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BETWEEN TWO WORLDS:  
ANGLO-INDIAN STEREOTYPES AND MALAYALAM CINEMA

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ABSTRACT

*The Anglo-Indians of India are the racial hybrids of European and Indian stock who came into being through four centuries of European colonial contact with India. Malayalam cinema produced in the state of Kerala, albeit being the fourth largest film industry in India, by and large has always been ridden by dominant-caste favouritisms. Regrettably there is minimal representation of the Anglo-Indian community in Malayalam films and if they occupy the screen-space at all, misrepresentation, typecasting and a dogged discourse of estrangement characterises their portrayal. These films ideologically affirm all the denigrating Anglo-Indian stereotypes, slyly 'othering' this 'hybrid' community, ostracizing them as the 'romantic outsiders' of Kerala and typified as 'non-realistic' in their approach to life. Historicising the production and reception of Anglo-Indian delineations in Malayalam cinema from 1970s to 2018, this paper examines such films both as processes and products of the complex historical, cultural and nationalist policies of majoritarian isolationist politics. The paper explicates not just the politics of signification, but the politics of (mis)representation, which is how the Anglo-Indian community gets pigeonholed in the filmic narratives produced in Kerala. It foregrounds the need to destabilize and subvert the conservative and belittling attitude towards the Anglo-Indian community in Malayalam films. The paper thereby argues the need for a fair and inclusive perspective of the Anglo-Indians in the mainstream Malayalam cinemascapes.*

## INTRODUCTION

The narrative expressions of Malayalam cinema<sup>1</sup> with its casteist mind set and ideological favouritisms such as elitism and hyper masculinity have constantly privileged and fêted the dominant class, caste and gender discourses. Such preferences have occasioned the categorical distancing and ontological exclusion of the marginalized communities such as Dalits<sup>2</sup> and Anglo-Indians<sup>3</sup> inside its narrative space. Malayalam cinema, which advanced as a radical medium of representation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, paradoxically undervalued and typified these communities as the 'other' by circulating and normalising certain affected images of them. With its focus on the dynamics of Malayalam cinema and its discourses of filming identities in the last five decades (1970s – 2018), this paper examines the politics of (mis)representation by analysing the pigeonholing of Anglo-Indians in select Malayalam cinema. Its aim then is to foreground the need for the inclusion of the marginalised Anglo-Indian identity in the Malayalam cinemascape.

## ANGLO-INDIANS AND MALAYALAM CINEMA

Anglo-Indians, who exist in a condition of relentless ambivalence<sup>4</sup> between two worlds – India and her historical colonial master, are as Sylvia Staub argues, “the prevalent, most interesting experiment in genetics between East and West” (quoted in Chhibber, 2012). Malayalam cinema with an illustrious legacy of 80 years, however, has seldom tried to sketch this ambivalence of the Anglo-Indian existence. This is on account of the serious cultural domination of the mindscape of Malayalam cinema by the elitist dogmata of the upper middle class and upper castes in Kerala, leading to the selective alienation or absence of the stories of the socially marginalised and the ethnic minorities such as the Anglo-Indians. Malayalam films that deal with the Anglo-Indian community have thereupon made deleterious evaluations of the complexities of Anglo-Indian lives from an exclusivist perspective. Being films scripted and directed by members of the dominant community (here, upper-caste Hindus<sup>5</sup> or Syrian Christians<sup>6</sup>), they can only present the spectators with an 'outsider's perspective', an outsider to the Anglo-Indian community who is irrefutably not all-knowing or omniscient. This 'imperial gaze'<sup>7</sup> has resulted in the fabrication of a host of stereotypes or sweeping generalisations in the representation

of the minority community of Anglo-Indians who are visualised as inferior and as the 'other'. Accordingly, credible characterisations of Anglo-Indians are utterly absent in Malayalam cinema with no positive characters in the lead role representing this minority community.

Screen theorists such as Jenny Rowena convincingly postulate that cinema achieves and safeguards its ideological function of upper caste/class dogma interpellation by reproducing the preponderant social and political disproportions. Exploring the case of Malayalam cinema, Rowena has discerned that,

Heroism in the 1970s and after Malayalam films centered on a single male protagonist who was more often than not upper caste/class, while men and women of other castes/classes were impediments and objects of reform or were tragic and/or peripheral to the main storylines. (Quoted in Lukose, 2009, p. 42)

In this fashion, Malayalam cinematic sentiments and the collective consciousness of the post 1970s Malayali audience have sided with the superior castes/classes and bolstered all the long-held generic Anglo-Indian stereotypes which leads to them being battered twice - first by the majority community in the film industry, customarily the upper-caste Hindus or the Syrian Christians, and then by the spectators who in turn develop an aversion to these 'racial hybrids' who are presented to them as 'misfits'.

The first notable Malayalam film that tried to express Anglo-Indian life on screen was K. S. Sethumadhavan's *Chattakkari* (The Anglo-Indian Girl, 1974). However, according to D'Cruz, "Sethumadhavan's treatment of Anglo-Indian life is...grotesque, comic and oddly sympathetic towards its "mixed race" characters" (D'Cruz, 2007, p. 60). *Chattakkari* (1974) could fittingly be conceptualised as a conceit, conjured up by a writer from a powerful Hindu caste-community that constructs the Anglo-Indian family using derogatory stereotypes in terms of their customs, food habits and stature which irrevocably asserts the ascendancy of the modernized, reformist Hindu family in the film. Attributable to the triumph of *Chattakkari* which gained the Kerala State Film Award for best actress (Lakshmi), best actor (Adoor Bhasi) in 1974 and the Filmfare Award for best director (K. S. Sethumadhavan) in Malayalam in 1975, later films such as *Daivathinte Vikrithikal* (The Ways of God, 1992), *Akale* (At a Distance, 2004), *Chattakkari* (2012) and *Hey Jude* (2018) followed suit and included Anglo-Indian narratives.

This study predominantly focuses on these films which are entirely set against Anglo-Indian backdrops and it also analyses other films with marginal Anglo-Indian expressions, such as *Madanolsavam* (Orgy, 1978), *Boeing Boeing* (1985), *Vandanam* (1989), *Love in Singapore* (2009), *Currency* (2009), *Violin* (2011), *ABCD* (2013), *Annayum Rasoolum* (Anna and Rasool, 2013), *Iyobinte Pusthakam* (The Book of Job, 2014), *Premam* (Love, 2015) and *Mariyam Mukku* (Mariyam's Corner, 2015). An exploration of all these films divulge the increasingly sectarian and casteist ideal of Malayalam cinema. The upper middle class/caste hegemony<sup>8</sup> in Kerala society astutely conferring Anglo-Indian ethnicity the status of the 'other' is what a close examination of these films unveil. It inexorably creates typified caricatures of 'imagined' Anglo-Indian femininities and masculinities which is essentially a massively manoeuvred partisan stratagem of the majoritarian caste/class/gender dominated Malayalam film industry to relegate the hitherto distanced community further to the fringes.

#### FIENDISH *FEMME FATALES*

Women of the Anglo-Indian community, though a hybrid populace of two (European and Indian) ancestral communities, are considered morally and culturally closer to their European counterparts or this is how the intransigent patriarchal predilections of Malayalam cinema perceives them to be. J. Brownfoot (1984) remarks that European women 'were stereotyped as frivolous, vain, snobbish and selfish' (Brownfoot, 1984, p. 186). Also, B. Gartrell (1984) suggests that 'few women have been described so negatively as the British *memsahibs*' (Gartrell, 1984, p. 165). The upshot of such spurious slants is nothing but the demonic and libidinous impressions of the women of this 'métis' population of Anglo-Indians, in films, as skimpily dressed playgirls and erotic ciphers who woo the men of the superior castes with their exceedingly voluptuous ways and deeds. Filmic discourses seem to be targeting Anglo-Indian women because of their supposed enticement of the European men, which is perceived as an act of moral degradation by the orthodox Malayali community.

Along these lines, Malayalam cinema has also been nefariously unfair in its formulaic representation of the Anglo-Indian women characters as shallow, ill-informed,

worthless, proud, cold, apathetic, malevolent, careless and devoid of resilient resolve. As for instance, the veteran actress Sukumari has been employed in Malayalam cinema to represent a number of Anglo-Indian female characters on screen, all highly stereotypical roles evoking hilarity, viz. the bedevilling mother and irksome wife Mrs Margaret in *Chattakkari* (1974), the ill-humoured and sullen maid Mrs Dick aka 'Dickammai' (Aunt Dick) in *Boeing Boeing* (1985), the bar owner Mamma in *Orkappurathu* (1988) and the haughty landlord Maggie aunty in *Vandanam* (1989). Anglo-Indian women in real life and their exemplifications on screen are in essence victims of 'double-marginalization', both because they are of the other or second gender and also because they belong to this minority cultural community.

An ideal example of how the Malayalam cinematic apparatus typifies Anglo-Indian women is *Chattakkari* (1974), which unwittingly becomes part of the bandwagon of films hell-bent on 'othering' Anglo-Indian women. The 2012 Malayalam remake of the film by Santhosh Sethumadhavan, served in further cementing and re-establishing the erroneous notions of Anglo-Indians who constitute a miniscule community of individuals with a mixed biological and cultural heritage. A close probing into it, divulges that the film ideologically reaffirms all the denigrating Anglo-Indian stereotypes, especially those about the women of the community. The title of the film *Chattakkari* (1974) is a pun on the Anglo-Indian girl, as the Malayalam term *chattakkari* in one sense alludes to a woman who wears *chatta* – a 'V' necked top, the traditional garb of Anglo-Indian women of Kerala worn along with a checkered dhoti<sup>9</sup>. The term is used in a pejorative sense to refer to the Anglo-Indian women whose dressing style is different from the traditional saree<sup>10</sup> worn by the women of Kerala. Besides, *chattam* in Malayalam means 'rule' and paradoxically the Anglo-Indian heroine Julie is epitomised as a girl who breaches all the prescribed rules and norms. Julie is pictured as a liberated young woman who roams freely around the woods on her bicycle unlike the supposed conventional *sanskari ladki*<sup>11</sup>. Interestingly, the title can also be interpreted as *chaattakkari* – a derogatory term in Malayalam used to refer to impulsive women, or women of loose morals – which foregrounds the society's prejudices about Anglo-Indian women, looked down upon as temptresses.

The costumes sported by Anglo-Indians in movies are also typified as Julie and her sister Ilin's 'short' and glamorous outfits are contrasted in the film against the traditional attire of the Hindu girl, Usha. By the same token, the Anglo-Indian girl Elsie in *Daivathinte Vikrithikal* (1992) is referred to as *madammakutty*<sup>12</sup> by the natives and the film presents her in short, tight fitting costumes. Unlike the Malayali<sup>13</sup> girls of her age, Elsie is friends with the boys - Sasi and Shivan, sons of the native medical practitioner, Kumaran Vaidyan. This friendship is scorned by Kadungan, the local moneylender and shaman who warns Kumaran Vaidyan of Anglo-Indian women's penchant for upper caste men. Kadungan, who indulges in illegitimate relations with several women is represented as having the audacity and the moral authority to speak against Anglo-Indians just because he is an upper caste Malayali male. Elsie is pictured as a corrupt influence on the Hindu boy Sasi as she encourages him to consume alcohol and additionally she is pigeonholed as a lascivious Anglo-Indian woman who consummates her love with Sasi time and again and becomes pregnant out of wedlock.

We note that in most of the films centered on Anglo-Indian life, the characterisation of Anglo-Indian women is that of promiscuous *femme fatales* and sexual sirens. That she is vulnerable, available to everyone, is easily approachable for sexual favours and her identity is marked by relationships with several men, are all predisposed notions which are employed to 'other', vulgarise and side-line Anglo-Indian women; thereby the identity of the women of the upper castes is constituted as chaste women of utmost purity. This stereotypical Anglo-Indian female promiscuity trope is repeated in the 1978 film *Madanolsavam* by N. Sankaran Nair with the Anglo-Indian girl Elizabeth D'Cruz from an impoverished family enticing a wealthy Hindu boy, Raju. Elizabeth disobeys her father and walks out of home with the man she loves when she is just 17. She is then belittled by Raju's father and abused as a woman bent on trapping men from rich families. Another emblematic example of the hackneyed characterisation of Anglo-Indian women in Malayalam cinema is Sibi Malayil's *Violin* (2011) in which the Anglo-Indian female characters Angel, Mercy and Annie are frowned upon by the society as lecherous women, with one of them being sexually assaulted and slain in the movie.

Fetishisation of the female body becomes manifest in *Chattakkari* (1974) as several men make sexual advances towards Julie and she is 'gazed'<sup>14</sup> at by Mr Pillai, an

Indian big shot with dishonourable intentions whom her mother invites to their home for a party. This gaze privileges the male and contributes to the explicit power play where the female body is victimised and made passive. In a reverse shot from Pillai's point of view, the camera first voyeuristically focuses on Julie's legs and then slowly moves upward until it rests on her face which subtly reiterates and normalises the objectification and commodification of the Anglo-Indian woman's body. This is repeated when the camera erotically zooms in on Julie's body from bottom to top while she lies on the bed thinking of her lover, Sasi. The film stereotypically presents her in colourful, sensuous and revealing costumes and she is seen to be making salacious advances towards Sasi in the song sequence *Kaatum mazhayum vannatharinjille* in her own imagination.

The film also ironically places a picture of the Virgin Mary in Julie's room to highlight the contrast between Mother Mary and Julie in character and morality. When Julie is sexually approached by Sasi, she drinks with him and easily succumbs to his will. However, she rejects the advances of her Anglo-Indian friend Richard and prefers to be with the higher caste Hindu male, Sasi Warriar. That the dominant culture enjoys an upper hand everywhere is conspicuous in *Chattakkari* (1974) when an Anglo-Indian lad fails to win Julie's love whereas a Hindu man succeeds. The morality of Julie is challenged as she is depicted as someone who gave Richard false hopes and then cheated on him.

Mrs. Morris, or Margaret, Julie's mother in *Chattakkari* (1974) who uses false exuberance and flamboyance as a means to assert her identity as an Anglo-Indian among "bloody Indians", can well be considered the epitome of Anglo-Indian female stereotyping. She conducts quite a few parties at her home to entertain Indian big shots for personal gain which only escalates the growing debt of the family. She parties with three men at her home in the absence of her husband and offers them foreign whiskey to show off her own 'foreignness'. When Julie refuses to have a drink with the family, Margaret accuses her of lacking in manners and compares her with "bloody Indians". Unlike the traditional conception of a *pativrata patni*<sup>15</sup>, Margaret never pays heed to her husband, nor does she bother to discuss matters with him and single-handedly takes all decisions concerning the family. She is also presented as a heartless vamp who demands Julie leave her new-born (illegitimate) baby with an elderly aunt to be admitted into an orphanage.

Julie, who resists the sleazy advances of Rahim, a native shopkeeper, is reprimanded by Margaret for being a 'fool' and surprisingly Julie is accused of provoking Rahim which makes the viewers wonder what sort of a woman, especially mother, Margaret is. Margaret D'Costa in the 2004 film *Akale*, directed by Shyamaprasad is yet another typified portrait of a meddling mother who exhorts her daughter to trap handsome Anglo-Indian men, through which the film tries to brand the women of this community as seductresses and husband hunters.

Strong parallels can be drawn between the plotlines of *Chattakkari* (1974) and *Daivathinte Vikrithikal* (1992) which inevitably point to the fact that Malayalam cinema has nothing new to state on the community and alarmingly the notions about the people of this community do not change with time. Alphonso's wife Margaret in *Daivathinte Vikrithikal* (1992) is portrayed as the promiscuous Anglo-Indian female who encourages the sleazy intentions of the native Hindu, Dharmapalan and her sexual proclivity is emphasised when she sleeps with him to win financial favours.

Women of the Anglo-Indian community are thus either fetishized or considered 'abject'<sup>16</sup> by Malayalam cinema which has elitist upper class and patriarchal sensibilities. Kristeva's (1982) theoretical formulation of the 'abject' is employed to describe bodies and things that one finds repulsive or disgusting, and in order to preserve one's identity, the 'abject' is generally cast out. *Iyobinte Pusthakam* (2014), the period thriller film directed by Amal Neerad, has Martha, a first generation Anglo-Indian woman born out of the illegitimate relationship between the British landlord Harrison and the ethnic tribal native woman Kazhali (Lena). Martha is systematically ostracized by society along with her mother and both are 'abjected' as 'witches' with uncanny powers and so are outcaste.

## EMASCULATED MACHISMOS

Since its inception the Malayalam film industry has been the domain of unparalleled hegemonic masculinity. It revels in constructing and discursively privileging the image and emergence of picture perfect *avatars*<sup>17</sup> of male machismo which are essentially those of upper caste Nairs or Syrian Christians. J. Devika (2016) notes that in every sphere of the Kerala society "[c]aste Hindu legacies have been privileged implicitly and as a result, hybrid communities can only be perceived as



'miscegenated'. They are, therefore, excluded from the legacies of national culture" (Devika 2016, p. 127). Owing to such parochialisms rampant in Malayalam cinema, Anglo-Indian masculinities have markedly and strategically been underemphasised and dominant caste sovereignty is slyly established in almost all the films by contrasting the Anglo-Indian men against the upper caste Hindu or Syrian Christian characters in the films. Anglo-Indian men have been typified in Malayalam filmic discourses as capricious, mendacious and lazy, which culminates in them being represented as the 'other', securing the 'centre' for the men of elite castes.

The skewed filmic representation of Anglo-Indian men perpetually reminds viewers of their eternal peripheral status by caricaturing them as men who would be easy prey to angst, ambivalence, split fidelities, hypersensitivity, self-disdain and a subservience complex. With all these assumed blotches, the Anglo-Indian male is habitually rendered in Malayalam cinema as Machiavellian and not-fully-adult figures. For instance, the penniless commission agents Freddy and his father Nicholas in the film *Orkapurathu* (1988), the fraudulent investor Andrews Perreria in *Love in Singapore* (2009), the counterfeit currency fabricator Daniel D'Souza aka Danny in *Currency* (2009), the effeminate dance teacher, Dolly D'Cruz in *Premam* (2015), the business minded trickster figure Lloyd Casper Anderson in *Mariyam Mukku* (2015), the scheming miser Dominic Rodriguez in *Hey Jude* (2018) – all bound by the commonality of being Anglo-Indians, are caricatured as clichéd Anglo-Indian prototypes who are notorious and duplicitous.

Malayalam cinema appears to relentlessly make it a point to sketch Anglo-Indian men as people with thwarted dreams, for example, Neil D'Costa in Syamaprasad's *Akale* (2004), is a distraught youth in an existential crisis. Neil, whose long held wish is to become a writer, conversely, ends up as a clerk in a factory for little recompense. Freddy Evans, another Anglo-Indian male in the film, is disheartened with life and laments his unrealised dreams. A brilliant musician and sports star during his high school days, Freddy later resents his tedious life of being a shipping clerk in an old company.

A substantial share of the stereotypes about the Anglo-Indian male includes his craving for alcohol as it is erroneously alleged that such men drink away the family's money, not bringing home the greater part of their salaries. The drunk and frustrated

Anglo-Indian male prototype is nothing but a clichéd image of mockery and a fantasy of the upper caste sense of cultural and moral superiority. Illustrating this point, Neil in *Akale* (2004) is the epitome of Anglo-Indian male stereotyping as a reckless drunkard and a chain smoker who whiles away his time and wastes money by incessantly watching movies in the cinema hall. Alphonso in *Daivathinte Vikrithikal* (1992), reminiscent of Neil, is that typical Anglo-Indian male representation of a romantic fellow, a dreamer, who smokes, drinks and does nothing productive, but plays on the beach with children and entertains them with his gimmicks. This bluntly points to the fact that Malayalam cinema only portray Anglo-Indian men as ineffectual and good for nothing drunkards. This supports the misconception that the Anglo-Indian community consists of henpecked men hamstrung by the dominating women of the household.

Anglo-Indian delineations of unassailable women have been sharpened by their contrast with the men of the community, who are portrayed as largely emasculated by insufficient education, lack of employment and beset by problems of power plays at home. Whereas, according to Lionel Caplan,

Despite the fact that greater numbers than ever before are going to university, entering the professions, becoming successful businessmen, finding lucrative work abroad (e.g. the Gulf) or in other parts of India, as well as achieving positions of leadership and responsibility within and outside the community, everyday discourses focus mainly on the ill-educated and unemployed or irregularly employed as typifying the Anglo-Indian male. (2000, p. 879)

Alphonso's wife Maggi in *Daivathinte Vikrithikal* (1992), persistently taunts him about his enervated masculinity and asks him to start working like a 'man'. The film also has a scene wherein he lays his hand open before her for money but she does not give him any. Here is reflected the stereotypical portrayal of a 'good-for-nothing' Anglo-Indian male and the authoritarian woman of the household. Likewise, Neil's commanding mother Margaret in *Akale* (2004) is a self-important, bossy figure, who is possessive of her children and forces her desires on them.

Neil calls his home a coffin, addresses his mother as "a chattering old witch" and is nonchalant about his family, appreciative only about his own world of adventures, away from home. His wife Kamala, a non-Anglo-Indian, leaves him quite a few years after their marriage as she can no longer be at his side. The reason for this well-

thought-out separation turns out to be his selfishness and she even holds him responsible for their daughter Rakhi withdrawing from them. To Kamala's question as to whether he doesn't hate himself, Neil answers, "always, really, all the time" (00:05:32-38). Neil's father too is pictured as a drunkard who was equally detached and went missing one day, leaving his wife and children in abject poverty. Typifying Anglo-Indian men as migrants, disloyal both to their families and the homeland, the movie has Neil utter to his friend Freddy, "I am like my father, we are wanderers" (00:48:54-57).

The film *Hey Jude* (2018) helmed by the ace art house director Shyamaprasad, on the other hand, employs the 'abnormal' Anglo-Indian male trope. The opening scene and the dialogue rendered by the Anglo-Indian lead, Jude Rodrigues, presents him as an eccentric figure who is a mathematical genius with Asperger's Syndrome. Caplan remarks:

Anglo-Indians were assigned a host of stereotypes - from mental deficiency brought about by malformation of the 'hybrid' brain to premature depravity on account of excessive sexuality. Their character weaknesses, moreover, were thought to be inherent in their blood. (2000, p. 867)

The film accordingly tries to present Jude not as 'perfection' or as an autonomous person with 'agency', but rather as 'lacking', focusing not so much on his incredible knowledge of oceanography or his calculator brain but on his slipups and paucities, and presents him as a socially awkward being.

Jude's father, Dominic Rodriguez is branded in the film as an avaricious Anglo-Indian man who owns an antique shop. A trickster fellow and a shrewd businessman who lies through his teeth to sell his goods, he refers to a brass water mug (which perceptibly is not an antique piece), as the symbol of Dravidian domestic life, hyping the product to sell for a higher price. This Anglo-Indian father figure is so absorbed in money-making that he avoids taking his own son to a doctor as he would have to pay the consultation fees. A miser, he thinks several times before agreeing to send his daughter on an outing with her friends. He also decides not to attend his paternal Aunt Olivia's funeral as he does not want to spend money travelling to Goa. Dominic, however, is elated when he learns that the entire property of his demised aunt, has been left to him. On reaching Goa, he appears unconcerned about his aunt's death,

but instead is busy casting his lustful eyes on the nineteenth century European furniture at her home which is worth a fortune.

While in Goa, he constantly pesters his late aunt's tenants (non-Anglo-Indians), Dr Sebastian and his daughter Crystal, by disrupting their power and water connections. The character of Dominic is that of a scheming man, who does not care for anything other than his own wealth and wellbeing and he even makes his innocent son Jude befriend the tenants, for his own selfish reasons. Dr Sebastian is an alcoholic who gambles and bets on cricket matches; however, the movie portrays him as a more practical man and a doting father in contrast to the Anglo-Indian father figure, Dominic. Also it is Sebastian who diagnoses the 'abnormal' condition of Jude and helps him 'recover'. Jude's Anglo-Indian parents and sibling could never comprehend him whereas his free spirited neighbours from another community easily enlighten Jude about life and help him transform from 'immaturity' to 'maturity'.

The Anglo-Indians of Kerala belong to the Latin Catholic sect which is considered to be of lower-caste ranking, while the Syrian Christians claim upper-caste status<sup>18</sup>. Demonstrating this dominant caste supremacy, Crystal, an upper caste Syrian Christian girl, herself a victim of bipolar disorder, is somehow able to aid and 'correct' the Anglo-Indian lad which none of his own family members could. She helps Jude change his perspective, motivates him to learn to drive and conquer the worst fear of his life – water – by teaching him the art of swimming. Crystal becomes that angelic-woman-saviour figure who salvages the blighted life of the young Anglo-Indian. The film thus repeats the cliché of the Anglo-Indian characters being 'saved' by non-Anglo-Indians. Through such deification of the members of a superior caste and downgrading of the Anglo-Indian male, the film seems to be substantiating the argument that Malayalam cinema methodically espouses the ploy of positive (upper caste) 'self' presentation and negative 'other' (minority) presentation.

## THE EXOTIC OTHER

The conceptions of culture, customs and tradition are timeworn imperialistic and hegemonic tools exploited by the 'self' to create the 'other', as an exotic spectacle, which is diametrically opposed to the majoritarian discourses of refinement and

civilization. Tracing lineage back to the European colonial masters, an Anglo-Indian is always ostracized as a deviant being who “[c]onsiders the literature, music and culture of Europe to be his and is commonly indifferent to the cultural heritage of his birthland” (Wright, 1971, p. 178). However, the fact that the Anglo-Indians sired by the Europeans were originally the ones who sparked off the modernization of Kerala society is irrefutable. The cultural mosaic of Kerala has been incredibly influenced by the language, culture, lifestyle and food habits of the Anglo-Indians. But at a time when modernity and progress were looked at with suspicion, Anglo-Indians and their way of life and mores seemed a threat to Kerala’s ‘genuine’ or ‘authentic’ regional culture, and traditionalism advocated by the upper class/caste, which was, and is, why Anglo-Indians and their customs are dreaded and consequently ‘othered’. To exemplify this praxis of vilification, Malayalam cinema sardonically addresses Anglo-Indian men and women as *Sayippu* and *Madamma* respectively, which are the Malayalam variants of the terms ‘Sahib’<sup>19</sup> and ‘Madamme’, that the casteist Kerala society employs to alienate Anglo-Indians and hence perpetually remind them of their crossbred status.

Steeped irrevocably in dominant caste favouritisms, Malayalam films have never come up with realistic representations of Anglo-Indian life. Films like *Madanolsavam* (1978), *Chattakkari* (1974 & 2012) and *Akale* (2004), for instance, thrive on exceedingly clichéd notions about Anglo-Indians, of them being impoverished, hysterically tangled in a struggle to mask their pitiable conditions and endeavouring to improve their status by hook or by crook. *Akale* (2004), begins in Calcutta with Neil narrating to Kamala, the thread of a movie which he happened to watch, wherein a group of people bizarrely live in seclusion away from the outside world. Through this prudently chosen opening utterance by the lead character, the director seems to be surreptitiously pointing at the Anglo-Indians themselves and the ghetto mentality infamously attached to the community.

Also, Malayalam cinema has always showcased a peculiar antipathy and disrespect for the lower class Anglo-Indians who were supposedly born out of illegitimate relationships between Europeans and women belonging to the coastal areas of Kerala rather than upper class women. The character of Joy Mathew (called Sayippu – a Malayalam variant of the term *Sahib*) in James Albert’s *Mariyam Mukku* (2015), claims himself to be an Anglo-Indian but he is mocked by others who refer to him as

the 'Anglo-kadappuramkaran' (a lower caste Anglo-Indian who lives on the seashore). *ABCD (American Born Confused Desi)*, 2013), directed by Martin Prakkat has S P Sreekumar playing the role of an impoverished inferior class Anglo-Indian, Lloyd Fernandez who claims himself to be a 'cross' (his dark skin colour as opposed to the fairness of skin expected of Anglo-Indians evokes suspicion, both in the characters in the film and also the film spectators), is pictured in the most ludicrous light as a pimp and a wanton guy. However, according to Cressey, "It is a common supposition that a large proportion of Anglo-Indians are the result of temporary associations between low class Indian women and Western soldiers and sailors, but there are no facts as to the extent to which this may be true" (Cressey, 1935, p. 264).

Furthermore, the speech style and language preferences of Anglo-Indians is questioned and mocked in films such as *Annayum Rasoolum* (2013) and *Mariyam Mukku* (2015). *Annayum Rasoolum* (2013) has Collins and his family speaking broken English with an out rightly comical Cochin dialect<sup>20</sup>. Correspondingly, the film *Mariyam Mukku* (2015) demands the character Sayippu wear flashy costumes and speak in unfitting English which he hilariously mixes with Malayalam. Sayippu, who is both proud and boastful of his European lineage is nothing but a hackneyed image of Anglo-Indian mockery. Also, the Anglo-Indian male, Lloyd Casper Anderson in *Mariyam Mukku* (2015), is a business minded impostor who makes the most out of an entire village. His chin puff goatee, coloured hair, contact lens and broken English are employed as features of ridicule.

*Hey Jude* (2018) on the other hand, lampoons the prized customs and age-old practices dear to the identity of the community. Dominic is disgusted when Susan hugs him; here the film presents the Anglo-Indian custom of a warm hug to greet a person as something repulsive even to a fellow Anglo-Indian. The religiosity of Anglo-Indians is questioned through the character of Dominic as he is depicted as utterly loathe to contribute to the church. He even scorns the thought of having to share lunch with his brother-in-law Paul, when in reality Anglo-Indians are well known for their hospitality. The film also lays bare other stereotypical notions surrounding the Anglo-Indian community as Jude's identity of being an Anglo-Indian is questioned by Crystal when he innocently admits his obliviousness to music and jive and reveals that he is a teetotaler who does not enjoy partying.

The Malayalam cinematic tactic of 'othering', as well as accrediting non-patriotic sentiments to Anglo-Indians, ideologically generalizes them as a community that never desires to assimilate into the Kerala or Indian culture. This is a conscious act of estranging the community that already survives in what Bhabha calls the 'liminal space'<sup>21</sup>, characterized by indeterminacy, ambiguity and hybridity. Thus the clichéd mother figure Margaret in *Chattakkari* (1974) never bothers to speak about her Indian mother while she on no occasion misses a chance to boast of her English father. She dearly refers to England as 'our land' and dreams of an exodus to England to be united with her dad's relatives. Alphonso's wife Margaret, who prefers French over Malayalam, in *Daivathinte Vikrithikal* (1992) is yet another exemplification of a stereotypical Anglo-Indian who prefers to leave their land, where they no longer "belonged" and return to their roots in France. She plays on her piano the song '*Is it all a dream? Would I miss it or would I be there?*' ruminating on her return to France, her dreamland.

Nevertheless, in a specific song sequence in Alphonso's imagination in *Daivathinte Vikrithikal* (1992), Maggi sings in Malayalam rather than English and dances in the traditional Kerala style, apparently assimilating into the Kerala culture. This is exactly what the caste-ridden Malayali society desires – Anglo-Indians should either abandon their individuality, their unique identity, and fit into the 'authentic' culture of Kerala, or leave Kerala, and India, for good. Illustrating the latter premise, Jude's transformation in *Hey Jude* (2018), from 'abnormality' to 'normalcy' happens with the backdrop of breezy Goa (and not Kerala) with its surreal locales, jazz music, parties and the sublime beaches. Thus, by choosing Goa as his place of amelioration, the film slyly suggests Anglo-Indians go back to their 'roots', where they can be their true selves. This is a tactic of estrangement.

Yet another remarkable feature of Anglo-Indian alienation in Malayalam cinema is that films like *Annayum Rasoolum* (2013), *Mariyam Mukku* (2015) and *Iyobinte Pusthakam* (2014) make no mention of the surnames of the Anglo-Indian characters which is emblematic of the psyche of Malayali social order that never bothers to look into the lineage and the complex divisions within the Anglo-Indian community. However, in reality, the Anglo-Indian community of Kerala has divisions among them based on surnames, which suggest their line of descent – be it Portuguese, Dutch or English. For Malayalam filmdom, whether D'Cruz or Johnson or Correya does not

make much of a difference. This is because these characters have nothing significant to contribute to the narrative world of cinema since they are just sidekicks and slapstick figures whose duty is merely to induce either hilarity or derision in the audience.

## CONCLUSION

The Anglo-Indian community has been a strong and compelling presence in the general spectrum of Kerala society since colonisation. However, Malayalam cinema has always been inimical to the sentiments of this minority ethnic community and never have they been considerably represented in the general schema of Malayalam films. General sensibility of the popular cinema is and has always been with the upper caste and the middle class Keralites. Given that community assertion in a caste-ridden society is possible only within the framework of the caste hierarchy and because caste society stigmatizes the Anglo-Indians as a product of miscegenation, they have been able to claim neither their complex past nor space within the history of Kerala. Moreover, even now there has never been any serious attempt from the part of Malayalam cinema to deal with the minute complexities, the divisions among them and reflect or represent the tensions of the life of the Anglo-Indians. Rather the whole Anglo-Indian community is stereotyped and treated as a monolithic entity with a single essentialised and largely negative identity. This paper attempted to foreground the need to subvert such flawed and stereotypical representations of Anglo-Indians in Malayalam cinema, owing to its casteist and male chauvinistic foundations, thus guaranteeing their appreciation on their own merits in films as well as the inclusion of the community into the Kerala society.

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## NOTES

1. Films produced in Kerala which is the fourth largest film industry in India. Malayalam is the native tongue of the people of Kerala.
2. Dalit, meaning "broken/scattered" in Sanskrit and Hindi, is a term mostly used for the castes in India that have been subjected to untouchability.
3. Anglo-Indians are people with mixed Indian and European ancestry, and historically included people of British descent born or living in the Indian subcontinent.
4. Ambivalence according to Bhabha is the duality that presents a split in the identity of the colonized 'other' as that of the Anglo-Indians. In postcolonial discourse, it describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterises the relation between the coloniser and the colonised. See Bhabha, Homi. "Of Mimicry and Man," *The Location of Culture*, Ed. Homi K. Bhabha, New York: Routledge, 1994.
5. Hindu refers to any person who regards him- or herself as culturally, ethnically, or religiously adhering to aspects of Hinduism. Hindus form the religious majority in Kerala. According to the *2011 Census of India*, 54.73% of Kerala's population are Hindus, 26.56% are Muslims, 18.38% are Christians, and the remaining 0.33% follows other religion or no religion.
6. Syrian Christianity refers to Eastern Christian traditions that employ Syriac language in their liturgical rites as opposed to Latin used by Latin Christians.
7. E. Ann Kaplan has introduced the post-colonial concept of the 'imperial gaze', in which the observed find themselves defined in terms of the privileged observer's own set of value-preferences. See Kaplan, E. Ann. *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*. Routledge, 2012.
8. Here 'hegemony' refers to the social and cultural predominance by the superior group over the marginalised ones within a society or milieu. The dominant group in effect exerts undue influence and power over the others.
9. Dhoti is a traditional garment worn mostly by the men in the Indian subcontinent. It is a rectangular piece of unstitched long cloth, wrapped around the waist and the legs and knotted at the waist.
10. Saree is a female garment from the Indian subcontinent that consists of a drape that is typically wrapped around the waist, with one end draped over the shoulder, baring the midriff.

11. A term in Hindi that designates the so-called morally upright and virtuous lady.
12. A Malayalam term used to refer to young Anglo-Indian and foreigner girls.
13. A member of a Malayalam-speaking community chiefly inhabiting the Indian state of Kerala.
14. By way of the 'male gaze', as articulated by the feminist film critic Laura Mulvey, the man emerges as the dominant power within the film fantasy, rendering the woman as the passive object for the active gaze of the male viewer. See Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16, no. 4 (1975): 6-18.
15. A term used in Hindu culture and traditions to refer to a married woman who is faithful and loyal to her husband.
16. See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
17. A Hindi term that refers to a manifestation of a deity or released soul in bodily form on earth. Here used in the sense of an unparalleled and God-like figure.
18. See J. Devika, "Cochin Creole and the perils of casteist cosmopolitanism: Reading Requiem for the Living," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. 51, Issue 1, 2016.
19. A polite Hindi title or form of address for a man. The Malayalam term *Sayippu* is but a derogatory deviant of *sahib*.
20. A dialect of Malayalam used by the people of Cochin in Kerala.
21. See Bhabha, Homi. "Of Mimicry and Man," *The Location of Culture*, Ed. Homi K. Bhabha, New York: Routledge, 1994.

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