

PORTRAYING OF KOCHI CITY IN MALAYALAM CINEMA



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PORTRAYING OF KOCHI CITY IN MALAYALAM CINEMA

Thesis submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Masters of Arts in Sociology**.

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I certify that the thesis entitled "PORTRAYING OF KOCHI CITY IN MALAYALAM CINEMA" is a record of bonafide research work carried out by ALEENA GEORGE, under my guidance and supervision. The thesis is worth submitting in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Sociology.



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DECLARATION

I, ALEENA GEORGE hereby declare that the thesis entitled "PORTRAYING OF KOCHI CITY IN MALAYALAM CINEMA" is a Bonafide record of independent research work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. LEELA P.U. I further declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship or other similar title.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Where is the cinema? It is all around you outside, all over the city, that marvellous, continuous performance of the film scenarios”

- Baudrillard

Cinema is a powerful medium that replicates society and shapes cultural narratives. Cinema often referred to as the “silver screen”, has been a powerful medium of both entertainment and influence since its inception. Beyond the realm of entertainment, it has significantly impacted society, inspiring change and shaping culture in profound ways. Cinema is one such discovery where humans have always been discovering different ways of recreation. From a sociological perspective, cinema can be understood as both a mirror and a moulder of society. The history of film can be traced back to the late 19th century, with the invention of 'magic lantern' optical toys such as the Phenakistoscope and the Zoetrope, which presented short, repetitive animations exploiting the eye's persistence of vision. Coleman Sellers modified the Zoetrope, replacing its hand-drawn images with photographs, creating the Kinetoscope in 1861. Henry Renno Heyl then projected a series of Kinetoscope photographs, using his Phasmatrope device, in 1870. Projection speeds for silent films were not standardised. The first film the Lumiere projected was *La Sortie Des Usines Lumiere A Lyon*, in Paris at the very end of 1895. Innovations like sound recording, sophisticated cameras, editing techniques, exhibition patterns, production styles and narrative methods made cinema more impressive and attractive. The earlier history of cinema can be divided into the ‘Silent Era’ and the ‘Era of Talkies’. The silent era refers to the period during which films were produced without sound due to the absence of adequate technology. The power of the cinema during the silent era was the power of their stories. Talkies mean films with sound. Films of the 1890s were under a minute long and until 1927 motion pictures were produced without sound. Until 1927, motion pictures for films were produced without sound. This era is referred to as the silent era of film. In late 1927, Warners released ‘The Jazz Singer’, with the first synchronized dialogue (and singing) in a feature film. By the end of 1929, Hollywood was almost all-talkie, with several competing sound systems (soon to be standardised). (*Hunt, n.d.*)

Early Indian cinema in the 1920s was founded on specific genres, such as mythological or devotional films. This trend was visible not only in the silent era, it continued in the talkie era.

Nallathangal in Tamil, *Bhaltha Prahalitha* in Malayalam and other languages, *Keechakavadham* in Tamil etc. are good examples. The sum and substance of the mythological theme is the fight between good and evil, and the importance of sacrifice in the name of truth. The retelling of stories known through an oral tradition was an important element in the success of the mythological films: The Ram Leela (a celebration and – a re-enactment of the exploits and adventures of Ram) and *The Ras Leela* (episodes from Krishna's life) are said to be of particular influence in Indian cinema. Such reconfirmation has always been an element of Indian culture. P.K. Nair, one of India's leading film historians, believes that D.G.Phalke chose mythology for the cinema not only because it was an easy means of communicating to the largest number of people, but also because Phalke saw mythological stories as a way of evoking patriotic feelings in the Indian Nation at a time when the country was a British colony. By showing Lord Krishna overcoming the demon snake Kamsa in his 1919 film *Kaliya Mardhanam*, Phalke showed that it was possible to fight the powerful and challenge the imperialism that had plundered the whole Nation in the same way the demon snake had poisoned the sacred river. Over some time, cinema evolved as a transformative power in shaping societal attitudes and fostering modernization. Films catalyze social change by challenging traditional norms and encouraging progressive thinking on topics such as work, gender roles, religion, customs, and community dynamics. By representing diverse regions and their people, films promote empathy and mutual understanding. Additionally, they serve as an educational tool, dispelling superstitions and encouraging scientific temper and rational thought. (DAV University. (n.d.).

Malayalam Cinema

Malayalam cinema, also known as Mollywood is the film industry in the Indian state of Kerala. Malayalam cinema has always been a significant part of the Indian film industry. The actors, media, and movie reviewers around the nation say that Malayalam cinema has always been popular for its unique way of storylines, narrations, acting, techniques etc. Malayalam cinema has always been noticeable nationally and internationally. The industry began in the 20th Century. When it comes to the historical background the first Malayalam film was *Vigathakumaran* a silent film directed and produced by JC Daniel who is also known as the father of Malayalam Cinema. The first Talkie in Malayalam cinema was *Balan* which was released in 1938 and was directed by S Nottani. The growth happened over decades; the Malayalam industry evolved over the period. The

progress of Malayalam cinema has always been appreciable. The 1970s and 1990s were considered the golden period of the Malayalam Film Industry. With movies that have portrayed social and political themes, reflecting socio-economic changes in Kerala. Both commercial success and complex movies happened during this period. Directors like M T Vasudevan, and Padmarajan mass Movie directors were popular makers during that time. In the early period Kodambakkam, Madras was the place that used to shoot even the Kerala locations. Later Industry relocation happened to Kochi because of the infrastructural development along with the development of Film infrastructure in Kerala like the establishment of film studios, local production companies, and other facilities. Because of all these, the city became a central hub for filmmaking in Kerala. This shift was driven by Kochi's vibrant cultural scene, diverse locale, and economic opportunities. Kochi's mix of modern and historical landscapes is the reason for making it an ideal location for filmmakers. From the crowded streets of Ernakulam to the serene backwaters, infrastructures like the Kochi Metro Train offer a variety of settings to enhance their storytelling. The diversity that comes from the culture of Portuguese, Dutch, Arabs, and Jews is mirrored in the narratives of Malayalam films by showcasing different social, cultural and political aspects. Rather than just being a setting, Kochi often functions as a character in Malayalam cinema. The city's cosmopolitan nature, with its mix of traditional and modern influences, allows for a diverse range of narratives. How people perceive movies has also evolved, to an active engagement of audiences on the content, technical aspects, and politics of the cinema. Rather than being a mere spectator, they perceived the movies from their reality of the world, influencing the interpretation of the narratives presented on screen. Thus, the social context of the audience, including their cultural background and prevailing societal conditions, influenced the kind of movies being produced.

Kodambakkam to Kochi

The transformation of Malayalam cinema from its initial reliance on Kodambakkam in Tamil Nadu to the rise of Kochi as its hub is a major shift in the cultural, infrastructural, and sociological context of Kerala. This essay discusses this shift exhaustively, examining the socio-political, technological, and cultural reasons behind the migration. The geographical shift in the base of Malayalam cinema production from Kodambakkam in Chennai to Kochi in Kerala is emblematic of a deeper cultural assertion, regional pride, and technological empowerment. The first Malayalam silent film, "Vigathakumaran" (1928), was produced by J.C. Daniel, followed by the

first talkie, "Balan" in 1938. However, due to the lack of infrastructure in Kerala, most early Malayalam films were produced in Kodambakkam, Chennai, which was already a thriving hub for South Indian cinema.

Kodambakkam offered everything the budding Malayalam industry lacked: studios, equipment, technical expertise, and a pool of trained professionals. During this era, the industry was dependent on Tamil Nadu not just for production facilities but also for distribution networks and audience reach. Kodambakkam was not just a logical necessity; it played a crucial role in shaping the early aesthetics and narratives of Malayalam cinema. Many Malayalam actors, directors, and technicians live and work in Chennai. The set location was shot in the studios of Kodambakkam and shown as Kochi. This era saw the emergence of legendary filmmakers such as Ramu Kariat, P. Bhaskaran, and A. Vincent, who bridged the gap between Malayalam content and Tamil infrastructure. However, the dependence on an external space also meant a certain dilution of regional authenticity. Despite this, Malayalam films maintained their distinctive storytelling style, often rooted in the social realities of Kerala. Post-1980s, Kerala witnessed urban development, especially in cities like Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi. The creation of Chitranjali Studio in Thiruvananthapuram and the emergence of private studios and post-production houses in Kochi gave filmmakers local alternatives. During these periods, Kochi did not experience a complete transformation as we see today. However, films like "Gandhi Nagar 2nd Street," "Sanmanassullavarkku Samadhanam," and "Rajavinte Makan" have portrayed the city and its residential areas, with particular attention to notable locations such as Kochi's flats and Bolgatty Palace. These films reflect a depiction of Kochi before it evolves into its modern form for cinematic purposes. At that time, however, Thiruvananthapuram served as the primary hub for shooting and technical work in Malayalam cinema. During these periods, Kochi did not undergo a complete transformation as we witness today. Instead, it retained much of its historical charm alongside emerging modernity. Notable films such as "*Gandhi Nagar 2nd Street*," "*Sanmanassullavarkku Samadhanam*," and "*Rajavinte Makan*" captured this essence by vividly portraying the city's residential neighbourhoods and landmarks. These films featured iconic locations, including Kochi's unique flats and the picturesque Bolgatty Palace, serving as representations of the city before it evolved into its contemporary form. Through these cinematic experiences, audiences could glimpse the Kochi of the past, showcasing its rich culture and

heritage. During this same era, Thiruvananthapuram emerged as the epicentre of Malayalam cinema, functioning as the main hub for film shooting and various technical operations. The capital was bustling with filmmakers, actors, and technicians, making it the heartbeat of the industry. As a result, filmmakers often preferred Thiruvananthapuram for their projects while Kochi gradually started to reveal its potential as a vibrant cinematic backdrop. The 1980s and 1990s are often considered the golden era of Malayalam cinema, with auteurs like Padmarajan, Bharathan, and K.G. George creating critically acclaimed films. However, the real infrastructural shift began in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

In Malayalam cinema, the city of Kochi, in Ernakulam District of Kerala, India, has emerged as a recurrent setting that represents multiple dimensions, crime and commerce, modernity and tradition, struggle and aspiration. From the bustling streets of Mattancherry and Fort Kochi to the high-rises of Marine Drive, Kochi's cinematic portrayal has advanced over the decades, offering insights into Kerala's socio-economic transformations. The trade by sea route has been a major factor in the growth of Kochi as a town. This city has created this identity over periods, which can be traced back to its historical connections with foreign countries through trade. The trade connections with Arabian countries, China and Europe, emerging as a port city since the 14th century, its strategic location on the Arabian Sea made it a vital trade hub for spices, especially black pepper, and cardamom. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to establish a settlement in Kochi during the 1503s. Later Dutch and British came to Kochi during the period of 17th and 19th centuries and this has made the melting pot of varied cultures. This multicultural heritage is also been manifested in its architecture, culture, and trends. Dutch palace, St. Francis Church and Jewish Synagogue in the Western part of Kochi are examples of that.

Kochi is a metropolitan city, capital of Industrial, Commercial and finance, which has its major contribution to Kerala's Major infrastructure. Now Modern Kochi continues as a cultural, economic and social powerhouse in Kerala. in Ernakulam District of Kerala, India Even today port called Cochin Shipyard which is the shipbuilding and maintenance facility in our country plays a major role in the reach of the economy in Kerala. The Info Park and Smart City being the major IT parks in Kochi, offer job opportunities to people across the world. The natural landscape of Kochi has also attracted the Tourists. Backwaters, Beaches, and Cultural festivals like India's First Art Biennale, and the Kochi Muziris Biennale since 2012 are among those festivals which attract

both native and international artists and tourists. In Ernakulam District of Kerala, India. The cuisine of Kochi reflects its multicultural heritage, with a mix of traditional Kerala dishes and influences from its colonial past. The city is a unique blend of historical significance, cultural diversity, economic vitality, and natural beauty which also makes Kochi a fascinating city. Its ability to harmoniously blend the old with the new while maintaining its cultural heritage makes it a vibrant and dynamic urban Centre. As Kochi continues to grow and evolve it remains a testament to Kerala's rich history and progressive future.

Kochi has been a prominent setting in Malayalam cinema, often portrayed as a microcosm of Kerala's urbanization, migration, and socio-political transformations. In technical terms, Cinema can be defined as the art of motion-picture photography. It's an experience of joy and wonder and in the sequels of entertainment, it gives way to thought, trial and criticism. Cinema is not merely a reflection of society; it actively shapes cultural narratives, identities, and urban imaginaries. In Malayalam cinema, the city of Kochi has emerged as a significant spatial and symbolic entity, evolving from a historical trading hub to a modern metropolis that embodies Kerala's social, economic, and cultural transformations.

The depiction of Kochi in Malayalam cinema has undergone a significant transformation over the years. Initially, films like "Thuramugham," released in 1976, showcased the city's aesthetic scenic beauty, highlighting its picturesque landscapes and rich cultural heritage. However, this portrayal shifted dramatically with the emergence of the 'Mattanchery gang,' a collective of filmmakers, actors, and technicians primarily active in Fort Kochi, Mattancherry, and the western part of Kochi. Prominent figures in this group include Amal Neerad, Vinay Fort, Soubin Shahir, and Aashiq Abu, all of whom have played pivotal roles in reshaping the narrative of Malayalam cinema. Their works often delve into the darker, more complex aspects of life in Kochi, presenting a stark contrast to the earlier idyllic representations. They portrayed the Examples like *Big B*, *Parava*, and *Bheeshma Parvam*. This evolution reflects not only the changing dynamics of the city itself but also the broader trends in cinema, where social realities and gritty narratives take centre stage. As these filmmakers critically analyze and interpret various facets of Malayalam cinema, their influence has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of Kochi, moving beyond mere aesthetic appreciation to a deeper exploration of the city's challenges and triumphs. This progression

underscores the power of cinema as a medium for storytelling and cultural reflection, capturing the essence of a place through its evolving identity.

The background of this study highlights cinema as a potent medium of mass communication that has always been intrinsically connected to society. Since its inception, the film has not only served to entertain but has also represented, shaped, and influenced social institutions, cultural norms, and collective consciousness.

Cinema, sociologically examined, can be understood concerning its functions in socialization, representation, ideology, and cultural change. Cinema has a role as a tool of socialization, representation and social identity, as an ideological apparatus, a cultural transformation. From a sociological point of view, cinema is more than just entertainment it's a reflection of societal values, a tool for shaping ideologies, and a tool for social change. Whether reinforcing existing norms or challenging oppressive structures, the film plays a crucial role in influencing the way we perceive the world. As society evolves, so too does cinema, continuously adapting to the cultural and political landscapes of its time. While connecting cinema with cities in Malayalam cinema has long been known for its deep-rooted storytelling and realistic portrayal of Kerala's diverse landscapes, cultures, and social dynamics. Among many cities depicted in Malayalam cinema Kochi holds a special place. As Kerala's commercial and cultural hub, Kochi has served as the backdrop for numerous films, shaping narratives that explore themes of numerous films shaping narratives that explore themes of urban life, crime, nostalgia and socio-economic transformations. The connection between Malayalam cinema and Kochi is evident in the way the city has been represented across different genres and periods. This thesis is to sociologically evaluate how Kochi City has been portrayed in Malayalam cinema over generations. To analyse the changing representation of Kochi City in Malayalam Cinema. To analyze whether the portrayal of Kochi reflects the city's sociological changes and cultural shifts. Also to examine the portrayal of Kochi city in urban enclaves and community areas in Malayalam cinema.

The need and significance of studying the portrayal of Kochi in Malayalam cinema lies in the fact that Kochi, often referred to as the Queen of the Arabian Sea, serves as a vibrant cultural and economic hub in Kerala. Its rich history, influenced by colonialism and a diverse population, has established it as a focal point in Malayalam cinema. Analyzing how Kochi is depicted in these films is essential for several reasons, including cultural representation, urban studies, socio-

economic insights, and cinematic evolution. Investigating Kochi's portrayal in Malayalam cinema is not merely an academic exercise but a journey into understanding the interplay between the city's identity and its cinematic representations. Such a study provides valuable insights into cultural narratives, social changes, and the art of filmmaking, making it a relevant area of research in both sociological and cinematic disciplines.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pramod L S & Remyasree (2023) in their article called *‘Kochi in Making: Polyphonic Articulations of Space and Subjectivities in Contemporary Malayalam Cinema’* is about a shift that happened in Malayalam cinema that shows how the urban environment is portrayed in recent narratives. They also mentioned the cinematic devices and stylistic tools used to achieve narratives in recent times. Cinema is a deeply influenced platform that defines a place by showing a geographical rhythm and spatial dynamics. From old to modern forms of art, lifestyles in cities, and their impact on human life are the major themes when it comes to portraying the city. Through cinematography, filming in actual locations and editing reflects the city's spatial dynamics, helping the audience get deeper into the live spaces. The writer says “I contend that a seemingly distinct transformation happened in this arena, where the articulations of the city evolved from a monstrous and formidable presence to a multifaceted domain that provides possibilities for polyphonic expressions.”

During the late 1960s to 1970s, Kochi was portrayed as a city for migration where characters migrated looking for better employment opportunities. The city is shown as a space of violence and various criminal activities. Films during this time narrated a specific fashion in the case of locations like ports, factories and storylines this was a symbolic relationship between cities in shaping urban narratives. Through narratives, there was a separation between urban and rural space which shows urban spaces as a crime and polluted space and rural area as a place of innocence and purity. Films like *Thuramugham* in 1979 & *Adiyozhukkukal* in 1989 portray port and city as symbols of urban structure. During the period of 1980s films were focused on gangsters and violent exteriors even the main central actor shows up as a grey-shade villain. In these Kochi and Trivandrum were city shows. But in the late 1980s, the Bollywood-influenced urban backdrop of criminal activities was shown where the streets and city of Bombay. Later on, the rural suburbs were also become part of portraying Kochi. Over the period changes through development, infrastructure, and culture also started acting. Including suburban regions on the big screen was a major example. Kochi is now showing as a city to live and for employment.

Anandu Suresh (2022) in an article *“Kochi and Malayalam cinema: An eternal love story that is ageing like fine wine”* comes in The Indian Express newspaper. This is about the relocation that has taken place in Malayalam cinema over a while. In this article writer says that the base of Malayalam cinema was at Kodambakkam, Madras. In early times Kodambakkam was shown as

Kochi a place of job opportunities. Later the port in Kochi became home and location for later movies. Nature and beauty become a reason for shooting movies. Just like Tamil actors and Technicians many Malayalam actors' permanent residences were in Chennai. Now, a few years ago, Kochi became the hub of Malayalam Cinema, when it comes to shooting every technical work where now in Kochi. The evolution from rural settings to urban Kochi, the city's diversity and how it impacts visual media. A complete shift happened in this field.

In an **article in 2017 “Kochi takes centerstage in Mollywood”** comes in the Times Entertainment says that young filmmakers are mostly attracted to and portray the city, its nightlife, malls and cafes and the unique culture of Fort Kochi and Mattancherry. Earlier Trivandrum and its slang were the favourites but now the focus has shifted to Kochi. In this article, they say the movies ‘Anwar’ a movie Directed by Amal Neerad, Chappa Kurish directed by Sameer Thahir, and City of God directed by Ashiq Abu are some among which Kochi as the backdrop. Kochi is fast becoming the centre of the state beyond any doubts of youth capitals. Industry experts say that some of the Contemporary directors Ashiq Abu, Sameer Thahir, Rajeev Ravi and Amal Neerad are Kochi-lived people who know and can portray Kochi in such an authentic way as they know. Also says that many movies have included such local culture and slang, especially referring to Malabar regions.

Anasooya A V in an article titled *“Walking with Films in the City”* is about the Urban centre of Kochi in various movies and representations of locations and socio-cultural milieu of Kochi. Kochi has a rich cultural history which Malayalam cinema has only started to explore. The maze-like structure of its streets is often used by movies, not only action-packed movies but also simple comedy-drama films with running scenes. Whenever you visit a place, you can see gatherings of men in front of the tea shop conversing politics for hours, families trying to spend quality time, and groups of friends hanging around taking photos; their reason for travelling varies. Each group tends to stick with those around them, trying to present themselves in a particular manner influenced by the cinema while the people influence the latter. Young people usually take photos at the sites where famous movies have been shot.

The house used for Big B presently acts as a kind of tourist spot where people would stand and take photos. The house is not maintained; however, it has nails on the handrails, possibly to avoid trespassers. This article mentioned the house used for Big B, beachside showing Chinese nets are

the common visuals in movies. The author enters the local sites of Fort Kochi and Mattancherry which are usually showcased in movies. Refers to the movie Big B This Gangster movie acted as a trendsetter in Malayalam cinema and used the rich cultural history of Kochi to its benefit. The movie 'Parava' the movie is confined to the Muslim area of Mattancherry. The movie deals with the competition of pigeon flying and the local disputes. The patterns of houses, windows, common people, and their close-ups are used in the movie to illustrate the diversity of the place. The author says 'I felt like they are so used to tourists in such a way that each and everyone knows the direction of places, where we are heading to. They were walking mental maps or in other words, people are walking stories.' Lastly, she mentions the movie 'Valiya Perunnal'. This movie reveals the minute nuances of Mattancherry more largely. The Gujarati and Cutchi communities are rarely depicted in Malayalam cinema. The character Hanumanth Shenoy played by Soubin Shahir talks to his mother in Konkani. The Gujarati and Cutchi communities are rarely depicted in Malayalam cinema. The character Hanumanth Shenoy played by Soubin Shahir talks to his mother in Konkani. She says that the versatility of the site makes it a popular site to make movies.

Sertac Timur Demir in an article called "*The City on Screen: A Methodological Approach on Cinematic City Studies*" says that cinematic representation of cities goes beyond visual documentation. It fictionalizes urban spaces, shaping how audiences perceive and engage with them. Also argues about how cinema captures the socio-political and cultural of city life, reflecting its complexities, contradictions and transformations. The article says that film provides an external perspective on urban environments, offering insights that everyday inhabitants may overlook. In a visually saturated world, cinema serves as an "external eye", revealing hidden aspects of urban spaces, critiquing and offering new ways of seeing. The study also engages with methodological debates on whether films reflect urban reality or reconstruct it through cinematic imagination.

Ultimately connecting this article with our project, we get the decisive role of cinema in shaping urban consciousness, arguing that analyzing the portrayal of cities on screen is essential for understanding both cinematic and urban evolution. This gives an idea of the intricate relationship between cinema and the city, they mutually shape and develop one another.

Swapna Gopinath in an article paper called "*Narrativising Urban Spaces and the Discourse of Modernity in Malayalam Cinema*" in part of discussing urban spaces in Malayalam cinema writer says that Malayalam cinema initially portrayed cities as corrupting forces, luring naïve villagers

into morally ambiguous worlds. The urban-rural divide was a recurring theme, especially in films that emphasized hyper-masculine heroism and crime narratives. Cities were shown as spaces of violence, consumerism, and moral decay, in contrast to the purity of rural life. However, with globalization, Malayalam cinema transformed. Urban landscapes became central to storytelling, with filmmakers using cities to explore themes of alienation, identity crises, and class struggles. Films like *Annayum Rasoolum* (2013) and *Angamaly Diaries* (2017) established cityscapes as more than mere settings—they became characters in themselves, shaping the protagonists' journeys. Urban spaces in Malayalam cinema have evolved from mere backdrops to active narrative elements. As cities become central to storytelling, they reflect the aspirations, anxieties, and realities of contemporary Malayali society. This shift underscores the importance of cinema in documenting the changing urban experience in a rapidly globalizing world.

In an **article of 2024**, *“Kochi grows as a cinematic haven as Malayalam Films ‘bid farewell’ to Madras and Kodambakkam”* in an online page of OnManorama. In this article, it talks about the shift in the shooting hub of Malayalam cinema to Kochi from Madras and Kodambakkam. This transition has positioned Kochi as a burgeoning hub for Malayalam Cinema, attracting filmmakers, actors and technicians to the city. Kochi's diverse locales, ranging from urban landscapes to scenic backwaters, offer filmmakers a variety of settings that enhance storytelling. The city's infrastructure and resources have further supported this cinematic evolution, leading to an increase in film productions and related activities in the region. This relocation signifies more than just a change in geography; it reflects the industry's adaptation to new environments and the dynamic nature of Malayalam cinema. As Kochi continues to grow as a cinematic haven, it symbolizes the industry's resilience and its pursuit of fresh narratives and opportunities. In this article, we also came to understand before Kochi it was Kozhikode that retained a sense of tradition of an obstinate family patriarchy unwilling to let go of the old legacy of its ancestral tharavadu

Joe Peach in the article *“City and the Urban Space”* explores how films serve as intricate mosaics reflecting the socio-cultural, economic, and geographical nuances of urban environments. By capturing the interplay between central and peripheral areas, as well as the dynamics between governing bodies and the governed, cinema offers a unique lens into the multifaceted nature of cities. Through the narratives of protagonists and the depiction of urban backdrops, films subtly encapsulate public policies, institutional preferences, and societal norms of their time. This

cinematic portrayal provides a valuable resource for analyzing the evolution of urban policies, particularly in transportation, by showcasing prevalent modes of transit and usage patterns across different eras. Such visual documentation allows for a deeper understanding of how transportation policies have influenced travel behaviours, offering insights that traditional written sources might overlook.

Shabin K in the research project “*Representation of Colonies in Contemporary Malayalam Films*” analyses how contemporary Malayalam cinema depicts colonies, emphasizing the ways film narratives create and reinforce stereotypes about marginalized groups. Utilizing theories from thinkers like Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci, the study investigates how cinematic discourse sustains the dominance of Savarna Hindu culture by portraying Dalits, Muslims, and other lower-class populations as criminals, thugs, or societal outcasts. Through a content analysis of films such as *Best Actor*, *Chotta Mumbai*, and *Anwar*, the research reveals a consistent pattern in which colonies are represented as hubs of violence, vice, and lawlessness, frequently contrasted with idealized images of upper-caste Hindu areas. The study contends that these portrayals are in line with broader ideological frameworks that normalize oppression and exclusion. It effectively places Malayalam cinema within the wider global context of media misrepresentation, drawing comparisons with racial stereotypes in Hollywood. The exploration of Orientalism and cultural hegemony enriches the analysis, making it a significant contribution to media and cultural studies. Nevertheless, including a broader selection of films could enhance the understanding of the topic. Overall, the study presents a strong critique of cinematic prejudices and their influence on social perceptions.

Sreedevi P Aravind in her article “*Kochi as Cinematic City: A Study in Contemporary Malayalam Cinema*” says that cinema is not merely a way of narrating events. Kerala is not yet an urbanized society, even though the process of Urbanization. The article talks about the cinematic landscape such as the camera always looking at the villages in a nostalgic mood. The beauty of the village being represented through the lens of a camera is imaginary to a great extent. The author views Kochi as a cinematic City. Kochi is being rapidly projected as an imaginary space that suits the concept of City which is shaped through cinematic images. Is becoming a Cinematic landscape so Kochi is a partner spectacle shoot overshoots the same landscape different spaces are being generated through the camera. This space accomplishes a new development as it

is changing as a film City. Over the period the changes happened and Kochi was a space in cinema but still shows as an underworld or a crime-filled city that people are scared of. While critically reaching this we understand that the author mostly states about the movies till 2013 but later movies like *Kumbalangi Nights* are examples of soft and mild movies that create a soothing impact on viewers. Yes in this article she said that movie like *Big B*, and *Chotta Mumbai* creates an impact on the criminal city. Kochi becoming a city spectacle, where people come to see and be seen here shopping remains a social experience saying as entertainment reflects and novel attitude of the people which is being widely promoted by the tourism industry Kochi has become a tourist destination even for Kerala that the local tourism wants to see the city that they are already acquainted with through the film images entertainment industry flourish and events like Kochin carnival, Grand Kerala Shopping Festival, Kochi Muziris Biennale etc attempt to make Kochi fitting into an image of an international city, in fact, coaches continuously being reincarnated in the cinematic image.

Christeena Romeo "*Rediscovering the Dalit: A Subaltern Reading of Kammattipadam*," presents a critical analysis of the Malayalam film *Kammattipadam* (2016) directed by Rajeev Ravi. The study explores how the film deviates from mainstream Malayalam cinema by portraying the lives of Dalits with authenticity and realism. It highlights the film's subaltern perspective, illustrating the oppression and marginalization of Dalits in Kochi's urbanization process. One of the key arguments in the document is that *Kammattipadam* breaks away from the conventional portrayal of gangster films. Instead of glamorizing thug life, the movie presents a socio-political commentary on how Dalits were manipulated into criminal activities by upper-caste land mafias. The protagonist Krishnan, who belongs to an upper-caste background, manages to escape the cycle of violence, whereas his Dalit friends, Ganga and Balan, remain trapped in it. This contrast underscores the social realities where Dalits often lack alternative opportunities for upward mobility. The article also discusses the aesthetic choices in the film, particularly how it challenges the conventional notions of Malayali beauty by highlighting dark-skinned actors in prominent roles. The director, Rajeev Ravi, deliberately portrays the raw and rugged realities of Dalit life, dismantling the typical upper-caste dominance in Malayalam cinema. The document references historical revisionism and argues that *Kammattipadam* is not just a gangster film but a larger commentary on caste-based oppression and the consequences of unchecked urbanization. It concludes that *Kammattipadam* serves as a significant departure from mainstream Malayalam

cinema by offering a voice to the Dalit community and shedding light on their struggles. It critiques the systemic exploitation of marginalized groups, making it a landmark film in the discourse on caste and social justice in Indian cinema.

CHAPTER- 3

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is described as a science of analysis of how research is done systematically. It is a method of analytically explaining the research problem. It is a way to systematically solve the research problem by logically adapting various steps. It helps to identify select and analyse information about the specific topic. This involves a deeper understanding of the various methods of research.

Statement of the Problem

Cinema has always been an attractive medium for everyone around the world. The portraying way is the major highlight. The film provides a window into different cultures, traditions and lifestyles. Showcasing diverse cinema helps people gain a broader understanding of the world. Historical films educate audiences about significant events and figures, contributing to a deeper understanding of history. More than the cultural and historical spreading context it has an empathetic and compassionate side. Which portrays they can't happen moments into a happening one will provide an in-depth connection with the audience. By telling compelling human stories, cinema fosters empathy. Audiences often find themselves emotionally connected to characters and situations. Malayalam cinema is one among those which always have a connecting thread with audiences. Lately, contemporary works have such in-depth threads.

Kochi often referred to as the 'Queen of the Arabian Sea' a vibrant city that has a rich cultural heritage, a diverse population and a significant historical background. Over the years Malayalam cinema has frequently depicted Kochi, offering various representations of the city that reflect its complex socio-cultural fabric. This research aims to address the gap by exploring the visual, narrative, and thematic portrayals of Kochi in selected Malayalam movies. This is an attempt to sociologically analyse How such above is portrayed in Malayalam cinema about Kochi City since 1950s. This study seeks to analyse the multifaceted dimensions of Kochi as depicted in films, considering factors such as historical contexts such as colonialization and later, urbanization, cultural identity, and socio-economic diversity. By getting into the cinematic portrayal of Kochi, this research hopes to uncover underlying patterns, themes and stereotypes that shape the city's image in public. This can also contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of cinema in representing urban spaces and its impact on cultural and social perceptions.

Objectives

- General Objective
 - To explore and analyze the multifaceted portrayal of Kochi City in Malayalam Cinema.
- Specific Objectives
 - To analyze the changing representation of Kochi city in Malayalam Cinema
 - To analyse whether the portrayal of Kochi reflects the city's sociological changes and cultural shifts.
 - To examine the portrayal of Kochi city in Urban enclave and Community Areas in Malayalam cinema.
 - To analyse how characters associated with Kochi are depicted, focusing on stereotypes, diversity, and socio-economic background.
- Hypothesis
 - The portrayal of Kochi city has changed from colonialisaton to Urbanization.

Defining the research: Theoretical & Operational

➤ Kochi City

- Theoretical definition

Kochi, also known as the Queen of the Arabian Sea, is a port city on the southwest coast of India that serves as a dynamic cultural and economic hub. Theoretically, Kochi can be defined as a cosmopolitan urban space shaped by centuries of maritime trade, colonial influence, and socio-economic transformations. It embodies the characteristics of a global city by integrating diverse cultural influences—from Portuguese and Dutch colonial legacies to traditional Keralite heritage—into a contemporary urban identity. The city's spatial organization and economy are deeply influenced by its geographical positioning as a natural harbour and its role as a centre for trade, tourism, and IT-driven economic activities.

- Operational Definition

This research focuses on specific, measurable aspects that can be systematically analyzed, such as geographical boundaries with prominent use of Kochi landmarks and locations like Fort Kochi, Mattanchery, Ernakulam, Marine Drive, and Community areas, storylines and Characters strongly associated from 1950 to contemporary portrayals of Kochi. Visual elements like buildings, streets, markets, Use of Natural settings like backwaters, beaches and parks. Historical sites and cultural landmarks. Also includes Narrative Analysis, Character Representation, and Cinematic Techniques. All above is on the border of Citys sociological changes and cultural shifts.

- Malayalam Cinema

- Theoretical Definition

Malayalam Cinema often referred to as Mollywood is the segment of Indian Cinema dedicated to the producing of motion pictures in the Malayalam Language. a vital part of Kerala's cultural and linguistic identity. Which became popular by way of storytelling, character portrayals, realistic portrayal of society etc. The industry evolved since the 20th Century. Theoretical studies of Malayalam Cinema also explore its unique cinematic techniques.

- Operational Definition

Selecting Malayalam Cinema that prominently features Kochi city as a significant part of their story or setting since the 1950s. Genres such as drama, thriller, romance and social commentary have been commercially successful, critically acclaimed or both. Which have key visual elements with Iconic landmarks, urban-rural landscapes, and historical and cultural monuments. Also includes Narrative analysis, Character analysis and cinematic techniques of Kochi city in Malayalam Cinema.

Variables

- Independent Variable

An Independent Variable is the factor that is being manipulated in an experiemet. In a research study, independent variables affect or influence dependent variables and cause them to change.

Independent Variables taken for analysis of the data were Malayalam cinema, Location, and Religion.

The Variable Malayalam cinema examines how the film industry in Kerala represents Kochi across different time periods, genres and narrative structures. It includes analyzing how films construct the city's image, whether as a cultural hub, an underworld hotspot or a blend of tradition and modernity. The study also investigates the role of filmmakers, actors and scriptwriters in shaping cinematic perceptions of Kochi. The location factor explores the geographical and spatial representation of Kochi in films. It focuses on how different areas within the city such as Fort Kochi, Mattanchery, Marine Drive, and the urban suburbs are depicted. The study also considers whether these locations are shown realistically or exaggeratedly and how these portrayals influence public perception of the city. The last variable religion looks at how different religious communities in Kochi particularly Hindus, Muslims, and Christians are represented in Malayalam cinema. It analyses whether films perpetuate stereotypes or offer a more nuanced depiction of religious coexistence, cultural interactions and communal tensions. By analyzing these three independent variables, the research aims to understand the deeper socio-political implications of Kochi's cinematic representation and its impact on audience perceptions.

- Dependent Variable

A dependent variable represents a quantity whose value depends on the independent variable and how it changed. It is influenced by the independent variable under various circumstances. The dependent variable of this study is Portrayal of Kochi City. Focusing on the various aspects such as its physical landscape, cultural representations, socio-economic divisions and the way its people are depicted in different narratives. This analysis included examining how Kochi urban spaces, colonial heritage and diverse communities are visually and thematically constructed in films. This analysis examined how Kochi's urban spaces, colonial history, and diverse communities are represented in films. It investigated recurring stereotypes of Kochi as a centre for crime and gang violence, often reinforcing social and class perceptions. The study also looked at how filmmakers use Kochi's geography—like its crowded streets and markets—to create specific moods, such as nostalgia or chaos. Additionally, it assessed the impact of caste, religion, and economy on how Kochi's marginalized communities are portrayed. By analysing these factors, the research aimed

to uncover the ideologies and narrative choices that influence the depiction of Kochi in Malayalam cinema.

Universe

The universe refers to the entire group or set of elements that the researchers is interested in studying. The Universe in this Study is Malayalam Movies. In this study, the universe refers to the entirety of Malayalam cinema, encompassing a diverse range of films produced within the industry. Specifically, this research focuses on the portrayal of Kochi city in Malayalam films, analyzing how filmmakers construct and represent its urban landscapes, social dynamics, and cultural identity. The study examines various cinematic depictions of Kochi, exploring how the city is framed through themes of crime, migration, economic disparity, communal interactions, and historical influences. By analyzing selected films, this research aims to understand whether Malayalam cinema reinforces stereotypes or offers nuanced perspectives on Kochi as a vibrant and evolving metropolis.

Research Design

The qualitative research design is well-suited for studying the portrayal of Kochi City in Malayalam cinema because it focuses on analyzing representations, themes, and cultural narratives rather than numerical data. Qualitative research is essential for this study as it enables an in-depth exploration of how Kochi is depicted in films, considering aspects like setting, character portrayal, cinematography, and storytelling. This method allows for textual and visual analysis of films to uncover patterns, biases, and ideological constructs that shape the city's on-screen image. Since cinema is a cultural product, its representation of Kochi is influenced by historical, social, and political contexts, which qualitative research helps to decode. By using content analysis, the study examines how Kochi is framed—whether as a crime hub, a cosmopolitan space, or a nostalgic landscape—and how these portrayals influence public perception. Additionally, qualitative research helps in understanding audience reception, and the socio-political undertones embedded in these films. Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on measurable aspects like box-office success or audience demographics, qualitative analysis delves into the symbolism, stereotypes, and power dynamics within film narratives. The study also applies theories like Foucault's discourse analysis and Gramsci's hegemony to critically assess how Malayalam cinema constructs Kochi's

identity, reinforcing or challenging dominant narratives. By focusing on contemporary Malayalam films like *Big B*, *Kammattipaadam*, *Kumbalangi Nights* the research gains deeper insights into how Kochi's urban spaces, communities, and cultures are represented. This approach is crucial for addressing broader issues of marginalization, class struggles, and cultural hierarchies that influence how Kochi is portrayed. Thus, a qualitative method is most suitable, as it provides a holistic, interpretive, and context-sensitive understanding of the cinematic portrayal of Kochi, making it a critical contribution to film and cultural studies.

Sample & Sample Size

The sample in this research study is Malayalam movies released between the 1950s and to present that feature Kochi city prominently.

The sample size is 11 films featuring Kochi city in Malayalam cinema.

The Sample selected Films are: -

1. Newspaper Boy (1955)
2. Odayil Ninnu (1965)
3. Thuramugham (1979)
4. Gandhi Nagar 2nd Street (1986)
5. Aparan (1988)
6. Stop Violence (2002)
7. Big B (2007)
8. Chappa Kurish (2011)
9. Annayum Rasoolum (2013)
10. Kammattipaadam (2016)
11. Kumbalangi Nights (2019)

Tools of Data Collection

Content analysis and Visual analysis

Content Analysis: -

Content analysis is essential in researching the portrayal of Kochi City in Malayalam cinema as it systematically examines recurring themes, patterns, and cinematic elements that shape the city's representation. By analyzing themes and patterns, researchers can identify dominant narratives—whether Kochi is depicted as a space of crime, nostalgia, cultural hybridity, or urban chaos. Character development is crucial, as it reveals how Kochi's residents, particularly marginalized communities, are portrayed—whether as gangsters, outcasts, or cultural symbols. The plot and narrative structures help uncover how the city's geography and social dynamics influence storytelling, reflecting deeper ideological perspectives. Through this method, researchers can assess how filmmakers construct Kochi's identity, reinforcing or challenging stereotypes over time. Content analysis also enables a comparative study of films to track evolving representations, highlighting shifts in socio-political contexts. By systematically decoding visual and narrative choices, this approach uncovers underlying power structures, class dynamics, and historical influences shaping Kochi's cinematic image. Given the city's prominence in Malayalam cinema, understanding its representation through content analysis offers valuable insights into broader cultural discourses, media ideologies, and the intersection of space, identity, and storytelling in popular culture.

Visual Analysis: -

Visual analysis is essential in researching the portrayal of Kochi City in Malayalam cinema because it helps decode how filmmakers construct the city's identity through setting, cinematography, sound, and aesthetics. Setting and location, including landmarks, and urban and rural spaces, establish Kochi's cinematic geography, reinforcing its image as a historical, multicultural, or crime-infested city. Cinematography, through camera angles, lighting, and colour grading, shapes audience perception—low angles and dim lighting may depict the city as dangerous, while wide shots of Fort Kochi's colonial streets evoke nostalgia. Sound and music, from ambient street noises to background scores, add authenticity, with Arabic, Malayalam folk, or jazz tunes reinforcing cultural diversity. Costume and props reflect social hierarchies, contrasting traditional mundu-clad elders with modern, urban youth in Western attire, while symbols like fishing nets, Chinese lanterns, or mosques evoke regional specificity. These elements collectively shape the narrative, influencing how Kochi is imagined in mainstream consciousness—whether as a bustling trade hub, a cultural melting pot, or a backdrop for crime

dramas. By analyzing these cinematic techniques, researchers can uncover underlying socio-political messages, class dynamics, and historical biases embedded in the visual storytelling of Kochi in Malayalam cinema.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

AND INTERPRETATION

I. Changing representation of Kochi city in Malayalam Cinema

Newspaper Boy (1955) is one of the earliest Malayalam films to embrace realism in its storytelling and setting. Unlike the studio-based productions of its time, the film was shot in real locations, adding to its authenticity. The film's setting is crucial in highlighting the socio-economic struggles of the protagonist, Appu, and his family. The movie was shot in and around Aluva, a town near Kochi, where the director P. Ramadas and his team were based. *Newspaper Boy* presented a raw and unembellished look at urban poverty, social disparity, and the struggles of the working class. The film, set against the backdrop of a growing post-independence Kerala, showcases Kochi as a city of economic contrasts—where colonial-era buildings and modern aspirations coexist, yet the marginalized struggle to survive. Unlike the later gangster portrayals of Mattancherry and Fort Kochi in films like *Stop Violence* and *Chotta Mumbai*, *Newspaper Boy* focuses on the hardships of lower-class workers, especially children, emphasizing themes of resilience rather than crime or violence.

Aluva a town near Kochi at the end of Ernakulam, was an important economic and cultural centre in the 1950s most residences were quite small at that time. We can visibly analyse the changes that came over the years. In terms of urbanization, infrastructure developments, and socioeconomic improvement. Like in transportation Aluva has seen major improvements in transportation infrastructure. The Aluva Metro Station, part of the Kochi Metro, has enhanced connectivity between Aluva and other parts of Kochi. The metro has reduced traffic congestion and provided a faster, more efficient mode of transport. The development of new roads and bridges has improved connectivity within Aluva and to neighbouring regions. The construction of flyovers and the widening of roads have eased traffic flow. Aluva has embraced smart city initiatives, including the implementation of digital services, smart lighting, and e-governance platforms, to enhance urban living and administrative efficiency. There has been a surge in residential projects, including apartments and gated communities, catering to the growing population and demand for housing. The rise of commercial complexes, shopping malls, and office spaces has transformed Aluva into a bustling urban centre.

The movie, *Odayil Ninnu* is also another example of an early Malayalam movie that presents a strikingly different representation of Kochi city compared to its later cinematic portrayals. Kochi's cinematic representation has shifted from being a city of working-class resilience in *Odayil Ninnu*

to a hub of crime, high-class society and modern aspirations, reflecting changing socio-economic perspectives in Malayalam cinema. *Big B*, *Stop Violence*, and *Chappa Kurish* are examples of those changing representations. In *Odayil Ninnu*, Kochi is not a glamorous trade or commercial hub or a crime hotspot as often depicted in *Chappa Kurish*. Instead, it is portrayed as a city of struggle, where wealth and power remain concentrated in the hands of a few, while the poor remain invisible. The soundtrack includes ambient street sounds- cycle rickshaws creaking, vendors shouting, and temple bells ringing creating a sense of raw urban life. When it comes to *Chappa Kurish* the film showcases two distinct faces of Kochi—one of luxury and power, represented by Arjun's world of high-rise buildings, modern offices, and elite social circles, and the other of struggle and survival, embodied by Ansari's life in the crowded lower-class neighbourhoods of the city. This juxtaposition of spaces highlights the economic disparities within Kochi. Unlike earlier films like *Odayil Ninnu*, which portrayed Kochi as a place of working-class resilience, *Chappa Kurishu* presents a more contemporary take—one where corporate greed, class divide, and social mobility define the city's landscape. The film critiques capitalist excess and social injustice, making Kochi not just a backdrop but an active player in the characters' fates.

Thuramukham offers a poignant exploration of human emotions set against the socio-economic backdrop of Cochin's port life. Throughout the movie, it showcases the port and harbour of Fort Kochi and Mattancherry. The film highlights the struggles of marginalized individuals striving for survival in a port city. Today, Kochi has evolved into a major commercial and industrial hub, attracting investments and fostering economic growth. Despite this progress, socio-economic disparities persist, with certain communities continuing to face challenges related to employment, housing, and access to essential services. This cultural diversity remains a defining characteristic of modern Kochi, celebrated through various cultural events and festivals. The city's rich heritage continues to influence its social fabric, contributing to its unique identity. Since the 1970s, Kochi has undergone significant urbanization, leading to infrastructural advancements and an expanded metropolitan area. While these developments have spurred economic opportunities, they have also introduced challenges such as environmental concerns, traffic congestion, and the need for sustainable urban planning.

In the movie *Gandhi Nagar* 2nd street in the movie Kochi is portrayed with a charming and authentic lens, offering a glimpse into the city's middle-class residential life during the 1980s. The

film captures the essence of a bustling yet close-knit community, showcasing Kochi's suburban landscape rather than its urban or commercial aspects. A major representation of Kochi city was changed with this community living area portrayal in cinema. Gandhi Nagar is a residential area located in Kochi city Near Kadavanthra a suburb near Kochi. The residential areas have specific categories of living based on their economic class. While connecting with the objectives when we analyze the changing representation of Kochi the hustle and bustle of the current city is might less in the film. When analysing the portrayal of Kochi city in Urban enclave and Community areas in this film we get the idea that the people who reside there are mid-low-class people. Even the superiority of this economic class is there the colony consists of families who share a strong sense of camaraderie. Neighbours are deeply involved in each other's lives, reflecting the communal living culture of the time. The film highlights the warmth of community interactions through shared spaces like courtyards, verandas, and front yards where residents frequently meet, gossip, and support one another. Characters embody traditional values while adapting to emerging urban influences, such as the aspirations for better jobs and education. Regarding the physical and social architecture, the homes are modest and reflect typical Kerala architecture of the 1980s, with tiled roofs and small gardens. The film primarily uses these homes as intimate settings for character interactions. The residents include families with varying backgrounds, representing a cross-section of Kochi's middle-class population.

In the movie *Aparan 1988*, the protagonist's journey takes him to Kochi, a bustling city where he secures employment. The urban landscape of Kochi serves as a backdrop for significant developments in the plot, reflecting the contrast between his tranquil hometown and the challenges of city life. In the movie, Kochi is shown as a bustling impersonal city where the protagonist came for occupation. The crowded streets and chaotic surroundings are the major scenes in the movie. From this, we can understand that Kochi is shown as a city of opportunities, where mostly people from suburbs and rural areas especially come for work. In the film, it was not modernized and had great infrastructure but today's Kochi is Kerala's commercial capital, with skyscrapers, metro services, IT parks, and modern residential complexes replacing many of the older, traditional spaces shown in *Aparan*. Today, the city has become a thriving, interconnected urban space with new opportunities and challenges. However, the film's core theme—how urban anonymity can alter one's fate—remains relevant in different ways, as the modern world with digital identities and misinformation.

Stop Violence, *Big B* are two movies that show the criminal hub of Kochi. The characters Saathan in *Stop Violence* and Bilal in *Big B* are the two crucial characters focused on crime, masculinity and the Kochi depicted are urban criminal chaos. They represent the different but similar phases of Kochi has been portrayed. *Stop Violence* shows a grittier, raw, dark, chaotic version of the city's underworld, with dimly lit streets, crowded markets and underdeveloped localities. *Big B* shows a stylish, Western-influenced cinematic aesthetic to Kochi's crime world. *Big B* highlights the developing urbanization, high-rise buildings, luxury cars and affluent lifestyles. In *Stop Violence* Kochi is gloomy, crime-infested, and middle and lower-class dominated, without giving a growing image of Kochi. The transformation of Kochi from an unplanned settlement to a bustling developing city is truly remarkable. The differences between the years 2002 and 2007 are particularly striking, showcasing an incredible evolution within just five years. The changes witnessed during this period are not only visible but also reflect a dynamic growth that has reshaped the landscape and character of the city.

Kammattipaadam movie was released during the period when Kochi was portrayed mostly as a middle-higher class region. But in this movie, Kochi was showcased as an underdeveloped location inside a developing city that too of a marginalized Dalit community. The location that took place in *Kammattipaadam* is a residential colony of lower-class people in the city who were mostly daily wage working class labourers. It shows the Kochi from glamour to grit. This film shows the real estate land mafia dealings that happen mostly in Kochi. This film shows the dark reality of people and society. Kumbalangi Nights beautifully captures the serene outskirts of Kochi, presenting it in a tranquil light. The film showcases the surreal, picturesque backwaters and lush greenery that characterize the region, while also exploring the struggles faced by the local fishing community in Kumbalangi. The contrast between the breathtaking natural beauty and the hardships of the fishermen enriches the narrative, offering viewers a deeper understanding of life in this enchanting locale.

In terms of representation, the "face of Kochi" in cinema has also evolved. Initially dominated by upper-class or idealized male protagonists, recent films have increasingly depicted a broader spectrum of characters—migrants, marginalized communities, women, and youth—reflecting the pluralistic and layered realities of Kochi's population. Characters portrayed by actors like Mammooty, Fahadh Fasil, Dulquer Salmaan, and Anna Ben, among others, have come to embody

different facets of Kochi's identity—from the rugged underbelly to the refined urbanscape. Over the years, the representation of Kochi in Malayalam cinema has undergone a significant transformation. Earlier films often portrayed Kochi through a lens of nostalgia, tradition, or crime-centric narratives, focusing on the city's colonial past, its ports, or underworld elements. However, in recent years, there has been a clear shift towards showcasing Kochi as a vibrant, cosmopolitan, and youthful urban space. This shift reflects the evolving social and cultural landscape of the city itself. The face of Kochi in contemporary cinema is increasingly embodied by young, educated, middle-class characters — often working in IT, startups, or creative industries. These individuals navigate modern relationships, urban struggles, and cultural hybridity, reflecting the lives of the new generation. Kochi is now often represented through sleek visuals of cafes, apartments, metro rides, and urban nightlife — making the city not just a backdrop, but an active character in the story. Thus, Kochi's cinematic representation has shifted from the margins of tradition and crime to the centre of modernity and aspiration, mirroring the city's dynamic growth and the changing face of its people.

II. The Portrayal of Kochi: Reflections of Sociological Changes and Cultural Shifts

In *Big B* (2007), directed by Amal Neerad, Kochi is portrayed as a living, breathing character that influences the narrative, shapes the characters, and symbolises the intersection of tradition and modernity. In terms of themes, Kochi in *Big B* is depicted as a city with urban crime, reflecting the darker side of rapid modernization. The narrative revolves around crime, family, and justice, positioning Kochi as a space where morality thrives. The film captures Kochi's cosmopolitan nature, showcasing various characters from various socio-economic backgrounds. From gangsters to law-abiding citizens, *Big B* explores the interplay between traditional values and modern conflicts, reflecting Kochi's dynamic societal structure. The film also contributes significantly to the portrayal of Kochi. The characters' costumes reflect their socio-economic backgrounds, from Bilal's rugged leather jacket to the antagonists' sharp suits. These visual cues add depth to their personalities and ties to Kochi.

Chappa Kurish film uses Kochi as a microcosm of socio-economic disparity, and its settings are integral to the narrative. Arjun's world is portrayed through sleek, glass-walled luxury apartments

symbolising wealth and detachment. These spaces, often adorned with minimalistic furniture and bathed in artificial light, underscore his isolation despite his affluence. In contrast, Ansari's environment comprises cramped, dimly lit rooms, bustling markets, and narrow alleys. These locations emphasize the claustrophobia of poverty and the struggle for survival. The supermarket where Ansari works is a significant space, representing the monotony and exploitation inherent in his daily life. Public spaces in Kochi, such as busy streets and crowded buses, are utilized to show the intersections and separations of different social classes. For instance, Arjun is frequently shown driving through these chaotic streets in his high-end car, isolated from the life outside. Meanwhile, Ansari navigates these same streets on foot, blending into the urban crowd. The city's high-rises and slums serve as metaphors for its residents' stratified lives.

Stop Violence The film delves deep into the dark underbelly of Kochi's underworld, showcasing the raw realities of gang conflicts and crime. Prithviraj's portrayal of Saathan who is a gang leader or a criminal in Kochi, a ruthless and feared gangster who is working for a criminal police officer. The socio-cultural changes like the diverse population which has many more Non-resident Keralites and the gender roles such as a male-centric, masculine society lesser than in the movie.

Thuramukham (1979) reflects on Kochi's sociological changes and cultural shifts and compares its portrayal of labour struggles, migration, and urbanization with present-day realities. The film captures the port city's working-class struggles, highlighting wage exploitation and union movements, reflecting the socio-economic tensions of that era. Modern Kochi, while developed, still experiences labour unrest, albeit within a regulated framework. The film's depiction of communal life and traditional markets contrasts with today's cosmopolitan culture, where globalization has reshaped identity and class dynamics. Analyzing these shifts through setting, character struggles, and narrative themes reveals how cinema documents Kochi's evolving social landscape. Cochin has historically been a melting pot of cultures, a theme evident in *Thuramukham*. Cochin is shown as a melting pot of cultures, the film portrays the interactions between locals and foreigners, emphasizing the city's diverse socio-cultural fabric.

To analyze whether *Newspaper Boy* (1955) reflects Kochi's sociological changes and cultural shifts in cinema, compare its portrayal of the city's social structure, economy, and cultural life with contemporary realities. The film, set in post-independence Kerala, highlights poverty, class struggles, and the resilience of the working class, mirroring the socio-economic conditions of

1950s Kochi. Today, Kochi has transformed into a metropolitan hub with modern infrastructure and a diversified economy. Analyzing how *Newspaper Boy* contrasts with later films showcasing Kochi's globalization, migration, and urban development helps reveal shifts in class dynamics, aspirations, and the cinematic representation of the city. In the movie *Thuramukham* a melting pot of cultures, the film portrays the interactions between locals and foreigners, emphasizing the city's diverse socio-cultural fabric.

Kammattipaadam offers a raw and unfiltered portrayal of Kochi's urban transformation, particularly focusing on the erasure of its marginalized communities in the face of modernization. Presents a gritty and evocative portrayal of Kochi, particularly focusing on the transformation of the city's socio-cultural landscape. Unlike the conventional cinematic depictions of Kochi as a booming metropolis, *Kammattipadam* delves into the underbelly of urbanization, exposing the socio-economic shifts that have shaped its evolution. This film showcases a close-knit Dalit Colony, that became a victim of gentrification. This is one of the major films that showcases the real life of a marginalised community that too in a developed city. *Kammattipadam* is not just about the physical displacement of communities but also the loss of cultural identity. The traditional ways of life, deeply rooted in community bonds, music, and shared histories, are eroded by the influx of capitalism. The city, once marked by organic social interactions and coexistence, becomes a landscape of alienation and anonymity.

III. The portrayal of Kochi city in Urban enclaves and Community Areas in Malayalam cinema.

The portrayal of Kochi's urban enclaves and community areas in Malayalam cinema reflects the city's evolving socio-cultural and economic landscape. Early films like *Newspaper Boy* (1955) depicted working-class struggles, highlighting the tight-knit communities of old Kochi. In contrast, later films such as *Big B* (2007) and *Annayum Rasoolum* (2013) showcase the city's transformation, with narratives unfolding in urban enclaves like Mattancherry and Fort Kochi, emphasizing their cosmopolitan nature. Recent films like *Kumbalangi Nights* and *Kammattipaadam* explore themes of class disparity and gentrification, portraying the contrast

between affluent residential areas and marginalized communities, and capturing Kochi's evolving urban identity.

Big B an action thriller presents Kochi as a city with a dark underbelly, showing its urban enclaves as crime-infested spaces. The movie's cinematography, particularly of Fort Kochi, showcases its historic streets alongside modern gentrified areas, where power struggles unfold. Also in *Stop Violence*, The film explores gang culture in Kochi, depicting a side of the city driven by violence, youth rebellion, and political influences. The setting reinforces the theme of urban alienation and the transformation of Kochi into a battleground for criminal factions.

Chappa Kurish's film contrasts two versions of Kochi—one represented by the elite, corporate lifestyle of high-rise dwellers and the other by the lower-income communities living in congested, underdeveloped areas. The film's chase sequences through the streets and market areas of Kochi highlight the stark socio-economic divide within the city.

Annayum Rasoolum this love story unfolds in Mattancherry and Fort Kochi, two areas known for their tight-knit communities, reflecting the city's multi-religious fabric. The film captures the fishing communities, lower-middle-class neighbourhoods, and the cultural heritage embedded in Kochi's backstreets. In the movie *Kammattipaadam* (2016), Kochi is depicted as a city undergoing rapid urban transformation, where urban enclaves and community areas exist in stark contrast. Kochi, in *Kammattipaadam*, is not just a setting but an active force, reflecting the tensions of urbanization—where one community's progress comes at the cost of another's erasure, revealing the deep-rooted inequalities within the city's expansion. *Kammattipaadam* offers a gritty, unfiltered portrayal of Kochi's transformation, focusing on urban enclaves and community areas that have been erased by modernization. The film explores the displacement of Dalit communities from Kammattipaadam, a once-thriving settlement in the heart of the city, now overtaken by high-rises and commercial developments.

Gandhinagar 2nd Street The movie showcases a typical middle-class residential colony, portraying the aspirations and struggles of urban dwellers. The sense of community, humour, and warmth in the film reflects the sociocultural environment of Kochi in the 1980s. Unlike contemporary portrayals of Kochi as a hub of crime or political tension, *Gandhi Nagar 2nd Street* captures the warmth and solidarity among residents in a typical middle-class colony. In the film, the character

of Sreenivasan says “We are paying Rs 250 just for this place.” At this time his mother character says “Five houses share one toilet, why should we pay Rs 250 for such a house where there are no Facilities” From this it is understood that there are different economic classes of people here. Which can be separated as the upper-middle class and Lower-middle class. *Thuramukham* (1979) – This film presents Kochi’s working-class history, particularly focusing on labour struggles at the port. The representation of dock workers and their fight for survival provides a socio-political perspective on the city’s past. *Aparan* (1988) – The film’s depiction of Kochi is one of mystery and existential crisis. The protagonist’s journey through the city reflects how urban spaces can both offer opportunities and strip away one’s identity, making it a compelling commentary on the changing nature of urban life.

Unlike typical Kochi-based films that focus on so-called urbanity, and the colourful vibrant and criminal side of Kochi *Kumbalangi Nights* focuses on the semi-rural community on the outskirts of Kochi. This film emphasizes the rich emotional and social tapestry of community areas like Kumbalangi, unlike the conventional portrayals of Kochi by focusing the urban affluence.

The evolution of the Malayalam cinema narrative landscape over recent years reflects a dramatic shift from an exclusive focus on upper caste, elite identities to a more expensive portrayal of marginalized communities and marginalized identities. The portrayal of locations is the visible shift that happened in Malayalam cinema, from upper caste Tharavdu to a subaltern community inside a developing city in movies like *Kammattipaadam*, *Kumbalangi Nights*, etc. Traditionally Malayalam films often centred on upper-caste protagonists, whose lifestyles, dialogues and mannerisms reinforced a narrow, privileged vision of Kerala society. In contrast, a new wave of filmmakers is redefining the cinematic discourse by foregrounding the experience of those who have been on the periphery. Contemporary films now investigate the intricate web of caste dynamics, struggles and the fight for dignity by reimagining characters that were once relegated to secondary roles. This transformative trend in Malayalam cinema is more than just a stylistic or thematic change it signals the broader socio-political awakening. As marginalized communities are represented from the shadows of negligence, their portrayal now reflects a more eye-opening on issues such as economic survival, social injustice and the protest against hierarchies that persist. Those films reconstruct the visual and narrative identity of Kerala, offering audiences a richer,

more diverse mirror of society. This re-examination of long-held narratives invites viewers to question entrenched stereotypes and rethink the cultural and political fabric of modern Kerala.

IV. Depicting Characters in Kochi: Stereotypes, Diversity, and Socio-Economic Background

The depiction of characters in Malayalam cinema associated with Kochi reflects a range of socio-economic backgrounds, from working-class labourers to wealthy business tycoons. Over time, the portrayal of these characters has evolved, shaped by the city's transformation into a modern metropolitan hub. This analysis explores how Kochi-based characters are represented in terms of stereotypes, diversity, and socio-economic status in films such as *Big B*, *Stop Violence*, *Chappa Kurish*, *Annayum Rasoolum*, *Gandhinagar 2nd Street*, *Thuramukham*, and *Aparan*.

Films like *Big B* (2007) and *Stop Violence* (2002) depict Kochi as a hub of crime, with characters such as Sagar (Mammootty in *Big B*) and Saathan (Vijay Babu in *Stop Violence*) embodying the hardened, street-smart gangster trope. *Thuramukham* (1979) and *Annayum Rasoolum* (2013) depict working-class characters who live in Kochi's traditional neighbourhoods. They are often shown as victims of economic hardship, corruption, and labour exploitation. *Chappa Kurish* (2011) starkly contrasts the rich corporate executive (played by Fahadh Faasil) with a low-income worker (played by Vineeth Sreenivasan), highlighting class-based stereotypes in modern Kochi. In films like *Gandhinagar 2nd Street* (1986) and *Aparan* (1988), protagonists represent the common urban dweller—either struggling to establish themselves or caught in societal pressures. *Kammattipaadam* (2016) portrays characters associated with Kochi through a raw and realistic lens, highlighting themes of marginalization, urbanization, and crime. The film's Kochi is not just a city of economic aspirations but also of lost identities, where traditional landowners are replaced by corporate developments. The narrative deconstructs the stereotypical “rowdy” image of Dalit men, showing them as victims of circumstance rather than criminals by choice.

While stereotypes persist, Malayalam cinema has also explored the diversity of people living in Kochi, including various religious, ethnic, and socio-economic groups: Kochi is home to Hindus, Christians, and Muslims, and this cultural mix of multi-religion is well represented in *Annayum Rasoolum*, which revolves around a romance between a Muslim man and a Christian woman.

Thuramukham depicts migrant workers who arrived in Kochi during the 1940s and 50s for jobs in the harbour, illustrating the struggles of an underprivileged class that built the city's economy. Films like *Chappa Kurish* show the aspirations of young professionals in modern Kochi, portraying their lifestyles, ambitions, and ethical dilemmas.

Kochi's characters can be broadly classified into three socio-economic groups such as lower, middle and upper class. Dock workers in *Thuramukham* (1979) represent the labour struggles of early Kochi. *Annayum Rasoolum* focuses on auto-rickshaw drivers, fishermen, and other daily wage earners. *Chappa Kurish* contrasts the life of a rich businessman with a low-income supermarket worker as the lower-class examples. *Gandhinagar 2nd Street* represents an aspirational middle-class colony. *Aparan* depicts an educated middle-class man struggling with identity issues in urban society. *Big B* and *Stop Violence* portray Kochi's criminal elite, showing them as powerful and dangerous. *Chappa Kurish* depicts high-ranking corporate executives living in luxury apartments.

Kochi-based films often glorify male aggression, but *Kumbalangi Nights* subverts this by showing vulnerability in its male characters. The film redefines masculinity where real strength comes from emotional openness rather than dominance. The emotional imbalance that men have has been portrayed through *Kumbalangi Nights* where the protagonist Saji by actor Soubin Shahir talks about his emotional/ mental imbalance to his younger brother and telling to "take me to the doctor". The emotional breakdown in front of the doctor also shows the breaking of masculine stereotypes that had in Kochi, especially through movies like *Big B*, and *Chotta Mumbai*. *Kumbalangi Nights* is a film that breaks away from cliché characters like affluent businessmen, Gangster Figures by portraying its characters with remarkable depth, rejecting one-dimensional depictions. On the antagonist, we can see the character Shammi played by Fahad Fasil who is an upper-middle-class family who has toxic masculinity masked under patriarchal control. This contrast highlights the economic and social divide within the same geographical setting.

The character stereotypes are even depicted in the way of showing their livelihood. Kochi-based characters often came under the framing through the lens of hyper-masculine, alcoholic gang members embroiled in urban violence. Mostly their livelihood might be gangsters. Such films tended to lean into caricatures where Kochi's denizens were marked by a singular, and at times dehumanizing, identity. These portrayals reinforced a narrow narrative: a city of underworld chaos,

with its characters, reduced to symbols of lawlessness and excess. A dramatic shift is evident in films like *Kumbalangi Nights*. Here, the filmmaker dismantles these entrenched stereotypes by depicting characters who, rather than resorting to gang warfare and alcohol-fuelled bravado, pursue humble, life-affirming livelihoods such as fishing. For instance, a character like Shine Nigam—whose story aligns with these more relatable, everyday struggles—illustrates that engaging in traditional occupations like fishing is not a marker of social failure or moral decay. Instead, it becomes a backdrop for exploring family bonds, resilience, and dignity in the face of societal marginalization. In this narrative, the livelihood of fishing is normalized and even celebrated as a viable and honourable way of life, offering a counterpoint to the previously glamorized, yet ultimately toxic, portrayal of Kochi's underbelly. This evolution in storytelling signifies a broader transformation in Malayalam cinema, shifting the focus from sensationalized portrayals to a more nuanced, realistic depiction of marginalized communities. By doing so, modern films invite audiences to see beyond stereotypes and appreciate the rich, everyday lives of people—a move that challenges both cinematic conventions and societal preconceptions about Kochi.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS &

CONCLUSION

Malayalam cinema, one of India's most critically acclaimed film industries, is known for its realistic storytelling, strong narratives, and socially relevant themes. This research "Portraying of Kochi City in Malayalam Cinema" talked about the cinema has evolved significantly, reflecting the city's transformation and its emergence in the early 20th century, Malayalam films have consistently reflected the cultural, political, and economic realities of Kerala, addressing issues such as caste discrimination, poverty, migration, communal tensions, and changing urban landscapes. From the early neo-realist era of films like *Newspaper Boy* (1955) and *Odayil Ninnu* (1965), which depicted working-class struggles, to the middle-class narratives of the 1980s *Gandhi Nagar 2nd Street* Malayalam cinema has been deeply rooted in society's lived experiences. The industry's ability to blend artistic storytelling with pressing social issues has earned it international recognition.

In later decades, films have captured the urbanization and globalization of Kerala, particularly through the changing representation of cities like Kochi. While early films depicted Kochi as a space of economic disparity and community life, recent films such as *Stop Violence*, *Big B*, *Chotta Mumbai* and *Annayum Rasoolum* have portrayed the city as a hub of crime, political power, and social conflict. This shift reflects Kerala's transformation from a traditionally agrarian society to a modern, urbanized state. Malayalam cinema continues to act as a mirror to society, constantly evolving to reflect contemporary issues, making it one of India's most socially conscious and critically engaging film industries.

Kochi, Kerala's commercial capital and cultural melting pot, has played a significant role in Malayalam cinema as a dynamic cinematic space. Over the decades, the city has been portrayed in diverse ways, reflecting its evolving socio-political landscape. Early Malayalam films depicted Kochi as a centre of working-class struggles, where labourers, rickshaw pullers, and newspaper boys navigated the harsh realities of urban life, as seen in *Odayil Ninnu* (1965) and *Newspaper Boy* (1955). By the 1980s and 1990s, the focus shifted to middle-class aspirations and urban development, with films like *Gandhi Nagar 2nd Street* (1986) exploring themes of residential communities, displacement, and modernization. However, in more recent films, Kochi has been increasingly associated with crime, politics, and power struggles, as seen in *Big B*, *Stop Violence*, and *Chappa Kurish*. This transformation highlights how Malayalam cinema mirrors broader social, economic, and cultural changes in Kerala. Kochi's portrayal in Malayalam cinema reflects

its transformation from a port-dependent working-class city to a complex urban space with crime, socio-economic disparities, and shifting identities. While older films highlight the city's sense of community and shared struggles, recent films focus on its rapid urbanization, social fragmentation, and class tensions. This evolution in cinematic representation aligns with the real-world changes in Kochi's cultural and sociological landscape. The portrayal of Kochi-based characters in Malayalam cinema reflects the city's socio-economic transformations over time. While early films focused on labourers and small communities, modern films explore class conflicts, crime, and social mobility. Although some stereotypes persist—such as the gangster trope and the struggling labourer—many films also showcase the diversity of Kochi's population, making it a dynamic setting for storytelling.

The depiction of Kochi, formerly known as Cochin, in Malayalam cinema, has undergone a significant transformation over the decades, mirroring both the evolution of the film industry and the city's dynamic growth. In the nascent stages of Malayalam cinema, particularly during the mid-20th century, the industry was predominantly centred in Madras (now Chennai). This geographical focus influenced the thematic and visual elements of the films produced during that era. Studio-based productions were the norm, characterized by limited technological resources and a reliance on controlled, indoor environments. Consequently, filmmakers often employed tight framing and close-up shots, resulting in visuals that lacked the expansive clarity that modern audiences are accustomed to. The constraints of studio shooting meant that there was minimal incorporation of authentic outdoor locations, leading to a noticeable absence of specific geographic identifiers such as Kochi in these early films.

During this period, narratives were frequently set in generic locales or rural settings, with urban centres like Kochi seldom serving as the backdrop. Kochi now embodies multicultural vibrancy, historical layers, and a striking interplay between tradition and modernity. The city is depicted not just as a static backdrop but as an influential force—its evolving character invites filmmakers to explore themes of identity, economic transformation, and social change. In this sense, Kochi becomes a canvas where urban realism and poetic aesthetics converge, echoing its journey from a quiet port town to a contemporary urban hub. Over the years, Kochi in Malayalam cinema has undergone remarkable changes from serving merely as a mysterious, backdrop to emerging as a vibrant character in its right. Earlier period films used Kochi as a setting filled with intrigue and

suspense mostly in a dark theme showing through the narrow alleys and hidden corners an atmosphere of uncertainty and danger. As Malayalam cinema evolved into the latest portrayal city was reengineered as a dynamic entity that mirrors the real-life complexities of urban existence.

The technical limitations decades before time, including the use of black-and-white film stock and rudimentary camera equipment, further restricted the filmmakers' ability to capture the vibrancy and complexity of city life. As a result, the portrayal of urban environments was often oversimplified or entirely omitted, with Kochi rarely mentioned by name or depicted on screen. The shift from studio-bound productions to on-location shooting marked a pivotal change in the Malayalam film industry. This transition allowed filmmakers to explore and represent real-world settings more authentically. Kochi, with its rich cultural tapestry and historical significance, began to feature more prominently in cinematic narratives. The city's unique blend of tradition and modernity, along with its diverse populace, provided a fertile ground for storytelling that resonated with audiences. However, the early reluctance or inability to depict Kochi in films has posed challenges for contemporary researchers and film historians. The scarcity of visual and narrative references to the city in early Malayalam cinema limits the scope of studies aiming to trace the evolution of Kochi's representation on screen. This gap underscores the broader issue of how technological and logistical constraints can influence cultural documentation and artistic expression.

In conclusion, the initial phases of Malayalam cinema were marked by significant limitations in portraying specific locales like Kochi. These constraints were largely due to the industry's reliance on studio settings, technological challenges, and a focus on non-urban narratives. In earlier movies, the location name Kochi was also not being used much and the documents, pieces of evidence and records based on that are also not so much. As the industry evolved, so did its capacity to authentically depict diverse settings, allowing Kochi to emerge as a significant character in its own right within Malayalam cinema. This evolution enriched the cinematic landscape and provided a more comprehensive reflection of Kerala's urban transformation.

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