

Mapping the Liberties: An Analysis of the Portrayal of Tamil Eelam in Selected Cinema

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Abstract

Cinema as an art expounds the nuances in the lives of humans by letting them experience various emotions. The multi-store model of memory of Atkinson and Shiffrin is used in this study to understand how the mainstream media's emotionally stimulating information gets retained in memory, and to explain further, the authors juxtaposed the real narratives of a vulnerable community through historical events with those of 'reel' stories to explain the standard of portrayal. This study aims to delve into the political scenario, narrative shift and the adverse effects of misrepresentation. This paper critically examines the portrayal of the Tamil Eelam struggle in Mani Ratnam's *Kannathil Muthamittal* and the second season of *The Family Man*, focusing on how these depictions shape societal understanding of the Tamil diaspora and their political aspirations. This qualitative study tries to develop an argument on the discourse of representation and how it is possibly involved in creating a perception in the audience's minds by incorporating a mise-en-scène approach for the selected mainstream cinema. While *Kannathil Muthamittal* juxtaposes the personal journey of a Tamil child adopted by Indian parents with the Sri Lankan-Tamil conflict, reflecting the ideas of war trauma and separation, *The Family Man* Season 2 has the portrayal of Tamil rebels as one-dimensional "terrorists," by simplifying the whole narrative of the conflict. This paper argues that representations have real-world implications, perpetuating biased narratives that delegitimise the community's aspirations and struggle for autonomy. Through this study, the paper calls for nuanced storytelling that respects the socio-political intricacies of the Tamil Eelam struggle, emphasising the need for accurate and empathetic representations in popular culture media.

Keywords: *Mainstream Media, Cinema, Representation, Tamil Eelam Struggle, Atkinson and Shiffrin Multi-store Model, Cinematic Techniques, Popular Culture.*

1.0 Introduction

Cinema is an art form that unites audiences through entertainment, cultural reflection, and inspirational narratives. People not only use it for entertainment but also often, knowingly or unknowingly, begin to mimic the behaviour of their favourite characters due to the perceptual, cognitive, and emotional impact on their psychology [1]. While cinema elicits emotional responses from all viewers, its content is always handcrafted with the target audience in mind. Often, the targeted audience finds such cinema relatable and mirrors the emotions of the lead characters. [2]. In various countries, artists are worshipped by their fans to such an extent that these fans are willing to go to extreme levels for their idols, such as BTS of South Korea [3], Taylor Swift [4] and Michael Jackson [5] of the USA, Amitabh Bachchan, Salman Khan, Rajnikanth, Kamal Hasan, Prabhas etc of India [6], [7], [8], [9].

Since the advent of cinema, there has been a long-standing relationship between the psychology of viewers and filmmakers. The psychology of cinema can be studied through psychoanalysis, which helps to understand the film as a narrative, alongside the filmmakers' psyches, the developmental crises faced by the characters, cultural psychology, and the viewers' experiences [2]. Real incidents, when transformed into reel incidents (Cinema) and projected appropriately, inspire brotherhood and promote

various communities, ethnic groups, or cultures. If portrayed inappropriately, reel incidents hold the power to cause communal bias, which may lead to communal riots and ultimately disrupt society. At the same time, commercial film manipulates the audience's emotions by eliciting dark emotions and playing with their sentiments, all to generate substantial revenue.

Cinema is fundamentally concerned with perception, attention, memory, imagination, and effects (emotions and aesthetics). Aesthetics has always played a key role in attracting viewers by influencing their psychology, whether in Aristotelian and Shakespearean plays or in films such as *Pushpa II* in the Telugu film industry (Tollywood). Movies with high aesthetic visuals, like thrillers, romantic films, and adult cinema, get popular, and movies with less aesthetic visuals, like documentaries and postmodern films, quite seldom receive popularity. There are many other reasons through which cinema gains popularity, like costumes, lavishness, lifestyle, appearances, acting, music, dance, technology, etc. In today's world, technology may not be the Key Selling Factor (KSF), but it is always a basic expectation of the viewers. The portrayal of a character induces psychological and emotional responses and also shapes the perceptions of society. Emotions get stimulated, and the mind processes and interprets visual information based on visual stimuli like colour, lighting composition, and camera angles. A higher degree of visual stimuli can be achieved by utilising shorter shot lengths and frequent transitions.

The impact of any kind of information on an individual or a group in society is based on the ideology of the mass media that circulates it. Carefully articulated movies based on real-life incidents earn the recognition of the public. However, small mistakes in such movies can easily earn the wrath of the public. Sometimes, these stories are based on real-life incidents, and at times, real incidents are transformed into stories that are propaganda by distorting the facts. Many times, the perception of the storyteller also alters the real stories of the communities, individuals, history, etc., and the audience is fed such an altered version of reality. This altered version is often purposefully crafted to influence the audience more than reality would, especially by triggering the emotions and sentiments of individuals or communities. Any misrepresentation of the narrative often affects the understanding of the audience and might as well mislead them from the factual information.

This situation makes cinema appear as the most sensitive mass media that has only one-way communication, i.e. difficult for a mass audience to question or interrupt controversial content before mass distribution. Thus, it becomes a prerequisite for the cinema to be subjected to nuanced censorship to avoid the mishaps of misrepresentation. Cinema holds the power to make the audience experience happiness, sadness, hope, fear, awe, empathy, wonder, suspense and various other emotions. Post reception of information through senses like sight, sound, taste, etc., based upon the emotional impact and usefulness, it gets stored either in the long-term memory or in the short-term memory. Emotionally stimulating information gets retained in memory, but when it is incapable of triggering human senses and emotions, it is often forgotten or deleted from the memory and becomes unrecallable. The initial information, received by the brain, is what gets stored in the long-term memory, irrespective of the truth involved in it. At the time of recall, if the secondary information received contradicts the initial information stored, it may cause an emotional clash. Sensory memory is the place where Information processing, i.e. encoding and decoding of information, usually takes place. [10], [11], [12].

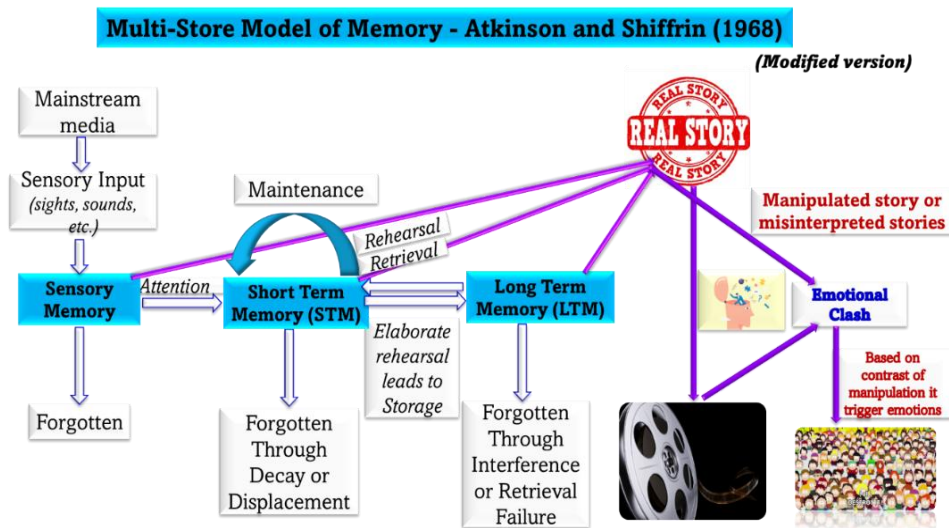


Figure 1: Atkinson and Shiffrin's Information Processing Model

Figure 1 shows the process of the multi-store model of memory given by Atkinson and Shiffrin in 1968. For this study, the authors have articulated by using the above-discussed model, which helps to understand the emotional clash of the target audience, i.e. the communities that are being portrayed in the narrative, when the represented communities' real story gets altered after it turns into a reel story. Furthermore, this qualitative study seeks to develop an argument about the discourse of representation and how it may shape perceptions in the audience's minds by employing a 'mise-en-scène approach' to selected mainstream cinema. According to Safrina and Nia, "One of the aspects in film studies is mise-en-scène. The analysis of mise-en-scène not only reveals how a film is communicated logically and aesthetically but also is an ideological decision"[13]. Beyond the formalist structural analysis of mis-en-scene, this study focuses on certain analytically rich sequences that do not follow a mechanical scene-by-scene formula.

The mise-en-scène analysis in the article does not follow a rigid scene-by-scene pattern because the aim of the study is interpretive rather than strictly structural. In film criticism, mise-en-scène analysis often focuses on visually and thematically significant moments instead of applying the same analytical template to every scene. This approach is consistent with broader traditions in film studies discussed by theorists such as André Bazin and David Bordwell, who emphasise understanding how visual elements create meaning rather than following a fixed analytical format [14]. Accordingly, the scenes discussed in the article are selected deliberately because they are particularly relevant to the argument being made. Each of these scenes returns to and reinforces the article's central concern with representation, thereby keeping the analysis focused and thematically coherent rather than devolving into a purely mechanical breakdown of the film.

The authors of this study juxtaposed the real narratives of a vulnerable community, as reflected in historical events, with those of ‘reel’ stories to examine the standard of portrayal and to delve into the political context, narrative shifts, and the adverse effects of misrepresentation. While every scene in a movie is created with the audience's attention span in mind, the filmmakers are the decision-makers about what should and shouldn't be seen. [1] Hence, it is crucial to understand the intention of the storyteller and the impact of these scenes on society. Since cinema is a cultural institution, the way films are projected affects viewers' cognition. Cognitive film theory posits that the human brain is highly sensitive to temporal patterns and rhythms in cinema, underscoring the importance of understanding how films move viewers and the effects they have. [15], [16]

While some get engrossed in the story, most get lost in the storytelling and acting. Music and sound design can also move the audience's hearts. This ultimately makes films more engaging and impactful. However, at times, this engagement and impact lead viewers to adopt the characters' ideologies, actions, and behaviours without first assessing whether these are positive. The violence shown on screen induces numerous behavioural differences in cognitive memory. Sometimes, behavioural changes don't get reflected immediately; rather, they stay hidden and appear when triggered [17]. This often gives birth to crimes in society.

Some popular cinema-inspired crimes that have taken place in the recent few years are, the smuggling of sandalwood inspired by Allu Arjun's 'Pushpa'; the brutal killings of five innocent people by an aspiring serial killer named Shiva Prasad, a 19 years old boy who derived inspiration from 'KGF 2'; the murder of Dubai-based flight attendant, Nitika Sharma, by her stalker, Ashwini Kashyap after getting inspired by the toxicity of 'Kabir Singh'; murder and disposal of dead body by Indrapal Singh and his nephew in 2015, after getting inspired by 'Drishyam'; abduction of Deepti Sharma in 2016 by her stalker Devendra who took inspiration from 'Darr'; the murder of Shraddha Walker and subsequent disposal of her dead body after getting chopped into pieces by her boyfriend who was inspired by American crime series 'Dexter' [18], [19]. At this juncture, it becomes pertinent to look at the liberties of production of mainstream cinema, especially those made after real-life narratives. Such portrayals reflect the society and its understanding of cultural ties between different communities. The following part of the study maps the liberties of such (mis)representations through the selected cinema by navigating through the political epistemology.

2.0 Learning Political Epistemology through Cinema

In India, cinema and politics are so strongly entwined that we can't see either of them separately. Different variations of cinema, ranging from mainstream to parallel cinema, can be seen receiving varied responses and applause from critics and audiences. Just like in any country, cinema has been a crucial part of popular culture [20] in India, which reflected and reinforced people's obstacles and aspirations. By drawing attention to representation theory at this juncture, it can be understood that representation is not just a reflection but an active process of constructing the meaning of the entities of culture. Thus, representation plays a significant role in constructing cultural identities [21]. Stuart Hall's theory of representation goes in line with larger media studies' viewpoints, which examine the reciprocal link between cinema narratives and real-world social structures [21].

The Indian cinema industry consists of different regional cinemas coming from different languages. In the earlier cinemas, we have not seen a proper interpretation of nuances and subjects that shape the socio-political environment of this country in any of the industries. As times changed, the filmmakers adapted their tactics to reflect the scenario of society. In Chidanand Das Gupta's words, "regional cinema, as we shall see, has its roots and its sense of identity; it tends to underplay the common factors that are arising in the country and stresses elements of regional tradition with some pride and tradition" [22].

Scholars have noted that Tamil cinema often showcases social tensions and aspirations. In Baskaran's words, "...over the seventy-nine years of its existence, Tamil cinema has grown to become the most dominant influence in the cultural and political life in Tamil Nadu" [23]. Following Zizek's perspective of Hollywood film as a means of understanding socio-political processes in post-industrial society [24] and applying it to Kollywood, or the Tamil film industry, provides a compelling case, given its close ties to Tamil Nadu's political and social structure. Throughout history, Tamil cinema has been crucial in forming public opinion, influencing ideologies, and even acting as a platform for launching political leaders [25], [26], [27].

The rise of Dravidian politics in Tamil Nadu is closely linked to the film industry, which has largely served as a platform for nationalist regional parties [28]. Baskaran argues that cinema became a vehicle for the Dravidian movement, embedding themes of social justice, self-respect, and linguistic pride within its narratives [22]. Tamil cinema is known for its intangible link between cinema and politics

that makes the silver screen an ideal platform for showcasing Tamil Nationalism [28], especially alluding to real-life political issues like the Eelam Tamil conflict. In order to analyse the prospect of representation of Eelam Tamils, this paper thus focuses on the position of the film-makers that helps to comprehend their understanding of the community and conflict.

This article aims to critically examine the portrayal of the Eelam Tamils and briefly overview only the two prominent Indian cinema *Kannathil Muthamittal* and season two of the Indian web series *The Family Man*, addressing the topic. Here, the term ‘mainstream’ is used to describe films produced by reputable production companies and created specifically for commercial audiences of popular culture. Culture is a concept with many different meanings and is subject to change in today's world due to influences from globalisation, technology, customs, and values [20]. It is not that Eelam Tamils have been absent from popular or non-mainstream cinema, nor is it that other such representations lack artistic merit or critical depth. Rather, the choice of selected cinema is based on how these narratives are framed, negotiated, and often selectively articulated within the constraints of political sensitivity and mainstream visibility.

Adding to this, limiting the study to only two selected movies so that the analysis can be detailed and careful, rather than too broad. These two works were chosen because both deal directly with the Sri Lankan Tamil conflict, but they come from different time periods and media formats. *Kannathil Muthamittal* represents early 2000s Tamil cinema, while *The Family Man 2* belongs to the recent digital streaming space with a pan-Indian audience. Comparing them helps to understand how the representation of Eelam Tamils has changed or remained similar over time. Although studying only two movies does not allow for general conclusions about all mainstream media, it makes it possible to examine these works closely and draw more precise insights.

Naturally, there is much disagreement about what is and is not mainstream. The study chooses to adhere to the previously stated definition of ‘mainstream’ to give a broad overview of the topic. The Eelam Tamil conflict is complex, yet the analysis depends upon a basic understanding of political dynamics in the state. This analysis has been done with due diligence by following Behar's claim that social science “that doesn't break your heart just isn't worth doing” [29], which seems particularly resonant about research with a persecuted and displaced community. Both works are sensitive portrayals of the lives of the Eelam Tamil people and their attempts at coming to terms with the reality of their shackled existence. It is not to grade the two schools of writing, but to analyse their differences in the way of illustrating the narratives as presented in the mainstream cinema.

3.0 *Kannathil Mutthamittal*: A Quest of the Child

Amudha [acted by P.S. Keerthana], an abandoned Sri Lankan child, is welcomed into the family of Tiruchelvan [acted by R. Madhavan], a fiery Tamil poet and engineer who writes under the pen name Indira, and his wife [acted by Simran]. When the much-loved Amudha reaches the age of 9, her parents reveal her adoption, motivating young Amudha to embark upon far too many adventures in pursuit of her ‘true’ mother. Ultimately giving in to her requests, Indira and Tiruchelvan proceed to Sri Lanka amid the civil war to find Amudha's biological mother, Syama [acted by Nandita Das].

The movie is about ‘discoveries’ of different narratives by the characters, touching upon the emotions amidst war and displacement. Discoveries such as Amudha discovering her adoption and biological mother, through which she discovers her roots and routes. Tiruchelvan and Indira find a new ‘Tamil’ identity abroad. The Buddhist Sri Lanka, which was found amidst the irony of civil war and the unpredictability of life, completely contradicts the Buddha's preaching of peace. The linguistic relevance in the movie also illuminates the relationship shared between Amudha and her parents. An adopted child of the age-old, archaic-styled poet/writer in Tamil; a writer who knows that he has the capital of language, in fact, that helps in the transaction of his own and his Sinhalese friend's lives in one of the most compelling and intriguing sequences of the film, where the LTTE soldiers surround both of them and drag them away. The Sinhala gentleman [acted by Prakash Raj] is shown as equally

defenceless rather than as an oppressor [30], which aligns with the Western understanding of the Eelam Tamil conflict.

Interestingly, Amudha was portrayed as a student who hates her Tamil language subject taught by the modern curriculum teachers. For most of the film, Amudha shares a closer bond with him, and this relationship subtly signals her connection to the cultural past that he represents. Amudha's relationship with her father becomes a subtle indicator of her unformed connection with her origins. In this analysis, from the focal point of the language, it acts as a cultural link for the migrated ethnic group. Under the diasporic framework, dwelling on the nuances of the film briefs the transnational migration, including the recurring themes of home and nostalgia. Unlike in the globalised era of migration, Sri Lankan Tamils' displacement mostly happened due to war and forced evacuation. In one of the scenes, when Amudha and her adopted parents reach her mother's village, they come across people evacuating that village as it is going to be air-bombed by the Sri Lankan military forces. Gloomy and cold visual settings are effectively used to portray the reality of displacement and war trauma. Seioighe states, "For the diaspora, remembering the de facto state can evoke powerful feelings of longing, loss, and disappointment for what might have been, where the community's emotional relationship to the 'homeland' is defined by exile" [31]. For such estranged communities, trauma and forced evacuation remain etched in the deepest memory and nostalgia.

Although Kannathil Muthamittal is a commercial film of national production, the plot explores the displacement and war trauma of Eelam-Tamils. According to Dhananjayan, Ratnam's work in Kannathil Muthamittal is indeed commendable as he had put much effort into rendering the struggles of the Eelam-Tamils as authentically as possible [32]. Also, unquestionably notable for its extensive coverage of the struggle, the human cost, and the psychological toll that Eelam Tamils incurred.

4.0 Fallacy of *The Family Man*

The second season of the show follows the same story template as the first season, following the complexities of an Indian spy agent chasing 'terrorists' to capture them before they perform any anti-social activity. They do not have any mention of the cause of conflict; also conveniently omit many historical instances that led to insurgency such as Tamil Nationalist sentiments, Sinhalese Buddhist extremism over ethnic minorities, the Srilankan government's anti-minority policies, the failed economy that gave way to the rise of the Marxist Jana Vimukthi Prerana [JVP] party and its insurrection in 1971, the birth of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE], the role of Tamil United Liberation Front [TULF] as the main opposition in Srilanka parliament etc [33], [34].

Surprisingly, in *The Family Man*, it was shown that the Prime Minister pushed the forces to capture the leader of the LTTE. In contrast, in the actual political state of affairs, during the prime ministership of Indira Gandhi, the government approved the Research and Analysis Wing to train the armed forces of the Tamil Liberation Movement [33], [34]. Thereafter, during Rajiv Gandhi's term, the Indian government signed an accord in 1987 that deployed the Indian Peace Keeping Force [IPKF] in the North and East of Sri Lanka to disarm the LTTE and end hostilities [33]. The Indian government's ambiguous involvement and the IPKF-LTTE war are said to be among the reasons that led to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.

For a pan-Indian show of this range, distorting the whole history without providing the larger political context, per se, is a disservice to the art of cinema. In toto, this misrepresentation is a reductive treatment that supports the institutionalising of Sri Lankan Tamil marginalisation, argues Hannah Stephen in her review [35]. The web series makers chose the conventional convenience of portraying LTTE as a 'terrorist group' rather than disclosing the role of Sinhalese Buddhist extremists' activities and the government's anti-minority policies against the Tamils, which birthed LTTE in the first place and then transmogrified into an ogreish outfit in due course of time [34]. Critics claim that this show failed to further any theory addressing trauma studies, feminist studies, or caste studies. The whole web

series displays some degree of reluctance in addressing the LTTE soldiers as ‘Tigers’; instead, they were validated as terrorists.

The key officer characters of the web series, who go by the upper caste surnames Tiwari [acted by Manoj Bajpai], Talpade, and Kulkarni, exude caste hegemony that further helps them in the process of neutralising the threat posed by the ‘Tamil Nationalists’, who are driven by the motto of Dravidian ideology. In the process of reflecting society, cinema can be believed that, as Anand concludes, a site that perpetuates and nurtures caste and Brahminical order [36]. He points out certain storylines that support societal norms and values, as well as the limited representation of subaltern caste heroes, which substantiates Srinivas’s argument regarding cinema being undemocratic, as it reinforces caste and class hierarchies [37].

The Brahminical portrayal of the demonisation of Dravidians, when viewed from an anti-caste lens, has always been a bone of contention between the Tamilians and North Indians for a long time. Pandian states that the Brahmin utilised his caste affiliation to exert influence over negotiations in both the ‘civil society’ and the ‘political society’ through the colonial state’s power system [38]. By strategically aligning with the colonial state’s administrative and epistemic structures, the Brahmin elite consolidated representational power in the domains of shaping discourse, codifying knowledge, and mediating cultural legitimacy. This framework helps in analysing *The Family Man 2*, where the North Indian Brahmin protagonist is placed at the moral and narrative centre, while Tamil militant characters are often portrayed through the lens of extremism and political threat. Such representation creates a contrast in which rationality, legitimacy, and national authority are associated with the upper-caste figure, whereas Dravidian identities are framed within suspicion and conflict. Therefore, the character construction in the series can be understood as reflecting a longer tradition of cultural representation that subtly reinforces Brahminical hierarchy in contemporary media.

Hannah states that the portrayal of Raji [acted by Samantha Ruth Prabhu] with mud make-up was far from being a feminist as it has repeatedly reduced her identity to her body, as a soldier and a survivor of abuse [35]. She also declares that Raji is a mere tokenistic representation of the women in the LTTE, where, in reality, the women make up to one-third of the liberation army, which has writers and political thinkers alongside fighters and shooters. Meena Kandasamy, while translating the poems written by female fighters, says that their poetry is a political commentary that denies being mere weapons of the organisation, and also, they are acutely aware of micropolitics [39]. Regarding the women’s portrayal, the select cinema is poles apart, with a discernible disparity. The rebels in *Kannathil Mutthamittal* are shown as driven by passion, even to the extent of the women cadres giving up their children for the cause of freeing their land [30]. Unlike *Kannathil Muthamittal*’s more nuanced portrayal of women cadres, in which sacrifice is embedded within a broader emotional and ideological framework, Raji’s character in the web series is narratively restricted, undermining feminist empowerment assertions and raising concerns about tokenism in popular cinema.

5.0 Empathy or Entertainment: Representation of Eelam Tamils

In *Kannathil Mutthamittal*, Maniratnam’s sophisticated approach deals with the conflict from the vantage point of the emotional vulnerabilities of the involved parties by strictly restricting the discourse to the politics of language and the quest for peace. According to Anker, melodramatic narrative style often persists as a cultural mode of storytelling that provides a channel for the audience to empathise with the victims and structure the presentation of political discourse [40]. Nevertheless, the question remains with this portrayal of whether the Eelam Tamil conflict is just for peace and not a sovereign state. The situation is well-nigh the same or even worse with the web series *The Family Man*, as the narrative was narrowed down to mere binaries of the government taking action against guerrilla warfare. To mention that the war was between the government and rebels is doing an utter injustice to the situation’s complexity [33].

Given that the LTTE is banned as a terrorist group in India, both the movie and web series make not even one reference to the group. Both allow the audience to interpret the situation for themselves since the rebels are only seen as armed individuals speaking the Jaffna Tamil dialect while appearing to be combating for unknown reasons. Similar to Raji's silence about the factors that led to the tyranny she experienced in her hometown, *Kannathil Muthamittal* avoids mentioning the conflict's roots directly. Nevertheless, in the absence of an outpouring of solidarity through film [30], while these films have offered some visibility and acknowledgement of the Sri Lankan Tamil situation, simultaneously narrowed down the entire cause behind the civil war to mere binaries.

6.0 Analysis and Observations

In the first part, this paper discussed the mechanism of the impact and influence of mass media, specifically, on the audience. Thus, this influence also provides a channel to adversely affect the audience by motivating them to develop bhakti or adoration for famous people in popular culture. These adverse effects can be connected with what Ambedkar had warned before during one of his constitutional speeches, calling bhakti or hero-devotion, a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship [41]. Cinema, being one of the far-reaching and influential media in popular culture, not only entertains but also renders space for manipulative and biased narratives that can create unrest in the social sphere. Also, by reflecting the existing dominating concepts, cinema helps in providing cultural legitimacy [42]. The aforementioned narratives stem from personal biases and misinformation rather than strictly sticking to the realities. The narrative of misinformation mimics the misrepresentation of an entity in that narrative.

The latter half of the paper, thus, dwells on the nuances of the narratives in the movie *Kannathil Muthamittal* and season 2 of the web series *The Family Man*, giving way forward for the argument presented in the former part. The representation of the Eelam Tamil conflict in both the movie and web series plays a significant role in influencing people's perception towards the conflict. When the mass media of such scale and acceptance deliver a narrative, the unbiased portrayal usually escapes scrutiny, whereas the biased or inappropriate portrayal renders a distortion of history. Through the analysis of the selected cinema, certain observations regarding time and position give way forward in understanding of the importance of representation.

At this juncture, it becomes pertinent to observe the portrayals in both narratives with respect to the time of their release. *Kannathil Muthamittal* was released in 2002 during the LTTE organisation's peak under Prabhakaran's leadership, whereas *The Family Man* season 2 was released in 2021, a long time after his death, which officially ended the civil war. With this comparative analysis of two narratives, however brief it is, the narrative shifting from empathy to apathy towards Eelam Tamils and the LTTE is palpable. This model of narrative shifting can be seen by juxtaposing it with the then-political dynamics happening among the governments of India and Sri Lanka, the LTTE and other local and international parties involved in the conflict for better or worse. Seighe argues that the Sri Lankan government's conflict memory is intended to defame the Tamil separatist movement as violent, unlawful, and apolitical, to dismiss atrocities, and to dodge responsibility for war crimes and genocidal slaughter [31].

Secondly, the position that inspires the narrator to pick his style of narration subtly speaks of their understanding towards the representation of the community. For a long time, people from Tamil Nadu shared empathy with the cause of Eelam Tamils. Over the 1980s, Tamil Nadu politics were impacted by Sri Lanka's ethnic challenges, especially in 1983 when a pogrom against Tamils in Sri Lanka forced about 1,00,000 of them to flee to Tamil Nadu. Born close to Kandy in British Ceylon, M.G. Ramachandran served as Tamil Nadu's chief minister from 1977 to 1987 and was well-known for supporting the Eelam Tamil struggle [30]. Karunanidhi opposed the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord's decision to send Indian forces to Sri Lanka. For his blatant condemnation, he was called an anti-national [43]. In the aforementioned instances, stage director Maniratnam [who is a Tamilian himself] is naturally diligent towards the sentiments and tells his story from the vantage point of empathy. On the other hand,

we can find the narration in web series to be quite in contrast to that of the movie, succumbing to commercial notions that only cater to entertainment.

Till 1971	From 1972-1983	Post 1983
• , Growing discontent about inequalities between Tamils and Sinhalese. • uprising of a popular liberation front, the <i>Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna</i> (JVP), a Marxist organization representing the interests of dissatisfied Sinhala youngsters	• 1972- New Constitution • Ceylon to Srilanka • discontent gradually started turning to violence. • 1972-Tamil United Front (TUF) formed and later transformed into Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF)	• conflict escalated that led to the Jaffna pogrom and India's involvement through its Peace Keeping Force (PKF)

Figure 2: A brief chronology of the events during Sri Lankan Civil War

7.0 Conclusion

While many artists and filmmakers have openly expressed their support for the Eelam Tamil cause, only a handful of them have truly empathised with their plight, yet they have not inculcated the Eelam Tamil struggle in their narratives despite their claims of expressing genuine Tamil cultural and sentimental interests. As Ranganathan and Velayutham [30] have noted, “Tamil films failed to relate to and represent Eelam Tamils of Sri Lankan ancestry, who comprise the largest market and most proximate diasporic Tamil community outside India”.

Concerning rapid globalisation, the content cinema creates travel throughout the world without many obstacles. Particularly for the web series receiving impunity in the form of zero censor cuts from the Indian Censor Board, required to be diligent in the portrayals of sensitive topics rather than becoming a medium of propaganda; which can be the reason behind the inappropriate portrayal of Eelam Tamils in *The Family Man*. Furthermore, the web series tends not to incline towards any moral obligation, while using the vulnerable community's narratives ultimately hurts the sentiments of the respective community. According to Atkinson and Shiffrin's information processing model, when the audience belonging to such communities looks at their stories projected otherwise, the long-lasting memory of trauma gets triggered and leads to commotion. Media representation can significantly influence public opinion, shaping perceptions and attitudes towards marginalised communities. Inaccurate or biased portrayals can contribute to misinformation and prejudice, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and reinforcing existing biases. Hence, it can be ascertained that when presented with sensitivity and with due consideration for the audience's emotional landscape, cinema based on real stories need not provoke adverse emotional reactions; rather, it can engage viewers without triggering negative sentiments.

This research highlights the critical need for nuanced storytelling that transcends simplistic binaries, advocating for portrayals that acknowledge the intricate socio-political histories and diverse experiences within the Tamil diaspora to promote a more informed societal discourse. Furthermore, it contributes to the broader academic discourse on the ethics of representation in popular culture, particularly concerning vulnerable communities whose narratives are often co-opted or distorted for mainstream consumption. The paper advocates for a more conscientious approach to filmmaking, where the powerful medium of cinema is leveraged not for sensationalism or political expediency, but for the accurate and respectful depiction of complex human experiences and geopolitical realities. This necessitates a re-evaluation of existing cinematic frameworks to ensure that storytelling aligns with principles of fairness and accuracy, particularly when depicting politically sensitive topics. [44]

The study's focus on only two mainstream movies may limit the understanding of the entire subject of the psychological influence of mainstream media or cinema on the audience. Nevertheless, this study finds the narrative shift concerning the dynamics of politics during different times. Additionally, the interpretation of the selected cinema content is subject to researchers' bias, despite systematic explorative analysis efforts. Future research could address these limitations by conducting extensive studies to determine how psychological influence evolves over time and shapes social perspectives, comparing the dynamics across different social groups to broaden the feasibility of the findings.

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