

**BEYOND THE JOKES: UNMASKING QUEER DESIRE IN GURUVAYOOR
AMBALANADAYIL**



Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language and Literature

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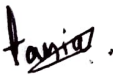

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I hereby declare that this project titled “Beyond the Joke: Unmasking queer desire in *Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil*” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Ms. Rose Taniya, Assistant Professor, Department of English.



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CERTIFICATE

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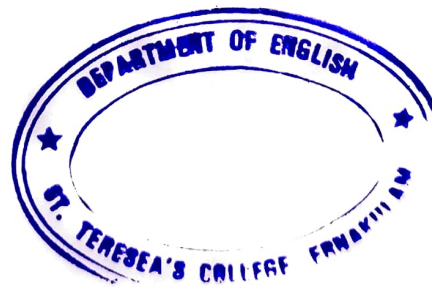
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CONTENTS

Introduction		1
Chapter 1	Queer Studies in Literature	7
Chapter 2	Reading the Homoerotic Subtext in <i>Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil</i>	12
Conclusion		18
Works Consulted		21

Introduction

“Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct” (Foucault 105).

In ancient cultures, distinctions like LGBTQIA+ were not needed, as no clear distinction existed between what we now classify as “heterosexual” and “homosexual” relationships. Society did not impose “us versus them”. Rather than categorizing individuals based on their attractions, love and partnerships were simply seen as personal choices. In fact, ancient writers often commented on sexual orientation of individuals unless it had a direct impact on an event.

In ancient Greece and Rome, the stigma surrounding male homosexual relationships was mainly focused on the social status of men rather than the relationship. A man of status who took on the passive role in a relationship was seen as diminishing his masculinity but the same-sex relationship was not inherently frowned upon (Mark).

Ancient Egypt provides a rather ambiguous account, that of the famous tomb of Niankhneferhotep and Khnumhotep, two royal servants who are depicted as a same-sex couple. In ancient China, homoerotic relationships were common among emperors, scholars, and poets; “cut sleeve” and “sharing the peach” being two literary metaphors for same-sex love. The story of Lord Long Yang is well-known example of same-sex relationships in Chinese history. Other East Asian cultures like Japan also considered homosexual relationships as any other heterosexual relationship. In fact, within samurai traditions, male-male intimacy was viewed as an expression of loyalty and camaraderie. In most of the ancient East Asian culture, homosexuality

was accepted. The shift from acceptance to oppression and erasure of homosexual relationships within the East Asian belt occurred in the late eighteenth century (Mark).

Homoeroticism in Indian culture can be seen within the Hindu mythologies and various religious texts. Hinduism with its understanding of gender and sexuality, has various references to homoeroticism. Same-sex relations were explicitly depicted in temple carvings, accepted but not openly celebrated. Indian poetry of the medieval period contains strong homoerotic undertones especially in Sufi and Bhakti traditions. Many Sufi saints expressed their longing through poetry which carried homoerotic undertones. Even a love between a devotee and God was described using male-male romantic metaphors. Indian society historically embraced homoeroticism in diverse ways, whether through admiration of male beauty, intimate spiritual bonds or everyday relationship (Vanita).

Back when Christianity was emerging, same-sex relationships were so common, especially in Ancient Greek and Roman societies. But as Christianity grew, it started to break away from those cultural norms and pushed for a stricter moral way of life. By the 4th century, when Christianity became a dominant force in Europe, its teachings had a big impact on how people thought about sexuality and structured their societies.

As Christianity spread, it brought a major shift in how homosexuality was understood, especially in areas under colonial rule. European laws, which was heavily influenced by religious beliefs, treated queerness as a crime and often enforced brutal punishments, including execution. The Catholic Church reinforce this by promoting heterosexual relationships as the only acceptable standard and viewing same-sex

desire as sinful. Missionaries played a crucial role spreading these beliefs to non-westerners and reshaping native traditions which once embraced sexual diversity (Jiang).

In many parts of Africa, Asia and the Americas, same gender kinship was penalized. They were forced to abandon these traditions due to missionary intervention and colonial laws. Christianization fundamentally reshaped global mental attitude toward homosexuality, shifting into what was once tolerated or still kept into something viewed as extraordinary and sinful. The diachronic relationship between Christianity and queerness is complex, shaped by theological reading, socio-political agendum, and colonial expansions. Before Christianization, many societies including those in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, had a diverse agreement of gender and sexuality, often accommodating same-sex relationship within their cultural and even the religious framework (Akon).

As Christianity spread, particularly with the rise of the Roman Catholic Church and afterwards Protestant movement, homosexuality was stigmatized, made illegal, and subject to moral examination. This demonization was not only theological but also political. The influence of Christianity on global position towards homosexuality persists, especially in former colonies where Western religious values are deeply embedded. Widespread Christianization led to the marginalization of homosexuality through biblical interpretations. Colonialism in particular used Christianity as a tool to suppress the queer identities in order to destabilize native social systems while imposing Western (the term used synonymously and erroneously with “modern”) legal and cultural attitudes toward homosexuality.

The introduction of Section 377 in the Indian Penal Code in 1861 was a significant legal imposition by British colonial rule in India. This law, modelled after British sodomy laws, criminalized non-heterosexual acts, enforcing Victorian-era Christian morality rather than reflecting Indian society's values. Before British rule, India didn't have widespread laws explicitly criminalizing homosexuality. However, under colonial administration any deviation from heterosexuality was systematically suppressed. This led to profound consequences, including the criminalization of same-sex relationships and the stigmatization of queerness in Indian culture.

Section 377 remained in place long after India's independence, fuelling decades of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals by targeting homosexuality, gender nonconformity and non-heteronormative relationships. It was only in 2018 that the Supreme Court of India fully decriminalized Section 377, marking a significant step towards reclaiming pre-colonial understandings of gender and sexuality (Khanna).

Kerala, often considered progressive, has a complex and contradictory relationship with queerness. While the State boasts high literacy rates and a history of revolutionary social movements, its conservative roots embedded in religion, caste, and patriarchy have made queerness largely invisible.

Hindu orthodoxy, Christian conservatism, and Islamic cultural norms have imposed rigid moral structures, ignoring or labelling queerness as unnatural. Family honour, marriage expectations, and stigma have pushed many queer individuals into silence or forced heterosexual marriages. Even Malayalam cinema has struggled to provide nuanced queer representation, often relying on stereotypes and mockery.

Many films used effeminate men as comic relief, implying they were sexually deviant or “less of a man”; a case in point is *Chanthupottu* (2005) in which the character played by actor Dileep is portrayed as an effeminate man, fueling negative stereotypes about gender nonconformity, and reinforcing the idea that queer people were laughable or pathetic (F. Rhea).

Malayalam films often categorized queer individuals in two ways; individuals to be mocked or demonized. Depictions of queer characters as sexual predators perpetuate a harmful trope. It must be noted that *Moothon* (2009) stands out as a mainstream Malayalam film that explicitly explores queerness. The movie follows a gay relationship between two men and highlights the struggles of being queer in a conservative society. This film marked a significant milestone in Malayalam cinema, portraying queer love with sensitivity rather than mockery. With the rise of streaming platforms and independent films, bolder narratives are emerging. While mainstream films still hesitate to tackle queer themes directly, there have been positive developments in queer representation in Malayalam cinema (F. Rhea).

Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil (2024) is a Malayalam comedy-drama that explores the complexities of relationships around a wedding and the chaos that ensues when secrets are revealed. The story revolves around Vinu, a young man engaged to Anjal, Anandan’s sister. However, problems arise when it becomes known that Vinu previously had a relationship with Parvati, who is now Anandan’s wife. This leads to a series of misunderstandings and conflicts within their lives. The film combines humour with heartfelt moments to delve into the themes of love and relationships. This study takes a closer look at *Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil* (2024) through the perspective of queer theory. This analysis looks at how the film quietly touches on

themes of same-sex attraction and bisexuality. By focusing on the relationship between Vinu and Anandan, it shows how humour is cleverly used to highlight these hidden feelings. It also explores how the film balances these desires within a world that largely sticks to traditional norms. The study explores how Malayalam movies beginning to show queer identities and desires, as well as the impact of these representations on the LGBTQIA+ communities.

Chapter 1

Queer Studies in Literature

Queer theory is a way of looking at the world that questions and challenges traditional ideas about gender, sexuality, and identity. It invites us to think beyond labels and categories, promoting a more open and fluid understanding. The informal use of the term “queer theory” emerged in the 1990s with scholars, such as Gloria Anzaldua who were inspired by Michel Foucault’s 1976 work *The History of Sexuality*. It invites us to think beyond labels and categories, promoting a more open and fluid understanding. The informal use of the term “queer theory” emerged in the 1990s with scholars, such as Gloria Anzaldua who were inspired by Michel Foucault’s 1976 work *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault asserted that sexuality is a part of human identity influenced by historical and cultural aspects. His work laid the foundation for contemporary queer theory by detailing how sexuality can be shaped by power and societal norms. “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault 93). Foucault introduced the concept of Bio-politics, biopower in particular, which explains how power is used to control life, including sexuality and this power operates through laws, education, healthcare and social norms, ultimately influencing how people express their sexuality.

Queer theory draws from Poststructuralism, the Feminist movement and LGBTQIA+ studies, to question the male/female binary and situate sexual identities. Italian-American feminist theorist Teresa de Lauretis introduced the term “Queer theory” at a conference on homosexuality at the University of California, Santa Cruz. A central concept in queer theory is the notion of “heteronormativity”, a term coined

in the early 1990s by Michael Warner. It describes society's view that being "straight" or heterosexual is natural and "normal". This 'normalness' is espoused by social structures like marriage, family, education and laws. It results in a segregation of relationships into "hetero-" or "normal" while relegating homosexual relationships and identities as subversive and even 'taboo'. Queer theory subverts the normalization that exists around heterosexuality by foregrounding the changing nature of identities.

Be it the legal system or the social structure, preference is given to "straight" relationships; even the terminology "straight" hinting at the subversive alternative of homosexuality. Assigning gender roles to children lay the beginning of heteronormative culture and values. It marginalizes queer people and their relationships by framing them as the "other". This limits their personal freedom by dictating how individuals should behave based on their assigned gender. The pressure to conform to heteronormative expectations can lead to feeling of isolation and discrimination for those who do not fit the mould, thus affecting an individual's mental health. This is in keeping with the results of the World Mental Health Surveys conducted across thirteen countries in which the WHO International Diagnostic Interview assessed 46,889 adults. The survey found cross-national evidence which hinted at an association between sexuality minority and psychiatric morbidity, partially mediated by perceived openness with family.

The works of cultural critic David Halperin focus on decoding the norms about sex and how identities are determined by historical and cultural contexts. Halperin advocated the defense of the historian and late French philosopher Michel Foucault in his work *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (1995). In it, he highlights the fluid nature of queer not as a singularity but rather a flexible and relational concept.

He emphasizes that queer theory is not merely an academic pursuit but also a political stance. Another prominent work of Halperin was *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (1990), which examines the historical and cultural construction of sexuality in the Western world, emphasizing ancient Greek practices, where homosexuality was not frowned upon. “Sex in Public” (1998), an essay by Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, examines how heteronormativity shapes public space, private lives and cultural systems. Both Berlant and Warner challenge social and cultural dynamics that is constructed by society, especially the play of power and politics with respect to sexuality and space. Berlant and Warner describes how queer community create alternate spaces and practices that resist heteronormative structures.

Another foundational figure is Judith Butler, whose text *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) details the intricacies between gender, space, sexuality and identity. She is known for her concept of gender performativity, which she uses to challenge the understanding of gender and identity, claiming that these are not natural or innate rather socially constructed. She criticized the validity of various feminist political theories by arguing that the subject of these theories, “woman” is an exclusive construct that gains its coherence and stability within the context of the heterosexual matrix. It must be noted that Butler’s ideas on performativity are strongly linked to the art of drag, where people intentionally showcase gender expressions that challenge societal norms. In her later works, such as *Bodies That Matter* (1993) and *Precarious Life* (2004), Butler explores how identity and vulnerability are inscribed on the body. She examines how bodies are labelled and classified, especially in situations of violence, war and social injustice.

In Epistemology of the Closet (1990), American scholar Eve Kosofsky

Sedgwick maintains that the oppression faced by the homosexual community is the most rigid amongst all the oppressions that exist in society. She points out that the concept of rights and “freedom” only exist for an individual if they fit the mould. In fact, in the process of “gay self-disclosure” or coming-out-of-the-closet, questions of authority and evidence are the first to arise. Sedgwick observes that the “coming out” of a homosexual individual may inflict harm on their next of kin or even trigger unrest in the overtly homophobic (and covertly homosexual) individual. All identity is directed to oneself, except for erotic identity and as such, homosexuals do not know who is in the community due to the lack of transparency.

Sedgwick lists the understanding of Western people in the 1990s with respect to homosexuality:

...that there is a distinct population of persons who “really are” gay...that sexual desire is an unpredictably powerful solvent of stable identities; that apparently heterosexual persons and object choices are strongly marked by same-sex influences and desires, and vice versa for apparently homosexual ones; and that at least male heterosexual identity and modern masculinist culture may require for their maintenance the scapegoating crystallization of a same-sex male desire that is widespread and in the first place internal.

(Sedgwick 85)

The exploration of queer theory in the chapter provides a foundational understanding on the major concepts and thinkers who have shaped the development. Through theorists like David Halperin, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick and many others, queer theory has blossomed into an effective tool to study and challenge cultural, social, and institutional forces which are responsible for the

shaping of identity and sexuality. These contributions, along with the discussion on heteronormativity and performativity, provide a critical framework by which to view the ways that norms are generated, maintained, and resisted. They provide tools to challenge societal structures which marginalize non-normative sexualities and identities. Queer theory is not an academic discipline but a direction towards society, the openness of possibilities for identity and the encouragement toward the re-invention of the structures governing lives. Both activists and members of society can play a role in recognizing and embracing social realities. This promotes the acceptance of diverse gender identities and encourages societal values of different kinds of gender identities.

The following study proposes to read the Malayalam film, *Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil* (2024), through the framework of Queer studies. It seeks to analyze the various characters, their relations and reactions in connection with gender performativity and the closeting of homosexuality. The central characters, Vinu and Anandan forge refreshingly caring brotherhood following Vinu's engagement to Anandan's sister Anjali. The men's budding friendship is set against the backdrop of Anandan's own strained relationship with his wife Parvathy, who is later revealed to be Vinu's former lover. Matters are resolved towards the end and an eventful display of masculinity ensues at the titular "*Guruvayoor amabanadayil*". The movie relies heavily on humour to bypass the glaring questions of gender performativity and the homoerotic undertones within the narrative. In the end, rituals, customs and traditions keep the homoerotic undertones in check, and "all's well that ends well".

Chapter 2

Reading the Homoerotic Subtext in *Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil*

Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil (2024) is a comedy-drama film in Malayalam.

Written by Deepu Pradeep, the film was directed by Vipin Das and produced by Supriya Menon, C.V Sarathi, and Mukesh R. Mehta. The film begins by introducing the protagonist, a young man named Vinu Ramachandran who is struggling to recover from a breakup despite it being five years ago. Anandan convinces Vinu to marry his sister, Anjali. As time goes by Vinu grows close to Anjali's brother, Anandan. Meanwhile, Anandan also faces marital problems when he found an anonymous letter addressed to his wife, leading to trouble between them. He eventually makes peace with his wife, but things get tricky when Vinu realizes that Anandan's wife is actually Parvati, his ex-girlfriend. This shocking discovery makes Vinu back out of his plans to marry Anjali. After a heartfelt conversation with Anjali, Vinu decides to follow his heart and starts begins the preparations for their marriage.

Meanwhile, Anandan mistakenly believes that the anonymous letter was written by Vinu to his wife, Parvati. Hoping to stop the wedding, Anandan attempts to reveal Vinu's past relationship with Parvati. However, to Anandan's surprise, His parents were already aware of this and still fully supported his marriage to Anjali. Anandan eventually discovers that the anonymous letter came from his maternal uncles, who were hoping to see his family's humiliation. However, in an unexpected twist, Anandan decides to stand by his sister and supports her marriage to Vinu. The movie ends with Vinu and Anjali's wedding celebrations held against the backdrop of an eventful display of masculinity at the titular *Guruvayoor Amabanadayil*. The movie ends on a positive and joyful note, as both couples achieve happiness. It also

dives into the complexities of male friendships, suggesting themes of hidden desire and queerness in connection between Vinu Ramachandran and Anandan. The film portrays several interactions between these two male characters, Vinu and Anandan, which can be analyzed through a queer perspective. These interactions suggest hints of same-sex attraction, bisexuality and deep male bonding. Vinu shows an obsessive attachment to Anandan. His personal involvement in Anandan's personal life, especially his marriage, reflects a level of protectiveness and intensity that goes beyond the norms of typical friendship or brotherhood. This can indicate the repressed same-sex attraction, acknowledged but never openly confirmed in the narrative. It is also worth noting that Vinu's relationships with women are often secondary in importance to his bond with Anandan, which forms the emotional core of the story. This suggests that Vinu might be a bisexual character, with a stronger and emotional connection to men than to women.

In a society where heterosexuality is the norm, Vinu's attraction to Anandan is conveyed through coded actions and moments of affection. These are often masked under disguise of humor, a device frequently used in cinema to explore queer themes without addressing them directly.

Another notable point is Vinu's lack of genuine passion towards his female romantic partner, especially when compared to the emotional intensity he shares with Anandan. He frequently seeks comfort and reassurance from Anandan, reinforcing the idea of their deep connection. Through the use of bromance and humour, the film cleverly disguises the homoerotic undertones in their relationship.

Anandan's vulnerability around Vinu suggests a deep emotional intimacy that transcends

typical male friendships. The private conversations between Anandan and Vinu are

particularly noteworthy, as they create an atmosphere of deep emotional closeness. The film's use of comedic queer subtext, such as exaggerated gestures and jokes, can be seen as a narrative tool to acknowledge bisexuality while keeping it ambiguous. Vinu's complaints and fights with Anandan mask a deeper, unconscious attachment that transcends typical friendship, potentially hinting at a strong emotional or romantic connection, which goes beyond friendship. In contrast, Vinu's interactions with Anjali appear formal and duty-bound, whereas his exchanges with Anandan are emotionally charged, spontaneous, and intense, suggesting that his feelings for Anandan are more genuine and even repressed. Throughout film history, humour has been employed as a strategic device to conceal subversive themes, including queerness, in societies where such topics face scrutiny or censorship. Comedy serves as a cloak of acceptability, enabling filmmakers to incorporate homoerotic subtext without provoking backlash. By presenting these themes in a humorous light, films avoid direct confrontation while allowing audiences, particularly those attuned to queer readings, to recognize and interpret the subtext. The notion of "bromance" is pivotal in deciphering how *Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil* utilizes humour to veil queerness. This concept, denoting intense, emotionally charged male friendships that are ostensibly platonic, has been staple in global cinema. It enables filmmakers to portray profound male bonding without explicitly confronting potential homoerotic undertones. In Indian cinema, this dynamic is particularly pronounced, with strong male friendships often depicted through physical closeness, affectionate teasing, and emotional intimacy that might be interpreted as romantic intimacy that might be interpreted as romantic in a different cultural context.

By categorizing these relationships as bromance, filmmakers create a socially acceptable framework that accommodates homoerotic tension without disrupting heteronormative expectations. In this movie the portrayal of Vinu Ramachandran and Anandan's relationship exemplifies this phenomenon. Their interactions, with physical closeness and playful banter, are consistently framed through humour, allowing the audience to engage with their dynamic without scrutinizing its deeper implications. This comedic framing serves as a veil, obscuring the queerness that underlies their relationship and rendering it palatable for a broader audience. Many films, especially in societies where queerness is stigmatized, have employed bromance as a narrative device to explore relationships that could be interpreted as romantic. This phenomenon reflects a cultural strategy of managing queerness in mainstream media by embedding it within humour and "bromantic" relationships. The scenes where Vinu's mother reveals her son's initial refusal of the marriage proposal and him being convinced by Anandan later in the film can be seen as moments where societal pressure enforces heteronormativity. Vinu's reluctance may indicate resistance to compulsory heterosexuality. Anandan's role in convincing Vinu to get married can be seen as a strategy to ensure that Vinu enters a socially approved heterosexual relationship, thus lending credibility to their future interactions. There is a scene (00:09:18) where Vinu reveals that he is returning to India to see Anandan not his own fiancée.

Through a queer theory lens, this moment significantly suggests Vinu's bisexuality, disrupting the conventional heterosexual narrative. Vinu's statement aligns with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of the "male homosocial continuum",

blurring the boundaries between male friendship and desire. Vinu's reluctance toward marriage and focus on Anandan suggests an internal conflict, hinting at a bisexual identity overshadowed by societal obligations. It is in line with Adrienne Rich's concept of "compulsory heterosexuality". In fact, Vinu's phone call with his fiancée Anjali (00:12:49) reveals his emotional disconnectedness in their heterosexual relationship. He continuously asks about Anandan and struggles to engage in meaningful conversation with Anjali. This is further established in the scene where Anjali tries to call Vinu, only to find him already engaged in another phone call with Anandan (00:16:11). This moment highlights Vinu's emotional priorities.

Sedgwick's theory of the male homosocial continuum highlights the ways in which intense male relationships can exist on a spectrum where platonic affection and homoerotic desire blur. Vinu's relationship with Anandan can be seen as existing on this continuum, with their emotional and physical closeness defying traditional heteronormative boundaries. Adrienne Rich's concept of compulsory heterosexuality also provides insight into Vinu's characterization, as it highlights the ways in which societal norms dictate heterosexual marriage as the inevitable path for men. Heteronormativity is reinforced through the recurrent issue of heterosexual marriage and the worship espoused at the titular temple of Guruvayur. Vinu's resistance to this institution, as well as his prioritization of Anandan over Anjali, can be seen as a challenge to these norms.

The film explores themes of queerness, particularly that of bisexuality, through the character Vinu Ramachandran. His reluctance to marry, prioritization of Anandan, and constant need for connection with him disrupts the expected heterosexual romantic arc. The recurrent homoerotic humour and exaggerated

physical reactions suggest an underlying tension between repression and desire. The pattern of queer erasure and bisexual invisibility also plays a significant role in understanding Vinu's characterization. Bisexuality is often ignored in favour of more binary representations of sexuality, leading to characters who exhibit clear signs of attraction toward multiple genders but are never explicitly labelled as bisexual. Vinu's character follows this trajectory, displaying clear emotional and physical closeness with Anandan while simultaneously being engaged to a woman. This creates a dual attraction that is evident yet never formally addressed, reinforcing the argument that Vinu's character is best understood as bisexual.

In conclusion, *Guruyavoor Ambalanadayil* presents a nuanced and complex exploration of male intimacy and desire through the character of Vinu Ramachandran. Reading the characters through the framework of Queer theory, it becomes evident that Vinu's character is one that is constantly navigating through heterosexual bonds and homoerotic desire. The film's employment of classic queer-coded narrative techniques, its portrayal of queer erasure and bisexual invisibility, and its challenge to traditional heteronormative boundaries all contribute to a rich and multifaced exploration of bisexuality. Ultimately, this film provides a compelling example of how queer identities can be subtly embedded within mainstream narratives, challenging surface level heteronormativity and revealing a deeper, more complex portrayal of human desire and intimacy.

Conclusion

This study explored the homoerotic subtext in *Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil* (2024) through a queer theoretical lens, focusing on humour as a vehicle for expressing and concealing same-sex desire. This research examines the character of Vinu Ramachandran and argues his portrayal suggests a bisexual identity, even though it operates within the traditional boundaries of heteronormative cinema.

It focuses on the film *Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil* (2024) and explores how humour both highlights and conceals themes of homoeroticism. Using queer theory, particularly Eve Sedgwick's idea of the male homosocial continuum and Adrienne Rich's concept of compulsory heterosexuality, the study analyses the film's subtext. It finds that humour serves a dual purpose: challenging heterosexual norms while reinforcing societal expectations.

Another observation is that the film follows a familiar trend in Indian and Malayalam cinema, where homoerotic undertones are made socially acceptable by showing them as humorous. This reflects a long tradition in Indian culture where male intimacy has been celebrated in art, literature, and cultural practices – though colonial influences later complicated its broader acceptance.

The study highlights several moments where Vinu Ramachandran's interactions, body language, and emotional connections demonstrate his attraction to men. Rather than being a mere joke, this theme can be seen throughout the film. Although, his bisexuality is never explicitly confirmed, the subtext provides evidence for this interpretation.

This study discusses how queer identities are portrayed in Indian cinema,

especially in Malayalam films where explicit LGBTQA+ stories are still relatively uncommon. It highlights that humour plays a significant yet complex role helping to introduce queer themes while also softening their potential.

The comparative studies of *Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil* (2024) along with other Malayalam movies that display similar trends, offering a deeper insight into how queer representation is evolving in Malayalam cinema.

Analyzing audience reactions to such portrayals offers valuable insights into how different groups understand these themes. This research highlights the presence of queer subtext in modern Malayalam cinema and emphasizes the need for explicit LGBTQA+ representation in Indian films.

A detailed study of *Guruvayoor Ambalanadayil* (2024) reveals that humour serves as a dual purpose, both emphasizing and concealing homoerotic desire. The dynamic between Vinu Ramachandran and Anandan consistently features humour, physical proximity, emotionally and intense moments that go beyond comic relief.

One major finding is that Vinu's character aligns with bisexuality, evidenced by his bond with Anandan and subtle suggestions about his sexuality, which hint at a deeper attraction remarking friendship. Unlike typical same-gender friendships without romantic undertones, Vinu's actions reflect real-life bisexual experiences, marked by attraction to multiple genders but often hidden due to societal pressures. The film uses comedy in line with a larger trend in Malayalam cinema, where queer subtext is subtly present, yet softened through humour to avoid direct challenges to societal norms.

Through a queer theory lens, the research shows how *Guruvayoor*

Ambalanadayil (2024) challenges rigid sexual binaries, while still following conventional storytelling methods. Humour and bromance are central to the narrative's execution, acting as tools that shows the homoerotic undertones present throughout the story.

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