



doi <https://doi.org/10.58256/70jrp738>



Research Article

Section: Literature, Linguistics & Criticism



Published in Nairobi, Kenya
by Royallite Global.

Volume 5, Issue 4, 2024



Article Information

Submitted: 25th June 2024

Accepted: 17th September 2024

Published: 8th October 2024

Additional information is available at the end of the article

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ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

To read the paper online,
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How to Cite:

Musadhique Kottaparamban, Saima Usmani, Nawal Mosa Mohammed Abdallah, Tahmina Begum, Sarrah Osman Eltom Hamed, & Elsadig Hussein Fadlalla Ali. (2024). Art, literature and performance in the age of social media: Exploring alternative aesthetics in home cinemas of Malabar. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.58256/70jrp738>

Art, literature and performance in the age of social media: Exploring alternative aesthetics in home cinemas of Malabar

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Abstract

This paper introduces a new aesthetic framework to the media culture. It aims to examine the home cinema trend initiated in Malabar throughout the 2000s. Video films, referred to as home movies in Malabar, are a novel development in popular culture. The industry has generated several titles and elevated many producers, entrepreneurs, performers, and technicians to prominence. The phrase 'home movie' signifies an intermediary realm between television and cinema. The video business is propelled by local markets initially originating from Malabar, is expanding swiftly to other regions, particularly Gulf nations. The success of the home movie movement hinges on the acceptance or rejection of its dedicated followers who anticipate the eventual release of a new picture on DVD. We contend that these home videos originate from the Mappila, an indigenous Muslim group, and via these films, the artists endeavor to encapsulate the community's existence inside the frame. These films chronicle and reconstruct socio-political and cultural events occurring both inside and without the nation's boundaries, particularly in the Gulf nations. The community was promptly impacted by the home cinema, since they saw these films as closely connected to their culture and daily existence, accurately portraying the community.

Keywords: alternative aestheticism, art and Islam, home cinema, home cinema in Malabar, Mappila, piracy, religious and cultural revivalism, Salam Kodiyathur



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Public Interest Statement

Academics generally agree that alternative media stands in sharp contrast to traditional news outlets. Content that questions established power systems or media produced using nontraditional organizational methods are what contemporary scholars mean when they talk about alternative media. This study contends that alternative media plays an essential role in contemporary social activity and often serves as the means of communication that give rise to networks. We utilize the idea of alternative aestheticism to look at the Malabar home cinema movements.

Introduction

Over the course of the last several years, the term “social media” has been more popular as a description for a collection of online platforms that aid in the production, storage, and transmission of user-generated content (UGC). In this paper, we study how some alternative media came to existence as the by product of social media. Home cinema movement in Malabar was one of the alternative media which run parallel to the mainstream film industry. The home cinemas of Malabar represent a distinctive but underexplored genre of Mappila performance, striving to redefine and refine Mappila aesthetics via the use of contemporary technology and innovations. The phrase ‘home movie’ signifies an intermediary realm between television and cinema. In Malabar and other regions of Kerala, the word gained prominence after the experimentation of some self-proclaimed artists with videotape. This film genre originated within the prominent video film industry of Malabar. These feature films portray the lives of Muslims as they strive to become more devout practitioners of their faith. The influence of these films is amplified by the community, which embraces the subjects and the socio-religious discussions they provoke. One must consider if these films embody an aspirational or suppressed yearning for a reformer existence, which is shown rather than actively sought, or whether they signify a widespread discontent over a bygone illustrious age. The birth of these films must be understood within the framework of Islamic revivalism in Kerala, particularly in the Malabar area, which has a strong Islamic culture. Salam Kodyathur, Yousuf, Banna Chennamangalloor, Sidhique Kodyathur, and Razak Vazhiyoram were the trailblazers in introducing home video to the general market in Malabar. Home cinemas offer an alternative aesthetic and significance that runs parallel to mainstream Malayali cultural expressions and art forms, deeply intertwined with the religious practices of Mappilas. However, it is important to recognize that, as a popular practice, it encompasses multiple layers where religion is a component but not a fundamental aspect, thereby revealing the aesthetic substance of these home cinemas. There exists a tension and uneasiness in the public arena, arising from the conflict between religious aspirations and popular behaviors.

Due to the language’s restricted audience, these films seldom extend beyond the Mappila community. Home films provide insight into the community’s home life for a varied audience. Televisions have grown ubiquitous, and residences of television owners often get congested with extended family and friends convening for an evening of cinematic viewing. The Mappilas are the native Muslim community mostly residing in the Malabar region of Kerala. They abstain from attending the theater due to religious convictions. These home movies were not intended for theatrical distribution but were distributed directly inside the Mappila family as video cassettes, CDs, and DVDs. This study examines and discusses the change of Mappila identity and its disputed domains.

Review of Literature

A multitude of scholarly studies have examined the Mappila community. The community evolved via several historical trajectories, including participation in nationalist movements, agricultural conflicts, and distinct social and religious characteristics along their path to the present. Ronald Miller was the one who integrated the community with academia. Miller presented the everyday dimensions of Mappila existence, including its artistic manifestations and musical customs, to scholarly discussion (Miller, 1976). F. Dale elevated the discourse to a higher plane. In his significant study of the Mappila community, he posited that the group's unique character contributed to the cessation of the uprising in 1921 (Dale, 1980). The distinguished historian, Majumdar, asserted that the society has a common essence. He attributed the communal characteristics of the community to the uprising of 1921 (Majumdar, 1973). The community's origin is historical, tracing back to the ancient era when Arabs engaged in commerce with Malabar in BC. The society is said to have originated from a confluence of many factions, including lower caste converts, native Arab/Persian merchants, a select number of indigenous aristocratic clans, and Sufis from the Middle East (Kottaparamban, 2019).

LRS Lakshmi's publication 'The Malabar Muslims: A Different Perspective' (Lakshmi, 2012) is a contemporary archival study addressing issues of kinship, matrilineality, and the Islamization of the Mappilas in Malabar. It elucidates the stratification within the Mappila community. The colonial and national historiography contributed to the marginalization of Mappila history. The book authored by Frederic Dale (Dale, 1980) is distinguished. This book examines the influence of two boundaries on the contemporary history of the Mappila Muslims of Kerala, the oldest Islamic group in the South Asian peninsula. Conrad Wood's work examines the pre-1921 Rebellion and identifies agricultural dissatisfaction as a catalyst for the Rebellion. He also analyzes that in the majority of Mappila resistance strategies against the local authority structure, conversion often played a significant role. During several breakouts, participants exhibited a consistent pattern of behavior, targeting those they saw as oppressors of the rural Mappila and forcibly converting any Hindu they encountered, with some of these converts sometimes joining the gang. Conversion seems to have been a significant tool in the fight against *jenmi*. The notion of converting in Islam as a method to withhold assistance from the government to non-Muslims was at times articulated more explicitly. The use of proselytism to obtain allegiance to the uprising was only an extension of this preventive notion of conversion.

Roland E. Miller (Miller, 2015), has done a comprehensive examination of Mappila Muslims. In the introduction of his 2015 book, he states, "In the earlier study of Mappila history and theology, I could give only passing attention to this intriguing community's cultural phenomenon" (Miller, 2015, p. x1). Consequently, he endeavored to produce a more comprehensive examination of the Mappila community, asserting that the primary focus of the book is to explore "the becoming and the being of the Mappilas" (Miller, 2015, p. x1). He delineates the history of the Mappilas and thereafter endeavors to examine comprehensive accounts of their culture, habits, and achievements in present Mappila life. He addresses the reasons behind the composite nature of Mappila culture and the Indo-Muslim effect on their cultural identity, the distinct characteristics of Mappila tradition, and the many interpretations of their rituals. Numerous studies exist about the Mappila people and their culture. In the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by CE Bosworth, E Vandonzel, B Lewis, and CH Pellat, distinguished Orientalists provide a detailed account of Mappila life (Bosworth et al, pp. 458 to 466). *Mahattaya Mappila. Sahithya Paranparyam*, a Malayalam publication, is among the first works authored by a member of

the community. Binu John Mailaparambil discusses the Mappilas of extreme northern Kerala while focusing on the specific Muslim rulers, the Ali Rajas, and the distribution of power among various kings of Kerala. This research examines the Mappila and their impact on the Arakkal Rajas (Mailaparambil, 2012). Alternative aestheticism is a phrase that originated in the 1980s. David Armstrong coined this phrase in the 1980s via his examination of social movements and their representation in many media (Armstrong, 1981). According to Armstrong, alternative media has four primary dimensions: content, audience interaction, production, and intersections with mainstream media.

Methodology

This paper employs an ethnographically focused technique. We conducted ethnographic fieldwork in several villages throughout the four districts of Malabar. This study, although grounded in fieldwork, also used several methodologies such as discourse and semiotic analysis to comprehend the articulation and expression of Mappila identity. This study theoretically contextualizes the contemporary inquiries into the politics of identity within the wider frameworks of country, democracy, modernity, secularism, and religion. Consequently, this research addressed the arguments and propositions presented by modern scholarship in these domains.

Home Cinema in Film Study

In 2000, several playwrights and community-based actors engaged in scriptwriting and performance for locally organized cultural programs started to focus on home videos. The recent home movies have established a new genre within the domain of cinema studies. These home videos serve as a significant revenue source for select artists, using diverse personalities, language, and imagery to captivate audiences. The majority of the narratives pertain to the Mappila community and its quotidian challenges, such as dowry concerns and the implications of returning from the Gulf. Consequently, they advocate for a moderate interpretation of Islam. Nearly all films depict very clichéd representations of virtuous and villainous women, as well as questionable spouses. Their home movies are narrative, feature-length films created using Mappila dialects. These films are not the typical art cinema seen at film festivals; instead, they cater to popular audiences, notably in Malabar, since their creation and finance are solely contingent upon its commercial performance. The performers' backgrounds and occupations indicate that their involvement in these films is driven more by social devotion than financial gain. All the performers are amateurs, with vocations ranging from educators to religious leaders. Acting is their least favored occupation. The renowned comedian Sidhique Kodyathur is a school teacher and is unwilling to abandon the teaching profession to pursue a professional acting career. The shooting occurs on holidays or during vacations for the convenience of educators and other professionals. Consequently, the acting and other elements of the home movie are subpar. The majority only want to appear in the film and do not need compensation for their performances. The director compensates them with an amount he considers appropriate. The prevailing assertion among performers and directors is that they create these films to convey messages to society. By 2010, many home films emerged in the Malabar area. These videos rapidly gained popularity among the Mappila community, sparking several arguments on religious grounds. This encompasses discussions on the applicability of cinema as a medium for Muslims and the guidelines for using film in religious dissemination, among other topics. The home video format introduces new audiences, especially women and the elder demographic of the Mappila community,

who were culturally marginalized by traditional commercial theaters. The influence of home movies was such that the performers quickly became prominent people in the Mappila family. The youngsters replicate and mimic the conversations and scenes from the film. Actors and directors are requested to initiate programs for school and college openings, as well as store openings.

Home Cinema: Theory and Praxis

The home movie industry background is significant. The emergence of the genre known as home movies is attributed to the widespread availability of affordable video cameras that were previously inaccessible to many individuals. Historically, film production incurred substantial costs. An intriguing aspect is the experience of seeing home theaters. In contrast to large theaters, home viewing offers more autonomy in selection. Viewers have the option to choose whether they are currently viewing a new film intermittently. This liberty enhances the industry's appeal for family entertainment. This option of choosing time and space is exclusive to home cinemas and is absent in broadcast and theatrical films. For Mappila, the domestic viewing context had more significance than minimizing manufacturing expenses. The first critique of this home movie stemmed from the space and acceptance acquired inside the Mappila residence. The general populace gradually embraced the concept of seeing 'quality' films in their homes. When these home films diverged from the societal norms, the filmmakers encountered significant criticism from the community. The primary critique of these films is that they betrayed the trust of the community that permitted them to transcend their limited scope. The quality of the first films released in Malabar was inferior. The community embraced it and derived pleasure from it, since it fulfilled their need for 'their own' pictures. The second pressing cause for promoting the home movie movement in the region is the rising migration of Malabar Muslims to the Gulf States. The impact of migration is seen in the Mappila dwellings. The migrants' dwellings were quickly filled with numerous musical instruments. The introduction of home videos established a familial context for viewing together.

Commenting on the emergence of home movies, JultenAbdelhalim opines:

"Home cinema refers to independent movies in Kerala made with small budget, and always revolves around a Muslim family and themes related to Muslims. The main reason for the proliferation of these movies is the rigidly conservative stance of Muslim scholars against cinema halls, and movies that carry either anti-Islamic ideas or indecency. The idea behind home cinema is that people buy the DVDs and watch them at their own homes with their families. Such enterprise gives space to women to occupy new roles, traditionally tabooed or signified in appropriate. The new spaces are not emerging just in home cinema, with Muslim actresses, but in songs and music videos" (Abdelhalim: 2016).

Salam Kodiyathur, a primary school teacher from Calicut, saw the potential market for retail video cassette sales for home watching. His debut film was NinagalenneBranthanaakki. It was recorded using a standard VHS camera and simply edited with domestic VCRs. He asserts that he spent just a few thousand on the film's creation. The Mappila household became mostly engaged with locally produced home cinema tapes. These films supplanted the Malayalam films and other program cassettes, resulting in the formation of a distinct Mappila popular culture.

Home Cinema and Alternative Aestheticism

According to Kenix (Kenix, 2009; 2011), the predominant academic understanding of alternative media is that it exists in stark contrast to mainstream media. Recent research has positioned alternative media

as content that challenges power structures or as media created through unconventional organizational practices (Atton, 2002). However, this paper argues that alternative media is crucial to modern social activity and frequently functions as the communication channels upon which networks are formed. To examine the home cinema movements in Malabar, we use the concept of alternative aestheticism as highlighted by authors like Shannon McCabe (McCabe: 2011). A transition has occurred in Film Studies, with terminology like alternative aestheticism being recognized as a framework for addressing indigenous art performance. For instance, anthropologist Faye Ginsberg observes:

“As a result of drastic ruptures in the social histories of indigenous communities, media have been taken as a way to form and negotiate Indigenous identities. Community video projects initiated by many Native American tribes to document oral traditions and life histories of elders are examples of the incorporation of the media technologies to document cultural practices and to maintain cultural identities.” (Wilmer: 2011).

We contend that these home videos originate from an indigenous Muslim community and aim to encapsulate communal life inside the frame. Consequently, it introduces a new aesthetic framework to the media culture in Kerala. Despite their Islamic themes, these films were not well-received by Muslims outside of Malabar due to their highly localized accent and cultural specificity. The impact of these home movies was extensive, prompting Islamic journals produced in Malabar, including *Shabab*, *Thelicham*, and *Prabodhanam*, to include articles about these films. These publications often address profound religious and theological concerns. Despite the careful approach of periodicals affiliated with Islamic organizations regarding the topic, the prevailing perspective among the religious community was mostly favorable towards home movies.

In addition to community magazines, major Malayalam publications also started to acknowledge the newly released home films among the Mappilas. Other prominent magazines, like *Gruhalakshmi*, *Mathrubhumi Weekend supplement*, *Madhyamam Weekend supplement*, and many English publications, included broad articles on the home cinema trend. These articles depicted the filmmakers' endeavor to develop a new cinema culture in a very comedic manner. However, they are not an academic analysis nor a critique, but rather intriguing facts, like the factors contributing to actors' success in a home film, the director's plot selection process, and some general information. The directors have collected these periodicals to present to guests, since they take pride in their recognition outside the community. The media coverage, whether from religious or mainstream publications, demonstrates the influence of home videos. The religious journals from Malabar examined these home videos from an Islamic viewpoint, while the secular magazines celebrated them. The topic initially appeared in *Prabodhanam* weekly and *Thelicham* monthly during the premiere of Salam Kodyathur's eighth film. In his essay published in *Prabodhanam* weekly, Jameel Ahmed, an Islamic art critic, asserts that the film's content is rather enjoyable and does not reflect 'the pure Islamic essence' of cinema (Ahmed: 2007).

The narratives of these films resonate in Malabar since they confront concerns like as communal deterioration, dowry practices, and conflicts over trivial matters pertinent to the community. They also effectively use certain Mappila storytelling strategies (Mappila narratives). These films chronicle and reconstruct socio-political and cultural events occurring both inside and without the nation's boundaries, particularly in the Gulf nations. The community was promptly impacted by the home cinema, since they see these films to be closely connected to their culture and daily life, accurately portraying the

community.

The film consistently employs the 'Mappila dialect'. This home cinema culture develops in contrast to the mainstream film culture. The community consistently discourages its members from attending theaters. The operating theater at Malabar is regarded as awful. The emerging cinema culture enabled the young to discover a modest source of income. The financial assistance provided to the performers constitutes a kind of 'understanding' rather than a contractual agreement. Previously, the director had responsibility for the production costs. Currently, local businessmen are compelled to make these films, driven not by profit, but by the significant gratification of having their names associated with the projects. These video films have now integrated into mainstream culture. The personalities, narratives, and ideas have become integral to the daily conversations inside Mappila households. It has shown remarkable success, exemplifying local economic accomplishment in a region where film viewing is strictly forbidden. These facts need an examination of the wider social ramifications of the enterprise. The early popularity of home movies may be attributed to the longstanding disregard of Mappila life inside the Malayalam cinema industry. They were mostly misinterpreted in Malayalam cinema. The portrayal of Muslims in the film industry is mostly unfavorable. The events of 9/11 exacerbated the unfavorable perception of Muslims, which was subsequently shown in Bollywood and regional cinema. Numerous films, including *Anwar*, *PaadamOnnuOruVilapam*, *Time*, *AraamThamburam*, *Valyettan*, and many other Malayalam and non-Malayalam productions, have perpetuated biased and stereotyped representations of Muslims (Faruqi: 2009). The emergence of home movies in Malabar enabled their prolonged aspiration to engage with the film industry and cater to a local audience.

It was a grassroots movement facilitated by several elements, including amateur artists, support from religious individuals, and local residents seeking to react appropriately to the mainstream Malayalam cinema business. To accommodate this burgeoning public culture, religion and its stewards collaborate with entertainment forces to create novel manifestations of religious expression. In response to criticism of Salam Kodiyathur's home movies, film critic Jameel Ahmad asserts that these films have inappropriately occupied the space where Muslim intellectuals were contemplating the creation of innovative works aligned with Islamic reformism. Despite debates over the erroneous appropriation of space by amateur filmmakers, it is essential to acknowledge that the first home movie creator effectively employed the space at their disposal.

Despite the absence of a formal advertising channel for new movie releases, individuals seek information via numerous platforms, including inquiries on Facebook and WhatsApp. Unlike the predominant film industry in Kerala, the home movie sector has emerged independently, without external investment or governmental assistance. The production expenses are mostly sourced from the community, and often, the producers originate from the same location. The home movies signify a departure from conventional filmmaking. The video business is propelled by local markets, with videographers as self-taught artists, and the market, initially originating from Malabar, is expanding swiftly to other regions, particularly Gulf nations. The Gulf is a significant market for these pictures. A multitude of films have been produced in Gulf nations, particularly Qatar and Oman.

An intriguing aspect of these films is their enhanced versatility. The filmmakers are acutely aware of the potential gains and losses in the market for these films due to the recent changes in the community. For instance, they originated as an adjunct to theater during the period when theatrical performances were prevalent in the region. Upon the decline of drama's allure, they promptly redirected their efforts

towards shooting the drama and disseminating it to the Mappila households. These home films started during the era of video cassettes' popularity. However, when CDs and DVDs became more affordable, home movies transitioned to these formats. DVDs have now diminished in their capacity to amuse the public. Home movies have now transitioned to YouTube, social media, and other social networks. Each production business has started its own YouTube channel and is generating revenue via advertisements on its Facebook page and other social media platforms.

Home Cinema: A Discussion

The home movie movement has considerable significance in Malabar, where the majority of Mappila Muslims began to engage with an evolving visual culture. It is a place that is fiercely disputed in a spiritually significant area. The group mostly comprises the traditional ulama elite and their adherents, who are reluctant to embrace innovations that may undermine the prevailing culture. The inaugural home movie was essentially a video imbued with messages and had significant technological deficiencies. It was the cinematic adaptation of a theatrical production. The principal rationale for establishing the home cinema was to shield the population from the impact of communist indoctrination via theatrical performances. The first home cinema, *Ningalenne Branthanaakki* (You Made me Mad), closely resembled the renowned communist drama, *Ningalenne Communistakki*, authored by Thoppil Bhasi. The play, *Ningalenne Communistakki* (You made me a Communist), had remarkable popularity and attracted several individuals to the Communist ideology. The film's title, reminiscent of a community play, suggests that aligning with Communism poses a threat to society. The narrative is primarily intended to enlighten the people about the materialistic existence and the need of a spiritual life. The play was primarily promoted by the reformist group Jamaat-e-Islami to safeguard the community against materialism and to educate its members on the significance of a virtuous life. During its state conference in Hira Nagar, Vengara, in April 1998, Jamaate-e-Islami staged mass conventions, which included a play that drew significant attendance to these events. It also affirmed the function of rashids, the communal guides. The embodiment of virtue is shown as a devout Muslim, presumably an imam, who instructs the community on moral principles and righteous actions while combating the injustices perpetrated by local thugs. The amateur quality of the play compelled them to discover other means of articulating their views due to their diverse professional backgrounds. Consequently, this constraint enabled them to transform it into a new format known as home movie.

Home Movies may be connected to the ongoing phenomenon of religious and cultural revivalism linked to the resurgence of contemporary Islam in Kerala. We have analyzed home cinemas from the year 2000 to examine the characteristics, content, and trends of home movies. Many Muslims consider seeing films at the theater to be "a deplorable act." The situation is analogous for the majority of Mappila Muslims. Even now, seeing the cinema does not constitute a family trip for them. A significant portion of the older age has never attended the theater, and even when they do, they seldom like to be accompanied by family. They engaged in religious discourses and documented Mappila songs that encapsulated the aesthetic enjoyment of Mappila Muslims. They believe it is forbidden in Islam or, at the very least, dissuaded by sharia law. The home directors of the 2000s saw the potential to produce films and distribute them to Mappila households via video cassettes and CDs. The general populace readily embraced this new notion, seeing it as a means to circumvent traditional theatrical. With the emergence of modern technology within the community, many factions of Mappila Muslims have begun using it to

disseminate their ideals.

Home movies, particularly in Malabar, stem from a confluence of religion, media, and public culture. Religious idioms and practices have transcended their original boundaries to integrate into broader public domains. The technical quality of these films may be deemed as poor. The filmmakers must convey to the viewers that they are using basic-level video cameras for the production of these flicks. Salam Kodyathur addresses the readers in an essay published in Prabodhanam. It is inappropriate to compare his film with other commercial films, since home videos serve an entirely different purpose (Kodyathur: 2007). The significance lies not in the technology, but in the message he intends to communicate to society. This is apparent in both films. The filmmaker started filming using inexpensive analog gear, and the results were not always promising. However, there is a consistent improvement in the use of technology in home filmmaking. The filmmakers have transitioned to digital cameras that provide enhanced picture quality. The consideration of using a high-quality video camera is irrelevant in the context of these home videos. The overarching allure of these films is in embracing the message rather than the medium. However, several film reviewers condemned this appeal as well. M Noushad, a film critic, asserts that these home videos have to embody an authentic cinematic perspective. All the films are inferior that fail to use technology effectively (Noushad: 2007).

Initially, these home videos portray narratives of 'authentic' Islamic figures. These films do not cater to the whole Muslim community or the people of Kerala; rather, they are focused on a certain segment of the Malabar region and its expansions in Gulf nations. The films consistently include religious figures from the community and portray 'cultured' and devout teenagers as the protagonists. This may have contributed to the establishment of a distinct Islamist identity at a period when the Muslim community in Kerala saw political and economic marginalization due to mainstream filmmakers portraying skewed representations of Muslims in cinema and other artistic mediums. Numerous prominent Malayalam films portray the Muslim community unfavorably. Films like *Araam Thamburan*, *Kilichundan Mambazham*, and *Thattatthin Marayathu* propagate anti-Muslim sentiments. These films attempt to portray alternative narratives of Muslim youth, countering prevailing perceptions of the Malayali public. The filmmakers and producers assert from the outset that their films serve to depict the authentic Islam to the community. The filmmakers strive to establish the validity of their profession via religious texts, including the Hadith and the Qur'an. In these films, the filmmakers convey specific themes and consistently reference phrases from the Prophet and the Quran. In *Kudumbakalaham Nooraamdivasam*, the actress expresses dissatisfaction with her husband's detrimental habits, who is ostensibly the protagonist of the film. She states, "Our prophet never reprimands his wives; rather, he supports them in all circumstances." This discourse engages the spectators' minds, prompting them to introspect. Although the discourse occurs among the players, it indirectly pertains to the general Mappila populace.

Films often undergo censorship for the depiction of particular activities, such as the use of alcohol and smoking. There is no physical contact with female actors in any of the films, since touching a woman is considered a crime in Islam. Although there is no religious authority to verify adherence to Islamic criteria in films, the filmmakers independently make this determination. They apprehend that contravening religious prohibitions may profoundly estrange their intended audience. The remaining regulations pertain to attire standards and the conduct of ladies and men in public, which are shown with meticulous attention in the films. The sites of these home recordings clearly demonstrate compliance with religious practices. The male actors are prohibited from interacting with the female

performers, and stringent self-discipline is enforced on the premises. They consistently maintain an Islamic ambiance, even on stage. The makeup artists are consistently directed to apply cosmetics after each prayer (namaaz). A universal pattern exists for all the flicks. They consistently provide narratives centered on Muslim households. For instance, the Muslim characters consistently engage in Islamic practices, such as greeting one another with ‘assalamualaikum’ (May Allah bless you); they acknowledge life’s events by stating, ‘innalillahivainnailahirajioon’ (we all return to Allah); they commence activities with ‘bismillahirrahmanirraheem’ (In the name of Allah, the most benevolent, the most merciful), along with various other religious expressions utilized in every circumstance.

The filmmakers use various strategies in these home videos to convey a certain message to society. For instance, the portrayal of two archetypes—virtuous and malevolent—of Muslim characters in almost all films serves to illustrate the community’s need to progress towards the ideal of being a good Muslim. By depicting an “evil other” in contrast to the devout Muslim, these films may provide their Muslim viewers with validation for their own transformations and endeavors to improve their faith, lest they face eternal condemnation. Numerous topics pertain to this duality between good and wicked Muslims. A promotion exists for the ‘decent Muslims’ within a politically tumultuous modern context (Mamdani: 2006). Most films depict a devout Muslim alongside one or two unscrupulous characters, illustrating the triumph of the devout Muslims or the downfall of the deceitful ones. Since the inception of the home cinema movement, the general public has been very attentive to the subjects of films. These videos are seen as essential for comprehensive social and cultural transformation in religious contexts. Consequently, little deviations from the accepted parameters of these films are rigorously scrutinized by society. For example, ‘KudumbakalahaamNooraamDivasam’ faced significant criticism for its depiction of the unsuitable behavior of an ideal husband and a wife attempting to isolate themselves in their home to avoid guests. A whole sequence depicts their endeavor to evade family members and neighbors in order to achieve alone for a while. Despite the absence of sexist statements or actions, the film was still attacked for its sexual innuendos.

A filmmaker often experiences internal anxiety when he believes there are further things to communicate to the viewers before ending the picture. In the early films, the filmmakers endeavored to incorporate many stories and subplots inside a single narrative. When he was unable to develop further characters to express his dissent against some malevolent actions inside Muslim culture, he introduced certain characters to give an extended monologue to convey the message straight to the audience. The inclusion of a ‘musliyar’ (religious priest) in almost all previous films exemplifies this discourse. In ‘Nashtapariharam’, he established a new character whose only function is to articulate a discourse on the tenets of Islamic finance and the issues surrounding interest and usury. The presentation of an implicit message is often inadequate, as seen in ParethanThirichuVarunnu, among others. Directors may contend that video films tackle societal concerns; nonetheless, many individuals are unsettled by their handling of ethical and moral dilemmas. These videos target the religious reversal of nominal Muslims, rather than appealing to the broader populace of Kerala. The character patterns are consistently selected and aligned with Islamic customs. The filmmakers establish concepts of virtuous and immoral Muslims by including several Muslim characters into the movie. The admirable traits of Muslims are consistently ascribed to the protagonists in films, who are shown with contemporary names that are widely recognized. The principal characters in these home movies include Abdul Aziz (Ningalenne Branthanaakki), Muhammad Sadiq (Varane Vilkkanaanundu), Zubair (Parethan Thirichu Varunnu), Niyas (Pennorumbettal), Abbas

(Pathiyathrakkoru Ticket), Nizar (Kubboos), and Jabir (Aanayittorayalvaasi), among others. The female characters are Rabiya, Raziya, and Maimoona. The names of villainous or malevolent characters are often antiquated and deformed, such as Andrukka, Checku, Leek Beeraan, Ayamutti, Kunjakka, and Mammadkutty.

Conclusion

Home video creators often express religious motifs to emphasize the significance of film viewing. Prior to the commencement of the film, the filmmaker personally addresses the audience, mostly of Mappila Muslims, urging them to refrain from piracy, since duplicating CDs from the original is deemed 'haram.' The director stated: 'I lack 'porutham' (indicating his disfavor towards the audience!) if you engage in piracy, and you must promote the 'Islamic purpose' by distributing the CDs to every Muslim family.' However, if you place a pirated CD into your CD player, I hope it fails to function on your computer. A virus may compromise your computer. The film creators use religious rhetoric rather than Constitutional Law to urge individuals to refrain from fabrication and piracy. In the context of fundamentalist Islam, filmmakers invoke Allah's name to seek divine protection, as is customary for any devout Muslim before undertaking any endeavor. The overarching concept of the film is that the makers of these home videos are entirely beholden to divine law, seeking God's favor from the outset. The filmmakers always assert that the films are produced only for the glorification of God, with no intention of financial gain. The phrases "bismillahirrahmanirraheem" (In the name of Allah, the Most Benevolent, the Most Merciful) at the opening and "Alhamdulillah" (Praise be to Allah) at the conclusion of the video suggest that the film is endorsed by divine approval. Primarily, such prayers possess a pragmatic aspect, as they may placate detractors who see video films as religiously invalid.

Funding: This research was funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Khalid University for this work through Small Research Groups under grant number (RGP1/187/45).

Acknowledgments: The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Khalid University for funding this work through Small Research Groups under grant number (RGP1/187/45)

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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