

# History of malayalam cinema essay sample

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Even much before the arrival of cinema, the people of Kerala were familiar with moving images on the screen through the traditional art form ‘ tholpavakkuthu’ (Puppet Dance). Usually exhibited at festivals of village temples, ‘ tholpavakkuthu’ uses puppets made of leather with flexible joints. These joints are moved using sticks and the shadow of these moving puppets are captured on a screen using a light source from behind, creating dramatic moving images on the screen. Stories from the mythology were told so, with accompanying dialogues and songs with traditional percussions like the Chenda. ‘ Tholpavakkuthu’ uses some of the techniques widely used in cinema like the close-ups and long-shots. Apart from the art of ‘ tholpavakkuthu’, which exhibits the nature of cinema, many of the folk arts and classical dance forms like ‘ Kuthu’, ‘ Koodiyattam’ and ‘ Kathakali’ exhibits very high visual qualities in their form. May be this legacy of Kerala’s visual culture lead the filmmakers of Kerala to take up cinema in a different way, rather than mere plain storytelling, than anywhere else in India, and the people of Kerala to appreciate them.

The early era (1907-1950s)

Cinemas before the first film

The first cinema hall in Kerala, with a manually operated film projector, was opened in Thrissur by K. W. Joseph in 1907. In 1913, the first electrically operated film projector was established (in Thrissur again) by Jose Kattukkaran and was called the “ Jose Electrical Bioscope”. Soon such cinema halls were established in other major cities of Kerala. In the early days, Tamil, Hindi and English films were exhibited in these theatres.

### The first film (silent movie, 1928)

The first film to be made in Malayalam was Vigathakumaran, which was released in 1930. It was produced and directed by J. C. Daniel, and for this work he is credited as the father of Malayalam cinema. The shooting of the first Malayalam film, the silent movie Vigathakumaran (The Lost Child), was started in 1928; the film was released in Trivandrum Capitol Theatre on November 7, 1930. It was produced and directed by J. C. Daniel, a businessman with no prior film experience. The plot of Vigathakumaran revolves around Chandrakumar, the son of a rich man, being kidnapped and brought up by a British man. At last he reunites with his family. Daniel founded the first film studio, 'The Travancore National Pictures Limited' in Kerala. The second film, Marthanda Varma, based on a novel by C. V. Raman Pillai, was produced by R. Sundar Raj in 1933. However, it became stranded in a legal battle over copyright issues and the court ordered the confiscation of the prints. As a result, the second movie's exhibition lasted only four days.

### The first talkie (1938)

Indian cinema had already entered the talkie age even before Marthandavarma was released. Balan, the first Malayalam cinema with a sound track was released in 1938. The film is a melodrama and was the first movie in this genre in Malayalam. Produced by Tamilian, T R Sunderam at the Modern Theatres, Balan was directed by Notani. A melodramatic film, with more Tamil influence than Malayalam, Balan featured the struggle of two orphaned children, Balan and his younger sister, oppressed and exploited by their evil stepmother until they are rescued by a kindly lawyer. Even though this film could be considered irrelevant in artistic sense, its

economic success created a base to the Malayalam film industry. Followed by the success of Balan, Jnambika was released in 1940. After Prahlada (1941), Kerala had to wait till 1948 for the next film. Nirmala (1948) directed by P J Cheriyan explored the possibility of music and songs in Malayalam cinema. Legendary Malayalam poet, G Shankara Kurup penned the lyrics for this film. Thus song-dance sequences became an essential ingredient for commercial success in Malayalam cinema.

Inspired from an imported film – Life of Christ – Phalke started mentally visualising the images of Indian gods and goddesses. What really obsessed him was the desire to see Indian images on the screen in a purely Swadeshi venture. He fixed up a studio in Dadar Main Road, wrote the scenario, erected the set and started shooting for his first venture Raja Harishchandra in 1912. The first full-length story film of Phalke was completed in 1912 and released at the Coronation cinema on April 21, 1913, for special invitees and members of the Press. The film was widely acclaimed by one and all and proved to be a great success. It is notable that none of the Malayalam films that came before the independence of India reflected the mood of the struggle for independence and also the film that came after independence and the early 1950s reflected that torrid period of Kerala, where the Communist upsprings was taking place changing the entire social climate of the State. Cinema continued to be dramas happening in a totally artificial and alien world. Malayalam films continued to be made mainly by Tamil producers until 1947, when the first major film studio, Udaya, was established in Kerala, in Alleppey (Alappuzha) by Kunchacko, who earned fame as a film producer and director.

1950s

Malayalam cinema has always taken its themes from relevant social issues and has been interwoven with material from literature, drama, and politics since its inception. One such film, *Jeevitha Nouka* (1951), was a musical drama which spoke about the problems in a joint family. *Jeevithanouka* (The Boat of Life) was a turning point for Malayalam cinema. This highly dramatic musical film, which narrated the story of ego clashes in a joint family, was mainly directed towards the women audience. *Jeevithanouka* was a huge success, and can be considered as the first 'super hit' of Malayalam cinema. Thikkurishi Sukumaran Nair, an actor from the stage, became the first 'superstar' of Malayalam cinema after the success of the film. But this success had also an adverse effect on Malayalam cinema. Films that were produced after *Jeevithanouka* were made according to this success formula, and nothing creative was seen for a long time. Superstars took over the driver's seat and directors were forced to the background.

Through *Neelakuyil* Malayalam cinema for the first time had an authentic Malayalam story. The story for *Neelakuyil* was penned by renowned Malayalam writer Uroob and directed by the duo of P Bhaskaran and Ramu Karyat. This melodramatic film dealt with the issue of untouchability in the society. Satyan and Miss Kumari were elevated to stardom after the huge success of this film. Malayalam film music till then were cheap imitations of Hindi and Tamil film music, also came up with original Malayalam tunes through this film. The lyrics written by P Bhaskaran were arranged by K Rghavan, influenced by Malayalam folk music, which became popular among the masses. This was also the first Malayalam film to be shot outdoors.

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Neelakuyil announced the presence of Malayalam cinema in Indian film arena.

Another notable production was Newspaper Boy (1955), which contained elements of Italian neorealism\*. This film is notable as the product of a group of amateur college filmmakers. It told the story of a printing press employee and his family being stricken with extreme poverty.

Nayaru Pidicha Pulival (1958) became the first movie based on travelling circus in Malayalam Cinema, and Aana Valarthiya Vaanambadi (1959) became the first jungle movie, directed by P. Subramaniam.

\* Italian Neorealism is a national film movement characterized by stories set amongst the poor and the working class, filmed on location, frequently using nonprofessional actors. Italian Neorealist films mostly contend with the difficult economic and moral conditions of the people.

The Growth: 1960s

After the success of Neelakuyil, films with authentic Malayalam stories set in the backdrops of Kerala villages started arriving. Minnamingu directed by Ramu Karyat and Rarichhan enna Pouran by P Bhaskaran were noted films produced during the late 1950s. Takazhi Shivashankara Pillai's famous novel Randidangazhi was also seen on the silver screen. In 1961 Kandam Bacha Coat, the first full-length colour film in Malayalam was released. This was an adoption of a famous social drama. Bhargavi Nilayam (1964) directed by A Vincent is a notable film of this period. This was a cinematic adoption of renowned Malayalam writer Vykam Muhammad Basheer's novel. Vincent

also directed some of the best films of early ages like Murapennu, Nagaram Nandi, Asuravithu and Thulabharam. Irutinte Athmavu directed by P Bhaskaran, based on M T Vasudevan Nair's story, gave a new face to superstar Prem Nazir, who till then was seen only in romantic hero's role.

Chemmeen - 1965 (Prawn)

Chemmeen (1965) directed by Ramu Karyat was the first South Indian film to bag the President's Golden Lotus Award for the best film. Based on a famous novel of the same name by renowned Malayalam writer Takazhi Shivashanakara Pillai, Chemmeen pioneered the growth of Malayalam cinema in technical and artistic aspects. It brought together some of the best technical talents then available in India, Salil Chowdhari (music), Markes Burtly (cinematography) and Hrishikesh Mukherjee (editing). It also had a huge star cast. The film tells the story of a pre-marital and later extra marital relationship between Karuthamma, the daughter of an ambitious Hindu fisherman, and Pareekutty, the son of a Muslim trader. The theme of the film is based around the popular belief among the fishermen communities along the coastal Kerala State in the Southern India regarding chastity. If a married fisher woman was faithless when her husband was out in the sea, the Sea Goddess (Kadalamma literally meaning Mother Sea) would consume him.

Post-Chemmeen Era

The post-Chemmeen Malayalam cinema arena saw an upsurge in quality films, mainly based on literary works of some of the best writers of Kerala. After Chemmeen, Ramu Karyat directed Ezhu Rathrikal which narrated the story of the down trodden. The renowned Malayalam writer M T Vasudevan

Nair made his film debut by writing screenplay for Murapennu. Directed by A Vincent, Murapennu was a landmark film. Oolavum Theeravum by P N Menon announced the revolutionary changes Malayalam cinema was about to witness in the early 1970s. A new generation of filmmakers who realized the uniqueness of the language of this medium, ventured into a different kind of cinema. This film could be considered as the bridge between the two eras of Malayalam cinema. Here onwards Malayalam cinema got split into two distinct streams, one that considered cinema's artistic qualities as its primary objective, which kept away all the formulas of popularity and the other the crass commercials, which took into consideration only the possibilities to entertain the mass and spin money. During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Kunchacko made significant contributions to Malayalam cinema, both as a producer and as director of some notable Malayalam movies. He started Udaya Studios in Alleppey (Alappuzha) in 1947, reducing the travel to Madras (Chennai) for film crew and actors. This boosted Malayalam film production in Kerala.

#### The Malayalam New Wave : 1970s

The 70s saw the emergence of a new wave of cinema in Malayalam. The growth of the film society movement in Kerala introduced the works of the French and Italian New Wave directors to the discerning Malayali film enthusiasts. Indian cinema that aims to bring out the seriousness or art is cited as art cinema. Film critics also term such kind of cinemas as the “ New Indian Cinema” or sometimes “ the Indian New Wave” or parallel cinema. During the 1960-1980s, the art film or the parallel cinema was generally aided by government. Such directors would receive federal or state



government allowances to produce non-commercial films on Indian themes. These films were exhibited showcased at state film festivals.

The directors of these art cinemas had strong foreign influences like that Italian Neo-Realism or French New Waves. These parallel or art films are claimed as ‘ meaningful movies’ where the intelligence of the viewers is not interrogated and profit-maximization is not the ultimate intention. The 70s era experienced an upsurge of new kind of Malayalam cinema. The development of film society movement and the viewing of world classics enforced a radical change in Malayalam film perspective in Kerala. A new trend often termed as the ‘ New Wave Malayalam Cinema’ or the ‘ Malayalam Parallel Cinema’ came into existence. This new genre of movies was mainly sparked off by the new generation filmmakers educated at the FTII, Pune, who created films with the help of the Film Finance Corporation which was then newly founded. Adoor Gopalakrishnan’s first film, Swayamvaram (1972), brought Malayalam cinema to the international film arena.

Swayamvaram revolves around Vishwam (Madhu), an aspiring writer and his love interest Seeta (Sharada), who arrive in a big city after eloping together. Financial pressure leads to Vishwam and Seeta moving out of their home and seeking a cheaper place to stay. Finally Vishwam dies and Seeta ends up as a widow with a baby. The film ends with unanswered questions.

Elippathayam (Rat Trap; 1981) which won many prestigious awards, is about Unni the pathetic middle aged man, unmarried, set in his traditional ways, who cannot accept social change and adjust accordingly.

All the ten films he directed, from Swayamvaram to Oru Pennum Randaanum, were screened at several International film festivals and won him several National and International awards. He won the British Film Institute award for Elepathayam. He also won National Film Awards four times and several State Film Awards. Adoor received the Padma Shree in 1984 and the Padma Vibhushan in 2006. The Nation honoured Adoor for his valuable contributions to Indian cinema by awarding him the highest cinema award of India, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for the year 2004. Apart from his films, Adoor's major contribution towards introducing a new cinema culture in Kerala was the constitution of the first Film Society in Kerala, 'Chitralekha'. He also took active part in the constitution of 'Chitralekha', Kerala's first Film Co-operative Society for film production. These movements triggered a fresh wave of good films, often termed 'art films' by directors like Aravindan, P A Becker, K G George, Pavithran, Raveendran etc.

Filmography:

Swayamvaram

Kodiyettam

Elippathayam

Mukhamukham

Anantaram

Mathilukal

Vidheyam

Kathapurushan

Nizhalkkuthu

Naalu Pennungal

Oru Pennum Randaanum

In 1973 M. T. Vasudevan Nair who was by then recognized as an important author in Malayalam, directed his first film Nirmalyam, which won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film.

Nirmalyam narrates the story of a temple ‘ Valichappadu’ (Oracle- the ‘ Valichappadu’ is supposed to be the personification of God. He speaks on behalf of God to the gathering) and his family, passing through extreme poverty. He has directed 7 films and written the screen play for around 54 films. He won the National Film Award for Best Screenplay four times for: Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha (1989), Kadavu (1991), Sadayam (1992), and Parinayam (1994), which is the most by anyone in the screenplay category.

K. P. Kumaran’s Adhithi (1974) was another film which was acclaimed by the critics. Cinematographers who won the National Award for their work on Malayalam films in the 1970s were Mankada Ravi Varma for Swayamvaram (1972), P. S. Nivas for Mohiniyattam (1977), and Shaji N. Karun for Thampu (1979). John Abraham, K. R. Mohanan, K. G. George, and G. S. Panikkar were products of the Pune Film Institute who made significant contributions.

During the late 1970s, some young artists started seeing Malayalam cinema as a medium of expression and thought of it as a tool to revitalize society.

A noted director, G. Aravindan was famous in Kerala as a cartoonist before he started making films. He followed Adoor’s lead with his Uttarayanam in 1974. The talent of the late G. Aravindan is evident in Thampu (The Circus

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Tent), Kummaty (The Bogeyman), Esthappan and Pokkuveyil (Twilight).

Thampu explores the complex and lonely lives of circus-players ‘ with an almost documentary fidelity.’ Kummaty deals with the legendary figure of a mysterious wizard who figures in children’s lore in Kerala. Esthappan is set among Christian fishermen in Kerala and narrates the life of a wandering and mysterious spiritualist. Pokkuveyil is about a young poet who, unable to withstand the hard realities of life, slips into a world of fantasy and hallucination. Filmography:

Uttarayanam

Kanchana Seeta

Thampu

Kummatty

Estheppan

Pokkuveyil

Chidambaram

Oridathu

Marattam

Unni

Vastuhara

1970s also saw the emergence of a notable director P. G. Viswambharan with his debut film Ozhukinethire and mythical film Sathyavan Savithri from the same director, which was well accepted. Also, commercial cinema in this period saw several workerclass themed films which mostly had M. G. Soman and Sukumaran in the lead followed by the emergence of a new genre of

pure action themed films, in a movement led by action star Jayan who is usually considered the first genuine commercial superstar of Malayalam cinema. But this was short-lived, and almost ended with Jayan's untimely death while performing a stunt in a film called Kolilakkam (1980).

Nevertheless, he paved way for different films and future actors who proved their talents in both commercial and art genres, the most famous of them being Mohanlal and Mammooty.

### 1980s

Another major course of Malayalam cinema that emerged during the 1980s was the 'middle-stream cinema' which was a fusion of the popular commercial cinema and the parallel cinema and had significant themes. These films were mainly directed by K G George, Padmarajan and Bharathan, who were the exponents of Pune Film Institute. These film makers made films which were commercially successful but didn't have the ingredients of commercial films. K G George was a celebrated director of Malayalam cinema. George's debut film, Swapnadanam was a commercial success as well as critically acclaimed and won several awards. A marital psychodrama, Swapnadanam rejected all the usual song-dance numbers of popular cinema, yet succeeded in reaching the common mass. George's last movie was released in 1998, Elavamkodu Desam, a period movie when mimicry movies ruled the roost. "The audience somehow did not relate to this movie," he says sadly. In between his first film Swapnadanam and Elavamkodu Desam, he created milestones in Malayalam cinema. Seven of his movies were screened at different international festivals.

Adoor Gopalakrishnan made *Elippathayam* in 1981. This movie was widely acclaimed and won the British Film Institute award. His other movies include *Mukhamukham* (1984), *Anantharam* (1987), *Mathilukal* (1989), *Vidheyan* (1994), *Kathapurushan* (1995), and *Nizhalkuthu* (2003). I. V. Sasi the path breaker who has directed more than 131 odd films over a span of 34 years made *Kanamarayathu* (1984). Padmarajan made his early works in this period including the movie *Koodevide?* (1983). The year 1988 marked the release of Kerala's first super hit soft core film *Adipapam* which was directed by P. Chandrakumar. P. A. Backer and Bharathan are other names worth mentioning. Shankar became a hero in the Malayalam films through the romantic film of Fasil – '*Manhil Virinha Pookkal*' which was released in 1980. Shankar became a romantic star in the minds of people through the movie.

'*Parayanum Vayya Parayathirikkanum Vayya*', '*Punnaram Cholli Cholli*', '*Aram Plus Aram- Kinnaram*', '*Itha Innu Muthal*', '*Chekkeranoru Chilla*', '*Sandhyakku virinha Poovu*', '*Oru Nokku Kanan*', '*Patayottam*', '*Poochaykoru Mookuthi*', '*Ente Mohangal Poovirihu*', '*Engane Nee Marakkum*' and '*Sukhamo Devi*' are the super hit films of Shankar at that time. But by the end of 1980s he was out of the Malayalam film industry. He was completely out of the cinemas in 1990s. But he was the super star even at that time. People couldn't forget him very fastly. They considered him as the hero even when he is not acting in films.

A movie worth mentioning is *Chithram* (1988) by Priyadarshan. Mohanlal, Renjini, and Nedumudi Venu were the main actors. The film was a phenomenal success in Kerala and broke all existing records in Malayalam

cinema at the time. It had a theatrical run of more than 369 days in some centres and is said to be one of the highest grossing all time blockbuster in Malayalam Cinema. It collected 4+ crores from major centres.

### Golden age of Malayalam cinema

Most critics and audiences consider the period from the late 1980s to early 1990s as the golden age of Malayalam cinema. The Malayalam cinema of this period was characterized by detailed screenplays dealing with everyday life with a lucid narration of plot intermingling with humour and melancholy. This was aided by brilliant cinematography and lighting as in motion pictures like Perumthachan (1990), directed by Ajayan with Santosh Sivan as the cinematographer. These films are also remembered for their warm background music by composers like Johnson, as in the motion picture Namukku Parkkan Munthiri Thoppukal (1986) by Padmarajan. The golden age saw big actors like Mammooty, Mohanlal, etc. Mohanlal , Suresh Gopi and Mammooty carved a niche for them in the Malayalam film industry during the Golden Age and they have now become the most sought after actors in the industry.

Many of the movies released during this time narrowed the gap between art cinema and commercial cinema in the Malayalam film industry, as in Mrigaya starring Mammooty (1989, directed by I. V. Sasi and written by Lohithadas), Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha (1989), starring Mammooty, Kireedam (1989, directed by Sibi Malayil, starring Mohanlal and written by Lohithadas) , Mathilukal starring Mammooty (1989, directed by Adoor Gopalakrishnan), Carnival, starring Mammooty (1989, directed by P. G. Viswambharan),

Amaram starring Mammooty (1991, directed by Bharathan), Kakkothikkavile Appooppan Thaadikal (1988, directed by Kamal) and Sargam (1992, directed by Hariharan). The period had an abundance of movies rich in creative humour from directors like Priyadarshan, Sathyan Anthikad, Kamal. The era also saw well crafted comedy by the Duo Siddique-Lal , (Ramji Rao speaking (1989) and In Harihar Nagar (1990). The internationally acclaimed Piravi (1989) by Shaji N. Karun was the first Malayalam film to win the Caméra d'Or-Mention at the Cannes Film Festival.

Other notable contributions of this period include His Highness Abdullah(1990) directed by Sibi Malayil, Abhayam (1991) directed by Santosh Sivan, and the motion picture Daisy (1988) an expressive depiction of separation and longing set in a boarding school, directed by Prathap K. Pothan.

### 1990s

Some examples are Mathilukal (1990) directed by Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Kattu Kuthira (1990) directed by P. G. Viswambaran, Bharatham (1991) by Sibi Malayil, Ulladakkam (1992) directed by Kamal, Kilukkam (1991) directed by Priyadarshan, Kamaladalam (1992) by Sibi Malayil, Vidheyam (1993) by Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Devaasuram (1993) by I. V. Sasi, Manichithrathazhu (1993) by Fazil, Ponthan Mada (1993) by T. V. Chandran, and Desadanam (1997) by Jayaraaj. Swaham (1994), directed by Shaji N. Karun, was the second Malayalam film entry in the Cannes International Film Festival, where it was a nominee for the Palme d'Or. Murali Nair's Marana Simhasanam later won the Caméra d'Or at the 1999 Cannes Film Festival. Guru (1997) directed



by Rajiv Anchalwas chosen as India's official entry to the Oscars to be considered for nomination in the Best Foreign Film category for that year, making it the first film in Malayalam to be chosen for Oscar nomination. The music was scored by Ilaiyaraaja. The symphonic background score was conducted by Raaja using the Hungarian Symphony Orchestra, which marked the first time in Indian cinema, the background score was conducted outside the country. Guru is a fantasy movie on the utopian concept. It is highly symbolic and makes a statement on terrorism and the evils of the world.

#### Early-mid 2000s

Slapstick comedy was the predominant theme in the films of this era. C. I. D. Moosa (2003) by Johny Antony, Meesa Madhavan (2002) by Lal Jose and Kunjikoonan (2002) directed by Sasi Shanker are examples. Sequels to a number of successful films were made. These include blockbuster hit Raavanaprabhu (Devaasuram) and the sequels to the 80s hit movie Oru CBI Diarykurippu, named Sethurama Iyer CBI (2004) and Nerariyan CBI (2005), which were well received. Many movies during the early 2000s were of low quality. But there were some movies which were examples of exemplary film making like Meghamalhar, Madhuranombarakaattu, Nandanam, Perumazhakkalam, Kazhcha etc. Dileep emerged as a major star force during this period after the blockbuster, Meesa Madhavan. Malayalam Cinema had a crisis, when a parallel culture of adult-content movies named " Shakeela films" emerged to be the best grossers for more than a year. Malayalam cinema saw a rare death of talent. At the same time, Tamil movies saw a

surge of new talent in scriptwriters, directors and actors. This resulted in increased popularity of Tamil and Hindi movies in Kerala.

Several film theatres were closed in rural Kerala and were converted to marriage halls. But by the last of year 2003, it was a happy season for the industry. The 2000s witnessed the decline of quality of Malayalam films. Many directors who excelled in the Golden Age struggled as many of their films continuously failed critically and commercially. As a result the gap between parallel cinema (now known as art cinema) and mainstream cinema (now known as commercial cinema) widened. The 2000s also saw a commercial film formula being created in line with Tamil and Bollywood films. Directors like Shaji Kailas, Rafi Mecartin and Anwar Rasheed directed blockbusters which had few artistic merits to boast of. Despite the overall decline, some directors stood apart and made quality cinema. Shaji N. Karun, Lenin Rajendran, Shyama Prasad and Jayaraj made films that won laurels. Notable directors who debuted in this time include Blessy, Lal Jose, R. Sharath, Renjith, Roshan Andrews, Amal Neerad, Aashiq Abu and Lijo Jose Pellissery.

#### Late 2000s

Malayalam movies saw a comeback in 2005. New directors such as Lal Jose, Roshan Andrews, Blessy and Anwar Rasheed brought back original scripts to Malayalam movies. Notable movies of this era are Nandanam, Meesa Madhavan, Kaazhcha, Udayananu Tharam, Notebook, Classmates, KeerthiChakra, Vinodayathra, Paradesi, Rajamanikyam, Karutha Pakshikal, Arabikkatha, and Kadha Parayumbol. Many of Malayalam movies are remade

into other languages. This era has seen new promising actors like Dileep, Kunchako Boban, Prithviraj, Jayasurya along with stalwarts Mammooty, Mohanlal, Suresh Gopi, and Jayaram.

### 2010s to Present

After several years of qualitative deterioration, Malayalam films saw the signs of some renaissance in the last two years with the release of several experimental films, mostly from new directors. Salim Ahamed's Adaminte Makan Abu, the Award assembling drama, has been chosen as India's official entry to the Academy Awards to be considered for nomination in the Best Foreign Film category for the year 2011. Adaminte Makan Abu is the second Malayalam film to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film after Rajiv Anchal's Guru. Other films that contributed the most to this renaissance include Ritu, " Kutty Srank, Bhramaram, Paleri Manikyam: Oru Pathirakolapathakathinte Katha, Pranchiyettan and the Saint, Urumi, T. D. Dasan Std. VI B, Traffic, Gaddhama, Pranayam, City of God, Melvilasom, Beautiful, Ee Adutha Kaalathu, 22 Female Kottayam, Nidra, Diamond Necklace, Veettilekkulla Vazhi, Manjadikkuru, Aakashathinte Niram, Spirit, Ustad Hotel, Thattathin Marayathu etc. It encouraged new generation actors like Fahadh Fazil, Murali Gopy, Indrajith, Anoop Menon with the emergence of promising directors such as Lijo Jose Pellissery, Rajesh Pillai, Anjali Menon, Aashiq Abu, Arun Kumar, Dr. Biju etc

### Actors

#### Lead actors

A lead actor is called as a superstar when that person has become a driving

force at the box office. Just like other Indian film industries, there are no clear-cut guidelines for decorating an actor as superstar, and this designation is almost always bestowed by the media after an actor proves to be a champion at the box office. Thikkurissy Sukumaran Nair was the first person in the Malayalam film history to be called a superstar, following the tremendous success of his second film *Jeevithanauka* (1951), which is touted as the first superhit of Malayalam cinema. Later Prem Nazir, Sathyan, Madhu, Jayan, M. G. Soman, and Sukumaran came to be called superstars. Prem Nazir and Sathyan formed a bipolar industry in which a considerable number of films made in Malayalam in the later 1960s and almost the whole of 1970s starred one of them, until the rise of Jayan.

Curiously, the trend was continued in the next era as well, with Mammooty & Mohanlal being established as superstars in the 1980s. Suresh Gopi emerged as a superstar by mid 1990s, following a series of successful movies having police/political themes, most notably *Commissioner*, directed by Shaji Kailas . As with most of the other Indian film industries, the Malayalam film industry is driven by male actors. None of the female actors who have been part of the industry have come to be known as superstars, though there have been immensely popular stars like Miss Kumari, Sharada, Sheela, Jayabharathi, Vidhubala, Srividya, Shobhana, Revathi, Urvashi, Manju Warrier, Samyuktha Varma and Kavya Madhavan.

#### Kerala State Film Awards

The Kerala State Film Awards are the most prestigious film awards for a motion picture made in the Malayalam language. The awards have been

bestowed by Kerala State Chalachitra Academy since 1998 on behalf of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Government of Kerala. The awards were started in the year 1969. The awardees are decided by an independent jury formed by the academy and the Department of Cultural Affairs. The jury usually consists of eminent personalities from the film field. For the awards for literature on cinema a separate jury is formed. The academy annually invites films for the award and the jury analyses the films that are submitted before deciding the winners. The awards intend to promote films with artistic values and encourage artistes and technicians. International Film Festival of Kerala

The International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) is a film festival held annually in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala. This film festival was started in 1996 and is organised by Kerala State Chalachitra Academy on behalf of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the State Government. The festival is held in November/December every year and is acknowledged as one of the leading film festivals in India.

#### Film studios

The Travancore National Pictures was the first film studio in Kerala. It was established by J. C. Daniel in 1926 in Nagercoil, which was then a part of Travancore. Producer-director Kunchacko and film distributor K. V. Koshy established Udaya Studios in Alappuzha in 1947. The studio influenced the gradual shift of Malayalam film industry from its original base of Madras, Tamil Nadu to Kerala. In 1951, P. Subramaniam established Merryland Studio in Nemom, Thiruvananthapuram. The other major studios are Sreekrishna

(1952, Kulathoor), Ajantha (1964, Thottumukham), Chithralekha (1965, Aakkulam), Uma (1975, Vellakkadavu), Navodaya (1978, Thrikkakkara) and Chithranjali (1980, Thiruvallam).

### Organizations

The Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) is an organisation formed by artists of Malayalam cinema to safeguard their interests. It aims to act against piracy, to safeguard the interests of member actors and actresses, and to serve as a common forum to raise concerns and address issues. The activities of AMMA include endowments, insurance schemes, and committees on wages and benefits on revision, fund for research, pensions, education loans for their children etc. for the members. The organization ventured into film production in 2008 with Twenty: 20 to raise funds for its activities. AMMA was involved in the film industry deadlock of 2004 and the alleged denial of work to senior actor Thilakan.