about her calibre, beauty and about the space she dreams of in industry, subtitles are given with less assertive words. They don't contain the word 'confident' in the first dialogue or even its synonyms. The word used is "believe" which appears inadequate to convey Aparna's self-assurance.

Aparna shares a complicated relationship with Mathan who was her boyfriend once. He keeps approaching her. She, on the one hand, shares space and time with him and, on the other hand, tells him that broken trust is hard to mend. Even when she denies the probability of a future together, Aparna exchanges vulnerable and emotional moments with Mathan. Following her selection in an audition, they engage in passionate sex. When Mathan asks for future plans, Aparna strikes out at any possibility.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Mathan	എന്താ അപ്പു enṭa: appu: What Appu? സെറ്റ് അല്ലേ set alle: Aren't you all set? നമുക്ക് പോണ്ടേ ṇamukk po:ṇṭe: Shouldn't we go?
Appu	ഇന്നലത്തെ കാര്യംനോ മാത്തൻ ഉദ്ദേശിക്കണേ? innalatte ka:rija:ṇo: ma:ttan udde:ṭikkane:? Are you talking about yesterday?
Mathan	ആഹ് a:h Yes

Appu	മാത്താ ഞാൻ ഇന്നലെ ഭയങ്കര സന്തോഷത്തിലായിരുന്നു ma:tt̪a: ɲa:n in̪n̪pale bʰajankara santo:ʂatt̪ila:ʃirun̪nu Maathan, yesterday I was extremely happy സെക്സ് ഈസ് നോട്ട് എ പ്രൊമിസ് seks i:s ɲo:t̪t̪ e pro:mis And, sex is not a promise.
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(1:27:29- 1:27:47)

This scene in general, and the dialogue “sex is not a promise” in particular, gave rise to a lot of discussions and was repeated in later movies. One of the films, *Kumbalangi Nights*, in discussed in this dissertation, also repeats the dialogue when sexual exchanges come into question between a couple before they reach any concrete idea about their future.

Aparna is shown as having physical intimacy with Mathan when they were in a relationship. In those flashback scenes, also Aparna is represented as confident about her actions. When they are caught kissing in an internet café, Aparna doesn’t showcase any fright or worry rather exhibits a mischievous laughter on her face. Here, in this scene, Aparna categorically states that engaging in a sexual act implies no other possibilities as long as she verbally expresses any. Aparna is well aware of the nuance of consent. In an instance where Mathan asks if he can kiss her, Aparna tells him he cannot yet. These exchanges affirm how Aparna approaches her bodily autonomy.

However, the silences that follow her reactions may confuse the reader about the possible

interpretations as the expressions and gestures are not translated. When Mathan asks why she is responding like a prostitute, Aparna goes silent. But her silence is not that of shame. Her tightened face and shivering body communicate her anger. Similarly, when her mother understands that they engaged in a sexual act, she also calls Aparna a prostitute. Again, she goes silent but brimming with pain. The difference in her reactions is not translated for the uninformed readers.

5.2.6. *Godha* (2017)

Godha is centred around Aditi, a wrestling aspirant. Aditi was born into a conservative Punjabi family. Her father encourages her wrestling spirit. However, the rest of the family is not in favour of a woman battling in *Godha*, instead of getting married at the “right age” to a respectable family. In a conversation with Das, she explains her situation.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Das	What happened എന്തുപറ്റി? entupati?
Aditi	Tell me something How big can a girl dream ഒരു പെൺകുട്ടിയുടെ സ്വപ്നങ്ങളുടെ വലിപ്പം അറിയുമോ ദാസിന?

oru penkuttijute svapnanna[ute valippam arijumo: d̪a:siɳu?

First of all, if she is from an Indian middle class family,

പ്രത്യേകിച്ച് ഒരു മിഡിൽ ക്ലാസ് ഫാമിലിയിലെ പെൺകുട്ടി ആണെങ്കിൽ...

praɽje:kiɽɽi oru miɽil k̪la:s fa:milijile penkutti a:ɳenkil...

then toh she can't dream, you know!

അവിടെ സ്വപ്നങ്ങൾക്കു തന്നെ സ്ഥാനമില്ല എന്നതാണ് സത്യം...

aviɽe svapnanna[kku ɽanne ɽaɳamilla ennaɽa:n satjam

I mean nobody wants a Sakshi Malik in their house

സാക്ഷി മാലിക്കിനെ പോലുള്ളവർ വരുമ്പോൾ നമ്മൾ കയ്യടിക്കും...

sa:k̪ʂi ma:likkiɳe po:lul̪avar varumpo:l̪ ɳammaɭ kajjaɽikkum

Until and unless she wins an Olympic medal...

പക്ഷേ അതുപോലൊരാളെ സ്വന്തം വീട്ടിൽ വളർത്തിയെടുക്കാൻ ഇവിടെ എത്ര പേരുണ്ട്?

pak̪ʂe: aɽupo:lora:le svaɳɽam vi:ɽɽil vaɭaɽɽijetukka:n iviɽe eɽra pe:ruɳɽ?

We don't have a say, you know...I mean we are not even given the permission to dream.

സ്വപ്നം കാണാനുള്ള പെർമിഷൻ ഞങ്ങൾക്കില്ല ദാസ്

svapṇam ka:ṇa:ṇuḷḷa permiṣan paṇṇaḷkilla ḍa:s

All they want us to do is

Get married...have kids and take care of our husbands...

കല്യാണം കഴിക്കണം...പ്രസവിക്കണം

ഭർത്താവിനെ പരിചരിക്കണം...കുടുംബം നോക്കണം

kalja:ṇam kaṭṭikkaṇam...prasavikkaṇam

b^hartṭa:viṇe pariṭṭarikkaṇam...kuṭumbam ṇo:kkaṇam

and then live under someone for the rest of our lives

ബാക്കിയുള്ള കാലം ആർക്കോ വേണ്ടി ജീവിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കണം

ba:kkijulḷa ka:lam a:rkko: ve:ṇṭi dṛi:viṭṭiṭṭu ṭi:rkkaṇam

I am getting married next week.

അടുത്ത ആഴ്ച എന്റെ കല്യാണമാണ്

aṭṭṭa a:ṭṭa ente kalja:ṇama:ṇ

My brother has been trying to get me married...

And I've been trying to escape

ഏട്ടനിൽ നിന്ന് എനിക്ക് രക്ഷപ്പെടാൻ കഴിയില്ല.

	e:tt̪aṇṇil ṇiṇṇ eṇikk rakṣappeta:n kaṭṭijilla
Das	Why don't you run away? തനിക്ക് എവിടെയെങ്കിലും ഓടി പൊയ്ക്കൂടെ? ṭṭaṇikk eviṭejeṇkilum o:ṭi pojkku:te:?
Aditi	It's not that easy yaar. അതത്ര എളുപ്പമല്ല aṭṭaṭra eḷupparamalla How far can I run? എവിടം വരെ ഓടാൻ കഴിയും eviṭam vare o:ṭa:n kaṭṭijum I've tried my best. ശ്രമിച്ചതാ ഞാൻ ṭramitṭiṭṭaṭa: na:n I behaved like a boy, I fight with boys. I beat them. ആൺകുട്ടികളെ പോലെ പെരുമാറിയിട്ടുണ്ട്...തല്ല കൂടിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. അവരെ തോല്പിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്!

a:ŋkuttikale po:le peruma:rijittunt...tallu ku:tijittunt. avre to:lppit̪iʃittunt!

I mean in the end I'm just a girl.

പക്ഷേ...ഉള്ളിന്റെയുള്ളിൽ ഞാൻ വെറുമൊരു പെണ്ണമാത്രമാണ് മറ്റുള്ളവർക്ക്

pakʃe:...u[l̪inteju[l̪il ja:n verumoru pen̪uma:t̪rama:ŋ matu[l̪avarkk

You know, sometimes I feel so helpless...then I just wanna kill myself, you know... problem solved

ഒന്നും ചെയ്യാൻ കഴിയാതെ ഇതൊക്കെ അങ്ങ് അവസാനിപ്പിച്ചാലോ എന്ന് തോന്നും

പിന്നെ പ്രശ്നമില്ലല്ലോ

on̪num t̪eʃja:n kaʃja:t̪e itokke aŋɐ avasa:n̪ippit̪iʃa:lo: en̪n to:n̪num

pin̪ne praʃŋamillallo:

I'll leave, I've to go to Patiala tomorrow...probably to play the last match of my life

ഞാൻ നാളെ പട്യാലക്കു പോകും

ചിലപ്പോളെന്റെ അവസാനത്തെ മാച്ചായിരിക്കും

ja:n ŋa:l̪e patja:lakku po:kum

t̪ilappo:l̪ente avasa:n̪at̪te ma:t̪iʃa:jirikkum

Aditi also says that she has attempted to behave like boys and tried to run away from home. But those attempts did not help her escape the family's controlling hands. She parallels her situation with how society celebrates winners, those who accomplished great achievements and points at what they face, especially if they are from middle-class backgrounds, during their training process. When Aditi says, "I mean nobody wants a Sakshi Malik in their house, until and unless she wins an Olympic medal", the subtitle is given as "സാക്ഷി മാലിക്കിനെ പോലുള്ളവർ വരുമ്പോൾ നമ്മൾ കയ്യടിക്കും... പക്ഷേ അതുപോലൊരാളെ സ്വന്തം വീട്ടിൽ വളർത്തിയെടുക്കാൻ ഇവിടെ എത്ര പേരുണ്ട്?" Aditi means that there are people to reap the fruit of their hard work. People are proud when Sakshi Malik wins an Olympic medal. But Sakshi alone faces the challenges and obstacles to reach till there. Though the film was released in 2017, it is interesting to connect the dialogue to the recent protest Sakshi and her fellow wrestlers led against Mr. Brij Bhooshan, former President of the Wrestling Federation of India. Sakshi's and her fellow wrestlers' victories were owned by the country. But when they were fighting against sexual harassment, they did not receive any structural support from the country. Aditi's intended meaning varies from the subtitles provided. However, the subtitles also carry equally relevant critique of how normative families groom their daughters.

Aditi stays at Das's house after fleeing from her brother and takes wrestling training from Das's father. When Das asserts his space as a patron, who gave her shelter and under whose father she is training, Aditi doesn't hesitate to fight his intentions to control her.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Aditi	Das, you okay?

Das

എന്താ നിന്റെ ഉദ്ദേശം? എന്തെക്കൊണ്ട് വെറുതെ ഒന്നും പറയിപ്പിക്കരുത്

entā: ninte uddṣjam?

enṇekkont veruṭe: onṇum parajippikkaruṭ

What's your intention?

ആ കൊരങ്ങച്ചനെ കെട്ടിപ്പിടിച്ചാലേ നിനക്കു ഗുസ്തി പഠിക്കാൻ പറ്റുള്ളൂ?

a: koranṇatṭṭṭaṇe ketṭippiṭṭṭa:le: nṇakku guṣṭi paṭṭikka:n patuḷḷu?

You can learn guṣṭhi only if you roll on that monkey?

കുടുംബത്തിൽ പിറന്ന പെമ്പിള്ളേര് ആമ്പിളൊരെ കെട്ടിപ്പിടിച്ചു മറിഞ്ഞു അല്ല ഗുസ്തി പഠിക്കുന്നത്

kuṭumbattil piranṇa pempille:r a:mpilla:re ketṭippiṭṭṭum mariṇṇum alla guṣṭi paṭṭikkunṇaṭ

Girls born in good families don't wrestle with boys.

ഞാൻ നിന്റെ ഫ്രണ്ട്...ആ കുളളൻ നിന്റെ ആരാ?

na:n ninte fraṇṭa:...a: kuḷḷan ninte a:ra:?

I am your friend. But who that dwarf guy is?

കൃട്ട് ആണ് പോലും...അവൻ ടെഡി അല്ല തെണ്ടിയാണ് തെണ്ടി

kju:ṭṭ a:ṇ po:lum...avan ṭeḍi alla, ṭeṇṭija:ṇ ṭeṇṭi

	Cute! He is such a crook! ചക്കപ്പോത്തു...ശീമപ്പന്നി...പന്ന പട്ടി tʃakkappo:tt...ʃi:mappanni...panna patti Burley...bulky...Bloody dog
Aditi	What are you saying?
Das	ദൈവമേ ഇതെങ്ങനാ ഇംഗ്ലീഷിൽ പറയാ ḍaivame: iṭeṇṇana: imgl:i:ṣil paraja: My God! How would I translate all these to English?!!! See, why are you training with those uncultured fellows? മ്മ് സീ, നീ എന്തിനാണീ സംസകാരം ഇല്ലാത്തവരുടെ കൂടെ ഗുസ്തി പിടിക്കുന്നത്? mh si:, pi: eṇṭṭiṇa:ṇi: samska:ram illa:ttavaruṭe ku:ṭe guṣṭi piṭikkunṇaṭ? You know this Balan? He is a very bad boy...I know him from this size. ഈ ബാലനങ്ങല്ലോ...എനിക്കവനെ ചെറുപ്പത്തിലേ അറിയാം i: ba:lanuṇṭallo:...eṇikkavane tʃeruppattile: arija:m He is a womaniser...he is a fraud. പെണ്ണ് പിടിയനാണ് അവൻ...ഫ്രോഡ്

and I will always be grateful to you for that.

ആ നന്ദി എനിക്കെപ്പോഴുമുണ്ടാകും

a: n̪andɪ ep̪ikkeppo:ɽumun̪ɔ:kum

But that doesn't mean you start to control me in whatever I do.

പക്ഷെ അത് നീ എന്റെ മേലുള്ള ഒരധികാരമായി കാണരുത്

pakʃe: aɽ n̪i: ente me:lul̪la oraɽ^hika:rama:ji ka:naruɽ

Remember one thing Das,

ഒരു കാര്യം...

oru ka:rjam...

For me wrestling is everything...and I mean everything.

I will do whatever possible to improve my skills.

മസ്തിയാണെന്നിക്കല്പാം...എല്ലാം

gust̪ija:n̪ep̪ikkella:m..ella:m

And I don't care for people who stand in my way telling me don't do this,

don't do that...

അതിനിടയിൽ വന്ന് അത് ചെയ്യരുത് ഇത് ചെയ്യരുതെന്ന് പറയുന്നവരോട് എനിക്ക് വെറും പുള്ളമാണ്

aɽɪn̪itajil v̪ann̪ aɽ t̪ɛjjaruɽ iɽ t̪ɛjjaruɽenn̪ paraɽuɽnn̪avaro:t̪ ep̪ikk̪ verum

	put̪t̪ʰama:ɳ not even my family, എന്റെ വീട്ടുകാരാണെങ്കിൽ പോലും ente vi:t̪t̪uka:ra:ɳenkil po:lum Don't you dare say such things to me again...okay അതുകൊണ്ട് മേലാൽ എന്തെങ്കിലും ഇതുപോലെ സംസാരിക്കാൻ വരരുത്. aṭukon̪ me:la:l entejaṭutt̪ iṭupo:le samsa:rikka:n vararuṭ
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(1:21:55- 1:23:24)

The concept of “കുടുംബത്തിൽ പിറന്ന പെണ്ണ്” comes in Das’s conversation as well. Unlike in *Ramante Edanthottam*, *Godha* gives the verbatim translation of the phrase. *Godha* also puts the idea in a good/bad binary. “കുടുംബത്തിൽ പിറന്ന പെണ്ണ്” is not about being a good or bad woman by character. As we have discussed in the analysis of *Ramante Edanthottam*, the phrase has a more layered political undertone. *Godha* also fails to capture it. Here, Aditi retorts in an aggressive and assertive tone. She questions Das’s idea of good and bad women. She says wrestling is everything for her and she will “whatever possible to improve” her skills. This dialogue is not subtitled. This is a reply to Das for expecting a romantic relationship from her as she stays at his house. He mistakes it as her interest in him. However, Aditi chooses to stay at Das’s house because his father is a renowned wrestler and wrestling coach. She, through this dialogue, implies that it is not Das, but wrestling is of prime importance as far as she is concerned.

Pallavi	അത്...ഇന്നലെ ഉച്ചക്ക് പെട്ടെന്നു മാറ്റിയത് at...innale ut̪t̪ɪakk pet̪t̪enna: matijət̪ It was changed suddenly last afternoon മറ്റേത് അത്ര കംഫോർട്ടബിളു് അല്ലായിരുന്നു... ആർക്കും mate:t̪ a:tra kamfart̪tabil̪ alla:jirun̪nu...a:rk̪kum The other one was not comfortable for anyone പിന്നെ ഇത് മതിന്ന് സന്ദീപ് സാറും പറഞ്ഞു pin̪ne it̪ ma:ti:nn̪ san̪di:p̪ sa:rum̪ paraɳ̪nu And even Mr. Sandeep said this one was fine.
Govind	അത് ഞാനറിഞ്ഞില്ലെന്നു ചോയ്ച്ചത് at̪ na:riɳ̪n̪illallo:nn̪a: t̪fo:ɟt̪ɪət̪ I am asking why I did not know

(14:40:00-15:13:00)

Pallavi's fear for Govind is articulated through the pauses in her response. She is scared of his disapproval about the dance costume. But these pauses are not represented in the subtitles. They are given as plain statements. Pallavi refers to Sandeep, their teacher. The reference seems to convince Govind that the costume is approvable. However, the subtitle is given as "Mr.

Sandeep” without specifying his connection to them. Pallavi uses Sandeep’s reference to imply Govind, a toxic boyfriend, that a man from a respectable position has approved the costume, therefore Govind needs not object to it. This scene is to introduce Govind, a toxically possessive boyfriend, and how the dynamics of their relationship is. However, how intimidated Pallavi feels in his presence and her shivering is reflected in her replies to him. Omitting those pauses in her response impacted the meaning of the subtitles and their correspondence to the scene.

In her conversation with Saariya, her fellow pilot trainee, Pallavi attempts to defend Govind’ toxicity as overprotectiveness. Saariya tells her relationship is only one part of one’s life and not to make it everything.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Pallavi	ഓ ഇതെല്ലാം കൂടെ ഞാനൊരു ദിവസം വെട്ടിക്കളയും o: itella:m ku:te na:poru divasam vetṭikkalajum God! I’m going to chop all this off someday
Saariya	അതിനും ഗോവിന്ദ് സാറിന്റെ അനവാദം ചോദിക്കണ്ടേ aṭṭinum go:vind sa:rinte anuva:dam tṣo:dikkaṇṭe: But you’ll have to get permission from Mr. Govind, won’t you? ഹൈ ചെയ്യുമോ ഉള്ള പവർ ഒക്കെ അവിടെ എത്തുമോളേക്കും ഷൂം ഭൂം fṭai tṣejjumpo: ulḷa pavar okke aviṭe eṭṭumpo:le:kkum ṣo:m bḥo:m

	And all the power you get flying goes this way with him!
Pallavi	ദേ ഇതിപ്പോ താൻ പല തവണ ആയിട്ടോ ഗോവിന്ദിനെ അതും ഇതുമൊക്കെ പറയുന്നു. de: itippo: ta:n pala tavana a:jitto: go:vingdine atum itumokke parajunnu Listen, you've been making fun of Govind a little too much പിന്നെ പെർമിഷൻ വാങ്ങിക്കുന്നതിന്റെ സുഖം തനിക്ക് അറിയാത്തതുകൊണ്ടാ pinne permissan va:nnikkunnapante suk^ham tanikk arija:ttatukonta: And, you don't know how nice it feels to ask for permission sometimes.
Saariya	ഏ, അതോണ്ടാണല്ലോ ഞാൻ ഒരത്തനോട് സലാം പറഞ്ഞു പോന്നത് tru:, aton:ta:hallo: na:n oruttano:t sala:m parajnu po:nnat True! That's why I said goodbye to someone once. ലൈഫിൽ ഇത്രേം കാര്യങ്ങളിൽ ഒന്ന് മാത്രമായിരിക്കണം റിലേഷൻഷിപ്പ്. laifil itre:m ka:rjanjalil onn maatrama:jirikkanam rile:shanip In life your relationship should be just one of many things അല്ലാതെ ഇതെല്ലാം കൂടെ ഈ ഒന്നിലൊക്കെ ഓവറാക്കി ചളുമാക്കരുത് Alla:te itella:m ku:te onnilotukki chalama:kkaru

	If you put everything into just this one thing, it gets messy.
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(33:30:00- 34:00:00)

Whereas Saariya seems self-assured about her independent and liberated self, Pallavi sounds unsure and scared when the discussion becomes around her romantic relationship. The enthusiasm and high-spiritedness immediately go down when Saariya mentions seeking permission from Govind. Pallavi's attempt to warn Saariya to refrain from talking ill about goes feeble. It is translated into subtitles as Saariya is making fun of Govind whereas the original dialogue says Saariya is critical of him. When Pallavi says Saariya doesn't know how nice it feels to ask permission from someone, the subtitle has "sometimes" as an addition. It gives the meaning that Pallavi has to seek permission only occasionally. In the scene it clearly states for anything and everything Pallavi has to ask for his consent. By adding the word "sometimes" subtitling process has eased the gravity of surveillance on Pallavi thereby impacting on the representation of toxic masculinity.

When Govind arrives in Mumbai, uninformed, he finds several changes in Pallavi's appearance. She lied to him that she was going to sleep out of fear that he would disapprove of partying with friends. He gets enraged seeing her in the company of boys, that too after telling him that she was going to sleep.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Govind	ഞാൻ ലാസ്റ്റ് കാണുമ്പോ വേഷം മാറ്റി എല്ലാം വേറെയായിരുന്നല്ലോ

	na:n la:st ka:ṇumpo: ve:ṣo:m muṭi:m ella:m ve:reja:jiruṇṇallo: The last time we met, your hair and clothes were different
Pallavi	ഞാൻ പറയാനിരിക്കാമെന്നു na:n para:ja:ṇirikka:ṇṇu I meant to tell you
Govind	എല്ലാം കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടോ? ഏഹ്? ella:m kaṇṇiṭṭo:? e:h? After it was all done? ഇങ്ങനെയാണോ എല്ലാ രാത്രിയും ഗൂഡ്നൈറ്റ് പറയാൻ വിളിക്കാറ്? iṇṇaṇeja:ṇo: ella: ra:ṭṛjum guḍṇait para:ja:n viḷikka:ru? Is this how you have been calling every night?
Pallavi	അല്ല alla No!

Govind	അല്ല? alla? No?
Pallavi	അല്ല alla No!
Govind	അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ഇന്ന് തന്നെ ഇങ്ങനെയൊരു നല്ല പരയാൻ തോന്നിയത് കോയ്തസിഡൻസ് ആല്ലേ? appo inn tanne inganejoru nuna paraja:n to:nnijatl kojinsidans a:lle;? So the fact that you happened to lie today was just coincidence? വിശ്വസിച്ചിരുന്നു...കണ്ണടച്ച് vijvasitfiruppu kannatatl I believed you...with blind trust ഇനിയെന്തൊക്കെയാണ് എന്റടുത്ത് ഇങ്ങനെ പറയാതെ വെച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്? inijentokkejunt entatutt ingane paraja:te vetfirikkunnat? What else have you been hiding from me?

	Answer me ഏഹ് e:h
Pallavi	പേടിയാ എനിക്ക് നിന്നെ pe:tija: epikk pinne I am scared of you അത് ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞിട്ടുണ്ടോ എപ്പോഴേലും aṭṭa:n paraṇṇittuṇṭo: eppo:ṭe:lum Have I ever told you that? എനിക്ക് ശ്വാസം വീടണം ഗോവിന്ദ് epikk śva:sam viṭaṇam go:viṇḍ I need to breathe, Govind പേടിക്കാതെ ശ്വാസം വീടണം എനിക്ക് pe:ṭikka:ṭe śva:sam viṭaṇam epikk I need to breathe without fear

Govind	അതിനു ഞാൻ ആണോ തടസ്സം? aṭṭiṇu ja:n a:ṇo: taṭassam? And I am what's in the way?
Pallavi	അതെ aṭe Yes നീയാണ് തടസ്സം ni:ja:ṇ taṭassam You are what's in the way എനിക്ക് എന്തെപ്പോലെ ആവണം ഗോവിന്ദ്... eṇikk eṇṇeppo:le a:vaṇam go:viṇḍ... I want to be me, Govind ഇനിയെങ്കിലും iṇṇijēṇkilum At Least from now on

	ഇനിയെങ്കിലും inijenkilum At Least from now on നിനക്ക് വേണ്ട എന്നെപ്പോലെയല്ല ninakku ve:nta ennepo:lejalla Not the me that you want me to be എനിക്ക് വേണ്ട എന്നെപ്പോലെ enikk ve:nta ennepo:le But the me that I want myself to be ആ എന്നോ കൂടെ ഇഷ്ടപ്പെടാമെങ്കിൽ ഇഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടാ മതി. a: enne:m ku:te istappeta:menkil istappeta: mati Love me only if you can love that me as well
Govind	ആ എന്നെ എന്ന് പറയുമ്പോൾ അതിൽ എന്റെ സ്ഥാനം എവിടാ എന്ന് എനിക്കു അറിയാം a: enne enn parajumpo:l aṭil ente st̥ha:ṇam eviṭa: enn enikk arijaṇam I need to know where I stand with that you പാതിരവരെ തോന്നിയിടത്തൊക്കെ നടന്നിട്ട് ഉറങ്ങി എന്നുള്ള കള്ള മെസ്സേജ് ഇനീം ഞാൻ

പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കണോ

pa:tiravare to:nnijitattokke natannitt uranni ennulla kalla messe:d̥ɔ̄ ini:m na:n
praʈi:kʂikkaṇo:

Should I expect more lies about sleeping? When you have been hanging out all night?

ഏഹ്?

e:h?

Should I?

ജോബ് ഇന്റർവ്യൂ ഇന്ന് ഇവിടെവെച്ച് ആയിരുന്നു.

d̥ɔ̄o:b intarvju: inn ivitevet̪t̪i a:jirunnu

I had my job interview here today.

ജോലി ഏതാണ്ട് കൺഫിര്മം ആയി.

d̥ɔ̄o:li e: ʈa:ɳ̪t̪ kaṇfe:m a:ji

The job is confirmed

നമ്മൾ അടുത്ത മാസം റിയാദിലേക്ക് പോവുന്നു.

ṇammal atutta ma:sam ija:d̥ile:kk po:vunnu

We leave for Riyadh next month

Pallavi	എനിക്ക് ഇനീം ഇവിടെ രണ്ട് മാസം കൂടെ ബാക്കിയുണ്ട് enikk inī:m iviṭe raṇṭ ma:sam ku:ṭe ba:kkijunṭ I have two more months to complete here
Govind	അത് പറ്റില്ലെന്നാ ഞാൻ പറയുന്നത്. aṭ patilleṇṇa: ja:n paraḷunṇaṭ And I am saying that can't be done
Pallavi	അത് നീ പറയുന്നത്. aṭ nī: paraḷunṇaṭ That's what you are saying എന്റെ കോഴ്സെ പറ്റിയാ ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞത് ente ko:ṣine patija: ja:n paraṇṇaṭ And its my course I am talking about
Govind	അപ്പോ...അപ്പോ നീ പറയുന്നതുപോലെ കാര്യങ്ങൾ നടക്കണം? appo:...appo nī: paraḷunṇaṭupo:le ka:rjaṇṇaḷ ṇaṭakkaṇam?

	So... things have to be as you say?
Pallavi	വേണം...ചിലപ്പോഴെങ്കിലും. ve:ṇam... tʃilappo:ɽenkilum Yes! At least sometimes.
Govind	കോഴ്സ് തീരേണ്ട എന്ന് തോന്നാം... ko:ɽs ti:re:ɳɽa enn to:ṇṇum Guess you don't want the course to be over. ഇങ്ങനെ മാറി മാറി കൂടെ കിടക്കാൻ തൊലിവെള്ളപ്പുള്ള ആണുങ്ങളെ കിട്ടുമ്പോൾ iṅṅaṇe ma:ri ma:ri ku:ɽekkiɽakka:n ɽoliveluppuɽɽa a:ṇuṅṅale kittumpo:l Since there are so many well-built guys to sleep with around here
Pallavi	Get Lost! Get lost from my life!

(45:07:00- 47:10:00)

The long exchange Pallavi and Govind have, which lead to their breakup, has many moments where Govind raises his voice and attempts to intimidate Pallavi. The use of the sound

“ഏഹ?” is with which Govind asserts his superiority over Pallavi. However, except for one dialogue, it is not subtitled in the entire conversation. The threatening and frightening aspect of Govind’s interrogation is thereby lost considerably in the subtitles.

When Pallavi finally speaks up for herself, the subtitles are given in a very vague translation. Where she says she wants to be herself, not the image Govind wants her to be, the translation into subtitles uses “me”. It confuses the readers what they originally mean. Pallavi is talking about a self that is freed from censoring and surveillance from Govind. However, the subtitles fail to convey the assertiveness and passion with which Pallavi is establishing her individuality.

Pallavi is not ignorant entirely about gender politics and gender discrimination. In an instance where she first meets Vishal; she humorously brings out how gender works everywhere citing how the bathroom doors are designed with “Blah” and “Blah blah blah.... Blah” instead of mentioning gender:

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Vishal	ഒരു കാര്യം ചോദിച്ചോട്ടെ എങ്ങനെയാ ഇതിന്റെയൊരു മെക്കാനിസം? oru ka:rjam tʃo:ɖitʃʃo:tʃe: enɳaɳɐja: itintejoru mekka:ɳisam? Can I ask you something? How does this work?
Pallavi	അത് സർ, ആണങ്ങൾ ആവശ്യത്തിന് മാത്രമേ സംസാരിക്കാറുള്ളൂ എന്നാണല്ലോ ആണങ്ങൾ പറയുന്നത്. aʈ sa:r, a:ɳuɳɳaʎ a:vafʃaʈʈiɳu ma:ʈrame: samsa:rikka:ruʎʎu: enɳa:ɳallo: a:ɳuɳɳaʎ

	parajunnat They say “men talk only when necessary”. At least that’s what men say. അതുകൊണ്ട് സ്ത്രീ മാത്രം aṭukonṭ bla: ma:tram So, it’s just “bla” ഞങ്ങൾ പിന്നെ സ്ത്രീ സ്ത്രീ സ്ത്രീ സ്ത്രീ naṇṇal piṇṇe bla: bla: bla: bla: And with us it’s “blablalabla...”
Vishal	ആരാണീ സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ പിന്നിലെ ജീനിയസ്? a:ra:ṇi: sriṣṭijute piṇṇile d̥zi:ṇijas? And who is the genius behind this creation?
Pallavi	അറിയില്ല. ആണങ്ങളാണെങ്കിലും തന്നെ ആയിരിക്കണമല്ലോ arijilla. a:ṇuṇṇa[a:renkilum a:jirikkanamallo: I don’t know. It must be a man for sure.

When she meets him again after the acid attack, he offers her all-possible help. She asks to become an air hostess. Her face is deformed as a result of the acid attack. He hesitates to give a reply at the moment. But later takes the step to hire her as an airhostess. On a flight she encounters Govind again who deliberately attempts to provoke her.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Vishal	ഞങ്ങളുടെ എയർലൈൻസിൽ എയർഹോസ്റ്റസ് ആയി ഒരു പുതിയ പെൺകുട്ടി എത്തുന്നു. ṇaṇṇaḷuṭe ejarlainsil ejarho:stas a:ji oru puṭṭija penḷkutti eṭṭunṇu We are hiring someone to work with us as an airhostess ഹെർ നെയിം ഈസ് പല്ലവി രവീന്ദ്രൻ her ṇejim i:s pallavi ravi:nḍran Her name is Pallavi Raveendran ആൻഡ് ഷീ ഈസ് ആൻ ആസിഡ് അറ്റാക് വിക്ടിം. a:nḍṣi: i:s a:n a:siḍ ata:k viktim And she is an acid attack victim
Media	ഇത് ഗൌരവം ഒരു ഗിമ്മിക് അല്ലേ? iṭṭṛerikkum oru gimmik alle:?

	Sounds like a gimmick
Vishal	ഒരു നല്ല ഭാവിയുള്ളൊരു പെൺകുട്ടിയുടെ മുഖത്ത് ഒരാൾ ആസിഡ് ഒഴിക്കുന്നു oru ṇalla b^ha:vijul[oru penkuttijute muk^hatt ora:l a:siḍ oḷikkunṇu Someone throws acid in the face of a person with bright prospects, അതോടെ ആ കുട്ടിയുടെ ഹൃദയവും കരിയുമൊക്കെ നിന്നു പോകുന്നു. aḷo:te a: kuttijute fju:ʈʃarum karijarumokke ṇiṇṇu po:kunṇu and that puts an end to her future and career വഴിയവസാനിക്കുന്നില്ല എന്ന് പറയുന്നതിൽ vaḷjavasa:ṇikkunṇilla enṇ parajunṇaṭil How can telling someone the road has not ended എവിടെയാണ് സുഹൃത്തെ ഗിമ്മിക് eviteja:ṇ suhrṭte gimmik? be a gimmick, my friend?
Media	മിസ്റ്റർ വിശാൽ, എന്നാലും സൗന്ദര്യം ഏറ്റവും കൂടുതൽ വേണ്ട ജോലിയല്ല എയർഹോസ്റ്റസ് mistar viʃa:l, enṇa:lum saundarjam e:tavum ku:tuṭal ve:ṇṭa dʒo:lijalle:

	ejarho:stas? Mr. Vishal. Being an airhostess is a job that places beauty at a premium
Vishal	ബുദ്ധിയുണ്ട്, ഹൃദയവുമുണ്ട് budd^hijunt, hridajavumnt She has brains. And a heart. 2019 അല്ലെ സാർ 2019 alle: sa:r This is 2019, sir! അങ്ങനെയും നിർവചിച്ചു തുടങ്ങിക്കൂടെ സൗന്ദര്യത്തെ നമുക്ക് anṇanejum nīrvatⁱtⁱtu tuṭanṇikk^u:te saundarjatte namukk Can't we start defining beauty in that way?

(1:22:11- 1:22:29)

Vishal announces his decision to recruit Pallavi as an airhostess in his airlines. He specifically says “ഒരു പുതിയ പെൺകുട്ടി” (a new girl). However, the subtitle says “We are hiring someone to work with us”, omitting the gender. Acid attack is a gendered violence. Omitting the gender from the reference alters the politics of the context in appointing a girl who was disfigured by a man through acid attack. Again, in the very next exchange where Vishal talks

about the consequences of acid attack on an intelligent woman, the subtitle chooses not to specify the gender. The film is about how Pallavi interacts with her surroundings through her disfigured face after the acid attack. She defies the dominant portrayals of disfigured and disabled bodies as embedded with shame and subjected to pity. Pallavi emerges as a fighter after the acid attack. The gendered nature of the violence, and the resistance of Pallavi as a woman, is not translated through the subtitles.

5.2.8. *Kumbalangi Nights* (2019)

Kumbalangi Nights talks about two families in the village of Kumbalangi; the Napoleon family and the family of Babymol. The Napoleon family consists of four brothers; Saji, Bobby, Bony and Franky. As discussed in the previous chapter, Bobby and Franky are born to Napoleon and his second wife, Leelamma. Saji is Napoleon's son in his first marriage, and Bony is Leelamma's son in her first marriage. These step brothers, after their father's death and mother leaving home, lead an unorganised and purposeless life. Bobby, out of the four brothers, nurtures expectations to have a normative family. His normative expectations from life are revealed in the scene where he irks Sumeesha, his friend's girlfriend, arguing about the concept of beauty.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Boby	കുട്ടി എനിക്ക് തോന്നുന്നു ഒരു ട്രൂ ലവ് ടൈപ്പ് ആണെന്ന് kutti enikk to:nnunnu oru tru: lav taipp a:nenn You seem to be, a 'true love' type, ഐ മീൻ ബാഹ്യസൗന്ദര്യത്തിലൊന്നും വിശ്വസിക്കാത്ത...

	ai mi:n ba:hjyasaundarjattilonnum vijvasikka:tta... not an admirer of external beauty
Sumisha	വിശ്വാസമില്ല...ആര് പറഞ്ഞു vijva:santallo:...a:ru parann Of course, I do പ്രശാന്തേ ആ ഗ്ലാസ് ഒന്ന് വച്ചേ praja:nte: a: gla:s onn vetjje: Prashanth, just wear those glasses. നോക്കൂ കറക്ട് വിനായകന്റെ സൈഡ് കട്ട് ഇല്ലേ no:kkje: karakt vina:jakante said katt ille:? Look at him, doesn't he look like Vinayakan (a popular Malayalam actor)?

(21:51:00- 23:15:00)

Sumeesha challenges Bobby's attempt to mock her choice of partner. Bobby carries patriarchal stereotypes as ideals within himself. For him Prashanth, despite being his closest friend, is not handsome. He is carried away by normative beauty standards. Sumeesha resists his jeering by telling Prashanth resembles Malayalam film actor Vinayakan. Vinayakan is a subaltern hero who established himself against the savarna imagination of stars. The subtitle mentions who Vinayakan is for uninformed readers to find the reference. The reference given for Vinayakan in the brackets help the

readers to understand why Sumeesha chooses the particular actor to contest Bobby's exercise of normative power over her romantic choice.

In a sequence where the newly married Simi and Shammi, along with Babymol and their mother visit their uncle, Shammi shows his disapproval through his facial gestures. The uncle and Shammi later engage in a conversation:

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Uncle	മോനേ ഇവളുടെ ചിറ്റയെ കെട്ടി ഞാനിവിടെ വന്ന് നിന്നപ്പോ mo:ne: ivalte tʃitaje ketti ja:nivite vann ninnappo: നമ്മളടുക്കളേക്കാൾ ഭക്ഷണങ്ങളും കാര്യങ്ങളുമൊക്കെ ഇങ്ങാക്കം ṇamma[ʈukka]elkke:ri bʰakṣaṇaṇṇa[um ka:rjaṇṇa]umokke inʈa:kkum Son, when I came here after marriage and started cooking and all, അതിവിടത്തെ ആളുകൾക്ക് ഭയങ്കര ചൊറിച്ചിലാ aṭivitatte a:[uka]kku bʰajankara tʃoritʃi:la: It did not go well with many neighbours ദേ മോനേം ചെലപ്പോ അങ്ങനെ ചൊറിയൻ ചാൻസ് ഉണ്ട്. പക്ഷേ മോനത് മൈൻഡ് ചെയ്യണ്ട de: mo:ne:m tʃelappo: anṇaṇe tʃorija:n tʃa:ns unʈ

	pakṣe: mo:ṇaṭ maind̪ t̪ʃejjaṇṭa They might turn towards you as well, but never mind it. ഞാനങ്ങനെ ആരോ ഉപദേശിക്കാറില്ല. na:ṇa aṇṇaṇe a:re:m upaḍe:ḥikka:rilla Usually I don't advice anyone- പക്ഷേ നമ്മളൊരേ തുവൽ പക്ഷികളാ pakṣe: ṇammaḷore: tu:val pakṣikaḷa: -but we are kinda, birds of same feather, that's why അതോണ്ടാ എനിക്ക് മോനോടൊരു സ്പെഷ്യൽ ഇഷ്ടം aṭo:ṇṭa: eṇikk mo:ṇo:ṭoru speṣjal iṣṭam
Shammi	[CHUCKLES] ഒന്ന് രണ്ട് തുവൽ വ്യത്യാസം ഉണ്ട് ചിറ്റപ്പാ oṇṇ raṇṭ tu:val vjaṭṭa:sam uṇṭ t̪ʃitappa: Some feathers are different, uncle. ഞാൻ മാനുഷനായിട്ടൊരു പണിക്ക് പോണുണ്ട് na:n ma:ṇjama:jittoru paṇikk po:ṇuṇṭ

	I do have a decent job. ചിറ്റപ്പനെപ്പോലെ ഇങ്ങനെ ബീഫ് വിന്താലു ഉണ്ടാക്കിക്കൊണ്ട് ഇരിക്കല്ല ʃiːtappaɳeppoːle iɳɳaɳe biːf uɳʈaːkkikkonʈ iɾkkalalla Not in kitchen like you.
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(29:44:00-30:24:00)

Shammi's reactions to the uncle are full of scornfulness for being a homemaker. His contempt is expressed through his disrespectful laughter and sharpened eye exchanges. Though the eye exchanges are not subtitled, his laughter is given in the brackets as "chuckles". Shammi smirks throughout the scene at Simi's uncle. He is not chuckling. There is an attempt to capture his expressions through subtitles, but the translation is not accurate.

Baby has been the breadwinner of the family. She earns through her job in a resort and also by runs a homestay. After Simi's marriage to Shammi, he shifts his stay to their house. Shammi starts controlling the family affairs. Shammi finds that a female guest, a foreigner, has invited a local man (Bony) to the room. Shammi peeps through the ventilator and sees the foreign lady and Bony making love. He resorts to moral policing, and verbal abuse. Baby gets offended by the incident.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitling
Baby	ചേട്ടൻ രാവിലെ കാണിച്ചു ഭയങ്കര ബോൾ ആയിപ്പോയിട്ടാ

	tʃe:ttan ra:vile ka:ɳitʃʃe bʰajankara bo:r a:jippo:ji tʃa: What you did to them was totally unfair.
Shammi	എന്താ മോളേ enʃa: mo:le: What did you say?
Baby	അല്ല...ചേട്ടൻ രാവിലെ കാണിച്ചത് ഭയങ്കര ബോർ ആയിപ്പോയി എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞതാണ് alla... tʃe:ttan ra:vile ka:ɳitʃʃe bʰajankara bo:r a:jippo:ji parannaʃa:ɳ I said, it was too unfair.
Shammi	Rule 15: No sellers and locals allowed in Home Stay Rule 15, No sellers and locals allowed in Home Stay
Baby	ഇതിലൊന്നൊന്നും ഒരു കാര്യൊല്ല ചേട്ടാ...അവർ പോയിട്ട് ഒരു പൊട്ട റിവ്യൂ കൊടുത്താ നമ്മുടെ റേറ്റിംഗ് പോവും itʃilonnnum oru ka:rjo:lla tʃeʃʃa:...avaru po:jitt pottʃa rivju: kotuttʃa: re:tiŋ po:vum Its nothing to do with rules, if they give a negative review, our ratings drop.

	ചെലപ്പോ നമ്മുടെ ലൈസൻസ് വരെ ക്യാൻസൽ ആക്കും ʃɛlappo ɳammaɽe laisans vare kja:nsal a:kkum Even our licence could be scrapped.
Shammi	ക്യാൻസൽ ആകട്ടെ kja:nsal a:katte Let it be, then. അങ്ങനെ അഡ്ജസ്റ്റ് ചെയ്ത് കിട്ടുന്ന കാശ് നമുക്ക് വേണ്ട മോളേ anjane addʒst ʃɛjt kɪttunna ka:ʃ ɳamukk ve:ɳta mo:le: We don't need that sort of money നിർത്തിക്കോ... ɳirttikko: Stop it ഇവന്മാരെയാണ് വിശ്വസിക്കാൻ കൊള്ളത്തില്ല ivanma:rejonnum viʃvasikka:n kollattilla These guys are not trustworthy. വർക്കല നടന്നത് ഓർമയുണ്ടല്ലോ ലെ

	varkkala ṇaṭaṇṇaṭ o:mmajunṭallo: le You do know what happened in Varkkala! ഇതിലേ സീരിയൽ മാത്രല്ല, ന്യൂസും ഉണ്ട്. അത് വല്ലപ്പോഴും കാണണം itṭile: si:rjal ma:ṭralla, ṇju:sum unṭ. aṭ vallappoṭum ka:ṇaṇam You should watch news also, not just soaps. ഇങ്ങനെയൊന്നും എന്നോട് സംസാരിക്കല്ലേ ബേബിമോളെ inṇaṇonṇum enṇo:ṭ samsa:rikkalle: be:bimo:le: Do not talk like this to me, Baby. എന്തെങ്കിലും പറ്റിയാ എല്ലാതും എന്നോടെ ചോദിക്കത്തുള്ളൂ enṭenkilum patija: ella:rum enṇo:ṭe: t̪o:dikkattulḷu: If something happens, all blames will be on me.
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(1:30:23- 1:31:46)

Shammi addresses his wife and Baby as “മോളെ” which infantilises their identities as adult women. However, the subtitle mentions only Baby, her name, which he categorically attempts to add the prefix “മോളെ” to, in order to signify her insignificant status in the family. Baby has been supporting the family through doing various jobs. One such is the running of a homestay. The objection Shammi puts against maintaining a homestay service stems from two reasons, both normative. Shammi finds the guest from a foreign country, a woman, making love with a local

man in the homestay. Baby's status as an earning member threatens his aspirations to become the patriarch of the family by all means. He covertly brings a tone of threat throughout the above conversation, which is not reflected in the subtitles. However, they capture his attempts at infantilising Baby.

The following exchange comes at a very crucial narrative moment in the film. Simi reveals that Baby might elope with Bobby, which triggers Shammi. He wakes her up in the midnight and starts lecturing her to her extreme detest.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Shammi	മോളേ മോളെന്നെ സ്വന്തം ചേട്ടനെ പോലെ കാണണം എന്നാലേ സംസാരിച്ചിട്ട് കാര്യമുള്ളൂ mo:le:... mo:le:nne svantam tjetthane po:le ka:nanam ennale: samsa:rittitt ka:ramullu: You should take me as your own brother, otherwise there is no point in talking. അല്ലെ സിമി alle: simi: Right Simi? എന്താ അവന്റെ പേര്... enta: avante pe:ru...

	അവന്റെ പേര് ഞാൻ മറന്നുപോയി avante pe:ru ja:n marannupō:ji What's his name, I forgot
Baby	ബോബി bo:bi Bobby
Shammi	ആ ബോബി a: bo:bbi Yes, yes. Bobby എന്താണവന്റെ യോഗ്യത? en̥ta:ṇav̥nte jo:gjaṭa? What's his qualification? എന്റെ കൂടെ ഈ ടേബിളിൽ ഇരുന്ന് നമ്മുടെ അമ്മയുണ്ടാക്കുന്ന ഭക്ഷണം കഴിക്കാനുള്ള അവന്റെ യോഗ്യത എന്താ? ente ku:ṭe i: ʈe:biḷil irun̥ṇ ṇammaṭe amma un̥ʈa:kkun̥ṇa bʰakṣaṇam kaṭikka:n av̥nte jo:gjaṭa en̥ta:?

	What qualifies him to sit with me around this table and eat our mom's food? ഷേവ് ചെയ്യാ...മോളേ ഷേവ് ചെയ്യാ കൊടുക്കാൻ 60 രൂപ എടുക്കാൻ ഇല്ലാത്തവനാ ʃe:v tʃejja:...mo:lɐ: ʃe:v tʃejja: koʈukka:n 60 ru:pa etukka:n illa:ttavana: He doesn't have even a sixty rupees for a shave.
Baby	ചേച്ചി അതൊക്കെ പണ്ട്..ബോബി ഇപ്പോ പണിക്കൊക്കെ പോണിണ്ട് tʃe:tʃi: aʈokke paɳt..bo:bi ippo: paɳikkokke po:ɳiɳt Sis it's not like that anymore, he is working now.
Shammi	മോളേ ഞാനല്ലേ സംസാരിക്കുന്നത്..ചേച്ചിയല്ലല്ലോ ഏഹ് mo:lɐ: na:nalle: samsa:rikkunnaɳt...tʃe:tʃi:jaɳallallo:...e:h I am the one talking to you, not her. [TENSE MUSIC] ഞാൻ ചോദിക്കുന്ന ചോദ്യത്തിന് എന്നോടല്ലേ മറുപടി പറയേണ്ടത് na:n tʃo:diɳkunna tʃo:ɳjaɳɳnu enno:talle: marupaɳi para:je:ɳɳɳt So answer me ഇൻസൽട് ചെയ്യല്ലേ മോളേ ഇൻസൽട് ചെയ്യല്ലേ insalt tʃejjalle: mo:lɐ: insalt tʃejjalle:

	Don't insult me
Baby	അതൊന്നല്ലേട്ടോ aṭonṇalle:ṭṭa: ബോബിക്ക് നല്ല ആരോഗ്യണ്ട്, നല്ല ബുദ്ധിയുണ്ട്, നല്ല മനസ്സാണ് bo:bikk ṇalla a:ro:gjanṭ, ṇalla maṇassa:ṇ അത്രേം മതി aṭre:m maṭi It's not like that, Bobby is a good guy, that's enough for me.
Shammi	നീ കൊരേ കൂതറ സിനിമ കാണുന്നുണ്ട് ṇi: kore: ku:ṭṭara siṇima ka:ṇuṇṇuṇṭ You watch so many trash movies. മോളേ ഡെയിലി ഞാൻ ഒരുപാട് പേരെ കാണുന്നതാ ഒരുപാടെന്ന് വെച്ചാ ഒരുപാട്. മോൾക്ക് ചിന്തിക്കാൻ പോലും പറ്റൂല mo:le: dejiḷi ja:n orupa:ṭpe:re ka:ṇuṇṇuṇṭ I meet many people daily, you can't imagine അവൻ പക്കാ ഹ്രോഡാ

	avan pakka: fro:ɖa: He is nothing but a fraud.
Baby	അത് ചേട്ടന്റെ ഒപ്പിനിയൻ, എനിക്കന്റെ ഒപ്പിനിയൻ അങ്ങനെ വിചാരിച്ചാ മതി at̪ t̪ɕɕante opi:nijan, enikkente opi:nijan an̪nane vit̪ja:rit̪t̪ja: mat̪i It's your opinion, I have my own, and that's all.
Shammi	ഈസി ആയല്ലോ, അപ്പൊ എല്ലാം ഈസി ആയല്ലോ i:si a:jallo:, appo ella:m i:si a:jallo: It's very easy to say so. മോളെ എനിക്കൊന്നേ പറയാനുള്ളൂ നിന്നെ കെട്ടുന്നവന് മിനിമം എന്റത്രേം യോഗ്യത വേണം mo:l̪e: enikkonne: paraja:nul̪u: niṇṇe kettunnavaṇu miṇimam entat̪re:m jo:ɡjaɽa ve:ṇam I have only this much to tell you, the guy you marry must be as qualified as me. വേണ്ടേ മോളേ

	ve:ɳte: mo:le: Right honey? പിന്നെ ഇവനാരും ഞാനും തമ്മിലുള്ള പ്രധാന വ്യത്യാസം മോശക്ക് പറഞ്ഞ് തരട്ടേ pinne ivanma:rum ɳa:num t̪ammilul̪la praɖ^ha:ɳa viɽja:sam mo:l̪kk paraɳɳ t̪aratte: There is a big difference between them and me. ഇവന്മാര് പല തന്തക്ക് പിറന്നതാ ഞാൻ ഒറ്റ തന്തക്ക് പിറന്നതാ...ഓക്കെ ivanma:ru pala t̪ant̪akk pirann̪a:....o:kke: I have a single father, whereas they have many. Ok?
Baby	അങ്ങനെ പല തന്തക്ക് പിറക്കണേ ടെക്നിക്കലി പോസ്സിബിൾ അല്ലേട്ടോ എല്ലാവർക്കും ഒരു തന്തേ ഉള്ളൂ aɳɳaɳe pala t̪ant̪akk pirakkaɳe: tekɳikkali po:ssibil̪ alle:t̪ta: It's not possible, technically, everyone has a single father.
Shammi	എന്താ പറഞ്ഞേ...എന്താ പറഞ്ഞേ en̪ta: paraɳne:... en̪ta: paraɳne:

	What did you say, what did you? [TENSE MUSIC] അശ്ശീലം പറയുന്നോ...അശ്ശീലം പറയുന്നോ asli:lam parajunno:... asli:lam parajunno: നിന്റെ തള്ളെ വിളിച്ചേ...നിന്റെ തള്ളെ വിളിച്ചെ ninte talle: vilittije:...ninte talle: vilittije: ഞാനൊന്ന് ചോദിക്കട്ടെ പെൺകുട്ടികളെ ഇങ്ങനെയാണോ വളർത്തുന്നെ എന്ന് na:nonn tjo:dikkatte penkuttikale innaneja:no: valarttunne: enn Absolutely lewd!! Call your mom, is this her way to bring up girls? എന്ത് ഉള്ളത്തരോം പറയാനാണോ ent o:lattaro:m paraja:mnna:no:
Baby	ചേട്ടൻ ഒച്ച ഇങ്ങാക്കിട്ട് ഒരു കാര്യമായില്ല. tje:ttan otija inta:kki:tt oru ka:rjo:milla എനിക്കിഷ്ടമുള്ള ആൾടെ കൂടെ ഞാൻ പോവും enikkistamulla a:lte ku:te na:n po:vum No matter how loud you shout, I will go with him
Shammi	എടീ എടീ എടീ ചവിട്ടി കേറ്റി തന്നാലുണ്ടല്ലോ

	eti: eti: eti: tʃavitti ke:ti tanna:luntallo: If you were a boy, I would have thrashed you right there.
Simi	ചേട്ടാ tʃe:tt̪a:
Baby	എന്നെ എടി പോടി എന്നൊന്നും വിളിക്കാൻ നിക്കേണ്ട ട്ടാ enne eti: po:ti: ennonnum vilikka:n pikke:nt̪a t̪ta: Don't yell at me
Simi	ചേട്ടാ tʃe:tt̪a:
Shammi	എനിക്കറിയാ നിന്നെ എന്താ ചെയ്യണ്ടെ എന്ന്... enikkarija:m ninne ent̪a: tʃejjaŋte: enn നിനക്കൊന്നും ആരുല്ലേടി ninakkonnum a:rulleṭi: ഞാൻ മാത്രേ ഉള്ളൂ na:n ma:tre: ullu:

	കേട്ടോ ke:ʈʈo: What would you do? Come down to earth, you have no one but me, mind it.
Simi	ചേട്ടാ ʈʈe:ʈʈa: ചേട്ടാ ബേബിമോളെ എടി പോടീന്ന് വിളിക്കരുത് ʈʈe:ʈʈa: be:bimo:le: eʈi: po:ʈi:nn̩ viʌikkaruʈ You can't yell at her
Shammi	മോളെ സിമി... നീ എടപെടണ്ട mo:le: simi:... ɳi: eʈapetaɳʈa ഞാനേ സ്വന്തം ചേട്ടനെപ്പോലാ ɳa:ne: svaɳʈam ʈʈe:ʈʈaɳeppo:la: സ്വന്തം ചേട്ടനെപ്പോലെ നിന്നാ സംസാരിക്കണം svaɳʈam ʈʈe:ʈʈaɳeppo:le ɳinna: samsa:rikkunne Simi, don't interfere. I am like her own brother.

Simi	ഏത് ടൈപ്പ് ചേട്ടനാണെങ്കിലും മര്യാദക്ക് സംസാരിക്കണം e:t̪ taipp̪ t̪ʃe:t̪t̪aṇa:ṇekilum marja:ɖakk̪ samsa:rikkan̪am You can't go rude on her, no matter what kind of a brother you are
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(1:53:59-1:57:00)

Though the subtitles attempt to capture the meanings and nuances more effectively, they lose the grip at certain crucial instances. Shammi screams at Baby “എടീ എടീ എടീ ചവിട്ടി കേറ്റി തന്നാലുണ്ടല്ലോ”, which implies he will mutilate her female genitalia. Women choosing her own partner is equivalent to exercising her sexual autonomy. Patriarchy and other dominant and normative institutions find it a severe threat. When Baby says no matter how much he yells, she will marry Bobby, Shammi’s masculine angst is triggered. He tells her if she doesn’t conform to the prescriptions of the institutions, her sexuality will be controlled by violent means. This dialogue is subtitled as “If you were a boy, I would have thrashed you right there”. The original dialogue doesn’t bring any comparison of genders. The translation has taken an excessive liberty to interpret the dialogue as an expression of Shammi’s potential violent ways. However, the gendered meaning of the dialogue is mutilation of female sexuality, not mere physical violence.

5.2.9. *Varane Avashyamund* (2020)

Varane Avashyamund revolves around the life of the middle-aged Neena and her daughter Nikita. Neena is a single mother. Nikita on the one hand is very proud of her mother’s struggles and confidence as a divorcee in bringing her up. On the other hand she feels insecure about how Neena’s approach towards romantic and marital bonds will impact her personal life. In the very

initial scene where Nikita is introduced as helping her friends to register their marriage, her pride about her mother is established.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Staff	ഇന്ത ഐഡിയിൽ ഫാതെർസ് നെയിം ഇല്ലയെ in̩ta aidijilu fa:te:s nejim illaje: Father's name is not mentioned in this ID
Nikki	മദേഴ്സ് നെയിം നീനാന്ന് പോട്ടുക്ക് ഒല്ല made:s nejim ni:na:nn po:ttirkk lle: Doesn't it have my mother's name as Neena in it? ഏൻ അറിവിൽ അത് ലീഗലി ഓക്കേ താൻ e:n arivil a: li:gali o:kke: ta:n As far as I understand, it's legally alright.
Staff	ഇത് യെൻ അറിവിൽ ആനാ ഓക്കേ ഇല്ലെല്ല it̩ je:n arivil a:pa: o:kke: illai According to me it's not right. പാരുങ്ക സാർ pa:runka sa:r

	Please look into this
Registrar	നീക്ക എല്ലാം മലയാളീസാ? ni:nka ella:m malaja:li:sa: Are you all Malayalees?
Nikita and Friends	ആമാ സാർ a:ma: sa:r Yes sir.
Staff	സർ, ഇത് തിരുട്ട് കല്യാണം വെറെ സാർ sa:r, iṭṭirutt kalja:ṇam ve:re sa:r Sir, this looks like a clear case of runaway marriage അഡ്രസ് പ്രഫിൽ റെസ്പോൺസിബിൾ ആന ഒരാൾ കണ്ടിപ്പാ വേണം സർ aḍras pro:fil respo:sibil a:ṇa: kaṇṭippa: ve:ṇam sa:r We need someone who can take their responsibility.

Nikita	അച്ഛൻ റെസ്പോൺസിബിലിറ്റി കൊറച്ച് കൊറവായിരുന്നു സർ at̪t̪ʰanu respo:sibiliti korat̪t̪ʰ korava:ʃirup̪pu sa:r Sir, my father lacked responsibility. അമ്മ സിംഗിൾ മാദർ, മാഡം. amma singil maḍar, ma:ḍam My mother is a single parent
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(6:50:00- 7:12:00)

The scene challenges the notion of associating responsibility solely with male figures by establishing Neena's personality as more responsible and stronger over male parental figures. The office staff, also a woman, questions the legality and potential capacity of a woman to take responsibility. The reference to Nikita's father as irresponsible has layered implications which unfolds later in the film. Not only was he irresponsible, but also abusive. It also indicates Neena's resilience and struggles through Nikita's tone and expressions. Both these expressions are missed in the subtitles which only focus on transferring the meanings verbatim.

The dining room scene where Nikita, Neena and Neena's cousin rekindle Neena's young days is an odd instance in the history of cinematic representation of mother in Malayalam cinema. Manual, Neena's cousin, tells Nikita about Neena's past romantic relationships and asks her to take inspiration from her mother rather than planning for an arranged marriage.

In both these scenes, we could see men who appreciate independent choices of women without any prejudices or judgements. The scenes also show how normative notions are perpetrated many a time through women themselves.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Elizabeth	കല്യാണം ആവാരായോ? kalja:ṇam a:va:ra:jo:? Are you getting married?
Chinnu	No
Elizabeth	മെലിഞ്ഞു സുന്ദരിയാവുമ്പോ നിറയെ ചെക്കന്മാര് വരും. melinjṇ supḍarija:vumpo: ṇiraje t̪jekkanma:r varum Once you get slim and beautiful, a lot of guys would want to marry you
Chinnu	ഐ ഹാവ് എ ബോയ്ഫ്രണ്ട് ai ha:v e bo:jfran̪ I have a boyfriend. ആന്റഡ് അവനക്ക് നാൻ ഇപ്പടി ഇറുക്കിറത് താൻ പുടിക്കും a:nd̪ avaṇukk̪ ṇa:n ippaṭi irukkiraṭ̪ ṭa:n puṭikkum

	He likes me as I am
Elizabeth's daughter	അപ്പോ എന്തിനാ മെലിയുനെ appo: eṇṭina: melijunne: So, why do you need to lose weight?
Chinnu	ഒരു ഡ്രസ്സ് പോടുമുക്ക് oru dress po:ṭarutukk To wear a special dress

(58:00:00 -58:10:00)

The character of Chinnu, in contrast to Nikita, is a progressive girl with an independent thinking. The kind of conflict Nikita navigates through is not seen in Chinnu. Her thoughts and words are very clear. She doesn't fall prey to the societal pressure on maintaining beauty standards. She protests when her enrollment in a weight loss clinic is associated with the prospect of marriage. The elderly woman and her friends who do not understand her purpose to lose body fat if she was not getting married soon. She responds saying “ഒരു ഡ്രസ്സ് പോടുമുക്ക്” (to wear a dress). Neena explains to the women that Chinnu has designed a dress for herself and to wear it she needs to reduce some amount of body weight. Chinnu tries to establish that her body weight and shape and their transformation need not be associated with finding a romantic/sexual partner. She categorically tells the women of the clinic that she already has a partner and he loves

her as she is. With her clarity and confidence Chinnu effectively resists the attempts of body shaming and patriarchal indoctrination.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Chinnu	മാം ടെൻഷൻ ആകാതിനെ ma:m tənʃən a:ka:ʈinke Don't get tensed ഇപ്പോ എങ്കുമ്മ എങ്കിട്ട ഇന്തമായിരി എതാവത് സൊല്ലിരുന്താൽ നാൻ സെമ്മ എക്സൈറ്റ് ആയിർപ്പൻ ippo enkamma enkiṭṭa inṭama:ṭiri eṭa:vaṭ sollirunṭa:l na:n semma eksaitaḍ a:jirippe:n If my mom had told me the same I would have been very excited. ജസ്റ്റ് ഒരു ലവ് താനേ dʒst oru lav ṭa:pe: You have just fallen in love. It's really cute.

(1:20:03-1:20:23)

When Neena navigates through conflicts with her daughter, it is Chinnu who supports Neena. Despite having a huge age difference and Neena being her teacher, Chinnu is able to better understand the situations and how to respond to them. In translating Neena's concerns

about how Nikita has perceived her relationship with the Major, the subtitles stumble a lot.

Where Neena says she would have revealed the truth in a softer way, the subtitle is given as “I would have handled it”. Similarly, where Chinnu urges Neena to give Nikita time to come to terms with the revelation, the subtitle reads as “give it sometime”. Nikita represents a character who suffers with a plethora of inner conflicts, and as one who ought to go through transformation. However, when the conversations about Nikita or of Nikita are subtitled, the sensitivity is often missed and it gives a colour of villainy to Nikita’s character, instead of highlighting her conflicting mind or ignorance.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Nikki	ഈ എൻഗേജ്മെന്റ് വേണ്ടെന്നുള്ള അമ്മുടെ ഐഡിയ സൂപർ ആരുന്ന് ട്രോ i: enge:d̥ʒment ve:ŋʈa:ɳɳuɭla amme:ʈe aidija su:ppar a:ɳɳɳu t̥to: Your idea to drop the engagement ceremony was good. ദേ ഞങ്ങൾ ശരിക്കും കെട്ടും എന്ന് ആൾക്കാരെ അറിയിക്കാൻ കല്യാണത്തിന്റെ അതേ സെറ്റപ്പിൽ ഒരു പരിപാടി. d̥e: ɳaɳɳaɭʃerikkum kettum eɳɳ a:ɭkka:re arijikka:n kalja:ɳaɳɳinte aɳe: setappil oru paripa:ʈi It's a ceremony similar to wedding. It's just to announce loyalty Total waste of money and time.

Neena	പിന്നല്ലാതെ pinnalla:te So true. ആ പൈസ വെച്ച് നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എന്തൊക്കെ ചെയ്യാം a: paisa vetʃi pɪŋɳlkk eɳtokke tʃejja:m You can use that money productively instead.
Nikki	ആ പൈസോണ്ട് എനിക്കെന്താ ചെയ്യാൻ പോണേ? എനി സ്ത്രീധനം? a: paiso:ɳt eɳikkenta: tʃejja:n po:ɳe:ʔ eɳi stri:ɖʱaɳam? So what are you going to get me with that money? Any dowry?
Neena	പിന്നെ സ്ത്രീധനം! pinne stri:ɖʱaɳam No dowry. തന്റെ പേരിലുള്ള എഫ് ഡി തനിക്കെടുക്കാം. ʔante pe:rilulla ef di ʔanikketukka:m You can use your savings.

	പിന്നെ എനിക്ക് ജീവിക്കണ്ടേ pinne enikk d̥i:vikkante: മദ്രാസ് അത്യാവശ്യം എക്സ്പെൻസീവ് ആണ് madra:s atja:vaɻjam ekspensi:v a:ɳ I have to figure out my living as well. It's expensive to live in Madras
Nikki	അത് ടെൻഷൻ അടിക്കണ്ടാ aɻ teʃan atikkanta: Don't worry. നമ്മൾ അടുത്ത മാസം മദ്രാസ് വിട്ടു. ɳammaɻ atut̪ta ma:sam madra:s viɻum Next month, we're leaving this place. എബി പറഞ്ഞ നാട്ടിലേന്നെ സെറ്റിൽ ചെയ്യാനാ. ebi paranne: ɳa:tt̪ileɳne setil t̪ejja:ɳna: Aby suggested to settle down in Kerala. കാക്കനാട് അവർക്കൊരു പ്ലാറ്റ് ഇണ്ടേ...

	ka:kkaṇa:t̪ avarkkoru fla:t̪ in̪t̪e: They have an apartment in Kakkanad. മമ്മി ഭവനം സെന്റിബിളാ... mammi bʰajankara sensibiḷa: His mom is very sensible. എന്നോട് പറയാണ്, നമുക്കൊരു ഡിസ്റ്റൻസ് കീപ്പ് ചെയ്ത് നിന്നാപ്പോരേ എന്ന്, നല്ലതല്ലേ?! en̪no:t̪ para:ja:n̪, ṇamukkoru d̪istans ki:p̪ t̪ʃej̪t̪ ṇiṇṇa:ppo:re: en̪n̪ ṇallejalle: She is telling me, we can live separately. That's good, right
Neena	ആഹ് ഞാൻ നിങ്ങളുടെ കൂടെ നിൽക്കുന്നേ ശരിയല്ലല്ലോ a:h̪ na:n̪ ṇiṇṇa:t̪e ku:t̪e ṇikkun̪ne: ʃerijallallo: I can't stay with you both.
Nikki	അവിടെയൊരു സർപ്രൈസ്.

	avitejoru sarprais ആ സെയിം അപ്പാർട്മെന്റില് നമ്മുടെ പേരിൽ ഒരു ടു ബീ എച്ച് കെ ഞാൻ ബുക്ക് ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. a: sejim apa:rtmentil ṇammaṭe pe:ril oru tu bi eṭṭiṭ ke ṇa:n bukk ṭṭejṭittunt That's the surprise. I've already booked another apartment over there. ഹുൾ എന്റെ പൈസ. full ente paisa അമ്മ അവിടെ നിക്കും amma avite ṇikkum I bought it with my money
Neena	പക്ഷേ, എനിക്ക്...ഇവിടെ ക്ലാസ്സിലേ നിക്കി pakṣe:, eṇikk iviṭe kla:ssille: ṇikki: But, I've classes here, Niki.
Nikki	അത് വലു കോളേജ് ഒന്നല്ലല്ലോ aṭ vallja ko:le:ḍḍḍ oṇṇallallo:

	ഫ്രണ്ട് നാട്ടിലും പഠിപ്പിക്കാം frendʒ na:tʃilum paɪˈippikka:m That's not a big deal. You can teach French there as well. അമ്മക്കൊരു കാരും വാങ്ങാം ammakkoru ka:rum vaṅṅa:m അടിപൊളി ആയിരിക്കും aɪpɒli a:jirikkum I'll buy you a car. It will be awesome
Neena	അത് നമുക്ക് അലോജ്കാം aɪ namukk a:lo:jkka:m We can think about it, എന്തായാലും നിങ്ങളുടെ പ്ലാൻസ് ഒന്നും മാറ്റണ്ട enɪja:lum niŋɳaɪe pla:ns onnum ma:taɳɟa പ്ലാറ്റ് ഒരസുറ്റാണ്

	fla:t orasata:ɳ Nevertheless, don't change your plans. an apartment is asset anyway. എന്റെ കാര്യം ഞാൻ പറയാം. ente ka:rjam ja:n para:ja:m തത്കാലം മദ്രാസ് വിടാൻ പറ്റില്ല ...മ് ṭatka:lam madra:s viṭa:n patilla..mh
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(1:10:55- 1:12:59)

Nikita's conventional mindset is exposed in this scene as she discusses her post wedding plans with her mother. Though Nikita takes pride in how her mother has brought her up independently and shares the opinion that her mother is smart, Nikita often disapproves of the very same independence her mother enjoys. Though jokingly, Nikita mentions about dowry. She is also ready to uproot to Kerala with her would be after marriage, leaving the city and her career. Her parents' separation and having to grow up with a single mother has made her more inclined towards the institution of family with its every conventional aspect. She has advertised herself in matrimonial, rather than going for a love marriage. She has even planned the location of their flat to be attractive for marriage proposals. Though her friends and uncle encourage her to find a partner by her own, she insists on finding through matrimonial profiles. Neena laughs off the mentioning of dowry saying that Nikita can have the savings in her name and that Neena has a life after Nikita's wedding. In Neena's attempt to establish the boundary of their independent lives Nikita declares that Neena is also moving to Kerala with her after Nikita's marriage.

When Neena says she has classes, Nikita brushes it off implying it is not significant. Neena expresses her displeasure to stay with a newlywed. Nikita says she has bought an apartment in their name and Neena will stay there. Nikita doesn't say Neena "can stay there", she uses "amma will stay there" instead to exercise her authority over Neena's life. However, this dialogue is not subtitled at all. This dialogue has a significance in detailing Nikita's character as with this sentence that Nikita tries to bring her mother within the fold of the institution of family.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Nikki	എബി വന്നില്ലേ? ebi vappille:? Where's Aby?
Sherley	ഇല്ല... അവൻ ഒരു മാസത്തേക്ക് യൂറോപ്പിലേക്ക് പോയിരിക്കൂ illa...avan oru ma:satte:k ju:ro:ppile:kk po:jirikkja: No, he has gone to Europe for a month.
Nikki	ഓഹ് o:h
Sherley	നിന്റെ പ്രായത്തിലൊരു മോളെനിക്ക് ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നെങ്കിൽ...

	n̥inte praːjatt̪iloru moːləp̪ikk un̪taːjirun̪nenkil... If I had a daughter of your age, കമ്മ്യൂണിക്കേറ്റ് ചെയ്യാൻ കൊറച്ചുടൊരു... kammjuːŋikkeːt t̪jejj̪aːn korat̪t̪juːtoru It would have been easier for me to communicate ഈ കല്യാണം നടക്കില്ല മോളേ iː kaljaːŋam n̪at̪akkilla moːləː We have to call this wedding off
Nikki	ഡാഡി സമ്മേച്ച് കാണില്ല ലേ... ɖaːɖi sameːt̪t̪j̪ kaːŋilla leː Aby's dad might not have liked the proposal, right?
Sherley	എനിക്ക് നിന്നെ ഒത്തിരി ഇഷ്ടം en̪ikk̪ n̪inne ott̪iri iʃtaː I really like you a lot ഞാൻ നിന്നെ മിസ്സെയ്യും

na:n n̪iŋŋe missejjum

I will miss you badly

ഞാൻ വിചാരിച്ചത്...

na:n vitʃa:ritʃʃat

I thought...

എന്റെ മോൻ എനെപ്പോലെ ആണെന്നാ

ente mo:n en̪neppo:le a:ɳenna:

My son was like me.

അല്ല...

alla

But he is not

അവൻ അവന്റെ ഡാഡിയെ പോലെയൊ

avan avante ɖa:ɖije po:leja:

He is like his dad.

നീ അങ്ങോട്ട് വരണ്ട

ni: aŋgo:tt varɳʃa

	It's better that you don't become a part of my family. എന്റെ വീട്ടിൽ വന്നാ നീ ഒരുപാട് വെഷമിക്കും ente vi:tt̪il vaɳɳa: ɳi: orupa:t̪ vɐʃamikkum If you do, you will never be happy. നീ വരണ്ട. ɳi: vaɳɳa Don't get married to Aby.
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(1:30:25- 1:33:40)

Sherley does not use the term “marriage” in the conversation at all. She considers Nikita more as her reflection, rather than as a future daughter-in-law. Whenever, she talks about Nikita not becoming part of their family, she uses “വരണ്ട”, which means ‘do not come’. Her expression is to imply Nikita as someone she has been longing for long to come. However, the subtitles use the word “marriage”. Sherley is careful not to mention the institution as she understands its intricacies and power dynamics. She regrets that her son did not become empathetic and understanding like her, and became misogynistic and chauvinistic like his father. She understands within a normative family, Nikita will not be happy and content. Her careful avoiding of the word marriage is to invisibilise the institution. However, the translation fails to capture her politics.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
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	pre:maro:gijo: Love? എന്ത് ചീപ്പ് ആടോ താൻ ent̪ t̪i:ppa:to: ʈa:n How can you be so cheap? തനിക്കേ , തനിക്ക് ഇതിനെപ്പറ്റി എന്തറിയാം ʈaɳikke: it̪neppati ent̪arija:m What do you know about me? ഇങ്ങനെ കല്യാണ മെറ്റീരിയൽ ആണോന്ന് നോക്കിട്ടല്ല ലൈഫ് പാർട്ണർനെ തെരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്നത് in̪ɳane kalja:ɳa matirijal a:ɳo:ɳɳ ɳo:kki:t̪alla laif pat̪ɳarine ʈeraɳnet̪ukke:ɳʈaʈ You can't choose your partner based on a set of parameters ലൈഫിൽ ഒരു പ്രാവശ്യമെങ്കിലും റൊമാൻസ് എന്താണെന്നറിഞ്ഞിരുന്നെങ്കിൽ താനെന്നെ ഇങ്ങനെ ജഡ്ജ് ചെയ്യല്ല laifil oru pra:vaf̪jamenkilum roma:ns ent̪a:ɳenn̪pariɳpenkil ʈa:ɳenne in̪ɳane d̪ɔd̪ɔ t̪jejjula
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As Aby calls off their marriage when Nikita shares the possibility of her mother getting married again, Nikita grows discontent towards her mother. When Neena attempts to know what is going on in Nikita's mind, she labels her mother as sick for having a romantic relationship lately in life. She calls Neena “പ്രേമരോഗി” which implies she is nymphomaniac. The term is not subtitled. It is translated as “It is difficult for him to accept that you are in love”. “പ്രേമരോഗി” is given the subtitle “love” which extremely contradicts what the phrase is meant in the context. Neena says Nikita would not have judged her if she had known the feeling romance gives. The dialogue is not subtitled at all.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
Akashavani	വഴക്കൊണ്ടാക്കാനും പെണങ്ങാനുമൊക്കെ ഒരാൾ കൂടാണ്ടാവുന്നത് vajakkonṭa:kka:ṇum peṇaṇṇa:ṇumokke ora:l ku:ṭonṭa:ṣuṇṇaṭ When you love someone, you may have disagreements എപ്പഴും നല്ലതിനാ മോളേ eppaṭum ṇallaṭiṇa: mo:lē: It's always a great feeling to have someone in life. എന്റെ ഭർത്താവ് മരിച്ചപ്പഴാ എനിക്കത് മനസ്സിലാവുന്നത് Ente b^harṭṭa:v maritṭiṭṭappaṭa: epikkaṭ maṇassila:ṣuṇṇaṭ I understood that when my husband passed away

	ഇവരും ഞാനും തമ്മിലുള്ള ബന്ധം എന്താണെന്നറിയാവോ മോശ്കു് ivarum na:ṇum tammilu[la band^ham enta:ṇṇ arijo: mo: kk Do you know how I am related to these boys?
Nikki	വല്ലമ്മ അല്ലേ? valljamma alle'' Aunty?
Akashvani	മ്മ് മ്മ് mh...mh No
Nikki	അമ്മമ്മ? ammamma? Grandmother?
Akashvani	അയ്യേ ajje:

	No. ഈ വലു ചെക്കന്റെ അമ്മാമ്മയാണോ ഞാൻ? i: vallja tʃekkante ammammaja:ɳo: ɲa:n? How can I be their grandmother? ഞാൻ ചെറുപ്പല്ലേ... ɲa:n tʃeruppalle: I am very young. ഇവരുടെ എളേമ്മേം ഞാനും ഒരു വാട്സ്ആപ്പ് ഗ്രൂപ്പിൽ ആരുന്നു. ivarute ele:mme:m ɲa:ɳum oru va:tʃa:p gru:ppil a:ruɳɳu I was in the same <i>WhatsApp</i> group with their aunt.
Nikki	ഏഹ് e:h What?
Akashavani	ആഹ് a:h

	Yeah യോഗ ക്ലാസ്സിന്റെ വാട്സ് ആപ്പ് ഗ്രൂപ്പ് jo:ga k[a:sinte va:tsa:p gru:pp It was a WhatsApp group of yoga class.
Nikki	ആഹ് a:h Okay
Akashavani	അതിൽ അവളു് ചോദിക്കുവാരുന്നു aṭil aval tʃo:ḍikkuva:runnu One day, she was saying in the group... ഇളയ ചെക്കനെ മദ്രാസിലയ്ക്കാൻ വേണ്ടി ഫ്രോഡ് പറയുന്നുണ്ട് ilaja tʃekkane maḍra:silajakka:n ve:nti fro:d parajunnunt Fraud needs to take his younger brother along to Madras അവനെ നോക്കാൻ പറ്റിയ ഒരാളിനെ കിട്ടുവോന്ന് avne nokka:n patija ora:ḷiṇe kittuvonnn

	He needed someone to take care of Karthik. മദ്രാസ് എന്ന് കേട്ടപ്പോ ഞാൻ അങ്ങ് കൊത്തി maḍra:s enṇ ke:ttappo: ja:n aṇṇ kottī I like Madras. So, I took the offer. എനിക്കിഷ്ടമുള്ള സ്ഥലം enikkisṭamu[la st̪hala: I like this place a lot. ഞാൻ നേരെ ഇങ്ങ് പോന്നു ja:n ne:re iṇṇ po:ṇṇu That's how I reached here.
Nikki	അതെനിക്ക് അറിയിലാർന്നു aṭṇenikk arijiḷla:ṇṇu I didn't know that. നിങ്ങളെ കണ്ടാ ഒരേ വീട്ടിലത്തെ ആൾക്കാരായിട്ടാ തോന്നാ niṇṇaḷe kaṇṭa: ore: vi:ttileṭṭe a:lka:ra:jittā: ṭoṇṇa:

	I thought you belonged to the same family.
Akashavani	ഞാൻ ഇതുങ്ങളെ ആദ്യമായിട്ട് കാണുന്നതേ റെയിൽവേ സ്റ്റേഷനിൽ വെച്ചാ na:n iṭuṇṇaḷe a:ḍja:jitt ka:ṇuṇṇaṭe: rejilve: steṣaṇil vatṭiṭja: I met them for the first time at the railway station പക്ഷെ ഒരു കാര്യംമോളെ pakṣe: oru ka:riṇṇṭ mo:ḷe But you know something? എന്നിരിക്കെന്റെ സ്വന്തം മക്കളെക്കാളും പേരക്കുട്ടികളെക്കാളും ഇഷ്ടം ഇതുങ്ങളോട് രണ്ടിനോടുമാ epikkente svaṇṭam makkaḷekka:ḷum pe:rakkuṭṭikaḷum iṣṭam iṭuṇṇaḷo:t I like them more than my own family right now. ചെലപ്പോ എന്റെ അവസാനംവരെ ഹാപ്പി ആയിട്ട് കൂടെയുണ്ടാവുന്നത് ഇതുങ്ങള് മാത്രമായിക്കൂം. ṭṭelappo: ente avasa:ṇam vare ku:ṭejuṇṭa:vunṇaṭ iṭuṇṇaḷ ma:ṭrama:jirikkum Most probably, I'll be happy with these boys until my last breath. മോളെ... Dear... ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഇടക്ക് വെച്ചാണെങ്കിലും ഒരു പുതിയ ആള് കേറി വരുന്നത്

	$\bar{d}i:vi\bar{t}attinte\ i\bar{t}akk\ ve\bar{t}i\bar{t}ja:\eta enkilum\ oru\ pu\bar{t}ija\ a:l\ ke:ri\ va\bar{r}unna\bar{t}$ Sometimes certain people enter our lives unexpectedly ചെലപ്പോ നല്ലതിനായിരിക്കും $\bar{t}i\bar{e}lappo:\ na\bar{l}la\bar{t}i\eta a:jirikkum$ It may be a good thing നമ്മള് മനസ്സൊന്നു തൊറന്നുകൊടുത്തതാ മാത്രം മതി $\bar{n}amma\bar{l}\ ma\bar{n}asson\bar{n}nu\ \bar{t}o\bar{r}a\bar{n}nu\ ko\bar{t}u\bar{t}ta:\ ma:\bar{t}ram\ ma\bar{t}i$ We just need to keep an open mind.
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(2:02: 01- 2:03:34)

Nikita's attempts to adopt the normative family structure is challenged and positively dismantled in this scene. Akashavani reveals that she is not related to the boys, Bibeesh and Karthik, though blood. The presentation of Akashavani in the narrative is such that she is expected to be their grandmother. The revelation of how she is connected to the boys is more surprising. She is friends with their aunt through a WhatsApp group. Social media relationships are viewed as hollow, cringe or fraudulent in every mainstream discourse, especially for women. The news articles of women getting deceived and trapped by the bonds they find through social media networks are everywhere, which eventually started labelling women who bond through social media platforms as immodest. Akashavani breaks such notions. She asserts that she found

her best relations through those WhatsApp interactions. She tells Nikita to be open about relationships and not to be bound by normative expectations.

5.2.10. *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021)

The film *The Great Indian Kitchen* (*TGIK*) garnered significant praise for its critical examination of traditional gender roles and expectations. Set in a conventional Hindu Nair household, this cinematic work follows the experiences of a newlywed woman. It depicts her transition from the seemingly liberal environment of her NRI parents' home to the constraints of a conservative marital setting.

The film depicts how the newlywed woman navigates the unending demands of the patriarchal and religious institutions. It traces her evolution into an agencied subject who not only contests the power structures but also evolve out of them as a liberated and empowered woman.

The initial scenes show her as silenced and suppressed from expressing her desires and opinions. When she shows interest to apply for the post of a dance teacher, the father-in-law objects saying it is not a suitable vocation. He concludes the statement of objection with the remark “കടലക്കറി അസ്സലായിക്ക”²⁴ to emphasise her place in the family. However, with the covert support of her mother-in-law, she applies for the job. When the interview letter arrives, the father-in-law confronts her:

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
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²⁴ kaṭalakkari assala:jikk
Your chickpeas curry tastes really good

Father-in-law	ഇതെന്താ മോളെ it̪ɛnt̪a: mo:l̪e: What's this, dear?
The wife	ഇന്റർവ്യൂ ലെറ്ററാ int̪arvju: letara: It's the interview letter
Father-in-law	ആഹ് നമ്മളന് പഠഞ്ഞ അല്ലെ മോളെ വേണ്ടാന്ന് a:h n̪ammaɭann̪ par̪ɳɳe alle: mo:l̪e: ve:ɳ̪ɭa:nn̪ Haven't we decided not to apply? ഇവിടെത്തെ അമ്മ എം എ വരെ പഠിച്ചതാ ivit̪ette amma M A vare pat̪^hit̪ɪt̪ɪɭa: Your mother-in-law is a MA holder. ഓള് ജോലിക്ക് പോണെന്ന് പറഞ്ഞ് o:l̪ d̪ɔ:likk po:ɳ̪ann̪ par̪ɳ̪ She wanted to work.

അന്ന് ഞാനെന്റെ അച്ഛൻ പറഞ്ഞത് കേട്ട്

ann na:nte at̪t̪ʰan parannaṭ ke:t̪

But I listened to what my father said

അതോണ്ടെന്നാ...മക്കളെല്ലാം നല്ല നെലേൽ ആയി

aṭo:ntenta:... makkaḷella:m ṇalla nele:l a:ji

Due to that all my children are settled in good positions.

വീട്ടിലൊരു പെണ്ണിളളത് വീടിനൊരശ്വര്യം

vi:ttiloru penṇillaṭ vi:ṭṇorais̪varja:

It's auspicious to have women in home.

കളക്ടർമാരും മന്ത്രിമാരും ചെയ്യുന്നതിനേക്കാ വലുതല്ലേ നിങ്ങളൊക്കെ ചെയ്യുന്നത്

kalakṭarma:rum manṭṭrima:rum t̪eṭṭiṇṇaṭṭine:kka: valut̪alle: ṇiṇṇaḷokke
t̪eṭṭiṇṇaṭ

Your efforts are much greater than what Collectors and Ministers do.

മോളമേനോട് ചോദിക്ക്...അമ്മ ഇതെന്നെ പറയും

mo:ḷmme:ṇo:t̪ t̪ʰo:dikk... amma it̪enne parajum

Consult your mother. She will also not differ.

സാരല്യ ടോ സാരല്യ

	sa:ralja t̪to: sa:ralja It's alright, okay
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(1:03:22- 1:05:14)

The wife's reactions to the indoctrination of dominant patriarchal discourse are the discontent on her face. Not only in these scene, but also at every instance of being compelled to perform a gendered role defined by normative institutions her face tightens with displeasure, revulsion and repulsion. Her expression of abhorrence, which gradually solidifies on her face, is her act of contesting the dominant ideologies throughout the film, till the climax sequences. However, at none of these moments her reactions are subtitled.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
The Husband	ലൈറ്റ് ഓഫെയ്താലോ lait o:feɽa:lo: Can we switch off the light?
The wife	ഏട്ടാ ഞാനൊരു കാര്യം പറഞ്ഞാ ഫീൽ ആവോ et̪ta: na:ɽoru ka:rjam paraɽna: fi:l a:vo: Will you feel bad if I say something?

The Husband	എന്തേയ് ente:j What's it?
The wife	ഏട്ടാ നമ്മള് ചെയ്യലെ et̪ta: ɳammaɭu t̪ɕej̪ju:le: അപ്പൊ എനിക്ക് നല്ല പെയിനിങ്ങ് appo ep̪ikk ɳalla pejiɳiɳt̪ It really hurts when we do it... കൊറച്ച ഫോർപ്ലേയും കൂടെ ഇണ്ടെങ്കിൽ എനിക്ക്... korat̪ɕ̪ɕ̪u fo:r̪ple:jum ku:t̪e iɳt̪eɳkil ep̪ikk... If there is some foreplay, I will be...
The husband	അപ്പൊ ഇതുകൊണ്ടിച്ച് എല്ലാറിയാല്ലേ appo: i:ɳekkuriɳt̪ɕ̪ɕ̪ ella:rija:lle: So, you know everything about it

The wife	എന്ത് ent? What?
The husband	ഫോർപ്ലേ!!! fo:rple:!!! Foreplay!!! എനിക്കും തോന്നണ്ട ഫോർപ്ലേയ്ക്ക് enikkjum to:ppann̄te: fo:rple:jkk I should feel something towards you, for foreplay...

(1:07:14- 1:08:10)

The wife attempts to explain physical discomfort and pain she experiences during the monotonous penetrative sex. The act of sex is depicted as completely one sided, without any active involvement of the woman. The scene is shot from top, showing only her body moving to and forth during the penetration. Her face is tightened in pain and in the haunting smell of the kitchen waste. She requests for some foreplay. In the entire conversation there is no mention of the word ‘sex’, however ‘foreplay’ is mentioned as it is. She leaves the dialogue in complete when saying “if there’s some foreplay, I will be...”. If she intends to talk about pain or pleasure

is not concretised in the dialogue. Nor does the subtitling attempt to cover these incompletions.

The subtitle also does not contain the word ‘sex’ or any word which has indication of sexual activity. The silence in the subtitles contests the politics of the text which foregrounds women’s experiences.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
The aunt	ഏഹ് ഇതെന്താത്? കെടക്കേല് ഒക്കയാണോ കിടക്കുന്നത്? e:h itentat? ketakke:lu okkeja:ɳo: kitakkunnat? What’s this? You sleep on bed? കെടക്കേലൊന്നും കെടക്കാൻ പാടില്ലാന്ന് കുട്ടോട് ഇതുവരെ ആരും പറഞ്ഞ് തന്നിട്ടില്ലേ? ketakke:lonnum ketakka:n pa:tilla:nn kuttjo:t ituvare a:rum parann tannittille:? Hasn’t anyone told you not to sleep on bed? മുക്കിയലക്കാൻ പറഞ്ഞേല് മാത്രേ കെടക്കാവൂ mukkija:lakka:n patunne:lu ma:tre: ketakka:vu: You should only sleep on something that can be washed. കുട്ടിക്ക് ബന്ധുവീട്ടിൽ വല്ലോം പൊയ്യടേ

	kuttikk baṅḍ^huvi:ttil vallo:m pojku:te: Can't you move to a relative's place? അല്ലേൽ ആ കുളപ്പുറക്ക് പൊക്കുളുടെ മോശ്ക്ക് alle:l a: kaḷappurakk pokku:te mo:ḷkk Or to the outhouse?
The wife	എനിക്ക് പേടിയാ enikk pe:tija: I'm scared...
The aunt	എന്ത് പേടി! ഇതെന്തൊ കൊച്ചു കുട്ടി വല്ലോം ആണോ ent pe:ti! iṭenta: koṭṭi^u kutti vallo:m a:ṇo: What's there to be scared of? Are you a child? അങ്ങോട്ട് മാറിക്ക് aṇṇo:tt ma:rikk Move aside. ഇനിപ്പോ ഈ ബെഡ്റോ ചെയ്യാ

	ini:ppo: i: beddenta: t̪ejja: What to do with this bed now? ദാ പായ ḍa: pa:ja Here's the spread. പായേല് കെടന്നാ മതി ത്തോ pa:je:l keṭanna: maṭi t̪to: Lay down on the floor.
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(1:13:44-1:14:15)

The scene discusses the fear of the wife towards spaces that are defined by patriarchy to confine women. The aunt mentions “കളപ്പുറം”, an outhouse kind of structure where women are compelled to confine themselves during their menstrual period. The wife says she is scared of that space. The wife obviously enjoys engaging in public spaces, as hinted by the film. Whenever she is shown in public spheres, dance school or restaurant, she is represented as more liberated and agencied. The bedroom, kitchen and the small room where she has to hide herself during menstrual period are the spaces that cause fear in her. This fear is about the oppressive power of patriarchy. The only verbal response of the wife in this scene is this dialogue that she is afraid. However, the film doesn't translate her anxiety and displeasure when the aunt details how patriarchy prescribes women to behave during their menstrual cycle is not subtitled at all.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
The aunt	പായക്കം നീയെടുത്ത സാധനങ്ങളൊക്കെ ഒഴുക്കുള്ള വെള്ളത്തിൽ മൂക്കിയെടുക്കണം pa:jaṭakkam ji:jeṭutta sa:ḍḍaṇṇaḷokke oḷukkuḷḷa vellattil mukkijetukkanam Wash everything you've used, including the spread, in running water തിരുമ്പു തുണിയൊക്കെ മറ്റുള്ള തുണിയുടെ കൂടെ തുടാതെ മാറ്റിയിടണം ṭirumpja ṭuṇijokke matuḷḷa ṭuṇijute ku:ṭe iṭa:ṭe ma:tijitanam Put your washed clothes away from those of others ഉപയോഗിച്ച പാഡോക്കെ അവിടം ഇവിടം കൊണ്ടിടാതെ കത്തിച്ചളയണം upajo:giṭṭiṭṭa pa:ḍokke aviṭe:m iviṭe:m koṇṭiṭa:ṭe kaṭṭiṭṭiṭṭaḷajanam Burn the sanitary pads, don't leave them lying around വെറുതെ സർപ്പ കോപം വരുത്തി വെയ്ക്കണ്ട veruṭe sarppa ko:pam varuṭṭi vejkkanta Don't evoke the wrath of the Snake God ഏഴ് കഴിഞ്ഞ് നീ ഉപയോഗിച്ച സാധനങ്ങളൊക്കെ പുണ്യാഹത്തിലോ നാലാമര വെള്ളത്തിലോ കഴുകി ശുദ്ധി വരുത്തണം e:ḷ kaṭṭiṭṭiṭṭi ni: upajo:giṭṭiṭṭa sa:ḍaṇṇaḷokke punja:hattilo: ṇa:lpa:mara vellattilo: kaṭuki ṭuddḍiṭṭi varuttanam

	After seven days, purify everything you used with holy water ഗൾഫുകാരാണ് എന്ന് വെച്ചിട്ടേ ദൈവകോപം വരുത്തി വെക്കൂ galʃuka:ra:ŋ ennuvetʃiʃitte: ɖaivako:pamonn̩um varutti vekkanʃa Don't think Gulf returnees are exempted from God's wrath.
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(1:16:35-1:16:50)

The above sequence elaborates on the menstrual rituals prescribed for the young woman by the aunt. It is entirely a one-sided dialogue where the aunt charts out the rituals to perform and the wife listens. Though the narrative of the film critiques the notions of impurity associated with menstruation, the subtitles does not talk about any kinds of resistance to the dissemination of normative practices around menstruation. The prescriptions of the aunt about how to purify after the seven days of menstrual bleeding is extensively subtitled. However, the expressions and reactions of the wife are not translated into subtitles.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
The husband	യൂ ആ ഫേസ്ബുക്കിലെ് ഷെയർ ചെയ്തത് അങ്ങ് ഡിലീറ്റ് ആക്കിക്കള jj a: fe:sbukkilu ʃejaɾ tʃejɾaɳ̩ aŋɳ̩ ɖili:t a:kkikkaɭa Delete the video you shared on Facebook

The wife	എനിക്ക് ശരിയായി തോന്നിട്ടാണ് ഞാൻ അത് ഷെയർ ചെയ്തതേ enikkat serija:ji to:nnitta:ṇna:n aṭ sejar tjejṭe: I shared it because I felt it's right. ഞാനത് ഡിലീറ്റ് ചെയ്തല്ല na:naṭ dili:t tjejju:la I won't delete it.
The husband	ഡി ഞാനാ പറഞ്ഞെ... നീയത് ഡിലീറ്റ് ആക്ക് dī: na:na: pare:ṇṇe:... nī:jaṭ dili:t a:kk I am asking you to delete it.
The wife	അത് ഞാൻ ഷെയർ ചെയ്തതോണ്ടു ഇങ്ങക്കൊന്ന സാങ്കടം പോണേ aṭ na:n sejar tjejṭo:ṇṭu inṇakkentṭa: samb^havikka:n po:ṇe: What's it to you if I have shared it?
The husband	ഞാൻ അകത്തോട്ട് കേറിവന്നാണ്ടല്ലോ na:n akatto:ṭ ke:ri vanna:ṇṭallo:

	If I come in, I'll...
The wife	ഇങ്ങളിവിടെ കേറ് inṅaliviṭe ke:ru... ഇങ്ങൾക്കിവിടെ കേറാൻ പറ്റുമോ inṅalkkiviṭe ke:ra:n patuvo: You, coming in here? As if you can... എന്നെ കാണാൻ പറ്റുമോ enṅge ka:ṇa:n patuvo: എന്നെ തൊടാൻ പറ്റുമോ enṅge toṭa:n patuvo: ഇങ്ങക്കെന്നെ ഒന്നും ചെയ്യാൻ പറ്റൂല inṅalkkenṅge oṇṇum t̪ejja:n patu:la You can't do anything to me.

(1:25:22- 1:25:53)

The husband orders the wife to delete the video she has shared. The video advocates young women's entry into the Sabarimala temple. The Karayogam, headed by her father-in-law

come home and share their discontent in sharing opinions that go against their religious and sociopolitical views. Compelled by the community group and his father, the husband tries to coerce her into conforming to their views. She states her conviction in sharing the views, much to the frustration of the husband. He threatens her with potential physical violence he can perpetrate on her. Ironically, the husband is appealing for religious amendments for his wife accidentally touching him from the Gurus. She asks him in complete contempt “ഇങ്ങൾക്കിവിടെ കേറാൻ പറ്റുവോ, എന്നെ കാണാൻ പറ്റുവോ, എന്നെ തൊടാൻ പറ്റുവോ...” She implies at the invisibility of her existence in that household and to the hollowness of rituals her husband follows blindly.

However, the dialogues are subtitled into just one sentence, “you can’t do anything to me”. Her retort contains many layers of meaning. It signifies how her presence, labour and desires have been unseen by her husband. Her constant pleas to repair the leaked pipe, her pain during the penetrative sex without any foreplay, her fear of being confined during menstrual period, her wish to work as a dance teacher etc. fell into deaf ears. Her discontentment, disappointments and revulsion were not seen by the men of the house. Her attempt to rescue him from the bike accident is treated as sacrilege because she touched him. However, when it comes to the honour of the community, the husband is ready to compromise his celibacy by coercing her physically. ‘You can’t do anything to me’ does not imply her invincibility. It contests the invisibilising of her subjectivity and existence. The subtitles do not convey this political nuancing in the dialogues.

Character	Dialogues and Subtitles
The mother	ഇത്ര നിസ്സാര കാര്യത്തിനാണോ അവിടന്ന് ഇറങ്ങിപ്പോന്നത് ഇയ്യ്

	it̪ra n̪issa:ra ka:rjatt̪ina:ŋo: aviṭ̪ann̪ iran̪ippo:n̪nat̪ ijj? You walked out of there for such a silly thing? വന്നേ, ഞാൻ കൊണ്ട് വിടാ vanne: na:n kon̪t̪ viṭ̪a: Come, I'll take you back. മാപ്പ് പറഞ്ഞ് ആ വീട്ടിൽ കേരിക്കോണം ma:pp̪ paraŋŋ̪ a: vi:ṭ̪il̪ ke:rikko:ŋam Apologise and go back to that house.
The wife	ഞാൻ എങ്ങോട്ടും പോന്നില്ല na:n en̪o:ṭ̪tum po:n̪pilla I am not going anywhere
The mother	പിന്നെ ഇയ്യ് എന്ത് വിചാരിച്ചിരിക്കൂ? pin̪ne ijj̪ en̪t̪ viṭ̪ja:riṭ̪ṭ̪irikkja:? Then what do you intend to do?
The brother	ആഹ് ചേച്ചി എപ്പോ എത്തി?

	a:h tʃe:tʃi eppo: etti? Sis, when have you come? അമ്മാ ഇനിക്ക് കൊറച്ച് വെള്ളം കൊണ്ടോ amma: inikk koratʃi vellam konʃa: Mom, give me some water
The mother (to the younger sister)	ഒരു ഗ്ലാസ് വെള്ളെടുത്ത് കൊടുക്ക് ഓന്ന് oru gla:s velletuttu kotukk o:nu Bring him some water.
The wife	ഇരിക്കടീ അവിടെ irikketi: avite Sit down there! നിനക്കെന്താടാ ഒറ്റക്ക് വെള്ളെടുത്ത് കുടിച്ചാ? ഹാഹ? ninakkenta:ʃa: otakk velletuttu kutitʃa:? ha:h? Why can't you get the water by yourself?

The wife reaches her parents' home. Her mother is extremely displeased at her for leaving her in-law's house. The mother demands her to apologise to the in-law's family and get back to her husband's house. She categorically refuses to go back. Meanwhile her younger brother enters, completely unbothered about the situation of his sister. He asks his mother to give a glass of water, which the mother redirects to the youngest sister. The wife screams at both her siblings; at her sister for not to serve him, and at her brother for not helping himself. The character of the wife gains her voice towards the end of the film where she raises her voice against the threat of her husband that he might coerce her physically. She, in the next sequences, throws the murky water from the leaked kitchen sink on her husband and father-in-law for attempting to use violence on her. Her parents and siblings are unaware of her reclaiming her agency and voice. This scene is pivotal where she exercises the power of her voice. She makes them listen. The question she asks her brother is one she throws at men in general. However, the generic implication of the question of why women are treated as mere caregivers is not reflected in the subtitles. It sounds like an individual exchange to her brother, much similar to her response to her sister.

5.3. Discussion and Conclusion

The introduction of subtitling in the film industry, as an AVT strategy, is a crucial development. Subtitling is the cheapest AVT method after digitalisation of cinema. Malayalam industry is the first to explore incorporation of complete English subtitles with the theatre release of films. However, the detailed analysis of the select AV texts signifies that subtitling has not grown in such a way that it can express the nuances and political signifiers within the film texts. The timeframe of the select texts mark the revolutionary transformation of Malayalam cinema

with respect to the representation of gendered and embodied spaces. The industry became critical in their approach to gender representations during this period. The aim of this chapter is to study how subtitles influence the reading of the selected AV texts, whose representations of embodiment of gendered spaces are established as feminist discourse in the previous chapter.

Though *Bangalore Days* and *Rani Padmini*, and to some extent *Godha* are able to translate the conversations and their layered meanings effectively, we could identify that the practice is not consistent and conscious. When it comes to *Uyare*, which specifically talks about gendered violence, subtitles do not specify the gender in most critical sequences. The only film which could relatively do justice to the representations on screen is *Kumbalangi Nights*. It attempts to capture the audioscape of the film in subtitles, particularly at critical moments. However, *Kumbalangi Nights*, and all the selected AV texts, invariably fail to translate meanings and references associated with female body and sexuality in a specific manner into subtitles. The reference to the mutilation of female genitalia is translated with an entirely different sentence in *Kumbalangi Nights*. When Bobby's potential toxicity comes out in the theatre at Baby's resistance to his attempt to kiss her without consent, the film they are watching is *Kabir Singh*. When Bobby walks out of the theatre the climax of *Kabir Singh* is shown in the film screen in the background. However, this information is not given in the subtitles thereby eroding the politics of the text.

The Great Indian Kitchen foregrounds the themes of menstruation, sex, and female labour at home and how they are exploited by the dominant institutions to subordinate women. However, the subtitles of the film do not use the word 'sex' and 'menstruation'. The words 'period' and 'foreplay' as they are rendered in the original dialogues. There is no conscious

intervention in the subtitles to use words and phrases that are associated with the female body and sexuality in the film, although the narrative of the film is centred around these themes.

Similarly, in *Varane Avashyamund*, dialogues are wrongly translated, thereby entirely changing the meaning of the context. The translation mistakes a reference to nymphomania as love. Nymphomania has been used as a label against women who exercise sexual autonomy. Neena, the lead character, is a woman who has had several romantic relationships at various stages of her life. She is a divorcee and seeks a partnership. Her daughter, bound by normative conceptions of family and marriage, finds it indigestible. She calls her mother sickened with lust, which is carelessly translated as “love”. The subtitles contradict the entire politics of the text. In *The Great Indian Kitchen*, there are no feminist interventions that could be traced to mention words and phrases that talk about the female body unless they are spoken in English in the original dialogues. The film extensively talks about how women are discriminated against during their menstrual phase. Though the film captures the menstrual rituals with all detailing, it does not use the word menstruation anywhere. Similarly, the word ‘sex’ is not used when the wife talks about the pain of penetrative sex without any foreplay. The word foreplay is mentioned as the dialogue also contains the same. However, it does not use the word sex to refer to the act at all.

There are no consistent and conscious interventions, particularly feminist interventions, in the subtitling of any of these films. The meanings or contexts are rightfully captured in certain scenes. They are translated effectively only because of the insistence to ensure fidelity to the original dialogue, not to the politics and critical nuancing.

The silences and misrepresentation of exchanges in subtitles disrupt the dissemination of political meanings embedded within these AV texts. Political meanings are woven deeply into the semiotic and acoustic components of the AV texts, particularly of film texts. Without accurate and thoughtful subtitling, these meanings can be lost, especially when the representations on screen are attempting to combat the dominant cinematic aesthetics and normative gender portrayals. The selected films offer, in their depiction of the embodiment of gendered spaces, a feminist critique of the dominant representations of gendered and embodied spaces in popular Malayalam cinema. However, the strategies of subtitling currently available for Malayalam cinema fall short of capturing the reworked meanings associated with gender, space, embodiment and their interaction with power arrangements within the narratives.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study titled ‘Translatability of Subtitles: An Analysis of Embodiment of Gendered Spaces in Select Malayalam Films (2014- 2021)’, in brief, is an attempt to critically and situationally read the representation of embodiment of gendered spaces in the post-2014 Malayalam cinema with a specific focus on ten films released during this span. The endeavour is to analyse the expressive potential of subtitles to convey the representations, as Malayalam cinema has been experiencing a transformation in its approach to gender, embodiment and spaces.

The study has shown how a critical and situational reading of the select AV texts challenges normative notions associated with femininity. These films contest dominant perceptions that women who express their desires- sexual and otherwise- and articulate their discontentment and displeasure are unvirtuous. For decades, popular Malayalam cinema has established that such vocal women should be doomed. Many popular and blockbuster films portray women who exercise their agency and try to satisfy their desires as severely punished. Women who traverse the boundaries set by patriarchy and other normative and dominant institutions either meet terrible deaths or face ruinous futures.

Although there were sporadic attempts to capture women’s perspectives and frame narratives from their viewpoints, it is only since the 2010s that Malayalam popular cinema began consistently reworking patriarchal stereotypes and dominant ideologies within the film narratives. This transformation in the representation of gender, embodiment, and spaces

coincided with the introduction of subtitling in 2014. *Bangalore Days* (2014), the first Indian film to be released in theatres with complete subtitles, marked a turning point in Malayalam cinema for its portrayal of gender and its acceptance across southern Indian states. As the practice of subtitling as an AVT strategy emerged during a phase of evolving representational conventions concerning gendered and embodied spaces in Malayalam cinema, it became imperative to understand how subtitling influences the reading of these films. The study sets out a detailed analysis of the subtitles that correspond to the sequences in the select AV texts where they contest and subvert patriarchal stereotypes and dominant ideologies.

6.1. Summary of Observations and Argument

6.1.1. Reading of the Select AV Texts as Translation

The study shows how an informed and situational reading of these texts offers a subversion of dominant representations of women and women's experiences. Reading is not a universal experience. The reader is socially conditioned, and our social location shapes our reading experience. Reading, as an act, is influenced by power, ideology and cultural contexts. The emergence of post-structural theories shifted the notion of a 'textual reader' to a 'contextually situated reader'. Identity studies that emerged during the 1980s emphasise that different social groups produce different readings.

Feminist theories of reading find how androcentric texts co-opt women to identify themselves through the process of *immasculation*. According to them, a 'textually implied reader is a male'. Female readers are compelled to align with patriarchal perspectives and subscribe to dominant ideologies by undermining their subjectivities and experiences with these texts. They call for readers to be 'resisting readers' and 'renegade readers', engaging critically with texts,

often reading against the grain and producing alternative meanings from within the texts. These negotiations between the reader and the text are crucial, especially in the case of AV texts. It enables readers to resist being assimilated into dominant narratives.

Resistant or renegade reading employs strategies such as Mulvey's 'passionate detachment' (18) and Karin Littau's 'distantiation' (131). These strategies alert women readers to the concerns of a feminist reader. The critical and reflective distance from the text makes the act of reading a political process by disallowing identification and erasing the possibilities of *immasculation*.

The feminist translator is defined by Barabara Godard as an active reader and a co-producer of meaning. Hence, a feminist reader who actively resists androcentric meanings and produces feminist interpretations of the texts is a translator. When they produce interpretations and rework meanings, feminist translators subvert the 'monologism of the dominant discourse' (Godard 44). The dominant discourse has, for a long, erased women's presence and muted their voices. The feminist negotiations of the texts will, thus, allow women's visibility to be enhanced and their voices to be heard. According to Godard, the prime endeavour of feminist translation is to give voice to female subjects (46).

When the erasure and silencing of women are discussed, it necessitates inquiries into the power dynamics embedded within the texts. Translation, as critical reading, explores how power works in the representations. In contesting these power distributions, translation becomes a political process. Feminist reading as translation, therefore, challenges the working of patriarchal and normative discourses in the representations.

The representation of embodiment of gendered spaces in the select AV texts challenges the dominant representations and patriarchal stereotypes in a variety of ways. These texts show how the transgressing of traditionally defined spheres empowers and liberates their subjectivities. They are fearless in expressing their desires, sexual and otherwise. Their displeasure in being compelled to subscribe to the demands of patriarchy and other dominant institutions is validated within the AV texts. Their demand for spatial equality, pleasure, and role in decision-making is legitimised. They are not ill-fated or ruined for exercising their will and agency. These representations resonate with Tymozcko's concept of translation as metonymy, where its metonymic characters offer the possibility to correct and retell the depictions of marginalised subjectivities (47).

The study establishes that the select AV texts offer a rewriting of prevailing representations of women, emphasise the transgression of private spaces to public realms and retell the experiences of women from their perspectives. The study shows how these films offer a reworking of meanings associated with gender, gendered spaces and embodied spaces and how prevailing representational patterns of the same are subverted. In doing so, the contextual and situational reading of these AV texts becomes a form of feminist translation in itself.

6.1.2. Translatability of Subtitles

The study observes that despite Malayalam cinema being the first film industry in India to incorporate complete subtitles with films' theatre releases, the evolution of subtitling practices is relatively slow in Malayalam. The introduction of complete English subtitles with theatre release was in 2014. The select film texts released from 2014 to 2018 do not approach subtitling as a political process. They attempt to translate only verbal exchanges. Subtitles of the film

Kumbalangi Nights (2019) offer translation of certain acoustic expressions. However, they do not delve deep into the political nuances within the film's narrative.

The absence of subtitles, or the mistranslation of representations into subtitles, dilutes and often disrupts the political contexts of the select AV texts. Reworked meanings, reinterpretations and retelling are not effectively expressed through subtitles in the select AV texts.

6.2. Limitations of the Study

Translation operates at two levels in this study; one is intersemiotic translation, which examines the representation of an embodiment of gendered spaces in the select AV texts, and the second is interlingual translation, which studies the expression of these representations through subtitles. A major challenge in materialising this study was the scarcity of descriptive studies that foreground subtitling. As identified by Luise von Flotow and Josephy-Hernandez, the question of 'what is translated' in the intersection of AVT and Gender Studies emerged only in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (300). Therefore, exploring literature that descriptively studies gender questions in subtitling was challenging. Locating research and studies that examine the semiotic aspects of subtitling is still practically non-existent. Two researches have come from Indian universities on subtitling in Malayalam cinema. Though one of them touches upon the cultural aspects, it does not extend its scope to the semiotic components of the AV texts and their translatability through subtitles.

6.3. Future Perspectives

Despite Malayalam cinema marking itself as the first industry to release films with complete subtitles in theatre, the evolution of subtitling practices has been slow when compared

to industries such as Bollywood. Subtitling is not yet viewed as a political process in the industry, even when the industry employs professionals to translate the post-production script into subtitles. The major reason for this inevitability of incorporating subtitles is the proliferation of OTT platforms, and the OTT rights the films get. The recent controversy²⁵ over the subtitle script of the film *Thallumala* (2022) highlights the seriousness with which the industry has started approaching the translation. The translators accused *Netflix* of watering down and butchering their subtitle script. The film employs Malabar Mappila Malayalam as a prominent dialect in the narrative. However, the translation of semiotic and acoustic components of the films has not gained much focus in the subtitling practice prevailing in the industry.

Malayalam cinema is increasingly producing films that centralise marginalised identities and subjectivities. These representations are most often subtle and entirely visual. The expressions of these depictions through subtitles become unavoidable in such cases. Feminist interventions in subtitling practices are yet to come in popular cinema. The study does not aim to propose solutions to the prevailing challenges. The study endeavours to offer a critique of the current translational practices prevalent in Malayalam cinema.

²⁵ The subtitlers of the film, Anju and Shyam Narayanan T K published a note in their respective instagram accounts accusing Netflix of butchering their subtitle script

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Translation and Embodiment of Gendered Spaces: Reading The Great Indian Kitchen

SAHANA PRADEEP
SRIPARNA DAS

Abstract

This paper, titled 'Translation and Embodiment of Gendered Spaces: Reading The Great Indian Kitchen', investigates the translatability of gendered embodied spaces in Malayalam films in general, and in The Great Indian Kitchen (2021), in particular. Critical reading of the embodiment of gendered spaces, as represented in this film, results in a site where knowledge and pleasure, produced and defined by the dominant cinematic aesthetics, get subverted. The subversion offers a feminist critique of the representations of women and women's experiences produced by popular Malayalam cinema. This subversion is visible in Malayalam cinema, which has been attempting to revise these popular gendered representations since the 2010s (Pillai, 2013, p. 26). This paper argues that these attempts become a form of feminist translation. This paper further argues that such an informed reading would enable an uninitiated reader to reinterpret the experiences of women subjects and their interactions with normative discourse/s.

Keywords: Audiovisual Translation, Knowledge, Embodiment, Gender, Space, Malayalam Films.

Translation and Embodiment of Gendered Spaces: Reading The Great Indian Kitchen (2021)

Introduction

The film *The Great Indian Kitchen (TGIK)* received great acclaim for its critique of the normative notions of gender roles and performances. This audiovisual text revolves around the journey of a

newlywed woman, taking place in a traditional Hindu Nair¹ household. The film unravels her transformation, within the cinematic narrative, from an ostensibly liberated upbringing in her NRI parents' home to the boundaries of an orthodox married household. This study attempts to critically read how the embodiment of gendered spaces, as represented in the film, becomes a locus where the established aesthetics of popular Malayalam cinema are subverted by challenging the hitherto patterns of productions of knowledge and pleasure.

The paper looks at spaces as having both concrete and symbolic dimensions. *TGIK* depicts domestic and outer spaces to carve gendered meanings associated with them, of which the most important is the kitchen. The kitchen produces wide-ranging meanings as a space encompassing diverse involvements and interactions. Moreover, the kitchen has conventionally been regarded as a female-centric space where women's unconditional servitude and unpaid care work are demanded (Abarca, 2006, p. 19).

The film unravels how the wife's reactions, expressions, and interactions with other characters conflict with the expected display of normative discursive behaviours. This paper argues that *TGIK* offers a feminist critique of the dominant representations of femininity by critically reading how behaviours prescribed by normative patriarchal discourses are combated. The feminist discourse embodied in this audiovisual text allows a re-writing of the popular representations of women characters and their performances in Malayalam cinema. In doing so, this paper establishes that this text becomes a feminist translation. The study reads how power competes between patriarchal, normative discourse, and gender discourse in this audiovisual text, which is represented through embodied gendered spaces. This study argues that such power

¹ "Nair is a matrilineal community that constitute a large section of landed elite in Malabar" (G. 2002: 3-4). The matrilineal kinship and descent were ended in 1933 by the Madras Marumakkathayam Act. This resulted in the "realignments of power along the lines of gender, generations, and changing access to property and authority..." (G. 1996: 283) The film subtly reveals its backdrop, particularly highlighting the North Malabar setting of the in-law's family, through the presence of 2019 Lok Sabha election posters, featuring candidates.

conflicts are negotiated by translation (Tymozcko, 1991, p. 285). The power conflicts in the AV text (*TGIK*) privilege female subjectivity, emphasising female agency and, thereby, bringing forth feminist translation (Godard, 2021, p. 2).

Space, Gender and Power: Contextualising Gendered and Embodied Spaces

Drawing from the Foucauldian perspective, John Allan points out that power can no longer be discussed as a centralised phenomenon but rather be understood and explored as divergent and operating through diverse geographies (2016, pp. 19-20).² According to Allan, specific spatial contexts manifested through everyday practices shape how power operates (ibid.). Feminist geographers have proposed a more nuanced notion of power manifestations in the diverse spaces occupied by different genders. They have been exploring how power works through these various sites, such as home, work, leisure, and so on, to highlight how gender identities and subjectivities are constructed. They argue that gender identities and experiences are shaped by the spatial contexts and power dynamics in which individuals navigate their lives. Since 'subjectivities are spatially embodied' (Rose, 1993, p. 546), pointing at how power operates through the production of space and how gendered identities are placed within these spatial configurations becomes a critical point to discuss at some length in this paper. Linda McDowell draws upon Butler's conceptualisation of gender as performative (2007, p. 23) to investigate how gender performances can be transgressive and specific to certain spatial contexts (ibid. p. 40). Further, Gregson and Rose also emphasise that not only the actors, but the sites are also 'performative of power relations' (2000, p. 441). McDowell says, "Places are made through power relations which construct the rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial — they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site of the

² The notion of power has conventionally been associated with dominance and control, which conjures up the ideas of hegemony and resistance. This perspective implies that power is exercised 'over' through a top-down dynamic.

experience” (2007, p. 4). Drawing the relationship of space and gender into the Indian, particularly in the South Indian context, Seemanthini Niranjana discusses how women have been muted in conventional anthropological discourse (2001, p. 22). The attempts to locate women's experiences, therefore, give way to the discussion on power and knowledge and the representation of identities (2001, pp. 22-26). Thus, the attempts of *TGIK* (2021) to explore the relationships between gender, space, and power open multiple possibilities for reading the power dynamics of gendered domestic spaces and their mutual shared margins with other spaces. Niranjana's notion about the household being the centre of women's lives (2001, p. 48) maps the locus of the film, *The Great Indian Kitchen*, as a household that demands its women to situate it at the centre of their lives.

Film Analysis: Representing Gendered Spaces and Embodied Spaces

The Kitchen as a symbol of gendered roles: *TGIK* discusses how married life unfolds for a woman in a traditional arranged marriage, culminating in estrangement and divorce. As the film's title suggests, much screen space is devoted to the protagonist's life around the kitchen. The wife and all other women in the film, all unnamed, are engrossed in the kitchen, performing various tasks. The uprooting of the female protagonist from an apparently modernised family of an NRI parent to a traditional and conservative environment is indicated by the architecture of both houses. The kitchen, in the in-laws' house, is situated at a distance from other common areas of the house, thereby limiting the interaction of the women, who are preoccupied with cooking and related tasks, with male members of the house. The culinary preferences of the men, as detailed by the mother-in-law in the initial sequences and later by themselves, stop the kitchen from getting modernised. The father-in-law demands the rice to be cooked on the hearth, chutney be done in grinding stone, and his clothes be washed manually. The husband insists on having chapatis for dinner. The women perform even the simple acts of giving a toothbrush and placing the men's slippers beneath their feet. After serving the men, the women swiftly vacate

the veranda and other open spaces, while the men never enter the kitchen or the backyard, markedly differentiating and demarcating gendered spaces inside a household.

As the film progresses, the women are reduced to mere hands which tirelessly perform a multitude of chores. This relentless repetition is symbolised by their wedding rings and bangles. The initial scenes of delicious meals give way to leftovers scattered on the dining table, remnants of the men's meals.

Women, including girl children, are not permitted to dine with the men. Arjun Appadurai observes, "While the male children are encouraged to continue to demand deference in culinary etiquette, female children are increasingly socialised into the subordinate, service role that they must learn to occupy as future daughters-in-law" (1981, p. 6). When men enjoy meals lavishly, women do not even have clean and hygienic spaces to eat. Appadurai says, "Domestic food transactions express the superiority of men largely through their priority in being served food, the positions they physically occupy, and the disengagement from the cooking process" (ibid. p. 5). The wife is displeased for being compelled to eat amidst leftovers and waste; however, the mother-in-law seems habituated and unbothered about the dirt around. The displeasure and discontent solidify on the wife's face, and she is haunted by the murky smell of kitchen waste even during sexual intercourse.

As the mother-in-law leaves, carrying a mini kitchen in her luggage, the house becomes solely the wife's responsibility. The kitchen, where the woman is tied to almost entirely, becomes what Simon de Beauvoir calls a space of "immanence" (2012, p. 98). The domestic labour she is slammed into "locks her in repetition and immanence; day after day it repeats itself in identical form...It produces nothing new" (ibid. p. 98). The film shows the wife performing the same tasks, including cooking, cleaning, and engaging in sex, repeatedly for about forty minutes.³ Beauvoir refers

³ The wife toils relentlessly, cleaning the filth and dirt of the kitchen, wiping the dining table where men have spitted the chewed drumsticks and changing the wastewater leaking from the broken pipe and clogged sink. When the kitchen sink is clogged, her pleas for her husband's help falls on deaf ears.

to Bachelard to argue that the Sisyphean struggle of a housewife is the one against the unconquerable dirt (ibid. p. 537). She repeatedly requests him to bring a plumber; however, he does not find it urgent or even necessary. The rotten smell of the murky water follows her till night, even during sex, and she gets nauseous.

Beauvoir says, “washing, ironing, sweeping, routing out tufts of dust in the dark places behind the wardrobe, this is holding away death but also refusing life: for in one movement time is created and destroyed; the housewife only grasps the negative aspect of it” (ibid. p. 541). The decay of the rotting kitchen leftovers is repeatedly visualised in juxtaposition with the wife gradually losing her liveliness and love.

The Shared Space of Bedroom: Sex and Desire: The bedroom, the only space she shares with her husband, also offers no atmosphere for intimacy or connection. Conversations are absent, and the exchanges are one-sided, mostly with the husband exerting his conjugal authority over the wife. The shots of their sexual acts are taken in top-down mode, with the wife being laid down and not involved in the act of sex. She is incessantly distracted by the memory of the dirt she is dealing with. Her mentioning of the pain of penetrative sex, devoid of any foreplay, shocks the husband and is met with humiliation and disapproval. Holland et al. observe, “to reveal sexual knowledge and express sexual desires threatens a girl’s reputation” (1994, p.4). She struggles to find a language that allows her to speak about her sexual experience; as Holland et al. find, “the dominant culture has no acceptable language for discussing sex”. They say, “a modest feminine reputation requires a young woman to construct a disembodied sexuality. The woman becomes a passive body, rather than actively embodied” (ibid., p. 4).

Body as a Site: Menstruation and the Notion of Impurity: The only time the wife is disengaged from household and sexual labour is when she is menstruating. The concession is not out of consideration but due to the concept of impurity during the menstrual period. “During a woman’s menstrual period, she is totally isolated and is especially barred from any contact with the hearth” (Appadurai, 1981, p. 9). She is instructed not to cook or

touch utensils and other accessories. Chitra Karunakaran Prasanna observes:

The practice of treating women as unclean during menstruation can be observed across India, where women face restrictions in mobility during menstruation not just in the domestic sphere (home and surroundings), but also in the public sphere (mainly in places of worship). In the private sphere of domestic life, the nature of restrictions includes denial of body contact within the house, denial of sexual intercourse, denial of entry to the kitchen or worship rooms in the house, segregation in terms of separate beds or rooms or even separate habitation where women have to stay away from the house etc.

(2006, p. 92)

The narrative takes a turn with the Sabarimala pilgrimage season starting, and the men of the house decide to observe the rituals. However, the wife, due to her upbringing in an NRI parents' household, is ignorant of the rituals and practices and ends up violating many of those to the displeasure of the men. Intensifying their discontent, she enters her menstrual period during the pilgrimage season. An aunt is urgently summoned to address the domestic and religious needs of the men during her menstrual period. This aunt embodies the traditional ideals of a woman in a patriarchal household, dressed in traditional Kerala attire and performing household chores as if they were acts of devotion. The wife is asked not to step out of the small and dark room where she is confined. She is barred from using any bedding or common vessels. The aunt clearly instructs her not to come out or see anyone. The wife is instructed to wash everything she has used during her menstrual period in flowing water to cleanse their impurity. Prasanna says: "Women also institutionalise these taboos, passing them on to successive generations through the process of socialisation. The violence is manifested in the silencing of a natural aspect of femininity by inculcating guilt and shame in women, which lasts for a lifetime" (ibid., p. 92). In an attempt to rescue her husband from a motorbike accident, the wife happens to touch him, which triggers his abusive response. However, he seeks ritualistic solutions to keep his asceticism intact. While men get opportunities

to make religious amends, women are forced to abide by the rules and norms of yesteryears.

The bitterness within the family regarding the wife's disregard for customs and rituals intensifies as she shares a video advocating women's entry into the Sabarimala temple. This act enraged the religious group headed by her father-in-law. The wife refuses to delete the video, creating extreme dismay for the husband. In contrast to the silence and submissiveness she embodies throughout the film, the wife yells at the husband when he attempts to coerce her to delete the video. This silence, notes Kristine De Welde, drawing from Urban Walker, "was inextricably linked with traditional gender roles and adherence to cultural narratives of femininity..." (2003, p. 20). De Walde says, "The ability to summon their voices and yell deeply and assertively... been compromised by a doctrine of silence" (ibid., pp. 19-20). Regaining her voice enables the wife to see how generations of women have been exploited and denied their choices, dreams, and fundamental rights.

In the penultimate shot, we see the wife in close-up shots with determination to leave the in-laws' house. She has removed the nuptial thread. Enraged with being ordered to serve tea for the priests, she pours the wastewater from the leaked kitchen sink. When the husband and his father storm at her to beat her, she throws the murky water on their face. de Welde says, "self-defence as a system of techniques and as a way of life subverts dominant gender patterns through an internal critique of them" (ibid., p. 4). She walks out as the men stand in shock, and the priests continue their rituals. She passes those women who protest against the Supreme Court verdict, allowing young women's entry to the Sabarimala temple, symbolising that progress is achieved only by destroying the conventions.

In the epilogue, we see the woman achieving her dream of being a dancer with confidence by choreographing an intense theme of women's resistance, opposite to her husband, who now got his divorce and married again, following the same pattern.

Subversion of Societal Norms and Critique of Patriarchy:
The only character named in the film is Usha, the domestic help.

Even when shown doing all the household chores like all other women in the film, Usha is the only one making an earning out of it. Thus, domestic labour for Usha is neither an emotional burden nor a devotional activity, rather, it is like any other vocation. She tells the wife she does not follow the conventions of staying isolated during the menstrual period. Usha and her daughter are the only people who come closer to the wife in her isolation during menstruation. Usha's shots are taken in the opposite direction to other women when performing household tasks to emphasise the difference.

A Dalit woman, Usha is aware of the exploitations and discrimination society inflicts on them. She subtly critiques the practices, saying one has to be smart to survive. When she says she works even during her menstrual period since she has to afford her children's education, the wife exclaims that it is an extraordinary measure any woman could take in her life. Even while observing the rituals, Usha's daughter does not turn discriminatory or practice rituals that endorse untouchability and marginalisation. The kid meets the wife and even touches her, showing empathy and sensitivity.

Representation of Feminist Discourse as Translation

Reading as Feminist Translation: In the previous sections, we have discussed how spaces are understood as gendered embodiments and we have illustrated our point by showcasing examples from our audiovisual text. Moving on, to carry forward this idea, the study will argue how reading a text through a situated lens becomes a feminist translation itself. The study attempts to establish that reading, much like translation, is shaped by socio-cultural contexts. It has long been perceived that readers, like translators, are engaged in the reinterpretation of texts, navigating the intricacies of language and cultural context to construct meaning (Steiner, 1975; Tymockzo, 1999). This understanding further adds to Godard's view, where she theorises that translation is "re-writing in the feminine" (1989, p. 3) and that a feminist translator is "an active reader becoming a writer, a co-producer of meaning rather than a passive amanuensis" (ibid.).

While it is increasingly clear to note the connection between the reader and the meaning-making process, it is also emphatic to note at this point that critical attention has shifted from a mere “textual reader to a contextually situated reader” (Littau, 2006, p. 122), courtesy, identity studies like postcolonial studies, ethnic and minority studies, women’s studies, queer studies, so on and so forth. This situated reader, then, focuses on ‘the differences of reading produced by women, gay or lesbian readers, or readers of ethnic minorities’ (Bennett, 1995, p. 4). Thus, an informed and situated reading of *TGIK* impels the reader to critically engage with the portrayals of the embodiment of gendered spaces, offering reinterpretations of the representations produced by the popular Malayalam cinema over decades. Such a reading opens possibilities to reinterpret traditional gender roles and patriarchal stereotypes and, therefore, offers an alternative and feminist translation of the text. Through its portrayal of a newlywed woman navigating the power dynamics of an orthodox and patriarchal family, as well as the burdens of household chores, the film ensures disruptions of normative gender roles and challenges patriarchal stereotypes. The contrasting representation of the wife, who loathes household chores, and the aunt, who considers it a devotional duty, offers reworked meanings and re-written depictions of women’s experiences. The wife’s resistance is recognised, whereas the aunt’s acceptance is critiqued within the cinematic narrative. This shift in the representational pattern invites viewers to derive feminist meanings through centralising and honouring the challenges posed to the patriarchal order.

This audiovisual text distances viewers/readers by disallowing them the possibility of any attachment to or involvement with the narrative through a repeated depiction of mundane household chores and dispassionate sexual intimacy. Judith Fetterly has pointed out how androcentric texts ‘co-opt’ the female reader to ‘identify against herself’ (1978, p. xii). The repetition and consequent displacement enabled by the film allow the readers to resist the androcentric representations they have been conditioned to accept. The process of ‘distantiation’ (Littau, 2006, p. 131) becomes the underpinning of resistance reading. The narrative urges the readers to actively resist

the patriarchal codes perpetuated by dominant Malayalam cinema, by presenting contrasting representations of equal companionship in marriage, advocating for equal rights and independence through subplots. Through a critical reading of the film, readers are encouraged to be 'renegade readers' (Boardman, 1994, p. 208) who read against patriarchal codes and stereotypes. Consequently, viewers/readers, through the act of 'distantiation' or 'passionate detachment' (Mulvey, 1987, p. 18), are alerted to the consciousness of a feminist reader. Through this process of 'distantiation' or 'passionate detachment', the film dismantles the working of the male gaze and necessitates the reader to foster a feminist consciousness.

Translation as Re-writing: The interface of Gender Studies and Translation Studies shows that translation is not only a means of communication but a powerful medium to subvert social and cultural practices as well. When normative discourses clash and give rise to new narratives, situated reading, encapsulated in feminist translation, emerges as an imperative act of rewriting these traditional normative positions. Alvarez and Vidal say that translation signifies an unstable power balance. They say "Translation is ... a complex process of re-writing that runs parallel both to the overall view of language and of the 'Other' people have throughout history; and to the influences and the balance of power..." (1996, p. 4). They further say, "Translation is an excellent vehicle for conveying the typically Foucauldian binary essence of the opposition power/knowledge: power is intimately related to knowledge, information, and especially to how that information is conveyed and the way of articulating a wide range of discursive elements..." (ibid., p. 6). As translation is now being recognised as a process of re-writing that foregrounds the questions of power and ideology, gender theories also intersect with translational operations. The film (*TGIK*) depicts patriarchal and feminist exchanges in juxtaposed sequences. The battling of these ideologies demands the viewer/reader to critically engage and develop a feminist consciousness to decipher the decision of the wife to break free from the institution of marriage. The representation of the activist who advocates for young women's entry into the Sabarimala temple is narrated in alternative scenes with the confinement of the wife during menstruation. These sequences play

a crucial role in understanding the gender politics of the text. The father-in-law holds a power position, not only within the family but also as the community head. The men of the said community congregation attack the activist and threaten her to mute herself from advocating for women's rights. The wife, navigating through these tensions around her, claims her voice and resists the demands of the patriarchal institutions. Her resistance and reclaiming of voice give rise to feminist interpretations of the text.

Visibilising Women's Voices: The prime endeavour of gender discourses is to reclaim the language and disengage it from how patriarchy has constructed it. Feminist movements which gained momentum over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries appealed to view language as a sexed and emphasised that language plays a critical role in constructing gender and gendered roles. Thus, feminist discourse attempts to deconstruct the patriarchal language and strive to make women visible linguistically. In Louis von Flotow's perspective, the endeavours that deconstruct the "conventional and prescriptive patriarchal language in order for women's words to develop, find a space and to be heard" become feminist translation (Flotow as cited in Arrojo 1994, p. 10). We see how the experiences of the female lead character in navigating the conflicts become the central theme in *The Great Indian Kitchen*. Her growing discontent is represented through repeated representations of the mundane. The film juxtaposes the close-up shots of the women hurrying to finish the household chores, being reduced to mere hands, with the scenes of men at leisure shown in long shots. The film showcases how household and emotional labour have become entirely women's responsibility. The shot of the mother-in-law's packed luggage, which contains only food items and cookware, as she leaves abroad to attend to her daughter's pregnancy, summarises how the patriarchal family perceives women and their role.

The film focuses on how women experience their everyday lives and how the household responses and society, in general, impact their experiences and emotions. *TGIK* details the experiences of not only the wife but also the experiences of the domestic help, the women's rights activists, and the women relatives of the newlywed

couple. It highlights women and men who respect the dignity of all identities when shown in contrast with the shots of men who disregard women's individuality.

Translation as a Tool to Subvert the Dominant Cinematic Language: The text revises the conventional cinematic language of Malayalam cinema in portraying the space occupied by the wife in the in-law's house. The women characters in Malayalam movies were shown with a shade of villainy for questioning the imposition of household labour entirely on them or for asserting their individual space and talking for their rights. *The Great Indian Kitchen* departs from that cinematic tradition by fixing the camera through a woman's perspective and her experiences. Her discontentment with the repudiation of her interests and negation of her needs is rendered in various ways—focusing on the nauseating expression on her face, how she holds the dirtied cook and dine wears with her fingertips, and the repulsion she feels while compelled to have sex—to give emphasis to the angle of vision. In setting this angle of vision, the film denies all possible scopophilic pleasures, even in the scenes of sexual acts. The gaze is set through the wife's character, whose repulsion, discontentment, and pain are detailed in being subjected to mechanical sex without acknowledging her desires. The female experience of how patriarchal hegemonic institutions treat them is given the centre stage in the cinema, which dismantles the conventional use of the prescriptive patriarchal language. It builds a space for women and women's experiences to be heard and visible.

Barbara Godard has emphasised that “feminist discourse is translation in two ways; a notation of gestural and other codes from what has been hitherto unheard of, a muted discourse, and as repetition and consequent displacement of the dominant discourse” (1989, p. 46). A woman who loathes domestic chores and aspires to become a dance teacher, and yet the narrative standing by her is a representation the popular Malayalam cinema has not been familiar with. Meena T. Pillai finds “Film after film in Malayalam has created the image of a woman who loves to cook and clean, wash and scrub, shine and polish for her man (*Melaeparambil Aanveedu*, *Valsalyam*, *Mayamayooram*, *Kumkumacheppu*, *Kudumbapuram*, *Thillakkam*, *Kuruppinte Kanakkupusthakam*, *Nayam Vyakthamakkuka*,

Rakkuyilin Ragasadassil)” (2010, p. 19). The aunt’s character, who prescribes to the wife how to follow the traditions and conventions, is the ideal representation of women the popular Malayalam cinema has established. She further says, “The obvious enjoyment of these women in offering their servitude to men takes on a new signification and serves as a marker of the power of culture to impose its structures on the woman as representation. Thus, that it is nearly impossible for a woman to command power in the family hierarchy elsewhere is neatly established through the differential assignation of tasks according to gender” (ibid. p. 19). In *The Great Indian Kitchen*, we see women who do not enjoy, rather loathe, the monotony of household labour and grow discontented about the servitude they are compelled to perform.

Transformation as Translation: The film emphasises these emotions and gestures where the patriarchal prescriptions are disavowed. The wife finds joy in dancing and finding her career in it. Women who choose art as a profession, such as Vasundhara Devi in *Ente Sooryaputhrikku* (1991), Rajalakshmi in *Sarovaram* (1993), etc., are disallowed to have a dignified life and are pushed to anomalous deaths for making their choices. *TGIK* ensures the women who exercise their powers to pursue their choices find their path and independent existence, and that they win over patriarchal ordeals. Such women and their narratives are unheard in the popular narrative patterns of Malayalam cinema. In voicing the unheard and giving life to what has been muted so far, the film offers a feminist translation of cinematic representations of women and their experiences. Godard also notes that “feminist discourse presents transformation as performance as a model for translation” (2002, p.12). *TGIK* showcases how the wife’s representation evolves from a docile and submissive existence to a robust and assertive individual. From a passively listening, apologetic, and muted character, her performance grows, with realising how the institution takes her rights away and pushes her to mere slavery, to questioning the institutions themselves.

The Great Indian Kitchen offers a reworking of the meanings and codes presented through the masculine and patriarchal gazes over the decades. The text establishes the experiences of women and how

they are treated in the gender hierarchy through the perspective of a woman by enabling her views to find visibility and voice to be heard. And, in doing so, the film becomes a feminist translation.

Conclusion

“It is only by learning to decode and deconstruct the cultural implications and meanings of messages that one can seek to destabilize the ideology of gender hierarchy so inscribed in their language”.

(Pillai, 2013, p. 22)

This paper has shown how the film *The Great Indian Kitchen* challenges the notions of impurity associated with women and menstruation, dismantles the convention that a “good and noble” woman cannot express her sexual desires and offers a central stage to represent the experiences, and expressions, emotions and gestures of women who combat the dominant social order where gender and caste hierarchies join their hands together. In doing so, the film enables women’s voices to find a prominent space in narrating their experiences. The dominant meanings associated with women and women's experiences are thereby reworked. The reading of the film text serves as a catalyst for challenging patriarchal constructs of femininity, shedding light on the transformation of traditionally submissive figures into empowered agents. Through its deliberate repetition of performances representing the structural violence inflicted by patriarchy and other dominant ideologies upon women and marginalised subjects, the film prompts readers to engage critically with reworked meanings, thereby elevating them to be feminist readers. These meanings, decoded and deconstructed, offer a feminist translation of the representation of gendered and embodied spaces by subverting the gender hierarchy and patriarchal prescriptive language established by popular Malayalam cinema over decades. As represented in the film, the representational conventions established by Malayalam cinema over decades are challenged as it encourages a Dalit woman character to inspire the upper caste female lead to be a fighter against systemic oppression. The character of the wife, the female lead, refuses to remain a victim

of the patriarchal social order. She, scene by scene, gains her voice and assertiveness and, towards the climax, summons her powers to break free from the bondages the patriarchal marital institution has imposed on her. The film text offers a re-representation of the women characters and a reinterpretation of the meaning associated with them and their roles by giving voice and agency to the women characters. In doing so, reading the embodiment of gendered spaces in *The Great Indian Kitchen* becomes a feminist translation in itself.

The study, in investigating the production of meaning and how gender plays a vital role in encoding and decoding, is a translational analysis that aims at exploring how feminist translation theories work on textual interpretation. Through the lens of feminist Translation Studies and concepts drawn from feminist reading theories, the study foregrounds the reworking of patriarchal codes and meanings within the film *The Great Indian Kitchen*. By focusing on the transformation of characters, rewriting gendered meanings and re-representing gendered and embodied spaces within the context of feminist discourse, the study situates itself as a Translation Studies exploration through uncovering how meanings are constructed, negotiated and transformed across discourses and ideologies.

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About the Author

Sahana Pradeep

Sahana Pradeep is a doctoral student at the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies, University of Hyderabad. Her research area includes audiovisual Translation Studies and feminist Translation Studies. Email: 18hapt01[AT]uohyd[DOT]ac[DOT]in

Sriparna Das

Sriparna Das is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies, University of Hyderabad. Her

areas of interest include Research methodology in Translation Studies, Oral Literatures, Gender and Translation, Multilingualism.

Email: sriparna2006[AT]uohyd[DOT]ac[DOT]in

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UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

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University of Calicut

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