

**A Critical Study of the Select English Translations of
Malayalam Dalit Poems**

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in

English language and Literature

by

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled **A Critical Study of the Select English Translations of Malayalam Dalit Poems**, submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature, is a bona fide work carried out by **Babitha B.**, under my guidance and supervision. Neither the dissertation nor any part of it has been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma or title before.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in the thesis entitled **A Critical Study of the Select English Translations of Malayalam Dalit Poems** is based on the original work done by me under the guidance of **Dr. Divya N.**, Assistant Professor, PG Department of English and Research Centre of English, Sree Kerala Varma College Thrissur and has not been included in any other thesis submitted previously for the award of any degree. The contents of the thesis have undergone plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.

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This is to certify that the corrections mentioned by the adjudicators in the reports have been incorporated in the Ph.D thesis of Babitha B., titled **“A Critical Study of the Select English Translations of Malayalam Dalit Poems.”** Therefore submitting here the corrected hardcopy of the thesis. The content of the CD is the same as that of the hard copy.

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Contents

Chapter One	:	Introduction	1
Chapter Two	:	The World of Translation and Themes	41
Chapter Three	:	Language and the Aesthetic Domain	91
Chapter Four	:	Translation: Prospects and Realities	163
Chapter Five	:	Conclusion	213
Chapter Six	:	Recommendation	220
		Endnotes	222
		Works Cited	233

A Note on Documentation

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Chapter One

Introduction

The contemporary Malayalam Dalit poets are triumphant in creating their own space in the canon and many English translations have appeared. The present study envisions scrutinising the English translations of Malayalam Dalit poetry. The study has chosen select poems of Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S. Das, Sunny Kavikkad, Raghavan Atholi, G. Sasi Madhuraveli, S. Joseph, Sivadas Purameri, M. R. Renukumar, M. B. Manoj, Vijila, Binu M. Pallippad and S. Kalesh. Translations have created a wide scope of international acclaim for these regional poets and opened a passage for vital academic discussion. Malayalam poetry prolific with its regional flavour and high esteem is bestowed with a vast international audience through translation. The consciousness of Dalit identity, the simple diction and the colloquial idioms used in these poems make them distinct in world literature.

The primary objective of the study is to analyse and interpret the translations of twentieth century Malayalam Dalit poetry and to examine how poetry acts as a medium of resistance against the exploitation of the marginalised class. It examines the language, diction and stylistic features used in these poems. The problems of translating Malayalam Dalit poems into English and the politics of translation are analysed. The linguistic, social and cultural equivalence principle in translation is also addressed. The study explores the attempts of Malayalam poets to create a Dalit identity. It scrutinizes how women are represented in Dalit poems and evaluates the poetry of the marginalized. The issues of alienation and identity crisis faced by Dalits of Kerala are also discussed.

The bitter experience of the downtrodden and the resistance they made to gain individual rights had exalted the inception of Dalit literature in India. The 'varna system' in the Indian social hierarchy had reduced the Dalit communities to the margin. The emergence of Dalit literature had made substantial contributions to the empowerment of the oppressed. The origin of Dalit writings can be traced back to Buddhist literature, Bhakti poets and the philosophy of Jyotirao Phule. The birth and evolution of Dalit literature in India can be associated with the Ambedkarite influence among educated Dalits and the formation of Dalit Panthers in 1972 in Maharashtra. The establishment of Siddharth College¹ and People's Education Society² by Ambedkar was a great milestone for the Dalit literary movement in Maharashtra. Under the leadership of Ghanashyam Talwatkar and Siddharth Sahitya Sangh a literary society was established in 1950. Even after the abolishment of untouchability, caste inequalities continued to be practiced in the different states of India. Its evil effects are persisting in Indian society. It is in this context that Dalit literature evolved as a protest against the inhuman caste inequalities in India. With the sudden demise of Ambedkar in 1956, there was a gap made in the formation of a Dalit literary movement. Soon his followers and Dalit writers gathered for the literary movement in Indian history. The Dalit literary movement was inaugurated with the formation of Dalit Panthers in 1972 in Bombay. Namdeo Dhasal, Arjun Dangle and J. V. Pawar were the pioneers of the movement. *Poisoned Bread* (1992) discusses about the establishment of Dalit Panthers:

Dalit Panthers came to be established through the Dalit literary movement. The leaders of the Dalit Panthers were all writers. A wave of literature expressing one's experience in provocative language swept over Marathi literature.

Maharashtra was again charged with discussions on Dalit literature and language. This was probably the first time in India that creative writers became politically active and led a movement. (Dangle xl-xli)

The term 'Dalit' was first used to represent the untouchables and the oppressed by Jyotirao Phule in Maharashtra in the nineteenth century. The term was later popularised by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his speeches and writings. "The etymology of the term 'Dalit' can be traced to the root word *dal* in Sanskrit, which means to crack, split, be broken or torn asunder, trodden down, scattered, crushed, destroyed" (Kumar 3). According to *Heuristic Explorations*, "the Dalits are 1) the broken, torn, the rent, the burst, the split; 2) the opened, the expanded; 3) the bisected; 4) the driven asunder, the dispelled, the scattered; 5) the downtrodden, the crushed, the destroyed; and 6) the manifested, the displayed" (Nirmal 139). Dalit Panthers' Manifesto defines Dalits as "Members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion" (Satyanarayana and Tharu 62).

Dalit writings were primarily initiated in Marathi Literature through the writings of Baburao Bagul and Namdeo Dhasal. The resistance and revolt that began to blow up in Marathi literature slowly advanced to other Indian languages. Dalit writers all over India initiated an innovative literature of protest, revolution and resistance against the conventional mainstream ideology. "Dalit writing has given new life to autobiography" (Satyanarayana and Tharu 18). Dalit autobiographies created a radical platform for Dalits. Many Dalit autobiographies appeared and were translated into English and other languages. Sharan Kumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* (1984), Bama's *Karukku* (1992),

Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* (1997) and Siddalingaiah's *Ooru Keri* (2003) are some of the popular autobiographies.

Kerala followed a different social hierarchy unlike the 'varna system' that existed in India which divided the Hindus into four classes – Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (kings and warriors), Vaishyas (the business class), and Sudras (the untouchables). The manacles of casteism in Kerala chained the untouchables (Parayas³, Panas⁴, Kuravas⁵ Adivasis⁶, and the Malayaraya⁷), where the Brahmins⁸ or the Namboodiris⁹ savoured the topmost position in the social hierarchy. Brahminical hegemony and ideology even controlled the ruling class (the three princely states – Travancore, Kochi, and Malabar) in the name of God. Feeding and offering gifts to Brahmins were considered sacred. Nairs¹⁰ who came under the Namboodiris in the social hierarchy belonged to the warrior class and followed the matrilineal system. Namboodiris and Nairs exploited the marginalized community of the Ezhavas¹¹ and Thiyyas¹² who were considered above the serfs and the Dalits.

Dalits were treated inhumanely, brutally discriminated against and denied the freedom to access public spaces. They were forced to keep a specific distance away from the *thampurans*¹³. The lands of the Dalits were captured. They were used for forced labour in agricultural lands without proper wages. The elite class in Kerala maintained social dominance and governance through control over the production and economy of the land. By degrading Dalits as slaves, the upper class established a social hierarchy in the name of caste and thereby enjoyed pleasure as well as power over land and economy. *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar* (1807) gives a record of the caste system and Dalits in Kerala:

In some part of the province, *Churmun* is a term applied to slaves in general, whatever their cast may be; but it is in some other parts confined to a peculiar cast, who are also called *Polian* or in the plural *Poliar*. Even among these wretched creatures the pride of cast has full influence; and if a *Churmun* or *Polian*, be touched by a slave of the Polian tribe, he is defiled, and must wash his head, and pray. (Buchanan 491)

The condition of the Dalits was pathetic under the reign of feudal lords and Brahmins. They had to keep sixty four feet away from the Brahmins as they were treated as untouchables. Dalits were served rice gruels in the leaves placed in the holes made in the ground. Women were not allowed to cover their breasts and were asked to wear necklaces made of shells and stones. Dalits had to accept the wages that they were given without any complaint. Sometimes they were subjected to brutal violence and physical abuse. The brutality of the slave trade is presented in the songs of Poikayil Appachan who sang about how: “They put ropes around the neck of mom and dad / Children cried aloud and rushed to the spot / The elder son realized that mom and dad are sold to the lords” (Appachan lines 2-4). The evidence of slave trade can be traced from the historical records:

Male slaves sell at from 20 to 60 old *Vir'*- *Raya Fanams* or from 9 s. 6 ½ d. 28 s. 8 d.: women sell at only one half of this low price. The difference of cast makes no variation in the value; although children of the different casts are not divided in the same manner. A male slave lets at four *Fanams* year, and a woman at half as much, the person who hires them providing for their maintenance. (Buchanan 495)

Kerala followed a power hierarchy based on the caste system. Through knowledge and power, the upper class controlled the lower class in society. According to

Dalit Literature and Criticism:

The hegemony of the high castes became so pervasive because all knowledge was generated and processed by them. One of the best examples of this was how learning and using Sanskrit as a language was the privilege of the upper castes. Dalits and women were barred from having access to this language and this was apparently codified in the Vedas, Smritis, and Puranas. Thus, the Sanskrit language, which was the repository of knowledge and wisdom at that time, became a closely guarded terrain where no outsiders were permitted. Some of the immediate effects of this policy were the non-proliferation of Sanskrit and the creation of an outer group, the 'untouchables,' whose sole purpose of existence was to serve the interests of the upper-caste people. As a result, for centuries, this community remained permanently at the periphery of society even though they participated in its production process. Ironically, though the people occupying the lowest strata of the society were rendered 'untouchables,' the goods they produced were somehow deemed acceptable for use. (Kumar 42)

Michel Foucault's concept of power and knowledge can be related to understanding how Dalits were controlled and marginalised through the articulation of power. The upper caste kept the knowledge away from the Dalit community and exercised power over them.

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces

things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (Foucault 119)

Silver lines of reformation began to appear in Kerala with the arrival of Christian missionaries. The colonial European powers implanted the seeds of revolution in the minds of the oppressed through education. The downtrodden tried to adopt alternative religions to escape from the cruelties of feudalism and inequality that existed in Kerala. But unfortunately the shadows of untouchability and subjugation continued to follow the converted Dalits. The sociocultural disparate atmosphere that existed in Kerala contributed to a new wave of revolution that ignited social reformation and enlightenment.

The real social reformation in Kerala had begun in the last phase of the nineteenth century with the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru and his followers. The spread of Marxian ideology along with the rise of left political parties and the freedom movements against British colonialism contributed to social change as the plea for equality began to be heard everywhere. Temple entry protests like Vaikom Satyagraha¹⁴ (1896) and Guruvayur Satyagraha¹⁵ (1931-32) shackled the Brahminical discourse. But Dalits continued to remain in the periphery as evident with the Malayali Memorial Mass Petition (1891) submitted before the Maharaja of Travancore for the reservation of government jobs in which the Dalits were omitted. Advocate P. K. Sankara Menon and C. V. Raman Pillai took the initiative in submitting the Malayali Memorial Mass Petition on 11th January 1891 with the signatures of 10038 individuals but Dalits and Ezhavas

were not included in it. Details of the first two fifty persons were only given in the mass petition which contained the signatures of Namboodiris, Nairs, Syrian Christians, landlords and merchants. The petition requested the reservation of Keralites in the government jobs of India. On 17th October 1895 under the leadership of Dr. Palpu, an Ezhava Memorial was submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore with the signatures of 13176 Ezhavas for the education rights of Ezhava children and the job reservation for them. However, Dalits were excluded from the Malayali Memorial and Ezhava Memorial.

Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham¹⁶ started in 1907 and stood for the liberation of the untouchables. It reinforced the confidence and identity formation of Dalits through activities that gave prominence to education and cleanliness. Under the leadership of Ayyankali, agrarian hunger strikes were organised when the upper class rejected the school entry of Dalit children. The one-year-old starvation strike threatened the feudal lords and realizing the value of labour and the labourers, they were forced to accept the demands of Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham. The remarkable *Villuvandi*¹⁷ travels by Ayyankali at Venganoor challenged the dominant discourses of the time. The crusades of Dalit movements like agrarian hunger strikes and the 'Kallumala struggle' were ejected from entering the historiography of the Kerala Renaissance.

Kallumala Struggle happened in 1915 was a great feminist revolt for the freedom of Dalit women in Kerala. Dalit women were not allowed to wear clothes on the upper part of the body. Instead, they were asked to wear *Kallumala*¹⁸ or necklaces made of stones, pebbles and shells as a symbol of their low caste. Struggles and revolts happened all over Kerala to eradicate this social evil. Under the leadership of Gopala Dasan, a

meeting was organised in Perinad near Kollam to boycott the stone necklaces. This led to a revolt among Dalits and Nairs. Following a Conference was arranged in the big open ground in Kollam under the chairmanship of Parameswaran Pillai. Over 4000 Dalit women wearing clean clothes, blouses, and stone necklaces attended the conference:

Ayyankali invited two Dalit women to the dias and suggested to them that they publicly cut their shell and stone necklaces which they promptly did with their sickles. Following this all the Dalit women including many grandmothers present there mounted the dias and discarded their necklaces which then lay in a huge heap. This was an inspiring moment in the history of social reforms and the reconciliation ended successfully. (Panikkasseri 209)

The contribution of Ayyankali, the pioneer Dalit activist and social reformer in attaining freedom and equality for the Dalits in Kerala was remarkable. The biography, *Ayyankali: Jeevithavum Idapedalukalum* (2017) marked the revolt of Ayyankali. Brahmins and upper castes used *Villuvandi* or the bullock cart for travel. Dalits were not allowed to travel in a *Villuvandi*. Ayyankali decided to challenge this as he brought a *Villuvandi* from Tamil Nadu and tied two healthy bullocks on it. He wore a white singlet, a turban, a dhoti and travelled through the streets of Venganoor in 1898. This was the first strike for the Right of Free Movement of the Dalits. The upper caste Brahmins and Nairs tried to stop him but the brave warrior could not be stopped. Ayyankali was a master in Martial arts. There were fights and bloodshed during his travel but despite all the huddles Ayyankali completed his travel and reached back to Venganoor. Ayyankali continued the travels along with his followers and fought for the right of free mobility.

In 1903 under the advice of Sree Narayana Guru, his disciple and great poet Kumaran Asan formed the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam. Ayyankali and his followers worked to gain education rights for Dalit children. In 1905 Diwan of Travancore gave orders in favour of Ezhava children to enter schools. Taking inspiration from Sree Narayana Guru, Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham started by Ayyankali in 1907 stood for the liberation of the untouchables. Continuous efforts of Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham prompted the Diwan of Travancore to issue orders in favour of the Dalits to enter schools in 1907. However, the *Savarna*¹⁹ Hindus of Kerala did not allow the Dalit children to join schools. Ayyankali and his followers petitioned the new diwan P. Rajagopalachari against the injustice done to the Dalit communities in denying the right to education. In 1910 the government issued a new order granting education rights to untouchable children. Ayyankali brought a Dalit girl named Panchami to enrol in the Ooruttambalam school. The upper castes attacked them while entering the school. Ayyankali's men fought back. Ayyankali entered the classroom with the Dalit girl and made her sit on a desk. The outraged elite class burned the Dalit homes and attacked the Dalits. The school owner Kochappi Pillai burned his school that was supposed to be polluted by the presence of Panchami. Dalits tried to enrol in the schools but were attacked. Ayyankali decided to start a separate school for Dalit children when they continuously failed to enrol Dalit children in the schools run by the *Savarna*. Kumaran Asan helped him to find a teacher named Pandit Parameswaran Pillai to teach the Dalit children. They had built a new shed for the classroom. However the elite class attacked the school and set the shed on fire. A new shed was made again before dawn. The *Ayyankalipada*²⁰ took charge of protecting the school and the teacher from the elite

rowdies. Ayyankali took a new strategy in achieving the right to education. Labour strike was organised under the leadership of Ayyankali. Dalits decided not to work in the fields. Even if they starved to death, they did not enter the fields owned by the feudal landlords. The strike had lasted for a year and Ayyankali arranged for the workers to associate with the fishing communities. Feudal lords trembled as their granaries lay empty and their income decreased. At last Diwan appointed Kandala Nagan Pillai who was the First-Class Magistrate to act as a mediator to resolve the issue. The elite class decided to accept the demands of the labourers: "Hours of work and wages were settled. Freedom to travel, the right to education were conceded and the strike that started in June 1913 was successfully terminated by Kandala Nagan Pillai in May 1914. This strike, the first of its kind not only in Travancore but all of India, for human rights demonstrated the power of dark skin." (Panikkasseril 207)

The fate of Dalit converted Christians was not different as they were not acknowledged by mainstream Christians and were marginalized in their newly adopted religious community as 'others.' Poikayil Yohannan, the founder of Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha²¹ stood for the abolishment of inequality faced by the converted Dalits. He later realised and pointed out the absence of downtrodden and subaltern from the Bible.

Samastha Kochi Pulaya Sabha²² founded by Pandit Karuppan and Krishnanadi Ashan aimed at the deliverance of Dalits took a wonderful step in the liberation movements by organizing a meeting near the Kochi Lake that made the landlords dumbstruck. Pambadi John Joseph, the founder of Cheramar Maha Sabha²³, K. Kelappan and C. Krishnan the forerunners of Aadhi Kerala Dharma Sangam²⁴ were the other notable Dalit leaders who struggled to evacuate the inferiority complex felt by the Dalits.

Dalit movements aimed to uplift the Dalit community to the mainstream culture. But these Dalit leaders and movements remained silent in the historiography of the Kerala Renaissance.

Ghadhaka Vadham (1864) the Malayalam translation of Mrs. Collin's *The Slayer Slain*, by Richard Collins which discussed the stories of converted Dalit Christians did not appear in the literary canon as the first novel in Malayalam. The historiography of Malayalam literature hailed Appu Nedungadi's *Kundalatha* (1887) as the first Malayalam novel. The period was noted for the beginning of novel tradition with the popular novel *Indulekha* (1889) by Oyyarathu Chandu Menon as the first best novel in Malayalam. The novels of Malayalam appeared as socially realistic with their rejection of conventions and customs. The colonial reformation and the English education of the upper caste Nairs and Namboodiris ignited new thoughts among the youth. Thus novels like *Indulekha* challenged the matrilineal system and the ideologies of *Sambandham*²⁵ (a kind of informal nuptial relationship between Nair women and Namboodiri men in Kerala). Madhavan the hero and Indulekha the heroine become the epitome of colonial modernity that challenged the conventions of the past. The novels *Lakshmi Kesavam* (1882) of Padu Menon and *Parangodi Parinayam* (1892) of Kizhakkeppattu Ramanunni Menon also discussed the lives of upper caste Hindus. C. V. Raman Pillai's historical romance *Marthandavarma* (1891) was popular with the stories of Kings and the elites of Kerala. Interestingly, *Indulekha* was written during a period in which Dalits were treated inhumanely and were still struggling as slave untouchables. When these novels and their authors were celebrated, Archdeacon Koshy's *Pulleli Kunchu* (1882), Potheri Kunhambu's *Saraswativijayam* (1892) and Joseph Muliyl's *Sukumari* (1897) failed to

enter the canon as it discussed the issues of Dalits. When *Pulleli Kunchu* (1882) discussed the life of Dalit Christians *Saraswathivijayam* (1892) focused on the importance of education and Dalit reformation. Marathan the hero of the novel was an educated Dalit who came back to his native place as a Judge. He then marries his earlier land owner's daughter Saraswati. Saraswati in Hindu mythology is the goddess of learning and knowledge hence the novel is named as *Saraswativijayam* (1892). Such a revolutionary act of a Dalit marrying a Namboodiri girl cannot appear rational before the social realists of the nineteenth century. The novel along with its author remained unnoticed in the historiography of the Malayalam novel. A close analysis of these three novels *Pulleli Kunchu* (1882), *Saraswativijayam* (1892), and *Sukumari* (1897) gives hints about the conversion of Dalits to Christianity to seek asylum on the Christian missionaries.

Many novels that echoed the sorrows of the Dalits appeared in the twentieth century. Thakazhi Shivasankara Pillai's *Thottiyude Makan* (1947) and *Randidangazhi* (1949), Kesavadev's *Odayil Ninum* (1944) and Vykyom Muhammed Basheer's *Balyakala Sakhi* (1944) discussed the Dalit themes. *Thottiyude Makan* (1997) by Thakazhi Shivasankara Pillai is a radical work that tells the struggles and rise of the scavenger class in Kerala. His *Randidangazhi* (1949) set in the agricultural lands of Kuttanad, a place in the Alappuzha district of Kerala challenges the bonded labour system in Kerala. Koran the hero of the novel is pictured as non-conformist and unconventional. He dares to challenge the cruelties of his landlord and associate with the trade unions. Pappu the central character of P. Kesavadev's *Odayi Ninum* (1944) also quarreled with the existing system of inequalities. He challenged the injustice in the

village and criticised the new city life with the rise of industrialism. In all these novels the rise of a middle class and the struggles of Dalits are portrayed. The wide acceptability of M. T Vasudevan Nair's *Nalukettu* (1958) can be related to the decline of the feudal system and the matrilineal system in the Nair community. The novel was popularised with the romanticised notion of its narrativity in telling the stories of upper castes. Dalit lives continued to appear in Malayalam fiction. Sara Thomas' *Daivamakkal* (1982), was about the life of a Dalit named Kunjikannan. But it was written from the sympathy of an elite, not from the experience of a downtrodden. Dalit characters continued to appear in popular Malayalam fiction. The character Kuttadan Pushari from *Khasakkinte Ithihasam, The Legends of Khasak* (1968) by O. Vijayan and the character Velutha from *Kunju Karyagalude Ode Thampuran* the translation of Arundhadhi Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) are examples. None of these novels were written by the Dalit writers. Kaviyoor Murali examines Dalit literature as the writings of the Dalits. He denounces all the writings of elites about the Dalits in his critical work *Dalit Sahityam* (2001). He vehemently criticises everyone who accepts the writings of the elite authors about the life of Dalits. (Murali 14)

Dalit writings in Malayalam fiction were heard first from the voices of T. K.C Vaduthala and Paul Chirakkarode. The novels *Kattayum Koythum* (1960), *Nannavulla Mannu* (1970) and *Changalakkal Nurungunnu* (1979) by T. K. C. Vaduthala created a Dalit consciousness. His *Changalakkal Nurugunnu* (1979) introduced the Dalit experience before the readers. Kannappan the central character of his magnum opus is created from his own autobiographical experience as a Dalit teacher. The humiliation and caste discrimination on the first day of his appointment as a school teacher prompted Kannappan

to fight for the rights of the Dalits. Apart from the novels T. K. C. Vaduthala has written many short stories about the Dalit experiences. Paul Chirakkarode in his novel *Pulayathara* (1962) tells the dilemma of the Dalit Christians and their resistance against the exploitation of the landlords. Thevan Pulayan, his son Kandankoran, Pathros Pulayan, and Maria are the victims of casteism. Paul Chirakkarode has also written many short stories that addressed the issue of caste. It took many more years for the first tribal novel from Malayalam, Narayan's *Kocharethi* (1998) to come out. In the last decades of the twentieth century, genuine voices of Dalits appear to enter the canon and become a part of academic discussions. *Kocharethi* (1998) presents the struggles, alienation and tribal culture of the Malayaraya community through the life of Kunjipennu and Kochuraman. Dalit literature in Malayalam came out as a reform movement to liberate the Dalits. It expressed the voice of disagreement against mainstream culture. D. Rajan's *Mukkani* (1987), K. J. Baby's *Mavelimannan* (1991), P. K. Uthaman's *Chavoli* (2008) which portrayed the life of Kuravas and Raghavan Atholi's *Chorapparisam* (2006) are the other notable novels that introduced the Dalitness and Dalit aesthetics. D. Rajan's *Mukkani* (1987) written in the Paraya dialect represents the culture and language of the Paraya community naturally and authentically. 'Mukkani' is the name of a bamboo variety with which the Parayas weave baskets and it is symbolic of the Dalit lives in the novel. *Chavoli* (2008) by P. K. Uthaman pictures the life of Kuravas of Nedumangad village in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The Kurava dialect makes the novel distinct and unique. The novel introduces some characters who are close to nature and land, those who identify themselves as part of the earth. The novel won the Sahithya Academi Award in the year 2008. Raghavan Atholi's *Chorapparisam* (2006) again rebels against the

mainstream narrative with its Pulaya²⁶ dialect. Thevan and Maatha, the characters in the novel, are the representatives of Dalits crushed under the upper caste hegemony in Kerala. The contemporary novel, *Eri* (2017) by Pradeepan Pampirikkunnu with its ritualistic language picturises the myths and realities about the Paraya community.

Vengayil Kunjiraman Nayanar's "Vasana Vikriti" (1891) appeared in the periodical *Vidya Vinodini* and was believed to be the first short story published in Malayalam. Unlike the novels that focused on social realities early short stories were about the themes of love, crime, and the glories of the past. Dalits and issues of Dalits appeared at the beginning of the novel tradition in Malayalam and short stories deviated from this tradition. It was from the 1930s onwards Dalit characters began to appear in the short stories of Thakazhi Shivasankara Pillai and M. Narayana Kurup. Thakazhi's "Vellapokkathil" (1935) and M. Narayana Kurup's "Neeli" (1935) are examples. "Neeli" was the first short story set in a Dalit background. Dalit characters continued to appear in the short stories of P. Kesava Dev, Ponkunnam Varkey and S. K. Pottekkad, Uroob, Kaarur Neelakanda Pillai, Lalithambika Antharjanam, Kovilan, Madhavikutty, Anand, M. Sukumaran, M. T. Vasudevan Nair, M. Mukundan, C. V. Sreeraman, Sara Joseph, Asokan Cheruvil and Santhosh Echikkanam. But these stories were not the true representation of Dalit life, they remained as the sympathetic portrayal of Dalit experience. It was in the stories of T. K. C. Vaduthala, a real zest of Dalitness appeared first in the Malayalam short story tradition. His short story collections *Randu Thalamura* (1950), *Chankranthi Ada* (1959), and *Jaatheeyatha* (1964) included many stories about the Pulaya community. Paul Chirakkarode, the critic and writer has written a voluminous number of novels and short stories. Most of his short stories addressed the caste

discrimination faced by Dalits, especially the Dalit Christians. C. Ayyapan was another great writer who took the issues of the marginalised in his short stories. C. Ayyapan's magical realistic and modern short stories stand out with the variety in structure and form. His stories "Spectral Speech" and "Madness" present reality in an extraordinary way before the readers. His collection of short stories includes *Uchayurakkathile Swapnagal* (1986), *Njandukal* (2003) and *C. Ayyapante Kadhakal* (2008).

Autobiographies and biographies are the recorded history from the viewpoint of an individual. Individual memories play a great role in narrating the personal experiences of the writers. Autobiographies stood as a writing tool in introducing the issues faced by Dalits in India. "Reading of Dalit autobiographies evokes interest and anxiety at once. Interest, because it is an exploration of a new world of experience. Anxiety, because the violence of caste society is conspicuously built into the genre of autobiography itself" (Nagaraj 211). Dalit autobiographies from different Indian languages became popular and were translated into English and other languages. Dalit autobiographies did not flourish in Kerala as it was in Maharashtra and other states of India. Autobiographies and Biographies began to appear in Malayalam many years after the popularity of Dalit autobiographies and their translations in different languages of India. *Manikkam Pennu* (1998) by Mariyamma John, *Janu: C. K. Januvinte Jeevitha Kadha* (2003) written by Janu in collaboration with Bhaskaran and Kallen Pokkudan's *Kandalkkadukalkkidayil Ente Jeevitham* (My Life among the Mangrove Forests) introduced the genre, Collaborative Autobiography in Malayalam. C. K. Janu's Autobiography was translated by N. Ravi Shanker in 2004 as *Mother Forest: The Unfinished Story of C. K. Janu*. A biography, *Pokkudan Ezhuthatha Athmakadha* (The Unwritten Autobiography of

Pokkudan) by Taha Madayi was published in 2003 in the *Samakalika Malayalam* magazine. Raghavan Atholi's *Oru Shilpi Jeevithamezhutumbol*, *Chengara Samaravum Ente Jeevithavum* (2014) by Seleena Prakkanam, and K. K. Kochu's *Dalithan* (2019), M. Kunjaman's *Ethiru* (2021) are the other works that appeared. *Ayyankali: Jeevithavum Idapedalukalum* (2017) is a biography written by M. R. Renukumar and has been translated into Tamil.

Traces of theatre in Kerala can be found in the Dalit ritualistic performances like *Theyyam*²⁷, *Thira*²⁸, and *Kakkarassi Natakam*²⁹. The theatres of Kerala at the beginning were dominated by the translations of Sanskrit plays. The plays in the twentieth century took social reformation as a mission. Pandit Karuppan's *Balakalesam* (1913), V. T. Bhattathirippad's *Adukkalayilninnu Aragathekku* (1929), and K. D. Damodaran's *Pattabakki* (1937) are social realist dramas. The 1950s witnessed the rise of KPAC plays with the *Ente Makananu Sheri* in 1951 followed by many social realist revolutionary plays. Thoppil Bhasi's *Ningalenne Communistaki* (1952) was successful in creating a change in society with its radical ideologies against the feudal system. K. J. Baby's *Naadugaddika* (1982) introduced tribal life in Malayalam drama. Vijayan Venattusseri's *Krishikkaran* was a Dalit retelling of Thakazhi's short story "Krishikkaran." Pappan Pantheerankavu's *Thudippattu*, A. Santhakumar's *Daaham*, *Karutha Vidhava*, *Sukhanidrayilekku* and *Swapnavetta* are other notable Dalit plays.

Dalit critical interventions stood sound and powerful with the writers and critics Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. Kochu, Pradeepan Pampirikunnu, M. R. Renukumar, Sunny Kapikkad, Sanal Mohan, Vinil Paul, K. K. Baburaj, A. Soman, M. Dasan, Rekha Raj, Rajesh Chirappad, E. V. Anil, O. K. Santhosh and Lovely Stephen. The critical

interventions flourished in Kerala with the establishment of Dalit-run newspapers and periodicals. *Sadhujana Paripalini*, a magazine was started by Ayyankali in 1914 to introduce topics related to Dalits. P. J. Joseph and Pambadi John Joseph began a press named Cheramardoodar in 1924. *Adakritan* started to publish in 1936 by K. P. Vallon and was renamed *Harijan* in 1937. *Prabodhini* is another magazine that discusses the issues of Dalit Christians. *Harijanmandram*, *Karmaveeran*, *Janasandesam*, *Udayakiranam*, *Prakasagolam*, *Navanadam*, *Vimarshakan* and *Kerala makkal* are the other Dalit magazines of the period. *Adiar Deepam* started in 1963 was the mouthpiece of the Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha and P. J Thankappan was its editor. SEEDIAN (Socially, Economically, Educationally Depressed Indian Ancient Natives), a radical Dalit movement inspired by the Ambedkarite ideology worked for Dalit liberation in the 1970s. In 1975 they started a magazine with the same name and contributed to a new intellectual reading atmosphere in Kerala. Contemporary Dalit critics like K. K. Kochu, K. K. S. Das, Baburaj, Paul Chirakkarodu, N. K. Kamalasanan and V. V. Swamy, and others wrote in the *Seedian* and initiated discussions on the Dalit reformation. *Dalit Voice*, *Dalith*, *Aura*, and *Karyadarshi* are the other magazines. Dalit magazines and newspapers were ignored and omitted from the history of mainstream newspapers and magazines.

Poetry in Kerala has been by and large dominated by the Sanskritized hegemony of Brahminism and Savarna culture for centuries. Poems like Kumaranasan's "Chandalabhikshuki" and Changampuzha Krishna Pillai's "Vazhakula" addressed the issues of the marginalized and the oppressed class. There was a dispute among the critics about the definition of Dalit literature. *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* (2004)

defines Dalit literature, “By Dalit literature, I mean writing about Dalits by Dalit writers with a Dalit consciousness. The form of Dalit literature is inherent in its Dalitness, and its purpose is obvious: to inform Dalit society of its slavery, and narrate its pain and sufferings to upper caste Hindus” (Limbale 19). Thus, Changambhuzha Krishna Pilla’s “Vazhakula” and Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan’s “Kurathi” became writings about the Dalits. Dalit writings are the response from the first-hand experience of the author. When a person writes about an issue from a harsh experience it becomes genuine. This is applicable in the case of Dalit literature.

The Dalit creativity first appeared in the forms of songs as in *koithu pattu*³⁰ and *chakra pattu*³¹ thus reducing the depth of hardship in labour. Dalit history is not recorded anywhere but their unwritten history is evident in the old folk songs. Dalit culture, languages, social life, land and geography, customs, rituals, art and literature can be understood through the old folk songs. Malayalam Dalit writing appeared strong and explicit in poetry. No other literary genre in Malayalam was loud and powerful in representing the issues of Dalits. Even before the emergence of Dalit panthers and Dalit literary movements that started in Maharashtra Dalit writings appeared in Malayalam. The nineteenth and Twentieth centuries witnessed the rise of many Dalit poets into mainstream literature. Dalits themselves began to come to the front to represent their space and to make them audible in Malayalam poetry.

Pandit Karuppan’s *Jathikkummi* (1904) was one of the first Dalit writings that appeared in Malayalam. The poem was written in the *kummi*, one of the metres used in the *Ammanappattu*³². *Ammanapattu* was sung during the eve of the marriages in Ezhava and Araya³³ communities in Kerala. The singing starts on the eve and ends on the

morning of the marriage day. Pandit Karuppan has used the stories from *Manisha Panchakam* by Adi Sankaracharya in his verse *Jathikkummi*. Pandit Karuppan satirises the brahminical ideologies through his long verse which was popularised among the Dalits in the form of *Ammanappattu*.

Poikayil Appachan the founder of Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha is a prominent figure in the renaissance of Kerala. His *Poikayil Appachante Pattukal*, (*Songs of Poikayil Appachan*) sung between 1905 to 1939 was a strong reflection of the subaltern voice in the oral rendering. His songs are recordings of the unwritten history of the Dalits in Kerala. The history of the slave trade and the slave transfer unknown to the modern Malayalis are mentioned in his poems. The separation of families and the aftermath of the slave transfer no one dared to speak were mentioned in his songs. When parents were separated to work under different feudal lords, the children suffered. No one supported the young orphans. V. V. Swami's and E.V Anil's collection of Poikayil Appachan's songs marks this injustice from history:

Thathane oridathum

mathave veroridathum

kuttikal anadharayathum

marappathamo

adima marappathamo (Appachan lines 1- 5)

The lines talk about the separation, the father is taken to one place and the mother is taken to somewhere else, how can slaves forget this?

Sahodaran Ayyapan born into an Ezhava family wrote "Swathandra Gadha," "Ujjevanam," Samudaya Ganam," "Aldaivam" and many more poems about the

liberation of Dalits. His concepts of *misrabhojanam*³⁴ (1917) and *mishravivaham*³⁵ aim to eradicate caste from Kerala society. He was radical and brave enough to include Pulayas in *misrabhojanam*. Kumaran Asan's "Duravastha" (1921) and "Chandalabhikshuki" (1922) are other poems that stood against casteism in Kerala.

K. K. Govindan's "Arukolakandam" (1980) is a long narrative poem speaks about the myth of the talisman and the killing of a Pulaya. The killing of Dalits to please the Gods and Goddesses was a practice among the upper castes. Dalits were also punished brutally and murdered accusing them of theft. "Arukolakandam" is about a popular story among Dalits about one such incident. A Pulaya who came for a visit to his sister's house was accused of thieving a cow from a feudal *tharavadu*³⁶. He was taken before the *thampuran* and was fed with a stomach full. He was asked to cut a tree from the forest. Nairs accompanied him to the forest. Once they got into the forest the Pulaya was bullied for thieving the cow. But he rejected the acquisition and said his innocence. The executioners "pulled back his arms / Tied his hands / They made him bow down and began to hack his head" (Govindan lines 6-8) but failed to cut his head from the throat. Blood splashed over the faces of the executioners, and at last, the victim told them about the talisman on his body. When they removed it, he died. The poem continues to narrate the revenge of the dead Pulaya. The *thampuran*'s family began to suffer from death and disease. The occult astrologer informed about the spilling of innocent blood as the reason for the recent incidents. A field was given to the Pulaya's family as compensation and the field was then known as Arukolakandam. Even though the poet tried to make a change in society through this poem, the poem remained on the periphery.

Kaviyoor Murali, Raghavan Atholi, Niranam M. P, K. C. Kattakkada, Kallada Sasi are novel and revolutionary in their poems. The poetry of Sunny Kavikkad, G. Sasi Maduraveli, K. K. S. Das, Sivadas Purameri, M. B. Manoj, M. R. Renukumar, S. Kalesh and Vijila appear to be much more prosaic, innovative, radical, experimental and post-modern. The poets Binu M. Pallipadu, C. S. Rajesh, Ammu Deepa, Johnson Cheeranchira, Sajin P. J, D. Anil Kumar, Asokan Marayoor, Dhanya M. D, Ambika Prabhakaran, M. R. Radhamani, Sathi Angamaly, Mriduladevi, M. K. Madhukumar, Babu Pulinelli and Ajitha continue to create their distinctive voices in Malayalam poetry.

Review of the literature helps to understand the topic deeply. It also helps to know about the previous discussions and studies on the topic. Dalit poets have created their signature when compared to other genres of literature in Malayalam and the English translations of the selected poems are also available. Dalit criticism and Dalit movements initiated an academic discussion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and it continued to the twenty first century. *Poisoned Bread* (1992) edited by Arjun Dangle was an anthology of English translations of Dalit literature that consisted of poetry, essays, speeches, autobiographical extracts and short stories. The anthology was successful in bringing the oppression and humiliation experienced by Dalits to World literature. The Introduction to *Poisoned Bread* (1992) says that Dalit literature “is closely associated with the hopes for freedom of a group of people who as untouchables are victims of social, economic and cultural inequality” (Dangle xxii).

Bhashaposhini one of the leading canon magazines in Kerala in 1997 published a special issue on Dalit Literature and criticism. The magazine triggered an academic discussion on Dalit studies and literature at the end of the twentieth century and it

continued to the twenty first century. The magazine introduced the poems of K. K. S. Das, Sunny Kavikkad, Sivadas Purameri and M. B. Manoj. C. Ayyapan's story "Njan Marupadi Prateekshikunnund" and Paul Chirakkarode's "Grihaduratham" made a great discussion. Critical interventions by Sanal Mohan, P. S. Suresh, Dr. S. Shaji, Dr. K. Ayyappapanikar and Sunny M. Kapikkad discussed the literature, aesthetics, politics and culture of Dalits in Kerala.

Dalit Sahityam (2001) by Kaviyoor Murali is one of the greatest critical books about Malayalam Dalit literature. The text critically introduces the history and origin of Dalit literature and Dalit movements across India. The text gives instructions to Dalit writers and critically defines Dalit literature. The text traces oral ritualistic songs as the origin of Dalit creativity in Kerala. "Dalits were not able to write their history in the past. Since their past is mentioned in the old folksongs, they do not need any authentication from the elite historians who omitted the past of Dalits from the recorded history" (Murali 78). A detailed analysis of the oral renderings in the form of songs *Pulaya Pattu*³⁷, *Njattu Pattu*³⁸, *Thottam Pattu*³⁹, Tribal songs, *Kumbha Pattu*⁴⁰, *Sopana Pattu*⁴¹, *Malamal Kilipattu*⁴², *Koothu Pattu*⁴³, *Bhadrakali Pattu*⁴⁴, *Edanadan Pattu*⁴⁵ and *Pulluvan Pattu*⁴⁶ traces the slave trade existed in Kerala. The text gives a detailed authentic study of the Dalit culture, Dalit identity and Dalit aesthetics. An analysis of Malayalam Dalit writings is given in the text.

Sharankumar Limbale's *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* (2004) is a seminal critical work that suggests how a Dalit writer should write and how the criticism of Dalit literature should be done. The work answers the provoking and probing debates going on about the emergence of Dalit movements and literature. Limbale defines various

concepts like Dalit aesthetics, Dalit consciousness, Dalit criticism and sensibility. He explains the purpose and aim of Dalit literature. The work includes an interview of the author and a translator's note. The book is meant to give awareness to the Dalits about the emergence of Dalit movements and Dalit literature.

Writing in the Dark: A Collection of Malayalam Dalit Poetry (2008) presents the translations of the poems of thirty three notable and emerging Dalit writers from Kerala. Poems of the pre-modernists, the modernists and the postmodernists like S. Joseph, M. B. Manoj, M. R. Renukumar, and Sivadas Purameri are translated by Ajay Sekher. The editorial of the collection says that “these poems can speak for themselves to the world in an open manner from the perspective of dalitism” (Manoj and Alex 9).

Malayalam Literary Survey the journal of Kerala Sahitya Akademi published a special issue on *Dalit Literature in Malayalam* in 2009 with an editorial by C. B. Sudhakaran. The first section of the journal included the English translations of the poems of Poikayil Appachan, S. Joseph, M. B. Manoj, Raghavan Atholi, M. R. Renukumar and V. R. Santhosh. Stories of T. K. C. Vaduthala, C. Ayyappan, Narayan, P. A. Uthaman, Paul Chirakkarode and P. K. Prakash were included. Session two incorporated various critical interventions on Dalit writing, Dalit sensibility, aesthetics and identity. Articles by K. Sachidanandan, Pradeepan Pampirikunnu, T. M. Yesudasan, K. K. Kochu, K. M. Sherrif, O. K. Santhosh, Meena T. Pillai and Ajay Sekher appeared noteworthy. “Dalit Poetry in Malayalam: An overview,” an article that traces the history of Dalit poetry in Malayalam and asserts that the “questions of identity do not seem to have troubled Dalit poetry in Malayalam as it did in the poetry in other languages” (Sherrif 143). Dalit cultural identity is visible in the poems of S. Joseph, Raghavan Atholi

and Renukumar, who tried to subvert the traditional Sanskritized language by introducing a new idiom into poetry. Dalit sensibility of Kerala in every field of aesthetics: politics, culture, novels, short stories, poetry and art are reflected in Pradeepan Pamparikunnu's article "Dalit Literature: The changing sensibility of Malayalam." Political rage and folkloric tradition in Raghavan Atholi's "Kandathi," and rough exterior liveliness in the poems of G. Sasi Madhuraveli are discussed. Narrative techniques visible in the poems of S. Joseph, M. R. Renukumar and M. B. Manoj are more subjective and modern. The post-modernist Sivadas Purameri is trying to "unify marginalized lives to Dalit lives" (Pampirikunnu 80).

No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India (2011) appeared in two volumes is a remarkable anthology of the English translations of Dalit writings that hailed the writers from Kerala to the world literary pantheon. The first volume on Tamil and Malayalam writings which introduced the short stories, poems, drama, criticisms and essays by the Dalit Malayalam writers presented the poems of Raghavan Atholi, K. K. S. Das, S. Joseph, Sunny Kavikkad, G. Sasi Madhuraveli and M. B. Manoj. *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012) encompasses poetry, short fiction, excerpts from novels, excerpts from life writings and critical interventions. It is a voluminous work that includes the poets Poikayil Appachan, K. K. Govindan, Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S. Das, Raghavan Atholi, Sunny Kavikkad, G. Sasi Madhuraveli, S. Joseph, Sivadas Purameri, M. R. Renukumar, M. B. Manoj, Vijila, Binu M. Pallippad and S. Kalesh to the canon.

The article, "On Castes, Malayalams and Translations" discusses the translation history of Malayalam Dalit Literature. Many Malayalam Dalit writings including fiction,

autobiographies, poetry and criticism were translated into other languages and Dalit writings from other Indian languages were translated into Malayalam in the twentieth and twenty first centuries. The article details the translation of Kancha Illaiah's "Why I am not a Hindu?" into Malayalam, "the book had been recognized as one of the most original and provocative works of the decade" (Sanjeev 176).

Kathal: Malayalathile Dalith Kavithakal (is a collection of Malayalam Dalit Poems compiled and edited by O. K. Santhosh. The anthology brings the notable forty seven Dalit poets starting from Poikayil Appachan to contemporary poets Dhanya M. D and M. R. Radhamani. The anthology divides the poems into three categories: The pre-modern period, the Modern Period and the Postmodern period. An introduction to the history and present of Malayalam Dalit poetry is given by the compiler. The anthology can be considered a remarkable work that marked the literary Dalit movement.

The Flaming Feet and Other Essays (2012) by D. R. Nagaraj examines the politics of caste and caste system in India. A detailed discussion of the ideologies of Ambedkar, Gandhi, and Marx is given in the text. The book is a collection of essays on Dalit literature, culture and politics. The text gives the author's viewpoints and theories about caste, power and identity.

"Caste in a Casteless Language? English as a Language of 'Dalit' Expression" is an article that proposes some questions "about the relationship between caste and the English language, the two phenomena that represent considerably antithetical signs" (Kothari 61). The article by Rita Kothari discusses the inclusion of Dalit studies in academics in the universities of India and abroad. Dalit studies were accepted and Dalit writings were translated widely. The paper examines the translations in bringing justice

and equality to the Dalit community. “Mainstreaming the Subaltern” an article that appeared in *The Frontline* discusses the Tamil and Malayalam Dalit writings and observes that Dalit literature “has indeed created its alternative aesthetic by redrawing the map of literature” (Satchidanandan 2).

“Globalizing the Regional and the Subaltern: Translation and Transnationalisation in Contemporary Malayalam Dalit Short Fiction” (2013) is an article that “aims to explore how the very act of translation, that too specifically from a regional language to a global language like English also emerges as an action of transcending and transmitting language, culture and societies across the borders of space and time” (N Divya 111). A comparative study of the source texts and target texts of the selected Malayalam short fiction is done. “Chankranthy Ada” by T. K. C. Vaduthala translated as “Sweet Offering at Chankranthy” by J. Devika, Paul Chirakkarode’s “Grihathurathvam” translated as “Nostalgia” by Catherine Thankamma, “Branthu” by C. Ayyappan translated as “Madness” by Abhirami Sriram, “Oru Pullaruppothiyude Kadha” by P. A. Uthaman translated as “The Story of a Sickle” by A. J. Thomas. “Paalakkunnande Yaatra” by M. K. Madhukumar translated by K. M. Sheriff as “Paalakkunnan's Journey” is discussed in the article.

K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu edited an anthology *The Exercise of Freedom: An Introduction to Dalit Writing* (2013) that incorporated Dalit Literature across India. It included poems by M. B Manoj, Raghavan Atholi, S. Joseph and critical essays by Rekharaj and T. M. Yesudasan. In the Introduction, K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu examine the origin of Dalit literature. “Dalit Poetry and Aesthetics of Traumatic Materialism” an article by Pramod K. Nayar demonstrates the sufferings, trauma and

laborious work done by the Dalits especially that of women. For the elite class men, Dalit working women were just bodies, to exercise their sexual pleasure. The aesthetics of Tamil and Malayalam poetry focuses on “the two main themes in Dalit poems, corporeal trauma and labour” (Nayar 1). The poems like Vijila’s “I Can’t grow my nails,” M. R. Renukumar’s “The Question Paper,” “The Silent Beast,” Kalesh’s “Hairpin Bend,” Sunny Kavikkad’s “With Love,” M. B. Manoj’s “Interview” and S. Joseph’s “My Sister’s Bible” depicts how culture and economy control women body and labour.

Negritude Poetry and Malayalam Dalit Poetry: A Comparative Study is a thesis submitted at the Mahatma Gandhi University. The thesis gives a detailed study of the history of negritude and negritude literature. The historical background of Dalit literature in India is included in the study. The thesis then gives a comparative analysis of negritude poetry and Malayalam Dalit poetry. Even though the socio cultural and political situations of both these literatures are different the study finds similarities in the themes. Exploitation, Violence, Protest, Revolution, and treatment of nature and women are the common themes occurring in negritude poetry and Malayalam Dalit Poetry. “Writing is a strong medium to express the realities and tragedies experienced by Dalits” (Kurian 76).

“Resisting discriminations: An Analysis of Selected Works from Contemporary Malayalam Dalit Poetry,” by Reshma K is a study on the three contemporary Malayalam Dalit poets Raghavan Atholi, S. Joseph, and G. Sasi Madhuraveli. It unravels the continuing marginalization and discrimination faced by Dalits in the twentieth century. Identity crisis in S. Joseph’s “Identity Card” and “On the College Wall,” are the major themes included in the article.

The exploitation of the untouchables constitutes the focus of the article “Indian Dalit Literature – A Reflection of Cultural Marginality” by Soumya Nair and Anoop Kumar. The study brings forth the issues of forced labour in the selected poems of M. R. Renukumar, Raghavan Atholi and K. K. S. Das. She comments that these rebellious Dalit poets are more autobiographical than the other modern poets.

My Sister's Bible: A Collection of Poems is an anthology of the English translations of S. Joseph's poems by the notable translators K. Satchidanandan, A. J. Thomas, P. J. Benoy, Ajay Shekar, Jobin M Kanjirakkat, Saritha Varma and M. T. Ansari. A study, “A Genuine Subaltern Voice on S. Joseph's Poetry” by K. Satchidanandan gives a detailed analysis of the poems included in the collection.

The paper “Dalits as Homines Sacri: The Politics of Inclusive Exclusion in Select Dalit Poetry” attempts “to read Dalit poetry in terms of an Agambenian perspective of *Homo Sacer* and probe into the inclusion and exclusion suffered by the Dalits” (Abhijith 41483). Analyzing selected poems of Poikayil Appachan, Sunny Kavikkad and Bapurao Jagtap the writer argues that, like *Homines Sacri*, Dalits are included in the structure of society but are excluded from the mainstream.

“Dalit History and the Formation of an Imagined Community in Kerala” is an article that relates the history of Kerala with Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined political community: Dalit readers reread texts and construct them to create an imagined community. Dalit critics trace Dravidians as the early settlers in Kerala and they are now known as Dalits. Their life and culture were related to agriculture and they lived in prosperity. It was during the 8th to 12th century Namboodiris began to settle in Kerala with the decline of Jainism and Buddhism in the

8th century AD. Namboodiris made a new feudal order and sidelined the Dravidians. They established the Vedic language and occupied all the lands. Education, temples, and lands were used as tools to control the native Dravidians and a new feudal system was introduced (Kottaparamban and Sulaiman 321-22).

Dr. Sakunthala A. I. in her book *Dalit Voices in Indian Poetry: A Study of Malayalam and Marathi Poems* (2016) gives a detailed analysis of the Dalit poetry. Poems of Malayalam Dalit poets Raghavan Atholi, Bhasi Arankath, Kaviyoor Murali, M. B. Manoj, Sunny Kapikkad and poems of Marathi poets Namdeo Dhasal, Waman Nimbalkar, J. V. Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Hira Bansode, Trymbak Sapkale, and Keshav Meshram are compared and analysed. The author identified similarities between the Dalit poetry in India. Dalit poetry across India records the torture, violence, and atrocities against Dalits. Poetry acts as a protest and identifies the mental struggle and identity crisis felt by the Dalits in India.

Writing Lives: Dialectics of Pathos and Protest in Dalit Women's Poetry (2016) is a study on Dalit feminism, protest and resistance of women writers in India. The socio-political and economic conditions of India subjugated Dalit women. The poems of Dalit women are against subjugation in the forms of rape, humiliation, violence, and murder. The thesis analyses the poems of fifty-two Dalit women poets and “examines the poetry of Dalit women and the implications of the dialectics of pathos and protest” (Kavitha 2).

The Oxford India Anthology of Modern Malayalam Literature (2017), a two-volume work edited by P. P. Raveendran and G. S. Jayasree incorporated the poems of Poikayil Appachan, Raghavan Atholi, S. Joseph and M. R. Renukumar. “Translation in Dalit Literature” is an article that examines “how translation is serving as a tool to make

the voices of the Dalits heard by the varied masses” (Tiwari 5036). The language of Dalit writing in communicating the voice of the oppressed and the impact of globalisation on Dalit writings are also considered. The representation of culture in the Dalit writings through the inclusion of rituals, practices, festivals, music, art, language, flora and fauna are common in Dalit writings. The difference in portraying Dalit practices in the writings of upper caste Hindu writers and Dalit writers is noted in the article.

Highly political, Dalit literature deals with the experience rather than traditional aesthetics. It deviates from the ideologies of the Savarna literature and creates its path. Abdul Jaleel’s “Dalit Identity and Literature: The Kerala content” traces the etymology of the word ‘Dalit,’ history of Malayalam Dalit literature, Dalit movements in Kerala, Dalit consciousness and aesthetics. *Dalith Sthree Idapedalukal* (2017) is a collection of essays by the critic and activist Rekharaj. It discusses the rise of Dalit women and their participation in the various strikes organised in Kerala. “The presence and participation of women in the dominant anti-caste movements in the history of Kerala Renaissance are remarkable” (Rekharaj 9). Dalit feminism, politics, body and power are discussed by analysing the contemporary incidents against the Dalits in Kerala. The essays also critically evaluate the representation of Dalit women in the movies and autobiographies. The representation and the role of Dalit women in changing society are also included in the collection. *Adrishyathayude Aaghyaganagal: Puthu Kavitha Padanagal Vayanakal Punarvayanakal* (2017) is a study on new Malayalam poetry by Rajesh Chirappadu. It includes the myriad facets of subaltern readings. The new Malayalam poetry gives much space to Dalits and other marginalised sessions in society. “The people who are not yet recorded anywhere in history, their struggles and thoughts are now visible in poetry”

(Chirappadu 20).

Realism, detailed portrait of Dalit life, simple language without stanzas, metres and Sanskrit interventions makes S. Joseph's poems distinct from other contemporary Malayalam poets. "Defying Bigotries: An Analysis of Select works of Contemporary Malayalam poet S. Joseph," tries to demonstrate the resistance of Dalits against the cruelties and oppression faced by the Dalits through the analysis of S. Joseph's selected poems. The article "Self-consciousness of the Dalits: Reflections of S. Joseph's Poetry" gives a detailed study of the popular and widely accepted Malayalam poet S. Joseph. His poems bring about the identity crisis and dilemma faced by the Dalits in contemporary society.

M. R. Renukumar's article "Writing and Sensibility: Thinking Specifically about Dalit Poetry" observes the predominant Hinduism in the mainstream literature of Kerala: "Women's writing, Dalit writing and similar identity-based writings that emerged from the margins had a crucial role in the democratization of Malayalam literature rooted in an upper caste, patriarchal consciousness and consensus" (Renukumar 69). The article is about the role of Dalit poetry in developing an emergent common stream in Malayalam literature.

Dalit Literature in India (2018) edited by Joshil K. Abraham and Judith Misrahi-Barak is a collection of essays on caste, Dalit literature and Dalit movements in India. *Soulful Silence Literary Mapping of Dalit Discourse in Kerala: A Study of Malayalam Dalit Discourse in Kerala* is a thesis that gives a detailed study of Malayalam Dalit Literature.

Raj Kumar's *Dalit Literature and Criticism* (2019) addresses the issues of caste

and Dalits. The emergence of Dalit literature and an understanding of Dalit aesthetics are discussed. The history of the caste system and an Aryan invasion theory that led to the rise of Brahminical dominance in India is given. The text observes Mrs. Collins *Ghatakavadham* (1877), Potheri Kunhambu's *Saraswativijayam* (1892) and Joseph Muliyl's *Sukumari* (1897) as the early manifestations of Dalit literature in Kerala.

“Expressing the Marginalised Self: Manifestation of Dalit Consciousness in the Poems of Vijila Chirappad” is an article that attempts a close analysis of the poems of Vijila. The study gives a detailed analysis of the discrimination faced by Dalit women in Kerala. Dalit consciousness and Dalit identity are the recurring themes in the poems of Vijila. Vijila's poems “are sharp reactions to the unjust predicaments forced upon Dalits for satisfying age-old conventions and prejudices” (Jeevaraj and Aswathy 4). *Malayalam Dalit Writings in English Translation* (2020) edited by Vishnu Narayanan is a collection of English translations of articles and criticism on Dalit writings. The translations of the notable Dalit critics, C. Ayyapan, Kavyyor Murali, Vinod B., Ajay S. Sekher, Santhosh O. K., Sajitha K. R., Pradeepan Pambirikunnu, K. M. Saleem Kumar, P. Lisa, Sanal Mohan, Sunny M. Kapikkadu, Baburaj K. K., A. S. Ajith Kumar, Rajesh Komath, Rekha Raj and Sreejith Paithalen are included in the anthology. Articles on the Dalit representations in literature, culture, performance arts, language, film and society are carefully selected for the anthology. The book focuses on the development of Dalit consciousness, subjectivity, and identity and the articles included in the collection present a Dalit perspective to the readers.

Prashant Ingole's article, “On Dalit writing and un/translatability” is about the untranslatability of Dalit writings. Translating Dalit dialects and regional variants of the

languages is difficult. The writer is worried about the loss in translation: “In globalizing the Dalit discourse, mainstream Indian translation studies scholars have adapted it as a mode of representation and as a result, the Dalit identity and culture is lost” (Ingole 41). The writer admits that despite the cultural loss “translations have helped to generate the discourse of Dalit studies in India and abroad” (43).

“Who can Translate Dalit Discourses?” is an article that discusses the current trend in translating Dalit texts. Dalit texts are part of the wide translation discourse that is currently gaining momentum in India. The article investigates the recent trends in translation and the task of translating Dalit Discourse. The study examines the untranslatability of the texts and Dalit identity formation through translations.

Adimakeralathinte Adrishyacharithram (2021) is a history book that records the slave trade in Kerala during the colonial period. The historical records during Portuguese and Dutch colonialism and the history of the plantation workers in Anjarakandy plantation in the Kannur district of Kerala during the British Colonial period give evidence of the slave trade in Kerala. (Paul 38) *Dalit Charithradamsanam* (2022) is a collection of essays written by the Dalit historian and critic Vinil Paul. The essays question the common notion and public domain regarding the past of Kerala and the evils of casteism. The history of the Dalits in Kerala is analysed with the help of archeological evidence. The text discusses the socio cultural changes in the lives of Dalits during the colonial period. The colonial period cannot be viewed as the golden age of the marginalised, but English education made people ponder the social evils that existed in India. (Paul ix-x)

The article “The Quest for Identity: In the Context of Dalit Christian Poetry in

Kerala” by Bincy Dominic analyses the poems of Poikayil Appachan and S. Joseph. The poems successfully present the subaltern Dalit Christian identity. The study documents the pluralistic approaches in the poems of Poikayil Appachan and S. Joseph. The identity crisis and dilemma experienced by the converted Dalit Christians form the focus of the study. The study also records the cultural background and the emergence of Dalit Christian voices in Malayalam Literature. “Dalit Feminist Poetry - Subtleties of Identification” is an article by Bincy Dominic that discusses the poems of Vijila, Sathi Angamaly, Ammu Deepa and Sunitha Thoppil in portraying the gender and caste experiences in Malayalam Dalit poetry. The autobiographical elements in Dalit feminist Malayalam poems and the construction of body politics are also discussed.

The methodology of the study includes the analysis of both primary and secondary sources. The select poems of Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S Das, Raghavan Atholi, Sunny Kavikkad, G. Sasi Madhuraveli, S. Joseph, Sivadas Purameri, M. R. Renukumar, M. B. Manoj, Vijila, Binu M. Pallippad and S. Kalesh which had appeared as translations in *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012) edited by M. Dasan. et. al, *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writings from South India* (2010) edited by K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu, *Writing in the Dark: A Selection of Dalit Poetry in Malayalam* (2009) are taken as primary sources for the study. The secondary sources are collected from books, journals and the internet. The thematic analysis and the interpretation of the primary sources regarding the sociocultural background is the aims of the study. Dalit theories are applied to analysing the select English translations of Malayalam Dalit poems. A formalistic analysis of the poems is done by examining the poetic diction, language, form and style of the poems. The politics and problems of

translation, loss and gain principles in translation are discussed using theories in Translation Studies.

The present study interprets the English translations of the selected poems of Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S. Das, Raghavan Atholi, Sunny Kavikkad, G. Sasi Madhuraveli, S. Joseph, Sivadas Purameri, M. R. Renukumar, M. B. Manoj, Vijila, Binu M. Pallippad and S. Kalesh. For these poets, poetry is a medium to raise voices against the atrocities, cruelties, injustice and humiliation that were perpetrated against the Dalit community in Kerala. The last decade of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century gave great momentum to this growing body of literature through the English translations of Dalit poems by notable translators K. Satchidanandan, Ajay Sekher, Valson Thampu, Lekshmi Rajeev, K. M. Sherrif, Catherine Thankamma, E. V. Ramakrishnan, M. T. Ansari and Shreekumar Varma. Translations strengthened the voice of these writers.

The thesis had attempted a detailed study of Kaviyoor Murali's poem "Dalitarkkezhutiya Suvisesham" translated as "The Gospel for Dalits" by Valson Thampu, K. K. S. Das' poem "Ente Mannu" translated as "My soil" by Lekshmy Rajeev, "Karumaadi Nritham" translated as "The Black Dance" by Ajay Sekher, Raghavan Atholi's poem "Kandathi" translated by K. M. Sherrif under the same title, Sunny Kavikkad's "Kanakkukalillatha Bhoopadam" translated by Catherine Thankamma as "An Uncharted Map", G. Sasi Madhuraveli's "Pranayapoorvam" translated as "With Love" and "Amma" as "Mother" by Lekshmy Rajeev, "Shambuka" translated with the same title by T. M. Yesudasan, S. Joseph's "Group Photo" translated by K. Satchidanandan with the same title, "Chila Irunda Idagal", "Malayala Kavithakku Oru Kathu", "Kotta" translated as "Some Dark Spaces", "A Letter to Malayalam Poetry" and "Basket" by K.

Satchidanandan respectively, Sivadas Purameri's "Chilatharam Viralukal" and "Chornnolikkunna Muri" translated by E. V. Ramakrishnan as "Some Types of Fingers" and "A Leaky Room" respectively, K. Satchidanandan's translations of M. R. Renukumar's "Mindaprani" as "The Silent Beast" and "Vishakkaya" as "The Poison Fruit", K. Satchidanandan's translations of M. B. Manoj's "Survey of India" under the same title, "Ammamar" as "Mothers", "Interview" with the same title and "Paarakal" as "Rocks", Lekshmy Rajeev's translations of Vijila's "Idam" as "A Place for Me", "Enikku Nakham Neetan Kazhiyilla" as "I Can't Grow My Nails" and "Oru Pennpattiyude Atmakatha" as "The Autobiography of a Bitch", Binu M. Pallipad's "Aaru Darshanikar Chernnu Amavasiye Naatakathilninnu Purathakunnu" translated by E. V. Ramakrishnan as "Six Philosophers Unite to Exclude Amavasi from the Play", S. Kalesh's "Hairpin Bend" translated under the same title by Shreekumar Varma and "Siren" under the same title translated by E. V. Ramakrishnan is done. The above poets initiated a new rhythm and idiom in poetry that served as a powerful medium to express their grievances. Dalit poets of Malayalam literature constantly remind us the truth that the evils of casteism are still entrenched in the minds of the people and hence in this modern world, Dalits have to create a new identity to fight back the savarna domination.

The hypothesis of the study is that the translations of the poems of the Dalit poets in Malayalam have helped them to create their own space and identity in the arena of global literature. They are successful in raising their opinion and voice through poetry. They have accomplished themselves in cracking the aspects of casteism thereby liberating the minds of the Kerala population from the murky 'lunatic asylum' and igniting the light of Dalit empowerment. The chosen English translations of the

Malayalam Dalit poems provide a wider opportunity and space for these writers to express their protest against the injustice encountered by them. Through translation, their voice is heard everywhere.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic and gives the historical background. It gives an overview of the history of Dalit literature in Kerala, the emergence of Malayalam Dalit novels, short stories, criticism and poetry. The chapter also analyses the aims and objectives, methodologies and the hypothesis of the study. The second chapter titled “The World of Translation and Themes” discusses the various themes appearing in the selected poems. Biographical details of each poet and their publications are included. The various themes that appeared in each of the poems taken for the study are considered. Resistance, protest, anger, identity crisis, alienation, nature, women, humiliation, poverty, helplessness, vulnerability, casteism, injustice and memory are the various themes that appeared in the poems selected for the study. The third chapter titled “Language and the Aesthetic Domain” discusses the various stylistic features that appeared in the select poems. The study is done on the English translations of the select Malayalam Dalit poetry. The stylistic features discussed in the translations are thus considered for the study. The language and diction of the poems, poetic diction, various imageries, analogies, symbolism, allusion and rhythm of the poems are examined and studied. The fourth chapter titled “Translation: Prospects and Realities” is about the translations of Malayalam Dalit poetry. The chapter discusses the politics of translating Malayalam Dalit poetry and the problems in translation. It also examines the loss and gain principles in the translations of Malayalam Dalit poetry. The last chapter titled

“Conclusion” sums up the study. It analyses the research findings and the limitations of the study.

Chapter Two

The World of Translation and Themes

Malayalam Dalit poetry shares some common themes even though the poets wrote in different and distinctive styles. The narrative nature of the poems makes them powerful like the life narratives and Dalit autobiographies. The dialogue part in these poems discusses the anxieties, protests, horrors, and worries of the poets. The poets talk about their past that was marked unworthy by society and they worry about their present. Beginning with lyrical and poetic form Malayalam Dalit poetry changed its course over time. The present chapter discusses the major themes in Malayalam Dalit poetry. Malayalam Dalit poets share some common aspects in their creative works. Protest against exploitation, memories of the past, history, women, nature, poverty, helplessness, identity crisis, alienation, fear and religion form the common themes. Dalit poetry like Dalit autobiographies discusses the social issues based on the life experience of the Dalits. It deconstructs the concepts of beauty and aesthetics. Malayalam Dalit poetry deviates from the romanticization in the early romantic period and aestheticism in the classical period. It creates a separate aesthetic from the life experience by rejecting the Sanskritisation in poetry. *Towards the Aesthetics of Dalit Literature* (2004) defines Dalit literature as “that literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule, and poverty endured by Dalits” (Limble 30). Dalit literature talks about the realities in the society. Malayalam Dalit poetry realistically presents the injustice experienced by the marginalised. It fulfills the purpose of writing about the marginalised. The book *Dalit Voices in Indian Poetry: A Study of Malayalam*

and Marathi Poems (2016) talks about the importance of experience in writing Dalit poetry:

Dalit literature is characterized by the authenticity of experience and the agonies of life. Therefore, the language of the oppressed is lively and illuminating. Poetry born out of experience (*anubhava*), and not speculation (*anumana*) personifies hunger, embodies pain, loss of basic human rights and dignity.” (Sakunthala 25)

Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S. Das, Raghavan Atholi, G. Sasi Madhuraveli and Sunny Kavikad express their angst and protest through their poems. Evils of darkness that haunted the lives of Dalits in the past become evident in their lines. The theme and image of death often danced and revealed through their poems. Poetry is a medium to mark the protest and anger felt by the poets against the exploitation and humiliation induced upon the Dalits over the ages. Dalits and Adivasis were demarcated in the name of skin colour other than class consciousness. Black skin was considered as inferior in Kerala culture. Elite-class people with white skin were given high privileges in society. Children in Kerala were given direct or indirect awareness about the colour consciousness that existed in society. The proverbs and popular sayings in Kerala did a lot in creating colour consciousness among the people. Malayalam Dalit poets often discussed the issue of colour consciousness in the society. The theme of colour black gets problematized in their poems. Black-skinned people were considered as the “others” in the society. Naturally the hostility and bitterness of the white-skinned elite class subjugated them to live under darkness. The colour black appears as a recurring image in the poems of K. K. S. Das, Kaviyoor Murali, G. Sasi Madhuraveli, and S. Joseph. Binu M. Pallippad presents the black colour differently. Black colour becomes the symbol of resistance in their

poems. Compared to other women, Dalit women are doubly marginalized in the name of gender, colour and caste. They have faced many atrocities in this cruel world of exploitation, molestation, murder and rejection. Dalit women had suffered a lot as their bodies and minds were subdued before the feudal lords. Dalit women in Kerala were not allowed to cover their bosom before the *thampurans* and God, *Nair* women not before the *Namboodhis* and God, and the *Namboodhiri* women not before the God. Dalit woman's body was used for both labour and sexual pleasure by the upper caste. In Dalit poems, women are represented in myriad ways. They are shown as mothers, sisters, daughters, goddesses and mythological figures. The image of the mother appears as a “suckling mammal” in G. Sasi Madhuraveli’s poem “Mother.” The tortures and cruelties exercised on the female body form the recurring theme in the poems of Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S. Das and M. B. Manoj. Vijila is trying to establish a separate space for Dalit women in the realm of poetry.

The present chapter also discusses how the Dalit poets in Malayalam have treated nature in their poems. Nature and land seem everything to the Dalits, it is a source of inspiration and revolt. They danced, struggled, and fought with nature, for some of them nature is the long-lost paradise from where they are extruded. Some of these poets are struggling hard and feel that they are losing their identity in the growing industrialization and developments. Nature appears in varied forms: rivers, sky, twilight, wild beasts, birds, insects, fields, pebbles, rocks, hills, soil, seeds, trees and forest creepers. For Kaviyoor Murali nature is an energy source that nurtures the Dalits. They prove their valour, learn survival and struggle to live in nature. Malayalam Dalit poetry can be related to the *thinnai*⁴⁷ tradition in its treatment of nature:

Unlike the mainstream Malayalam poetry which is concerned about the existential anguish and romantic reflection of a feudal past, new Dalit poets foreground the life-world of the marginalized as one that is sidelined and erased by the dominant discourse. Dalit poets bring Malayalam poetry closer to the *thinnai* tradition of the Sangham age by making the people inhabiting the margins, the material world of production and regional topography, visible through their poetry. (Haridasan 75)

Recorded past is history. Memories play a great role in the creation of history. Collective memories of the past become historical. In literature individual memories create a parallel history to the mainstream collective history. Autobiographies and historical fiction had a great role in the creation of historiography. Malayalam Dalit poetry with its narrative technique and use of memories contributes a lot to the missing parts of recorded history which had omitted the labour of Dalits. Even their present is haunted by the memories of the past. The hardships of their life were recorded in the history in the coming years. Individual memories of each poet will become collective cultural memories of the Dalits: “Dalit writers assert that their literature conveys the life that they have lived, experienced and seen. Since the experience contained in Dalit literature is articulated out of a desire for freedom, its character is collective rather than individual” (Limbale 32). With its highly political nature, Dalit poetry deals with the realities and experience rather than traditional aesthetics. Poems of S. Joseph, Sivadas Purameri, M. B. Manoj, M. R. Renukumar, Vijila and S. Kalesh depicts their memories.

Traces of past and history consciously and unconsciously creep into the poems of Malayalam Dalit poets. “Dalit poetry is by far the most powerful expression of their

forgotten history and culture” (Kavitha 9). The dalit community were not the makers of history but its scapegoats. History does not grant justice to Dalits. Injustice and inequality had always loomed over their past. They were allegedly erased from history. Malayalam Dalit poetry had always powerfully protested the negligence toward Dalits. The poems portray the injustice that society has done to them. Kaviyoor Murali and K. K. S. Das question the reliability of mainstream history in which Dalits were excluded. Sunny Kavikkad talks about history in a symbolic language. Sivadas Purameri, M. R. Renukumar, S. Joseph and M. B. Manoj recollect the bitterness of their past through the memories.

Poverty and vulnerability are other themes that appear in Malayalam Dalit poetry. Poverty and hunger had always struck over the Dalit lives thus making them economically down and helpless. S. Joseph, Raghavan Atholi, Sivadas Purameri and S. Kalesh had expressed their worries about poverty and hunger. Representation of poverty had brought a clear-cut distinction between haves and have-nots. It had specifically marked the distance between elites and the marginalised. Subjectivity and lived experience had become a major concern in the writing of poetry. Experiences are vital and sometimes unavoidable. Poetry written out of the experiences genuinely reflects the trauma of lived experiences. Like the famous quote, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir 301) one is not born but becomes a Dalit through their experience. Every child is born as a human being but it is the society that distinguishes and labels him/her under different caste identities. The first-hand experience of a Dalit writer appears more genuine to the readers who go through the mediated experience of the text. When a non-Dalit writes about the issues of untouchability and caste it is written

out of second-hand experience. The situations and the first-hand experience of the Dalit writers make their writings distinct from traditional literature. Michael Pickering in his article “Experience and the Social World” talks about first-hand and second-hand experience:

Considering the diverse stuff of experience brings us back to the distinction between first-hand and second-hand experience, involving that which occurs to us in an immediate and relatively direct way and that which occurs at a distance, in some unfamiliar elsewhere. (Pickering 24)

Religion is another major theme that appears in Malayalam Dalit poetry. Casteism was rooted in the Hindu religion. Dalits during the colonial period converted to Christianity to escape the manacles of casteism. But they remained as Dalit Christians in the new religion that they believed would save him. Caste continued to haunt them and it was reflected in their poems:

Memories of past slavery and its brutalities, the hardships of contemporary Dalit life as landless laborers along with the caste character of the Communist Party ruling state, the stigma of skin color, and betrayals from within by Christianity and casteism are some of the prominent tropes recurring along the horizon of Malayalam Dalit poetry. (Muthukkaruppan 66)

Poikayil Appachan burnt the *Bible* in Public as a protest of the injustice against converted Dalit Christians. His songs were for the liberation of the Dalits. S. Joseph also wrote against the identity crisis faced by Dalit Christians.

The present chapter gives a thematic analysis of the select poems of Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S Das, Raghavan Atholi, G. Sasi Madhuraveli, Sunny Kavikad, Sivadas Purameri, M. B, Manoj, S. Joseph, M. R Renukumar, Vijila, Binu M. Pallipad and S. Kalesh. Biographical details of each poet are given. A detailed study of the major themes in the selected poems is also done in this chapter.

Kaviyoor Murali (20 March 1931- 20 October 2001) was born in Kaviyoor, Pathanamthitta. He was a folklorist and prominent Dalit activist from Kerala. He was honoured with the fellowship of Bharatiya Dalit Sahitya Academi Delhi. His major works include *Dalit Bhasha* (1997), *Dalitarkkezhutiya Suvishesam* (1997), *Purananooru Oru Paddanam* (1999), *Dalit Bhasha Nighandu* (2010). Kaviyoor Murali marked his place in Malayalam dalit poetry and criticism through his works. Most of his works and criticism discuss the history, language, aesthetics, identity and literature of Dalits in Kerala. An ardent follower of Ambedkar, Kaviyoor Murali fought through his writings for the empowerment of Dalits in Kerala.

Kaviyoor Murali's poem "The Gospel for Dalits" visibly shares the experience of violence, torture, and exploitation inflicted upon the Dalit community. Violence in every form was exerted on the marginalized by the upper castes. In the context of Kerala, the upper caste Namboodiris and Nairs imposed violence and exploitation on the outcastes. Dalits were economically, sexually, and mentally tortured and exploited. Unable to question the injustice imposed upon them, Dalits abjectly obeyed the orders of the elite class. The trauma of violence, torture and brutality forced them to write and record it. "The Gospel for Dalits" is a reaction against the exploitation and marginalization of Dalits. Anger, protest, violence, exploitation, religion and the colour of blackness are the

major themes in the poems of Kaviyoor Murali.

Kaviyoor Murali in his “The Gospels for Dalits” reminds the readers about how Dalits are thrown away to the margin by social dominance. The poet writes and records the injustice that fell upon the Dalits. He urges them to protest to fight back the humiliation forced upon them. His anger towards the exploitation is visible in the translation by Valson Thampu: “My ambience rains fire, / my soul glows red hot, / like iron in a smith’s forge” (Murali lines 41- 43). The poet’s anger is evident through the expressions “rains fire,” “soul glows red hot” and “iron in a smith’s forge.”

The blackness of their skin represents the darkness of their past. Kaviyoor Murali in “The Gospel for Dalits” is worried about the darkness of the past which continues and haunts the Dalits in the present: “Darkness, as with my days past, /encamps each day of my present” (Murali lines 22-23). Evils of cruelty thrust upon them from the past force Kaviyoor Murali to relate the discomforts Dalits continue to experience even in the socially reformed twentieth century: “The horoscope of the present/ is written, don’t you think, / in stones from the past?” (Murali lines 19-21). The darkness that hovered and haunted them in the past is still tracking them down to the present and exploitation continues. No one questions the elite class when Dalits are injured and battered to death. The lower caste was supposed to bear the maltreatment by the Nairs and Namboodiris. Dalits were burned alive: “My people they kill and consume /like ants gnawing a dead fly / Kerosine they pour on / our living bodies to set ablaze” (Murali lines 26- 29). A gospel is the teaching of Saints and Christ. Kaviyoor Murali in “The Gospel for Dalits” writes about the Dalits. He describes: “Oh, my people! / This into your hearts receive, /and share the sorrows of my heart” (Murali lines 67- 69). He states that his gospel is for

the Dalits. Dalits in Kerala were converted to Christianity in the hope that the latter may provide solace to their broken life. Unlike their expectations, Christianity failed to provide justice and equality. The poet here relates the story of Adam and Eve who were thrown out from Eden to talk about the forceful exclusion of Dalits from their dwelling. Dalits were marginalized in the name of caste, colour and religion. God remains silent upon the inequality enforced on them. No God is to give them justice. They were driven out from their settlements “on a Sabbath day/ when God was on holiday” (Murali lines 83-84). These lines remind the readers about the expulsion of Adivasis from the forest lands. Their cultivation and farmlands were spoiled. Their thatched houses were destroyed and their belongings were plundered. Mass attacks on Adivasis evicted them from their place making them landless: “Their vineyards and fig trees felled and despoiled / Their thatched houses pulled down. / Land and goods snatched away by force” (Murali lines 99-101). Even newborn babies and toddlers were attacked. Violence on Dalits permeates the atmosphere. The attackers and predators ran for their blood. “Catch them. / Blot them out. / Butcher their children to extinction” (Murali lines 106-8). If anyone is spared, that one will be back to claim that it was his land so, “Spare not, hence, even their first-born” (Murali line 116). Violence against the Dalits and tribals is presented here in brutal form. The poet here narrates the history of Dalits and tells how they became landless slaves. The lives of the exiles and the homeless are turbulent. They lived with their insecurities and fear of the dreadful wild animals and poisonous reptiles. The elites had plundered everything from ‘others’ while throwing them to the harshness of vulnerability. They were forced to live under the threat of forest thieves, opium thugs, and wild beasts.

9. Thistles and thorns their bodies ripped

All along the way they fled

10. Snakes, on the rocks and in the caves,

Slithered and crawled on them as they slept. (Murali lines 87-90)

Kaviyoor Murali's "The Gospel for Dalits" discusses the society's attack against women. Sexual objectification of the female Dalit body and the violence induced upon Dalit women becomes a concern in the poem. Dalit women's bodies become an object of pleasure for the elite class men. Young girls and old women were subjected to gang rape and torture. The author describes how: "My sisters, coerced and pierced / to rape they subject" (Murali lines 30-31). Child sexual abuse and attacks against old women are common. Upper castes turn attractive women into concubines: "Among the women caught, / those found to be attractive / were degraded into keeps and chattel" (Murali lines 134-36). Their women were raped as "prowling gang-rapists spare / neither tottering women past sixty / nor tender trembling girls under eleven" (lines 32-24) but the media remained silent, "law and justice stand like signpost" (line 39). No one reacted to the injustice and cruelty that fell upon Dalit girls and women. Kaviyoor Murali believes that the horoscope of the present is written in the stones from the past. The negligence and insecurity that Dalits continue to experience in the present is the aftermath of their tragic past. He is destined to write the history of the untouchables. The poet chooses poetry as a medium to represent the past of Dalits. The experience of deceit and torture needs to be recorded. The Dalit culture, arts, crafts and music were deliberately excluded from mainstream history. History makers were always from the elite class and Dalits failed to

enter mainstream history. Only the lives of Kings and queens have a place in history. Art, music, dance and mainstream culture have always gained a space in history. The past, art and culture of Dalits have always remained unrecorded. Epics and religious texts had told the stories of the elite class. Kaviyoor Murali has written “The Gospels for Dalits” to make Dalits aware of their past as history does not provide any information to understand about them. He wrote it in the form of the gospels as religion and gods did not find any solution to the mounting discrimination against Dalits. The discrimination and inequality in the Hindu religion had forced Dalits to convert to Christianity and Islam. But it had also failed to provide justice to the marginalized. Soon they realized that they were still untouchables in the newly joined religion. The poet is here with gospels for the Dalits. In his youth, the poet had stood firm in his fight against injustice but now, he is weak and old. So, he writes and records for the Dalits his works are like a balm for the broken and suffered. The poet laments “Oh, my people! / This into your hearts receive, / and share the sorrows of my heart” (Murali lines 63-65).

Deliberate discrimination and erasure of Dalits from history and the mainstream is the major concern in Kaviyoor Murali’s “The Gospels for Dalits.” The poet questions the reliability of current history by calling it “a smoke-shrouded history” (Murali line 141). The poet mocks the historians who reject the stories of Dalits from the mainstream. The article “Dravidians and Dravidian Culture: A Dalit Perspective discusses the history of Dalits in Kerala:

The Dalits of Kerala believe that they are Dravidians. The historical thinking which is the basis of such a belief is this: Dravidians had a golden past by way of agriculture, trade and culture during the Harappa-Mohenjodaro period. But

consequent upon the first invasion, they were defeated and fled to south India. The Dravidians who thus reached the South including Kerala could build a rich culture. Those days they never had any discriminations or castes dividing them. It was after the Brahminic invasion that the Dalits became untouchables. In the opinion of the famous Dalit leader and writer Kallara Sukumaran, up until the 10th century A.D., all the kings were Pulayas and Parayas belonging to the Dravidian tribe. Almost all the Dalit movements in Kerala have followed the above mentioned historical lesson. Following the narratives of William Logan, the author of *Malabar Manual* and Dalit historians like T. H. V. Yentharassery and N. K. Jose, they establish that the first Chera reign existing during the last decades of B. C and first centuries of A. D., was that of Cherumans. This Dravidian thinking has deeply influenced literature in folk songs, folk arts, and rituals points out its difference from the mainstream literature through the under currents of Dravidian culture. (Kochu 98)

The poet enlists the incidents from the past that was deliberately excluded by the historians. Dalits should be proud of the generosity of their “ancestors who gifted elephants to *Eravalars*” (Murali line 200). Great poets and rulers came out of the wombs of Dalit women. Awesome genius Thiruvalluvar was the son of a *Parayaya* woman and “it was / a Kurathi woman who gave birth / to Imayavaramban Nedumcheralathan” (Murali lines 211-13) Women poets of the *Sangam*⁴⁸ age like Nallini, Avvaiyyar, Elaveini, Vennikkuyathi and Kanni Kaamakanni were *Paanathies*⁴⁹. But out of some deceit, Dalits were marginalized and subsided. The poet is posing some questions to ponder about:

41. How did a poetic people forfeit their language?

42. Princes become hired planters of seedlings?

43. And geniuses deformed into idiots

44. All these, forget not,

Were by deceit wrought. (Murali lines 220- 24)

K. K. S. Das was born on 24 December 1946 at Kottayam. He has published several scholarly works and collections of poems. *Malanadinte Mattoli* (1967) was his first work on poetry based on the life of Ayyankali. He has published several other poetry collections including *Karumadi Nritham* (1975) and *Noottandukalkku Marupadi* (2002). His other notable works are *Dalit Deshiyatha* (2002), *Yuddhavum Aagolavalkaranavum* (2002), *Marxisavum Ambedkar Chinthayum* (2010), *Dalit Janathayude Swathantryam* (2010). He was a member of the Director Board of Kerala Bhasha Institute and Resident Editor of *Seediyan*. His bold and powerful poems shake the pillars of feudal lords and Brahminical dominance. Untouchables are in protest and they are in rebellion in his poems. Anger, restlessness, protest, revenge, exploitation, blackness, and memories are the main themes of his works.

K. K. S. Das's "The Black Dance" translated by Ajay Sekher is a protest poem against the exploitation and oppression of the Dalits by the elite class. The poem opens with an invocation a call for revolt asking the black girl to come along with the wrath of Kali⁵⁰. Revenge of the Dalits is metaphorically dancing like Goddess Kali. Dalits, the black cubs of panthers and lions who shade the black soil are strong and rigid in their

attitude. Now they are here to avenge the age-old exploitation and abuse induced upon them. Dalit labourers were once pushed alive and their heads were chopped down. Their blood drained the fields and farmlands. It was high time to take revenge. The blacks who were butchered and slaughtered in the past are now back with their long hair and nails. Like a demon with its dangling tongue, they are powerful enough to shake the hills and uproot the palm. Proud to be black, they announce that they were the souls that were once scattered and dumped around the barns of feudal landlords. The social reformation that happened in Kerala from the beginning of the nineteenth century has its reflection in the Dalit discourse. The introduction of a new educational system had ignited the minds. Malayalam Dalit poetry has its reverberations as Dalits started to speak out through the medium of poetry. The time for revenge has arrived and with great rage, Dalits are roaring and shouting back, "Blood for blood" (Das line 36) Dalit Malayalam poetry is revolutionary with the poems of K. K. S Das. Kaviyoor Murali supports this revolutionary ideology of protest:

The Dalit literature of old times contains sorrow, sobs, tears and screams. This is no more considered a desirable style. The world of today thinks that teary eyes are prettier. Justice, here, has always been the justice of the mighty; it still does. Tears are useless in a cruel world that is pleased to see the powerless crying. The Dalit literature of today should have a language of determination which should insist that if you make me suffer, you must know the same suffering. The writings of the modern times must be fundamentally capable of moving the Dalit. (Murali 39)

Roaring dark ones are shaking the forest and the woods, in a frenzy they are to destroy everything in their front. The image of Black Goddess Kali dancing in ecstasy after killing the *Asura*⁵¹ is symbolic of the revenge of dark ones. The oppressed have risen to repay the old debts. The dark ones razed the barns and reserves, snuffed out the lights and lamps, and tore down the clothes and ornaments of the landlords. In the smile of slaves, masters are trembling now. Dark ones reveled and danced in the blood of the elites: “we will break your back and baston / we will avenge all this! / We will avenge you all for sure!” (Das lines 28-30).

In “My Soil” translated by Lekshmy Rajeev, K. K. S. Das elevates poetry as a medium of resistance. Dalits ‘who triumphed over time’ are ‘pouring poems of thunder and lightning’ for a social reformation. The poet is born into the heart of his fatherland by breaking the boundary stones of generations as he is destined for a revolution. He stands firm at the soil snatched from his ancestors. He rushes into the prisons of fellow tribes and kisses their wounds. Poetry is powerful to break the chains and he is here to create a new world with one community, clan and nation.

The colour black is another common theme that Dalit writers have dealt with. Unlike other poets, K.K.S Das celebrates blackness. K.K.S. Das in “The Black Dance” directly addresses Dalits as blacks. Black is here the colour of pride and self-respect and is no longer the colour of shame and insult. The poet is encouraging the blacks irrespective of their gender. The poet is calling black girls who reap the paddy fields and black cubs who shade the black soil for a revolt. Discarding the social taboo, black colour gained the status of valour to fight back the injustice in society. The poets describe: “We are those black souls / scattered and dumbled around your barns / today we shake the

forest and the woods” (Das lines 32-34). Black ones are here making a death dance with the wrath of the black goddess Kali. The etymology of the word Kali relates to the black colour. In *Puranas*⁵² goddess Kali is associated with blackness and bravery. She is the black goddess who fights against the evil and darkness in the world. She is dark skinned and fights against evil. Skin colour does not decide the conduct of a person. Evil lies within the white-skinned Brahmanical ideology that was prevailing in society. Their white skin is a mask to cover the evil inside. Black dance is an invocation to smash the evils of society to bring new order.

For K. K. S Das women are not vulnerable and weak. The poet represents women as powerful and destructive. Women are the source of power like Kali and Kannaki⁵³ the mythological goddesses. The poet urges the black girl who reaps the field to “come along with the wrath of Kali!” (Das line 5). The Poet is presenting women as strong and capable unlike the patriarchal stereotypical portrayal of women as subordinate and passive. The poet is announcing the entire Dalit community to be like goddesses Kali and Kannaki. Women are represented as brave, fierce and proud in the poems of K. K. S Das. The poet breaks the stereotypical way of representing women as timid and vulnerable. Women are associated with power and authority in his poems.

Soil and nature are the other themes discussed in his poems. For K. K. S. Das, the soil is the Dalit identity. He stands firm on the land “snatched from / the first tribes’ makeshift” (Das lines 12-13). Thunder, lightning, flowers of thorny plants, and soil are the background to his poem “My Soil.” Nature is set as a perfect background for revenge in “The Black Dance” shaking the hillock and uprooting the palms perfectly describes the strength of the Dalits. Dalits are associated with soil and nature, their lives and lifestyle

are in tune with nature, they reap the paddy fields, become manure in the soil and the colour of the river.

The treatment of history and the past is distinctive in the poems of K. K. S Das. The poet is conscious that his birth is in the heart of his fatherland “breaking the boundary-stones of generations” (Das line 6). He realises that his past is in the field songs of the Pulayas and old songs of Paanas. His patrimony hurls over the heads of Dharma shastras and the poet stands firm at the soil once snatched away from his ancestors. The poet is aware of how tribes became landless in the past and how history deceived them perfectly. “The Black Dance” gives a picture of injustice in the past, which history failed to record: “you were pushed down alive / under the mud as slush / so many Pulaya heads were chopped / and the blood drained into the fields and farmlands” (Das lines 14-17). Their past is filled with rituals and prayers, they sacrificed roosters and fed the spirits. Their unwritten past is mingled with the rhythm of nature. Their souls were scattered and dumped around the barns of feudalism. The exploitation of Dalits in the past and the violence inflicted upon them is clear in the lines of “The Black Dance.”

The poet, painter, cartoonist, novelist, activist and sculptor Raghavan Atholi was born in 1957 in the rustic village of Atholi in Kozhikode district. His sculptures are exhibited in many national and international exhibitions. Raghavan Atholi can be identified as one of the early figures of Malayalam Dalit Poetry. His first collection of poetry *Kandathi* had appeared in 1996. *Mozhimattam* (1998), *Kalladuppukal* (2003), *Mounasilakalude Pranayakurippukal* (2004), *Kanalormakal* (2007), *Kathunna Mazhakal* (2007) and *Chavumazhakal* (2008) are his other poetry collections. *Choraparisam* (2006), *Mankolagal* and *Kaliyattam* (2006) are his novels. His novel *Choraparisam* won

the prestigious Basheer Award in 2006. He had also received accolades for his sculptures, Korea International Arts Festival Award in 2003 and Kerala Lalithakala Academi Award in 2004.

Raghavan Atholi created his voice through his modern lyrical poems. “Atholi evokes in his poems the rhythm, beauty, and pattern of the folk-song tradition of the working class. When he writes, the lost generation speaks through him and the racial memories of his people express through his poetry” (Haridasan 79). Hunger, exploitation, helplessness, poverty, Dalit women, darkness, and blackness are the major themes of his notable poems. ‘Kandathi’ is the name of the poet's mother. The poem “Kandathi” depicts the difficulties and struggles of a Dalit mother. The patriarchal families in Kerala gave a second-rate position to women in the past. The endless waiting of the mother in the poem depicts the lower status of women. The opening lines of the poem translated by K. M. Sheriff, “Before the garbage heap in the street / A hungry woman waits” (Atholi lines 1-2), introduce the ‘Kandathi’ to the readers. Here she is described as a hungry woman and is waiting for something. Hunger is a major theme in the poems written by Dalit poets. The experience of hunger and starvation is painful and sad. Food is the basic need for every living being. Denial of food due to socio-political reasons is a curse of the society. Dalits in Kerala were not given proper wages during the feudal period. Denial of wages and food is extremely cruel. Here, the woman continues to wait for her wages, and at home, she again waits before the cold food for her husband to return at night. As per the tradition of Kerala families, women are not allowed to eat before their husbands. At the end of the poem the woman is presented as waiting: “She waits for the light that went out to return, / For a handful of rice untainted with blood / For a piece of land untainted

with greed” (Atholi lines 39- 41). These lines depict the struggling past of the Dalits and the greedy nature of the elite community. The blood of Dalits was shed to satisfy the greed of the elite community.

The poem has a feminist approach and is written on the experiences of the poet's mother. The struggles and strength of a mother are presented through the memories of the poet: “This battered woman / My flesh and blood, / My mother” (Atholi lines 34-36). Her hard work and tears turn the poem ‘personal is political.’ The bitter personal experience of the poet’s mother becomes political as it represents the problems of entire Dalit peasant women in Kerala. They are subjected to workspace insecurities and violence. She gets hurt at work with stones and experiences fatigue under the sun while sowing seeds in the fields. The picture of a mother nursing and breastfeeding the baby in the middle of her work in the fields proves the struggles of Dalit peasant women in Kerala. The poet portrays the history of the Dalits through memories. Experiences form the unrecorded past that a Dalit cannot erase from the memory. The poem portrays a brave mother and her difficulties.

Sunny Kavikkad is an activist and a poet born in 1962 in Kavikkad in the Kottayam district of Kerala. He has published several stories and poems. *Padiyirangunnu* (1993) and *Baliyadukalude Velipadukal* (2000) are his poetry collection. *Purayidathilekkoru Yatra* (1987) is a spectacular and striking street play against nuclear power plants. His other important works are *Nilathezhuthukal*, and *Viswasathinte Porulukal*. “Sunny Kavikkad’s poems are a storm that echoes the agonies of centuries. The miserable and hapless Dalits that we see in his early poems were set aside and he is more concerned about the inevitability of a social revolution” (Sakunthala 53).

Sunny Kavikkad calls history dark in his poem “An Uncharted Map” translated by Catherine Thankamma: “For darkness to write history / I offer my eyes” (Kavikkad lines 8-9). History has pulled Dalits into the shadow of destiny. History has rejected the alphabet and truth to the Dalits. The Poet is critical of what history has done to them. Realizing the deceit of elites in turning Dalits into landless, the poet offers his eyes ‘for darkness to write history.’ ‘Truth/ dissolves in sighs’ in this world created of lies. The world has lied and hidden the real history behind it. He is questioning the Brahmanical ideology which denied education to the marginalised. Knowledge was something unattainable to the Dalits for ages, ‘a serpent slithers’ on the ‘alphabets in the bowl of plenty’ and prohibits Dalits from learning.

G. Sasi Madhuraveli was born on 15 November 1959 at Madhuraveli in Kottayam district. His poems appeared in the periodicals *Yukthirekha*, *Samakaleena Kavitha*, *Adhasthita Navothana Munnani Bulletin*, and *Dynamic Action*. His collection of poems *Balikkakka* was published in 2001. In 2002 he committed suicide after falling prey to depression.

Sasi Madhuraveli offered a different reading experience in his collection of poems *Balikkakka* (2001). His works attracted attention since they broke the weary expressions of resignation and deprivation that marked earlier Dalit poetry. They step beyond the personal experience to encompass the community at large. They are not passive portrayals of Dalit life, but express assertive inner experiences of the Dalits world. (Sakunthala 53-54)

G. Sasi Madhuraveli’s “Shambuka” translated by T. M. Yesudasan represents the entire Dalits of India tortured, butchered, and humiliated by the higher castes. The poet is

urging his people to beat the drum of time to evoke changes in society. Time has reached to react, “Ebony children, / hunger and mischief fused, / beat the drum of our times” (Madhuraveli lines 14-16). Dalits started questioning every injustice, insult and violence thrust upon them. Education made them rational to realise that salvation is not the result of any *tapas*⁵⁴. *Kaattalan*⁵⁵ should not civilise himself to be a ‘Valmiki’ to write hymns praising the upper caste ideologies. Instead, he should revert to *Kaattalan* for writing the Ramayana of Dalits. They must create a space for themselves: “Valmiki reverts to Kaattalan/ Our Ramayana is born/ for the salvation of all” (Madhuraveli 23-25).

Black appears as a recurring image in the poems of G. Sasi Madhuraveli. His poem “With Love” is addressed to a lady to whom the poet is asking many questions. While calling her ‘Saumini,’ which means one who is soft-natured, the poet is problematizing the concept of black in Kerala culture. Here Saumini represents the elite class woman who often repeats the popular saying that black is beautiful:

Saumini,

Didn’t you say that black is beautiful?

And haven’t the poets sung so too?

How then were the Blacks disgraced? (Madhuraveli lines 1-4)

Even though the elite class uses soothing words and says that black is beautiful, it is not said from the heart. In this pretentious post-independent India Dalits are considered equal to other higher castes but they are always marginalized and insulted in the society in the name of caste. Laws and rules framed in the twentieth century assure equality and

protection for the Dalits. Black is described as “the seed of self-rage / The mount of tumult / The shadow of endurance / The shade of love” (Madhuraveli lines 22- 25). Even nature comprises of the blazing sun red and hot is attacking the black community. Earth is not presented here with the stereotypical mother image. Mother who is regarded as the protector of universal love and caring is not with the blacks to assure support: “Amme, we Blacks lack space / to hide under your wings/ We are being shooed away” (Madhuraveli lines 10-12). Blacks are driven away from everywhere and everyone. The humiliation and constant neglect of blacks by society is well explained in these lines.

G. Sasi Madhuraveli’s “Shambuka” pictures the marginalization and exploitation of women in a patriarchal society. Women are the victims of oppression and suppression in every culture. Elite class women as well as lower class women are experiencing the trauma of injustice and violence in a different way. Sita the *Kshatriya*⁵⁶ queen from the epic *The Ramayana* faces an ordeal to prove her chastity but a Dalit woman who is a mere pack of fish need not go through an ordeal as she becomes a betel to chew and spitted by the upper caste men. The question of chastity is never associated with Dalit women.

The character of ‘Mother’ in G. Sasi Madhuraveli’s poem “Mother” translated by Lekshmy Rajeev represents the sorrows and plight of Dalit women in society. She is the direct victim who endures the sufferings of poverty and famine. A Dalit mother can be easily portrayed through the images of “a battered kanji-bowl / a few grains of rice / and many tears” (Madhuraveli lines 2-4). The images of ‘a suckling mammal’ and ‘a creeping reptile’ show the pathetic situation of a mother reducing herself to an animal serving a family. “Mother is a suckling mammal” (line 9) exploited at its best by the family.

Metaphor is used to compare a mother to a cow whose milk is used by everyone else in her family. In Indian male dominated culture, women are always a burden for their brother's head. For the husband, she is merely a creeping reptile confined in the kitchen. *Puranas* and proverbs eulogise women as the sight, sound, and light of wisdom but reality is far from the myth. The stories of Kannaki and Sheelavathi⁵⁷ failed to strengthen women and now she is living in the kitchen stories of deliveries and dirt-smearred days. After completing the endless and countless tiresome work in the kitchen she rots away "like the unclaimed carcass of the cow / that yielded milk no more" (Madhuraveli lines 28-29).

S. Joseph born in 1965 is a contemporary Malayalam poet and artist from Kottayam. He is a retired Associate Professor from Maharajas College, Ernakulam. S. Joseph is fortunate to enter the canon of mainstream Malayalam literature through his distinctive style and language. His poems are included in the syllabus of various universities in Kerala. His poems are translated into English, Swedish, Hindi, Tamil, Bengali and Kannada. His famous poetry collections are *Karutha Kallu* (2000), *Meenakaran* (2003), *Identity Card* (2005), *Uppante Kooval Varakkunnu* (2009) and *Vellam Ethra Lalithamanu* (2011). *Pulariyile Moonu Thengukal* (2006) is his children's fiction. He has published several articles on poetry and paintings in reputed journals. His collection of poetry *Uppante Kooval Varakkunnu* (2009) won the prestigious Kerala Sahitya Academi Award in 2012. He is also a recipient of the Kanakasree Award from the Kerala Sahitya Academi. *Uppante Kooval Varakkunnu* had won the Thiruvananthapuram Book Fair award in 2009.

The article "A Genuine Subaltern Voice: On S. Joseph's Poetry" discusses that:

S. Joseph's poems stand apart both from the mainstream tradition of Malayalam poetry and the poems by the writers of his own generation by their apparent simplicity, the unfamiliar world they often deal with, the aura of mystery he lends to common things and situations, their genuine subaltern voice and their organic link with the environment. (Satchidanandan 19)

Dalit Voices in Indian Poetry: A Study of Malayalam and Marathi poems explicates on how,

S. Joseph has carved a niche in Malayalam Dalit poetry on account of the unconventionality of his themes and style. His poetry is about all those people who are outside the mainstream. The landscape of his poetry is about all those people who are outside the mainstream. The landscape of his poetry takes us to the hitherto unknown places. Malayalam poetry has never seen the coasts and hills which belonged to the subalterns. (Sakunthala 55)

His poems in simple diction and language are the voices of the marginalised. He portrays the problems, poverty, identity crisis and the hazard of the subaltern. "S. Joseph and his poetry and dalit literatures in general in regional languages are effectively countering and resisting the cultural and political monolith of the Nation or even the region and its elitist and canonized Metanarratives of hegemonic appropriation in diverse and democratic ways. (Sekher 220). S. Joseph's "A Letter to Malayalam Poetry" is a protest and rebellion against the massive Sanskritisation that had once ruled poetry. To liberate Malayalam poetry from rhetoric, the poet challenges the higher caste poetical tradition. S. Joseph's poems paved a new tradition of simple diction avoiding rhetoric and

metre. Malayalam poetry is personified as a young woman who is trapped and confined in rigid metres and stanzas. The poet, the one from the meanest of the society is there to rescue her from the upper caste fineries: “They locked you up / In stanzas and meters” (Joseph lines 23-24). The poet wants to free her to enjoy the rhythm of the mundane life. In the poem Malayalam poetry is personified as an aristocratic elite young woman getting tired of the luxurious confined life. Wrapped in silks and smiles she could view the world only through a hole. But the poet who is a lover can ensure her freedom that she can bath in the brooks, chirp with wagtails and sit on the *veranda*⁵⁸. Poet invites her to his life, promising her to show the woods, sleep in a thatched hut, wade through filth and slush, burn and catch a fever in the sun. These are the mundane and yet enjoyable moments in life. The poet’s life is hazardous yet adventurous as he lives among the poor in a hut. He does the tough jobs of cleaning mother’s shit and piss, fetching water from afar, collecting tins, paper, sandals and bottles. His father abuses and calls him a dog while the people call him ragpicker. The life of a Dalit is far from the elite imagination. Elite class might underrate this kind of life but thrill and freedom reside with it.

Caste discrimination and identity crisis are the major themes in S. Joseph’s poems. His poems “Group Photo” and “Identity Card” are the best examples of the identity crisis that was felt by the Dalits in Kerala. All other castes except the Dalits took their caste as their identity after the Kerala Renaissance. Society demanded the *Savarnas* to formulate caste as their identity. Dalits continued to consider themselves inferior and tried to hide from their identity. “The depressed classes were made to feel inferior whenever markers of caste identity appeared on certain occasions” (Pampirikkunnu 114). As identity is a social construct, Dalits failed to fit themselves into an identity of their

own. When the girl in his poem “Identity Card” mentions the red mark on the poet's College Identity card to show the stipend he receives, the poet gets embarrassed and confused. His subjectivity gets crushed behind his identity.

“Caste and colour are foregrounded in the poem “Group Photo” where he refuses a girl’s invitation to stand close to her in the group photo. His place is taken by her stalker. The poem asks certain sharp and direct questions about living as a dark, low-caste person in Kerala that no one seems to bother about” (Satchidanandan 14). The poem “Group Photo” discusses the struggles of a dark-skinned one, “How does a poor, low-caste fellow, / And dark at that – live in Kerala?” (Joseph lines 16-17). Darkness is associated with the aspect of black colour. Dark is always synonymous with black as it gives a subordinate status in society. The poet is much more conscious about the dark spaces in the poem “Some Dark Spaces.” The dark skin of the body constantly reminds about the dark spaces Dalits were allotted to live in society. When the poet returns to his home with the forest girl, he realizes about the dark spaces: “Only now I realized / My house too was in a space / knotted with darkness” (Joseph lines 55-57). The poem is in search of a space that every Dalit longs to attain in this world of exclusion and discrimination. The poet believes that the cries of birds like *uppan*⁵⁹ or *olenjaali*⁶⁰ which symbolises wisdom and education brighten the dark spaces. He explicates how “Their cries light up / those dark spaces” (Joseph lines 10-11).

Women in S. Joseph’s poems live in a magical aura and the poet carefully places her at a distance where an untouchable Dalit finds difficult to enter. For him woman is a symbol of unattained or lost love. In the poem “A Letter to Malayalam Poetry,” Malayalam poetry is personified as a woman far from the poet's own culture, spending

life amid luxuries. She could know nature and the world only through the limitations of the car in which she travels. The poet loves her and wants to free her. The question of freedom is problematised here. The poet understands her mind and rescues her from the house and takes her to his hut. Even though initially the poet promises her freedom at the end of the poem like a typical male who wants to marry a girl and lock her at home, the poet too wants to keep her inside the hut. The poet is offering that she can say what she likes to do. But the poet limits her freedom to his own house. The poet then assures the company of mother and father to Malayalam poetry. The poet will go out for work and Malayalam poetry personifies a woman who sits at home waiting for her husband to come. Patriarchy is not allowing a woman to be free and independent. 'She' needs protection and care as she might get scared by owls hooting at night and during the daytime father and mother are at home to take care of her. Her individuality is never concerned. The poet is still hesitant to free Malayalam poetry from the patriarchal dominion.

Nature appears as a recurring background in the poems of S. Joseph. The poet himself is an artist and his poems are rich with the images of landscape. Images of rivers, brooks, waterfalls, rain, trees, birds, animals, woods, sun and rocks appear in his poems. Nature appears as pure, exotic and mystic in his poem "Some Dark Spaces." The poet's place and home near rubber groves are described as dark spaces. Birds like *uppan* and *olenjaali* arrive to light up the dark spaces near the poet's home. The poet's father sends him out to search the nests of those birds which bring light to their place. His search for wisdom and light leads him to the forest into a magical and exotic land where he "flew up the hill like a dragonfly. / Watched the waterfalls gnawing/the insides of the hollowed

rocks” (Joseph lines 16-18). Picturesque details of the forest that include sounds of crickets, rotted leaves, bushes, meadows, a herd of deer and a herd of elephants felicitate a visual retreat. Forest is represented as the mother earth. The cave in the forest is the womb from which all living beings come. The poet explicates about, “the sounds that go into it would come back / The lights that go into it would also come back” (Joseph lines 37-38).

The cave is full of water and it symbolises nature’s womb. The poet is taking us to a pure virgin land in the poem “Some Dark Spaces.” The sense of mystery in the poem is interesting:

‘Some Dark Spaces’ leaves the reader with a sense of mystery. The poet following his father’s instructions tries to locate the origin of birds that appear from nowhere, in the dark spaces left by Sunlight. In the process he hears and sees many things, waterfalls, dears, elephants, chameleons, Cicadas... but fails to find the nest of those birds. (Satchidanandan 17)

The life of labourers in tune with nature and songs is well expressed in his poem “Basket.” Nature provides raw materials to fill the basket as well as the life of Dalits. Weaving a basket is both professional and creative. Picturesque description of the rustic village landscape and labour culture associated with it is beautifully woven with words. *Ottal*⁶¹ reeds used for making the basket are brought from the edges of paddy fields and dark surrounds of ponds. The rim of the baskets is woven with palm-rib slats and it is collected from “boulders / entangled in creepers atop hillocks” (Joseph lines 8-9). *Vazhuka*⁶² vines and *theru*⁶³ slats are also used in making basket. Making baskets is

related to mingling with nature and singing songs. The origin of Dalit poetry is from the labour songs. Singing songs or making sounds in a certain rhythm can reduce the strain of labour. It is from such sounds during work time, that Dalit songs were created. Songs form an integral part of Dalit lives. The initial job in the making of baskets starts from nature itself. It begins with the search and collection of the raw materials for the basket from nature. The poet gets nostalgic about those days of labour and hard work. With the change in lifestyle the labour culture is gone along with the songs.

Today, *ottal* reeds are no longer brought

from fields or from around the ponds.

No *theru* slats are brought from hillocks.

There are no songs any more. (Joseph lines 49-52)

Sivadas Purameri, the poet, film lyricist and music composer was born on 31st May 1966 at Purameri, Kozhikode district in Kerala. *Chornnolikkunna Muri* (2001) his first poetry collection won the Professor Joseph Mundassery Award in 2004. He also received the N. N. Kakkad Smaraka Sangheetam Award, Adyapaka Kala Sahitya Samithi State Poetry Award, Cherusseri Smaraka Award and Muravasseri Vijayan Award. His *Chila Tharam Viralukal* bagged the Moodadi Damodaran Award in 2008 and Abudabi Sakthi Award in 2010. He got the Edasseri Award for his *Manushyane Prathishticha Kannadikal* in 2022. His poetry collections include *Chila Tharam Viralukal* (2007), *Mazha Nanayunna Veyil* (2015) and *Manushyane Prathishticha Kannadikal* (2020). He wrote the lyrics for the songs of the National Award-winning movie *Byari* (2011). “Be it

an element of nature or other inanimate objects, everything has emotions and life in Sivadas Purameri's poems, where nature, especially the rain, is often an important element" (Backer). Rain is a recurring element in Sivadas Purameri's poem "A Leaky Room" translated by E. V. Ramakrishnan. In Sivadas Purameri's narrative and dramatic poem "A Leaky Room" the darkness of the poet's life forces him to take the to commit suicide. The "rain pours from darkness in torrents" (Purameri line 2) above the leaky room in which they are living. Darkness signifies the plight, sufferings and torments of Dalits. Poverty, callousness, and helplessness of Dalits are the main themes in his poem "A Leaky Room." The poem discusses the themes of life, death, love, relationships, hope and faith. Darkness associated with the lives of Dalits is another major theme discussed in the poem. People who get confused before life and death is a grave reality for Dalits who do not own any land, property or space. The poverty of the family is clear from the leaky room in which they live as their house is no longer a shelter from rain and sun outside. Everything gets wet inside the room when rain pours outside. The lines "Soaked are the mattresses, clothing, bedsheets, / pillows, books, medicines, hearth, the firewood / kept to dry" (Purameri lines 7-9) describes the plight of Dalit community.

Death is presented from a different angle here. Unlike Kaviyoor Murali and K.K.S Das who are revolutionary in their poems, Sivadas Purameri portrays the helplessness and hope of vulnerable lives before death. The characters in the poem are helpless and hence they are doomed to stand before death. Debt forces them to make the wrong decision to commit suicide: "On the pages of the book of life, / columns of debt alone stand / to account for mother's throbbing love." (Purameri lines 17-19) Poet soon realises that their death, like the death of any poor and untouchable makes no change in

society. Media will celebrate the news of their death for some days and like their bodies, the death and tales of their deplorable life will get drowned in some other news.

The poem “Some Types of Fingers” translated by E. V. Ramakrishnan discusses the injustice and treachery inflicted upon Dalits by the society. The poem begins with a foreword “On an Incomplete Album.” It suggests that the album of fingers is incomplete like the history which omitted the Dalits from the canon. A severed thumb becomes a symbol of defeat. The poet states that once erased from history no one will remember the vigour and strength of those fingers. He explicates how “The fingers cut will not recall / Their past vigour, arrows shot, / the writings of the forgotten” (Purameri lines 39-41). The poem is a reaction against the continuous erasure and marginalisation of Dalits from the canon in the name of caste. The poet is presenting a list of fingers from the past and notes that the last finger smells of the kitchen. He explicates,

A woman’s imprint on the contract of consent.

A sigh at the bottom

of the page, unnoticed,

A thumbprint. (Purameri lines 44-47)

The othering of women in a patriarchal society prompts the poet to list the woman’s finger in the incomplete album of fingers. Her thumbprint is unnoticed among the other fingers that were omitted from history and past.

M. R. Renukumar born on 8th February 1969 is a poet, short story writer, biographer, translator, essayist and painter from Karapuzha in Kottayam district. His

poetry collections are *Keninilangalil* (2005), *Veshakkaya* (2007), *Pachhakuppi* (2011) and *Kothiyan* (2019). *Naalam Classile Varaal* (2008), *Aracycle* (2017) and *Kootu Koodunna Kadhakal* (2017) are his anthology of stories for children. He has written a biographical sketch of Poikayil Yohannan for children entitled *Poikayil Yohannan* (2009). *Muzhusooryan Aakaanulla Shramangal* (2013), a collection of essays, *Adimatha Keralam* (2016), a historical work and *Ayyankali: Jeevithavum Idapedalukalum* (2017), a biography of the great social reformer from Kerala are his other notable works. He translated a graphic novel *Bhimayana: Experience of Untouchability* from English to Malayalam in 2014. He edited and prefaced Dalit short stories from Malayalam under the title *Njaarukal* in 2014 and later it was translated to English as *Don't Want Caste* in 2017. He was the Kalaprabhava of the M.G. University Youth Festival of 1994. His *Keninilangal* (2005) won the Kaavyavedi Award in 2006 and *Veshakkaya* won the State Bank of Travancore Puraskar in 2009. His *Naalam Classile Varaal* bagged the State Balasahitya Award for Best Children's Literature in 2010. He won the prestigious Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for poetry in 2021.

M.R. Renukumar pulls out poetry from the aesthetic theories in a different way. "Though there is no conscious effort in his poems to glamorize Dalithood, each character, situation and condition of life he pictures has the unmistakable stamp of Dalit experience and sensibility" (Sakunthala 57-58). His way of representing love, sex, women, life and work takes a new dimension through the non-rhythmic lines that he creates in his poems. Like S. Joseph, Renukumar had attempted to rescue Malayalam poetry from the conventional use of rhymes and metres. Explicating the theme is one of the significant elements associated with his poems. Unlike the early romantic poets, Renukumar

approaches the themes of love, lust and death unconventionally. His “The Poisoned Fruit” translated by K. Satchidanandan challenges the dimensions of love and death. The poem is at a time emotional and sentimental in its rush toward death. The act of intense lovemaking and the suicidal attempt of the lovers go hand in hand. The poem moves through memories like his many other poems. His poems serve as a cultural and historical record of the past Dalit life in Kerala. Rural rustic lives and the culture of social inclusiveness associated with it are evident in his “The Poisoned Fruit.” The toddy culture in Kerala develops social relationships and bonding among men. Life, labour, friendships, and toddy shops in Kerala are related to each other. Drinking alcohol is considered masculine and sharing a bottle of toddy is vital to friendship and closeness. The Poet’s brother and his lover’s brother playing with tops together, their sisters playing *ittooli*⁶⁴ which is a kind of game that children play in which one child throws a safety pin somewhere on the ground and others have to search and find it out shows intimacy shared by their families. The poet’s uncle going to take a bath in the pond “exactly when / her amma’s younger sister / goes there to wash clothes” (Renukumar 18-20) analyses the culture in which how love and lust develop among people. Kerala, rich with many rivers and ponds creates a culture closely associated with water. Women moving to wash clothes near the water bodies, men taking baths and the way they communicate with each other causes a cultural complexity. Travelling of women in boats through rivers in search of grass for cattle is another activity related to water bodies and labour culture. Death is another major theme problematised in the poem. Insecurities in life prompt people to commit suicide. Rather than taking a revolutionary approach towards life, the protagonist and his lover decide to commit suicide by eating the

poisonous fruit of the *othala*⁶⁵ tree, common in the riverside of Kerala. Helplessness and vulnerability of the Dalit lives are presented differently through the concepts of love and death. Though the families of the poet and his lover are close to each other, they commit suicide. The readers are unaware of the reason for their decision to commit suicide. The poem thus ends in an ambiguity.

M. R. Renukumar's poem "The Silent Beast" translated by Satchidanandan is an unacknowledged and unrecognised daily domestic labour and toil of a mother who represents the entire Dalit women from Kerala. Minute details of a women's day and the labour associated with it are presented in the poem. The original title of the poem "Mindaprani" refers to a silenced animal (one who is not able to speak) who endures every torture and injustice succumbed to it. *Mindaprani*⁶⁶ is voiceless and constantly gets exploited by the master. The mother in the poem is like a *Mindaprani* who silently do all the domestic work in a house. Dalit women were suppressed for years and their domestic labour is not acknowledged by the patriarchal elite class. The poet is giving a list of jobs done by the mother without rest from dawn to night. Even before the crow lands, the mother starts her work. She cleans the cattle shed, keeps the milk pot and the oil bottle ready, collects the rice- water from the neighbourhood, feeds the cattle, and cuts the grass. Every day she goes through an unending and tiresome job. *Mindaprani* refers to cattle who is exploited by human beings for milk and work. The mother in the poem is also exploited. Women and cattle in the poem are voiceless and helpless in their way, exploited economically and vocationally by the patriarchal society. The elite class benefited from their labour.

M. B. Manoj who is a notable writer, activist, poet, biographer, translator and

critic was born on 30 April 1972 at Idukki district in Kerala. He has received the Konatu Publication Award, AKPCTA Poetry Award (2001) and Caravan Cultural Award (2005). His poetry collection *Kaanunnilloraksharavum* got Kanakasree Award from Sahitya Akademi (2010). There are more than twenty books to his credit. His poetry collection includes *Koottandhadayude Ezhupathu Varshagal* (2004), *Kaanunnilloraksharavum* (2007), *Munkalukal kootikketiya Nadathakkar*, *Pave Pave Pokavenda* (2016) and *Buddharoopam* (2021). He is the co-editor of *Writing in the Dark* (2018) which is an anthology of Dalit poems in translation. *Dalit Padanagal* (2008), *Desam Desi Marga* (2009) are his books on literary criticism. *Aadarsham*, *Adrushyam*, *Ezhuthu*, *Avastha* (2008) are his collection of essays. *Jaaga*, his novel was published in 2018. *Mariya Irudaya* (2019), *Bhuddharoopam* (2021) are his other notable works.

The poems of M. B. Manoj are loud and bold in expressing the spirit of being ‘Dalit.’ He raises questions about the marginalisation faced by Dalits with a confident and strong voice:

The poems of M. B. Manoj are poetic expressions of Dalit identity.... Manoj has coined a word in Malayalam language ‘Koottanthata’, a blend of two words ‘koottam’ (crowd) and ‘ekanthata’ (solitude). Which other words can so aptly describe the plight of the dalits. They are a crowd, brushed aside at every level, lonely and marginalized to the peripheries, hence feeling the pangs of isolation. A very sensitive boy growing up in an ugly, hostile environment with an abiding sense of inferiority is an oft-repeated image in almost all his poems. (Sakunthala 57)

M. B. Manoj's poem "Survey of India" translated by Satchidanandan is a critique of the varna system in India. It raises the thought-provoking question, "Who weighs more? / A cow or an outcaste?" (Manoj lines 1-2). The varna system denies dignity to the outcastes and worship cows as holy animals. A cow is worshipped as a mother goddess. The poet is critical of a social system in which Dalits are not even granted the consideration given to animals. A cow enjoys all freedom and dignity in this system but a Dalit is deprived of it and the poet realises that a "dead cow weighs / five times a live outcaste" (Manoj lines 31-32). According to him, a "live cow's weight equals / two hundred and fifty million outcastes" (lines 33-34).

M. B. Manoj is conscious of the colour discrimination that exists in society. The lives of the dark-skinned Dalits are tumultuous and hazardous. The feeling of disgrace Dalits experience in their life is visible throughout the poems. For a black-skinned one life becomes a hurdle. The poet compares the life of the Dalit with a dark rock in the poem "Rocks." The solid rock with which the poet compares the life of a Dalit is black. Dark-skinned Dalit can only grow slowly like a rock. The poet describes on how,

Each solid rock
 is a dark-skinned man
 who can grow only slowly,
 like the rock. (Manoj lines 1-4)

The image of a crow "scattered by a hurled stone" (Manoj line 7) reminds the reader about the inferior status of the colour black in society. Crows are always described as

blackbirds. The mass attack on Dalits in the name of caste and colour is well portrayed in the poem. Mob lynching is an extreme form of violence imposed upon the Dalits by the inhumane society. By accusing theft and violation of conduct upper castes brutally exert power upon the Dalits. The upper class hegemony looks upon Dalits as 'others', barbaric, uncivilised and wild. Dalits accused of child lifting, molestation, defiance, and robbery are lynched to death. If the accused is a Dalit, then society gives the verdict and punishes him. The elite class finds pleasure in mob lynching and assaulting Dalits. The crow who is scattered by a hurled stone from a flock in the poem "Rocks" symbolises a Dalit who is attacked by a mad mob. The poem portrays the cruelty thrust upon a black man. Elites assault and kill the lower castes knowing that they would never be caught. For a dark man, survival is a Herculean task. Killing, shedding of blood and the turbulence it creates in the reader's mind make the situation terrible. The poet says that one can identify the eyes of a Dalit on a ruined stone.

Patriarchy pulls down the progress of women in general and urges them to push them towards the margin. As for Dalit women crossing the periphery to reach the center is a great task. They are forced to go through many kinds of torture and humiliation inside and outside the domestic sphere. M. B Manoj's poem "Mothers" is a resistance against stigmatizing Dalit women as adulterous and bad. The poet clearly expresses his anger and prompts the readers to react against such insults. The poet tells on how,

If someone says
 a mother is bad,
 even if it's your father,

You'll simply have to rise up

and hit him. (Manoj lines 15-19)

The poem is a reaction against the stereotyping of Dalit women as sluts. The Brahmins consider the body of Dalit women as a property to be used for sexual pleasure. They are vulnerable to such insults by society calling them bad. It is as if they do not have any dignity of their own. The fact that one does not have rights over one's own body is a cruel thing. Denying rights to cover the body and exerting power over it is upper-class politics. A woman's body is a mere property to be enjoyed by the patriarchy. The poet realises that it is a sold-out body. Here readers are made to raise the question about the distinction between the good and the bad. He states his reason for his acceptance of mother. He remarks on how,

She pulls us out

of a sold-out body

pats our back

until we cry and say:

breathe in, breathe out. (Manoj lines 4-8)

The poet considers motherhood as the greatest blessing and counts their efforts in bringing out the next generation. The son owes his debt to his mother for bringing him out into this world.

M. B Manoj depicts into the harsh realities that Dalit women face in their lives. The poet talks about the sexual objectification of the Dalit women in a patriarchal society. Sexuality is not a choice for Dalit women. Women are degraded to concubines. Trust is a matter of question in these relationships. Denial of freedom is a major issue. His poem “Interview” opens a close look into a Dalit woman’s mind. An interview is a kind of personal narrative that one shares with another person. In an interview, questions are often directed into certain answers an interviewer might look upon. The invisible interviewer in the “Interview” and the innocent Dalit women share a microscopic look into the woman’s life. The interview becomes a personal narrative:

Each time after it was done

he would wash me with his piss

always saying,

how can we trust you women? (Manoj lines 6-9)

The poem is a reaction to the several social issues and injustices that are prevalent in society. Rape, child abuse, inequality and humiliation and male dominance are the visible social problems in the poem. Male superiority and contempt towards women can be easily read from the line “how can we trust you women?” (Manoj line 9). Society wishes to portray women as symbols of betrayal and mistrust. In *The Bible* Eve is the symbol of temptation, betrayal, and disobedience. Eve tempts Adam to eat the forbidden fruit and gets expelled from the Eden. Society, religion and tradition view women as inferior, untrustworthy, and treacherous.

Vijila was born in 1981 at Perambra in Kozhikode district. She started writing poems during her college days. Her poetry collections are *Adukala Illathaa Veedu* (2006), *Amma Oru Kalpanika Kavitha Alla* (2009), *Pakarthi Ezhuthu* (2015) and *Pacha Pongu Peruvazhi* (2021). Her poems are included in the Under graduate and Post graduate syllabus of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala University and Calicut University. She has also published poems under the name Vijila Chirappad. In an interview Vijila openly criticises casteism. She remarks that:

Even those who may not be blatantly casteist in their approach to life have it embedded in their subconscious here in Kerala. Take for example, how a Nair woman would relate to Karkidakam (a month in the Malayalam calendar). You would hear her wax eloquent about the heavy rains, reading the Ramayana and partaking of the Karkidaka kanji (a spicy gruel-mix of rice and medicinal herbs). But what about a Dalit woman? She would be more worried about whether the coconut fronds-plaited roof of her home would be able to withstand the heavy onslaught of the rains. So you see the same phenomenon has an upper-caste woman looking outwards to enjoy the rains and the paraphernalia that comes along with it, while the Dalit woman tries to figure out how to survive life for yet another day. (Vijila)

Vijila is the sole woman poet included in *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012). Women writers struggle hard to create a space of their own in this male-dominated society. Patriarchy denies the creativity of women. For a Dalit woman, creating their own space is a double challenge. Her poems are distinctive and unique in the portrayal of women's lives in Kerala society. Vijila represents the entire

Dalit women from Kerala. Her voice gets synonyms with the labour of Dalit women. Her poem “The Autobiography of a bitch” is indeed a story of a Dalit woman. The word ‘bitch’ is counted as an offensive word that patriarchy would associate to call women. The word ‘bitch’ is used as a sexist slur while its masculine gender ‘dog’ is treated as normal. Vijila’s poem is about these types of defiance against women especially against Dalit women. Dalit women in the periphery are looked upon as mean, bad, untrustworthy, and immoral. ‘She’ is always blamed for her incessant delivery. The anthropocentric patriarchal world denies space for Dalit women and finds many reasons for the denial. They were marginalised in the name of beauty, status, caste and religion. The poet tells,

In their markets,

we’ve neither milk, flesh

nor skin.

We’re not offerings

nor their gods either. (Vijila lines 20-24)

Vijila’s “I Can’t Grow My Nails” exposes the sexual violence against women inside and outside the domestic sphere. The poem gives a clear distinction between the sophisticated and mediocre women. The poet accuses Dalit women of being more vulnerable to sexual violence than the sophisticated elites. The poet is making a stark criticism of upper-class women who enjoy the aesthetic of polished nails while watching TV serials. Pressing mobile keypads and surfing computers are the leisure time enjoyment of elite community. The life of the Dalit woman is associated with wounds.

The poet describes on how their nail polish “begins to flake / along with blackened vessels” (Vijila lines 14-15). Economic independence considerably makes a change in the lives of women. For Dalit women gaining economic independence has become a Herculean task. They fight and resist to survive in the society. The poet advises Dalit women to grow nails and use it as a weapon to resist sexual abuse:

Do maintain the grown nail of at least one finger

like an iron nail

to pierce those

venomous fingers

that dare touch your body. (Vijila lines 19-23)

The struggles of a Dalit woman who feels ‘unfit for life’ and does not own any space for herself is the issue discussed in the poem “A Place for Me.” Identity crisis, death, poverty, memories, debt and life hazards of Dalit women are the major themes of the poems. Friendships and the outside world can help them forget personal sorrows and problems at home. Naturally, Dalits go out in search of friends and knowledge outside. Their experience at home relates to the “memory of the land / and the small house / forfeited to creditors” (Vijila lines 10-12). Their debts continue forever like the debts in terms of relationships remain forever. Drishya’s gift, which is a blue diary in the poem, is one such debt that remains forever. It is a debt of a sweet relationship one achieves in life. The poet gives importance to those friendships that can cure the wounds of the heart. He feels that a gift from an intimate friend can always assure that she is not lonely

“Maybe, never ever to remember / that I am all alone” (Vijila lines 23-24). The identity crisis felt by Dalits without any space of one’s own is a common theme in the poems of S. Joseph. Vijila’s poem explains,

Not even six feet of land

Crossing the land

That oozes mud

To which graveyard? (Vijila lines 25- 28)

The poet is worried about the debts of the landless. One who does not own even six feet of land for his funeral stands helpless before everything in this mundane world. Identity becomes a big question for the landless.

Binu M. Pallipad, the poet, flutist, translator, writer, film critic and painter was born on 5th October 1974 at Haripad. He received the Mathilakam Kanivu Poetry Award in 2022 for his poem “Paluvam Pennu.” He has regularly published his poems in popular periodicals and journals in Malayalam since 1991. His poetry collections are *Palette* (2009), *Avar Kunjune Thodumbol* (2013) and posthumous *Kuyilkudi* (2023). *Ella Ruthukkaludeyum Kavi* (2023) is a collection of articles based on the study of the poems of Binu M. Pallippad edited by M. R. Renukumar. He has also translated an *Anthology of Tamil poems* by N. D. Rajakumar into Malayalam. He is a popular flutist who has done musical programs all over South India along with the Baul singers from West Bengal. His poems are prescribed in the University syllabus of MG University, Kerala University and Madras University. He passed away on 22nd April 2022 due to pancreas related health

issues. The poems of Binu M. Pallipad stand distinct from other Malayalam Dalit writers through its startling ideas in simple diction. The painter-poet illustrates his poem through stunning post-modernist techniques. The poet's knowledge about life through his travels, reading and experience in watching movies had moulded him as a mature, surrealist, modernist writer. The poet's place of birth, Pallippad inspires his writings with scenic landscapes as background. His poems reflect the music from the flute he plays.

A deviation from the traditional way of poetry writing is visible in Binu M. Pallippad's poem "Six Philosophers Unite to Exclude Amavasi from the play." Like S. Joseph in "A Letter to Malayalam Poetry" Binu M. Pallippad takes a different turn in his poem. "Six Philosophers Unite to Exclude Amavasi from the Play." It is a startling and remarkable postmodern poem that astonishes the readers through its content and form. The poet's vision of the world and the knowledge that he gained through his readings, travels and life experience is evident throughout the poem. The poet consciously or unconsciously takes the readers to the social issues faced by the Dalit communities in Kerala. The poem is a discussion of a play by six philosophers. The six philosophers include a postmodernist Vinod, an expressionist Thundathil Rajappan, a social realist Puthuvalil Kumaran, a surrealist Daveed- Converted, post-impressionist Chirayil Raveendran and neoclassic Thiruvanchan. The six philosophers though seem postmodern still hold back the rigidities of Sanskrit plays in their play. When the poem begins the six philosophers are sitting in front of a thatched hut. The thatched hut, the wooden grain pounder on which one philosopher sits, the catapult owned by the surrealist and the 'laksham veedu'⁶⁷ in the poem suggest that the philosophers are from the marginalized community. 'Laksham veedu' is a project by the state government to provide housing for

the homeless. The marginalised are engaged in the creation of a play. The making of the play and the planning of the play reminds the role played by K. P. A. C (Kerala People's Arts Club) which is a theatrical movement in the social reformation of Kerala. The six philosophers in the poem are experimenting with the play and are trying to free theatre from the Sanskrit domain:

The short dark man, the postmodernist,

(Vinod) decides that there will be

no actors in the play.

We have doubts about his rationale. (Pallippad lines 9-12)

Each one is radical in their way as the expressionist “volunteers to paint / the backdrop of the stage” (Pallippad lines 14-15). The social realist includes melodious background music and the surrealist wants an allegory in the play. Even though they try to be postmodern and experimental in the play, they are struck with the Sanskrit plays. When Amavasi, the younger one loudly sings the Sanskrit quatrain *snathamasvam gajam matham* like a boatsman singing in full throat from a popular movie, the social realist panchayat member suggests the parading of seven women with hay on their heads while swaying their hips on stage. Suddenly they realise that they are not yet free from the influence of Sanskrit plays. Amavasi in the play is a radical revolutionary Dalit who attempts to reject the norms of Sanskrit plays. He “angrily demands that his hut in the play / be thatched by a thousand amputated hands” (Pallippad lines 67-68). The neoclassic who believe in Manu⁶⁸ and *Vaastu*⁶⁹ cannot digest this and suggest that paddy

banks are essential for the house. Amavasi's anger forces him to slap on the face of the neoclassic. All the six philosophers get agitated with the reaction of Amavasi and expel him from the play. The character Amavasi in Binu M. Pallippad's poem "Six Philosophers Unite to Exclude Amavasi from the Play" is a black one who is deliberately omitted from the mainstream aesthetics. "Amavasi" in Malayalam language means a no-moon day. On a no-moon day or *amavasi* moon is not visible in the night sky. The sky appears darker on no-moon days. The black sky reminds about a black-skinned Dalit representing the younger generation thrown away from the discussions of the making of the play.

The poem discusses the omission of female creativity from mainstream literature. In this poem, all the six philosophers and the Amavasi involved in the creation of a play are from the male gender. They are presented either as background dancers or as housewives. Women are sidelined to the kitchen hold works. One of the philosophers is introduced as talking to a housewife at the kitchen door. She is not sitting along with the philosophers. One needs to go near the kitchen door to speak with a woman. The poem gives a historical record of the condition of women in Kerala. The poet is critical of the sexual objectification of women in the Sanskrit plays. Women are used as background dancers in the plays and are subjected to male gaze. When Amavasi in the play sings aloud a Sanskrit quatrain, like boatmen singing in a popular film, the social realist "insists on seven women / carrying seven headloads of hay / to walk the stage with their hips swaying to this rhythm" (Pallippad lines 54-56). Then others realise that the contemporary play they are going to make is not free from the influence of Sanskrit drama.

S. Kalesh was born in 1982 in Pathanamthitta district. He graduated from Mar Thoma College, Thiruvalla and post graduated from the School of Technology and Applied Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. He took a diploma in Journalism from the Press Academy and received the Best Journalism Student Award. He started writing poetry in 1999 and his poems have appeared in leading journals and periodicals. He had won the first prize in Malayalam Versification at the Mahatma Gandhi University Youth Festival in 2003. In 2004, he received Ankanam Kavitha Puraskaram and Madhyamam Daily-Velicham Kavitha Puraskaram in 2005. He got Atlas Kairali TV Kavitha Award for two consecutive years in 2005 and 2006. He received the V.T. Kumaran Poetry Prize in 2011. In 2019 he got the prestigious Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for poetry. His poetry collection *Sabdhamaha samudram* (2015) won the Kanakasree Award (Kerala Sahitya Akademi Endowment Award) in 2017. His poetry collections are *Hairpin Bend* (2011), *Sabdhamahasamudram* (2015) and *Aattakkari* (2021). *Final Round* (2023) is a short story collection edited by him. He is the editor of *Samakaleena Malayalam Vaarika*, a leading weekly in Malayalam. His poems are the result of his deep vision and observation of life around him. Identity crisis and life struggles of Dalits are visible throughout his poems.

Like S. Joseph's poems, lost love is a general theme in S. Kalesh's poems. His poem "Siren" discusses the distance between the poet and his lover. 'She' reached an unattained height which the poet failed to climb. The poet is in search of his unnamed lost lover who is married and has gone to live her new city life. Distance between them had grown much farther, thus dividing them into two separate cultures. The poet dares to see her city man and asks him to give her back: "Must go to the city and see him / tell

him / that he should give her back to me” (Kalesh lines 5-7). The city upsets and threatens him about the distance between him and his lover. He is doubtful whether his unnamed lover will come back to him leaving behind the city life: “She must have climbed all that distance. / She wouldn’t want to climb down again, would she?” (Kalesh lines 41-42). His “Hairpin Bend” is about an unnamed girl the poet secretly loves. The distance and height between the places at which their houses stood prohibited him from revealing his love for her.

The poem “Hairpin Bend” illustrates the impending insult that every girl must bear in a patriarchal society. The poet describes her as a silenced one. She is silent against the insult that falls upon her as a growing woman. Even she is forced to bear the male gaze and sexual comments passed upon her. She is helpless and weak to protest. The poet is not able to speak against the sexual harassment experienced by the girl. Even the girl remains helpless and silent. The narrator explains,

On the way if anyone comments
 on the growing heaviness of her tiny breasts
 and the fine down on her limbs
 like Arabic letters ready to be read.

She says nothing. (Kalesh lines 4-8)

Patriarchy expects women to bear any violence and insults that society imposes upon them. A good woman is not expected to protest. She should not react to such passing comments. This is how society categorises a good woman and a bad woman. The poet is

critical of the stereotypical notions associated with gender. She lives in a house on a hill “her house is on the last stop / of the line bus that goes up the hill” (Kalesh lines 6-7) whereas the poet and his class live at a low land “Were you to dig a well there / even below the visible water-level / is where I stand” (Kalesh lines 8-9).

Malayalam Dalit poetry had created a new opening to mainstream literature through unconventional and radical individual experiences. Along with the introduction of Dalit themes into poetry, these poems have created a space among the mainstream literature and can be read as outstanding new poetry. Instead of remaining under the genre of Dalit writing, the above discussed poets are accepted as mainstream poets and critics. Some of them are recognised nationally and internationally. All the poets taken for the study are unique in their writing style and treatment of themes. Malayalam Dalit poetry had created a separate aesthetic tradition and had gained much popularity and recognition in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature (2004) talks about the new Dalit aestheticism:

Dalit writers believe that their literature should be analyzed from a sociological perspective focused on social values than on beauty. An exclusively aesthetic consideration of Dalit literature will disregard the Dalit writers’ fundamental role, and hence is not acceptable to Dalit writers. Rejecting traditional aesthetics, they insist on the need for a new and distinct aesthetic for their literature - an aesthetic that is life-affirming and realistic.” (Limbale 19)

The new aesthetic of Malayalam Dalit poetry transcends all these theories of Dalit writing and creates a new space and acceptance among the academics and public. Starting with the revolutionaries Poikayil Appachan, Kaviyoor Murali, and K. K. S. Das

Malayalam Dalit poetry continued with the Dalit consciousness in the poems of S. Joseph, M. B. Manoj, M. R. Renukumar, G. Sasi Madhuraveli and Sunny Kavikkad. The great popularity of the poems of S. Joseph had made a turning point and created a canon for Malayalam Dalit poetry. The poems of Binu M. Pallippad and Sivadas Purameri appear with fresh and different themes. The poets M. R. Renukumar, Vijila and S. Kalesh are popular and their poems are much discussed.

Chapter Three

Language and the Aesthetic Domain

Poetry is considered to be one of the oldest and earliest genres of literature. The form, language, rhythm and structure of poetry made it different and popular. The rhythmical and lyrical quality of the poetry helps in memorising it and the origin of poetry can be traced from the oral renderings associated with various cultures. Poetry as a literary genre thus originated in all languages following different rules in different regions. The form of poetry changed at different periods in all languages. Early poems were written in rigid metres, rhythm and pattern. Conventional Malayalam poetry also followed strict rules regarding rhythm and metre. The traditional Malayalam poetry was inspired and influenced by the Sanskrit plays. Hence, the poets used particular metres, rhythm and figurative language in writing poetry. Figurative language, the use of metre and the sanskritised diction of Malayalam poetry kept it away from the common people. Only the elite learned men had written poems. The marginalised or the downtrodden of society at that time enjoyed oral songs as part of their rituals, labour and culture. These songs were marginalised as substandard by the elite class. Malayalam Dalit poetry in the twentieth century deviated from traditional poetry in style, form, structure, language and rhythm.

Malayalam Dalit poetry is written with a purpose to make changes in society. The form and structure of the poems thus stand out in fulfilling the purpose of writing poetry. Dalit critics advise Dalit poets to be different and simple in form.

Poetry should avoid the trope of *sleshokti* (conveying two meanings at once).

Obscurity (the quality of being difficult to sense the meaning) is certainly a

drawback of poetry. Dalit poets should never be obscure in their writing. They should write in a way that lets the reader grasp the meaning in one reading. Literary devices are ornaments to poetry. However, Dalit poems should do without figures like *ulpreksha*. Instead, similes can be used” (Murali 36).

Malayalam Dalit poetry is a record of the Dalit experiences and memories. The poets use every day simple language in the poems. “It is important to understand how and why Dalit writers and poets use the everyday language of their home, be it a slum or a village. Peppered with slang and abusive language, Dalit creativity is a real challenge to the official ‘standard’ language of the upper castes” (Kumar 76). Dalit poets wrote in an alternative language to create a Dalit identity. “The reality of Dalit literature is distinct, and so is the language of reality. It is the uncouth-impolite language of Dalits. It is the spoken language of Dalits. This language does not recognize cultivated gestures and grammar” (Limbale 33). Dalit poets use various images in their poems. The use of imagery enhances the representation of Dalit experiences in the poems. For Dalit poets, life itself is the thread of the poems. “Dalit writers have used those images and symbols in their literature that are appropriate for relating experiences” (Limbale 34). The images in the poems express the experiences and memories of the poets.

The present chapter gives a textual analysis of the poems taken for study. The language, form, structure and figures of speech used in the poems are analysed in detail. English translations of the select Malayalam Dalit poems are taken for the study.

Kaviyoor Murali’s poem “Dalitarkkezhutiya Suvisesham” translated as “The Gospels for Dalits” by Valson Thampu is written in the form of Gospels and is considered as the fifth Gospel by the poet. His Gospel is for the Dalits who are under the

threat of slavery. The poet knows that Apostle Matthew and Apostle Marcos will not come to write for the liberation of Dalits. He feels that a Dalit himself must write for the freedom of Dalits. The poet has used the language and diction suitable for the Gospels in his “The Gospels for Dalits.” The form of the poem is like a Gospel. The language used in the Gospels follows a particularly long discourse and style in narration. “Language is seen as an aspect of the style of the Gospel” (Engelbrecht 199). Gospels generally follow a polished, distinguished, majestic and elevated language. Kaviyoor Murali’s poem “The Gospel for Dalits” stands out with its clarity and choice of diction. A characteristic narrative style is adopted by the poet in encouraging Dalits through a Gospel. Sharp and precise vocabulary is used. The poet has maintained authority and consistency throughout the poem. His motive for writing and recording the Gospel is clear. It makes the Dalit community realise the real stories of their past which are omitted from mainstream history. The poet has maintained an argumentative and persuasive language throughout the poem. Proper use of rhetorical questions and emotive language has done magic throughout the poem. The poet is directly addressing the readers with the use of personal pronouns ‘I’, ‘We’ and ‘You.’ These personal pronouns make the poem more subjective and closer to the readers. The technique of using personal pronouns is a common style followed in the Gospels. It helps the listeners to be in touch with God in the biblical Gospels. The poet has adopted the same technique in his poem “The Gospel for Dalits” to grab the attention of the readers. With the extensive use of personal pronouns, the poet is creating a feel that his poem is solely written for Dalits: “27. My nerves gone numb, / my joints in chronic ache, / do you think I can Stand up straight?” (Murali lines 60-62).

Through personal pronouns and rhetorical questions the poet is getting into the reader's psyche. Throughout the poem, the poet is playing with the personal pronouns.

The rhetorical language is persuasive in directing the attention towards the viewpoint of the writer. When the poet asks, “horoscope of the present / is written, don’t you think, / in the stones from the past?” (Murali lines 19-21), he is seeking the attention of the readers towards the ignored history and past of Dalits. The phrase, “don't you think” is persuasive in tone and voice, it grabs the attention of the reader towards the author’s point of view. In the first chapter of the Gospel itself, the poet wants to make his stand clear. Dalits themselves must work for their redemption and freedom. Through several rhetorical questions the poet makes it clear: “Will any heart melt in your tears? / 18. And does anyone hasten to you in Solidarity? / Your redemption! Is it not your own duty?” (Murali lines 47-49). Here the poet is not expecting an answer from the reader but persuading the reader to understand the reality. In the twelfth chapter, the poet is trying to encourage and inspire the readers to know their own value and strength, “23. Aren’t you, the heir of a great tradition, / imbued with innate worth?” (Murali lines 181-82). The poet is trying to remind the great tradition of Dalits as rulers: “28. Remember your forefathers, / who honoured poets, / with bars of gold and swathes of land?” (Murali lines 194-96). Taking inspiration from the folktales and oral tradition, the poet talks about Dalits who were smart and creative in making their imprints over history: “34. Thiruvalluvar, the awesome genius, / remember! / Wasn’t he the son of a Paraya woman?” (Murali lines 208-10). The poet is then taking the readers to the golden age of Sangam literature where Dalit women poets made an outstanding performance. The rhetorical questions the poet has posed are intended to motivate the Dalit readers:

38. For wasn't she Nallini, the Chola Princess?

39. Avvaiyyar and Elaveini,

Vennikkuyathi and Kanni Kaamakanni,

Doubtless they were Paanathies

who, through poems, bewitched the world? (Murali lines 215-19)

Valson Thampu has translated the first, third and twelfth chapters of the “Dalitharkkezhuthiyasuvisesam,” a long poem in thirty-seven chapters by Kaviyoor Murali under the title “The Gospel for Dalits.” In the first chapter the poet describes his childhood memories and the circumstances that prompted him to write the Gospel. In the third chapter, the poet discusses the injustice and cruelty experienced by Dalits. Violence is a predominant element in this part of the poem. The twelfth chapter encourages and prompts Dalits to look into the realities of history. It evaluates how history appeared “smoke-shrouded” (Murali line 142) before Dalits. Provoking, prompting and persuading language is used in the twelfth chapter of the Gospel. Here we can see a shift from an aggressive and revolutionary language used in the earlier chapters to a more provoking and inductive diction. The vocabulary and diction used in the poem give a realisation regarding the alleged elimination of Dalits from mainstream history. The tone of the poem seems encouraging to Dalit readers. The poet is reminding Dalits that they are the heirs of a great tradition. The Poet is motivating his readers to rise and pay heed to their great ancestors. The entire twelfth chapter of the Gospel is a revelation of the pitfalls in history that eschewed Dalits. Using persuasive language suitable to the style of a great Gospel, the poet advises Dalits to act according to his Gospels. The structure of a Gospel is emotive and persuasive. The Gospels in general follow a language to change society

and people through advice and commands of God. The poet's arguments are clear and leading, "18. I tell you, hence, what to do, / deem not yourself Dalit or untouchable."

(Murali lines 173-74) The poet advises the readers to be bold and confident, "19. The world, you know, will degrade / those who devalue themselves." (Murali lines 175-76)

The poet is motivating his readers to rise and pay heed to their great ancestors.

The entire twelfth chapter of the Gospel is a revelation of the pitfalls in history that eschewed Dalits. While using persuasive language suitable to the style of a great Gospel, the poet advises Dalits to act according to his Gospels. The structure of a Gospel is emotive and persuasive. It in general follows a language to change society and people through advice and commands of God. The poet's arguments are clear and leading, "18. I tell you, hence, what to do, / deem not yourself Dalit or untouchable." (Murali lines 173-74) The poet advises the readers to be bold and confident, "19. The world, you know, will degrade / those who devalue themselves." (Murali lines 175-76)

The poet has introduced himself as a smart and brave Dalit in the opening lines of the poem. The poet represents that the Dalits in Kerala are known for their bravery. The poet has "outsmarted friends in crunching / deadly chillies" (Murali lines 5-6) and he pulled out a snake from its hole by holding its tail. Climbing steep rocks and hitting bull's-eye on the target without using a catapult are the things that a normal person does. Only brave hearts are proven to do such activities. The poet is confident about his right to write a Gospel for the Dalits while thinking and acting upon his will: "I have the right, I insist, / to think for myself" (Murali line 14). The poet deconstructs the norms in writing a Gospel as he wanted to provoke the elite Christian communities in Kerala, who marginalises the converted Dalit Christians. His act of writing a Gospel is like the temple

consecration of Sree Narayana Guru at various places in Kerala. When the elite class questioned the right of a non-brahmin in consecrating an idol of Lord Shiva⁷⁰ at Aruvippuram, a village near Thiruvananthapuram district in the year 1888, Sree Narayana Guru answered in tranquil that he was consecrating an Ezhava Shiva⁷¹. Here, from the title itself, Kaviyoor Murali proclaims that his Gospel is for Dalits. Poetry is used as a medium to reform society, to make revolutionary changes and awareness.

Verbs indicating violence are carefully chosen to recreate the violence against Dalits and forest dwellers. The phrases “trees felled,” “despoiled,” “snatched away,” “pulled down” and “shouting and screaming” show the action against the vulnerable and depict piercing diction. It portrays the stark realities faced by Dalits. The poet’s anger against the injustice and violence inflicted upon Dalits are evident in his choice of diction. The words “Darkness,” “death-dance,” “kill,” “consume,” “death fly,” “ablaze” and “rape” suggests the grave realities faced by Dalits. The poet’s motif is clear. His poetry is an eye-opener to the entire Dalit community to realise the discrimination and injustice they faced. The poet’s rage is visible in the lines “16. My ambience rains fire / my soul glows red-hot, / like iron in a smith’s forge” (Murali lines 41-43). The expressions of command “catch them. / Blot them out. / Butcher their children to extinction” (Murali lines 105-7) highlight the authority and power, the elite class exerts over the Dalits. The use of proper nouns like “thistles,” “thorns,” “snacks,” “wild beasts,” “thieves,” and “opium thugs” in the third chapter intensifies the violence against the vulnerable forest dwellers.

Dalit poetry is noted for its narrative style. Kaviyoor Murali in the poem “The Gospels for Dalits” used the same narrative technique and biblical style in the poem. The

poem narrates the life struggles and unwritten history of Dalits in the form of the Gospel. The poet has introduced a dark and eerie background. The expressions of command “catch them,” “butcher their children to extinction” (Murali line 107) and “Spare not, hence, even their first-born” (Murali line 115) suggest the authoritative voice of *Savarna* over Dalits. The use of commands is also a style commonly seen in the Gospels.

Dalit life and experience are associated with the forests, land and water. Their life is in tune with the rhythm of nature. Movements and labour associated with Dalit life are expressed in the poem with the effective use of imagery. Rustic village and forest life and the rituals associated with it are perfectly woven with the visual imagery in the poem. The entire poem is rich with visual imagery. In the introduction itself, the poet has made use of visual imagery. The background for the gospel is well established with the vivid details of the poet’s life.

1. I, Kaviyoor Murali,
 who, in his teens, revelled
 in yanking back by its tail
 the snake retreating into its hole,
 outsmarted friends in crunching
 deadly chillies and bitter neen leaves,
 pelting stones, no catapult,
 and hitting bull’s-eye, targets from afar.
 Climbing steep rocks,
 sharp white pebbles in hand,
 on them his name to etch,

behold, the Gospel according to him,
for the Dalits of the world! (Murali lines 1-13)

Climbing steep rocks with white pebbles in hand to etch his name on the rocks involves action to prove the valour and courage of a Dalit, an apt use of kinesthetic imagery is involved here. Auditory imagery is then used to show the change in his health condition and age. The poet is getting older, he is weak: “upon my vocal cords / feeble words fumble and fall” (Murali lines 57-58) and hence he decides to write for his people. He writes about the ancient forest lives of his people. Like Milton’s “Paradise Lost,” Kaviyoor Murali vividly picturises the expulsion of Dalits from the forests with the help of visual images.

Stunning visual images are used while detailing the cruelties of the elites over the marginalised. Like ants gnawing at a deadfly, they have killed and consumed Dalits and poured kerosene over the living bodies of his people to set ablaze. The trauma of pain, distress and torture is apparent through the visual images used. The third chapter of the Gospel is about the expelling of the forest dwellers from their place, it explains the forced eviction of Dalits from their land. Visual and kinesthetic images carefully create the harsh realities of the forced eviction of Dalits from their land and shelters. The imagery used in the poem creates a strong impact in visualising the cruelties of the elites and the injustice endured by the marginalised. The kinesthetic imagery is used to present the action involved in the forced eviction, “Their vineyards and fig trees felled and despoiled / Their thatched houses pulled down” (Murali lines 99-100).

The poet has used ornate language and some analogies in the poem “The Gospel for Dalits.” He described history as “smoke-shrouded,” an apt adjective to describe the

history of Dalits. In the twelfth chapter of the Gospel, the poet compares the new light of education falling upon Dalits as “Diamonds dazzling like morning stars” (Murali line 145) with a beautiful alliteration of “dazzling diamonds.” Dalits are compared to a “baby elephant / fallen into a deep ditch” (Murali lines 230-31). Here by comparing the condition of Dalits to an elephant, the poet is trying to recreate the deceit faced by Dalits in the past. Like an elephant trapped in a ditch inside the forest, Dalits are also trapped, prodded, kicked and whipped by the elite class. Dalits are not realising their strength, value, and merit. Elephants are loaded with demons and deities on their heads and paraded in the festivals. They are a spectacle to the rituals and practices of human beings, they were tortured and humiliated. Dalits should realise such injustice and act against it.

Symbolism is another poetic device the poet has used in “The Gospel for Dalits.” Metal like iron and big animals like elephants are associated with strength and valour. Here iron is symbolic of the strength and bravery of Dalits, “my soul glows red-hot, / like iron in a smith’s forge” (Murali lines 142-43). Treasure pot in the twelfth chapter of “The Gospel for Dalits” refers to enlightenment and education received by Dalits, which gave them the capacity to think about the injustice that fell upon them. Diamonds and sapphires are the knowledge they have gained about their past. The poet realises that his ancestors were educated and talented, he wonders “how beautiful were the jewels / on the crowns of your ancestors!” (Murali lines 153-54).

The allusion to the mythical past is another poetical device that frequently appears in the Malayalam Dalit poetry. Biblical allusion to Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Eden is most beautifully and minutely portrayed. The exile of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden is compared to the expulsion of Dalits and Adivasis from the forest in

the third chapter of the Gospel. Here God is presented in a different way, instead of God expelling Adam and Eve from Eden, the man and woman in the poem are driven out of the forests and lands on a day God was holidaying:

7. On a Sabbath day

When God was on holiday

8. Out of their settlements were they

Drivenout, dispossessed. (Murali lines 83-86)

The forest is the Garden of Eden, where Dalits “sang and danced / revelled and rejoiced” (Murali lines 81-82). The analogy turns into a biblical allusion here. The title of the poem is also a biblical allusion to the Gospels of the great prophets. The images of snakes slithered and crawling on the bodies of Dalits evoke the presence of Satan in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. The attacks on the man and woman in the poem create a real hell in the forest.

Mythical allusion to Lord Mahabali⁷² and Vaamana⁷³ is mentioned in the twelfth chapter of the poem “The Gospel for Dalits.” Lord Mahabali was an *Asura*, a mythical demon king from Kerala. An *Asura* symbolises Dalits who were stereotyped as uncivilised and low-cultured demons. Mahabali was a mighty and righteous emperor. He was an unbiased and just ruler. People lived in prosperity under the reign of Mahabali. The territory of his kingdom extended up to three worlds. Indra⁷⁴ the King of Devas⁷⁵ got jealous and mad with Mahabali as he is a great threat to his throne. Indran along with other Devas went to the Lord Mahavishnu⁷⁶ to seek help to end the reign of Mahabali. Lord Mahavishnu in disguise of Vaamanan, a Brahmin priest visited Mahabali, “begging, / for land mere three footfalls long” (Murali lines 164-65). Giving gifts to Brahmins is

considered as a great custom in the Kerala tradition. Hence Mahabali agreed to give three footfalls of land to Vaamanan. Suddenly Vaamanan grew up into a gigantic figure and measured the three worlds with his two footfalls. To keep the promise Mahabali showed his head to measure the last footfall. Vaamanan put his giant foot over Mahabali's head and pulled him down to *Paathalam*⁷⁷. The story alludes to the great mythical trait towards Dalits by the *savarnas*. The story also throws light on the tradition of *avarnas*⁷⁸ as great rulers and emperors of the land. The *savarnas* or elites deceitfully took the lands from the Dalits as depicted in the mythical story.

An allusion to *Parayi Petta Panthirukulam*⁷⁹, a folktale popular in Kerala can be seen in a rhetorical question: “34. Thiruvalluvar, the awesome genius, / remember! / 35. Wasn't he the son of a Paraya woman?” (lines 208-10). Vararuchi⁸⁰, a renowned Brahmin scholar at the court of Vikramaditya⁸¹ along with his wife Panchami⁸², a Paraya woman abandoned their newborns on their way for a pilgrimage. According to the folktale, the eleven abandoned newborn babies were brought up by eleven different families of different castes. According to folk tales, Thiruvalluvar, the Tamil poet was the son of Vararuchi and Panchami. The poet Kaviyoor Murali is presenting this story as evidence to prove that the ancestors of Dalits were great poets and singers. “The Gospel for Dalits” is written in the form and style of a Gospel, and it does not follow any rhythm and metre. The use of similes, alliteration and assonance in the translation gives a lyrical charm to the poem.

“Language and culture are complexly related and reliant on each other. Language is moulded by culture, while culture is inclined and wedged by language. Language is the medium of culture” (Nair Soumya and Anoop Kumar 81). The language of Dalit poetry is

related to Dalit culture. Their poetry reflects the culture and the lived experience of Dalits. Language is meant for communication. The poems of Dalits are trying to communicate with society. K.K.S Das's "The Black Dance" is written to urge Dalit readers to start a revolution full of revenge. The language of the poem is highly emotive as the poet persuades the readers to an immediate reaction to fulfill his vengeance. Here the poet is trying to evoke the anger and fury of the readers against the cruelties over Dalits through emotive language and diction. The poem is descriptive and narrative about the cruelties of the feudal lords, "so many Pulaya heads were chopped / and the blood drained into the fields and the farmlands" (Das lines 16-17). The choice of diction wonderfully recreated the whole story of violence. The use of verbs shows the cruelties in the most brutal form. The words "pushed down," "chopped," "drained," "snatched," "dumped," "shake," "uproot," "destroy," "stripping," "raping," "burning," "beheading" depicts the violence against Dalits. The verbs are used in their past tense, simple present tense and continuous form to show the violence faced by Dalits. The call for vengeance is presented with simple future tense "will destroy," "will break," and "will avenge" are examples. The repeated use of the proper noun "blood" takes the readers to the real violence and bloodshed in the past and the future awaiting the blood revenge of Dalits. The verbs like "roar," "rise" and "danced" which describe the valour and revenge of Dalits are used to show the intensity of their strength. Descriptive adjectives are used to express the nouns that carry the past oppression and present revolt of the Dalits: "dangling tongues," "tormented arms" and "uprooted tongues." The vocabulary that shows the pagan culture of Dalits and their life and struggle with the deities and spirits is presented. Sacrificing roosters and shedding blood to feed the spirits to please them is

part of Dalit culture. The language and diction of the poem bring those primitive experiences before the readers. The use of exclamatory sentences while describing the revenge of Dalits against the feudal landlords gives a feeling that there is something extraordinary about the revenge of Dalits as they are fighting against the existing system of the society that supports feudalism. When the poet proclaims, that “we will pay them back!” (Das line 25) and “we will avenge all this!” (Das line 30), it becomes a deconstruction of the social norms and there is something to wonder about. The language turns more aggressive and ruder when he talks about revenge. The use of assertive or declarative sentences states the condition of Dalit lives. Kaviyoor Murali’s poem “The Gospel for Dalits” is more like a piece of advice and command. Even though both Kaviyoor Murali and K.K.S Das are revolutionaries, K.K.S Das in his poem “The Black Dance” gives statements about the protest.

The figurative language in the poems gives an impression of the real death dance performed by Dalits before the readers. Here the readers become the spectators as the images used can evoke their senses. The visual, kinesthetic and auditory images in the poem give an impression of watching a live death dance. The visual imagery of the black girl reaping the paddy fields with the sickle, and the poet calling her for revenge, the poet's call for black cubs to come with the staff of *Vela*⁸³ and the rope of *Kaala*⁸⁴ takes the impression of the beginning of an agitation or protest. The imagery of the violence experienced by Dalits is presented in its most murderous and barbaric form. The violence is explicit when the poet talks about Dalits who were “pushed down alive / under the mud as slush” (Das lines 14-15) and about the many Pulaya heads that were chopped and “the blood drained into the fields and farmlands” (Das line 17). The visual and kinesthetic

imagery is well used to make the impact of the strenuous efforts of Dalits and their reaction against the elites. The visual imagery of a pagan God in vengeance is perfectly represented: “They come back with long hair and nails / with dangling tongues” (Das lines 18-19). Kinesthetic imagery of movements and actions gives the effect of the pagan deity and its rage, Dalits in a frenzy are shaking the hillock, uprooting the palm, stirring up the stream and coming to avenge all the injustice. The roaring of Dalits and their shouting are examples of auditory images. All these visual, kinesthetic and auditory images present the feel of Dalit rituals and festivals like *Theyyam* popular in the Malabar regions of Kerala.

Black cubs are an analogy of Dalits who are black-skinned. By comparing Dalits with black cubs, the poet is presenting Dalits as brave-hearted. The poet’s call for Dalits to “come along striding like demons” (Das line 11) is a simile. The recurring black colour in the poem symbolises the dark-skinned Dalits. The black girl reaping in the paddy fields and black cubs are the representatives of Dalits. The colour black is signified as a bad omen and black-skinned people are degraded as inferior. The colour black symbolises the dark ages of Dalits. When the poet says “We are those black souls / scattered and dumped around the barns” (Das lines 32-33), the poet is mentioning the dark days of their past. The symbolism as a poetic device is identified when the poet relates lions and panthers with Dalits. Dalits are addressed as “cubs of lions and panthers” (Das line 8). Lions and panthers signify the strength and courage of Dalits, the forest dwellers.

The mythological allusion to the goddess Kali and her association with Dalit worship gives a different perspective to the poem. David Kinsley’s *Tantric Visions of the*

Divine Feminine: The Ten Mahavidyas (1997) describes Kali as gaunt, wild, black and ferocious. Her lolling tongue, nudity, untied long hair and the garland of human heads make a strange and grotesque appearance to her. She is always considered a primitive goddess worshipped by the marginalised: “Kali's association with the periphery of Hindu society (she is worshipped by criminals, tribals, and members of low castes in uncivilised and wild places) is also evident in an architectural work of the sixth to eighth centuries, the *Mdnasdra-silpa-sastra*” (Kinsley 78). Mythological belief that Kali and her husband Lord Shiva live at the cremation grounds points to her disparate nature from the other mythological goddesses. Gods and goddesses described in the legends, mythologies, *Itihasas*⁸⁵ and *Puranas* are worshipped by the Brahmin class. But Kali is worshipped by the *savarnas* and *avarnas* alike. Kali's blackness, freedom and uncontrollable aggressiveness make her the goddess of Dalits. Kali symbolises death and destruction. *Devi Mahatmya*, an ancient Hindu philosophical text describes Kali as Mahakali, an unrestrained source of Power. Kali is related to blood in Hindu mythologies and she wiped away the blood drops of Raktabija⁸⁶ and drank it during the battle of Goddess Durga against Sumbha⁸⁷ and Nisumbha⁸⁸, the *asuras*. Raktabija, a fierce *asura* on the battlefield caused great trouble to the goddess Durga⁸⁹. Raktabija was unbeatable as he secured a boon from Lord Shiva that every drop of blood spilled on the ground would turn into many Raktabija of equal strength and power. Seeing that Raktabija was uncontrollable, Durga called Kali for help. After killing all the *asuras*, Kali became a destructive force and started to kill everything before her eyes. The untamed, destructive, fierce goddess was later calmed by her husband Shiva.

K. K. S. Das brings the fierce black goddess Kali and her vengeful aggressiveness to portray the revenge of Dalits in his poem “The Black Dance.” Kali and Shiva are also popular for their fierce dance steps, *Thandava*. The frenzy dance of Kali is the death dance described in the poem. The analogy of Kali to vengeful Dalits compares the destructive energy of Kali after defeating Raktabija and the other *asuras*. The act of uprooting the palms and stirring up the stream requires great energy and strength which only superhumans can do. Pulayas are coming back with their long hair and nails for revenge. The loosened long hair symbolises the untamed and uncontrollable nature of Kali.

Reference to Kannaki is an allusion to the famous Tamil epic poem from the Sangham age, *Silappathikaram* by Ilango Adikal. The epic speaks about the injustice faced by an ordinary couple Kannaki and Kovalan before the court of the Pandya king. Kannaki stands for the voice of the ordinary mundane world. Kovalan⁹⁰ the husband of Kannaki was accused of theft of an anklet of Pandya queen and was beheaded even without a trial. The furious Kannaki went to the court of the Pandya King threw and broke her anklet which was filled with rubies to prove the innocence of her husband. The queen’s anklet was filled with pearls. Kannaki in her madness set fire to and burnt Madhura, the Capital of Pandya Kingdom. Kannaki symbolises the rise of the periphery in K. K. S. Das’s poem “The Death Dance.” When the poet writes about the smile of the slave and the fear of masters, he is bringing the rage of Kannaki towards the Pandya Kingdom before the readers:

as the slave smile

The masters tremble

In the flames of the slave-smile

Throbbled the heart of Kannaki (Das lines 47-50)

The smile of the slave is juxtaposed with the rage of Kannaki. When slaves smile the masters tremble out of fear, like the Pandya Kingdom trembling over the fury of Kannaki.

Kaala is another mythological figure referred to in the poem. According to Hindu mythology Kaala or Yama⁹¹ is the God of death. He pulls out the life of the mortals with his rope. The poet is here urging Dalits to turn themselves into Kaala to take the lives of their enemies, the *savarnas*: “take the staff of the Vela / and the rope of the Kaala / come along striding like demons!” (Das lines 9-11). Vela is the Vel Muruga in Hindu mythology, the son of goddess Parvati⁹² and Lord Shiva. The staff of Muruga⁹³ gifted to him by his mother symbolises victory and strength. Here the poet is asking Dalits to take the staff of Muruga to fight against the feudal landlords.

The poem translated by Ajay Sekher is rhythmical like its source text “Karumadi Nrittam.” As the title indicates, the repetition of the lines and vocabulary provides the rhythm of a death dance to the poem “The Black Dance.” The repetition of the phrases “come along,” “you reap,” “we will pay them back,” “we will avenge,” and “blood for blood” creates the reverberation of *tandava*⁹⁴, the dance. Here, it is the Kali *tandava*. The rhyming words “Vela,” “Kaala” and the alliteration in “break your back and baston” (Das line 29), “Blood for blood” (Das line 36), “shiver and shout” (Das line 35) “flare into flames” (Das line 59) and “the dark-dark ones danced too” (Das line 56) adds a rhythm to make the poem lyrical. The repetition of the word “let” in the last lines offers a rhythm to

rise: “Let the tormented arms be raised to avenge the wrong / let uprooted tongues flare into flames / let the oppressed rise to repay old debts” (Das lines 58-60).

K.K.S Das’s “My Soil” is distinct from his “The Black Dance” with figurative, non-lyrical language. Powerful narrative language and diction are used in “My Soil.” The choice of diction is not simple and easy. The first-person pronoun ‘I’ makes the poem subjective. The aggressive and rude language in the poem “The Black Dance” turns much darker and sharper in “My Soil.” Reflections of modernism in poetry are seen in “My Soil” with the fragmented, distorted images used in the poem. The devastated hell-like experiences of Dalits are presented in fragmented sharp language. Confidence, determination and pride of the poet and his tribe in their resistance are evident in his statement, “I stand firm” (Das line 14) in “the soil snatched from / the first tribes’ makeshift” (Das lines 12-13). The proper nouns “hell,” “ember,” “thorny plants,” “skulls,” “bones,” “prisons,” “wounds,” “scars” and the abstract noun “death” give the details of hell-like life experienced by his tribe. The action words in past tense form “snatched,” “rushed,” “triumphed” and in progressive form, “breaking” and “dancing” marks the past humiliation and current resistance of Dalits.

The visual and kinesthetic images are employed simultaneously in the poem to recreate the hell-like life situation of Dalits and their resistance against injustice. Kinesthetic and visual images are involved in the revolutionary acts of resistance “Breaking the chest of hell” (Das line 1) and “Breaking the boundary-stones of generations” (Das line 6). Too much action is involved in the “rush into the prisons of fellow tribes” (Das line 17), where they solace each other “Wounds kisses the wounds” (Das line 18). As in his poem “The Black Dance,” dancing is a recurring move of

resistance. Here the act of dancing in a group shows the formation of Dalit movements. Visual images indicating the action of snatching soil from the first tribe describe the forceful evacuation of Dalits from their lands.

The poem is noted for its use of symbolism thereby introducing modernism in Dalit poetry. The poet has used many symbols in the poem to describe the dark and sombre experience. The flowers of thorny plants symbolises the trauma and hardship in labour. Ember symbolises the burning and painful experience that went through by Dalits. Personification in the smiling skulls and talking bones symbolises the self-expression of Dalits. Even the dead are speaking about the humiliation and pain they felt. Non-Aryan clan's unfinished house represents the identity crisis felt by the landless Dalits.

The mythical allusion to Lord Shiva and the mythical story of the poison *Kaalakoodam*⁹⁵ is mentioned in the poem. Lord Shiva is sometimes associated with the tribal culture with his unconventional appearance wearing the tiger skin and ashes from the graveyard. Wearing a serpent on the neck and ornaments with *rudraksha*⁹⁶ beads make him different from other Gods depicted in Hindu mythology. *Kaalakoodam* was the poison extracted while the *Asuras* and *Devas* were churning the milky ocean, *Palazhi*⁹⁷ to get *Amrit*⁹⁸, a drink for attaining immortality. While churning the Milky Ocean, first came *Kaalakoodam*, a poison powerful enough to destroy the entire universe. *Devas* and *Asuras* requested Lord Shiva to save the universe and Lord Shiva engulfed the entire poison. Parvati, his wife quickly grasped the throat of Shiva to prevent him from drinking it. Shiva's neck turned blue, and he came to be known as Neelakand⁹⁹.

The poem “My Soil” is not lyrical like his poem “The Black Dance.” The poet has applied the technique of modernism. He had used a free verse pattern to write the poem. Grotesque broken images are used to express the debris in which Dalits continued their life. Alliteration is used in the phrases “smiling skulls,” “breaking the boundary-stones” (Das lines 6) and “pouring poems.”

The language and diction of Raghavan Atholi’s poem “Kandathi” translated under the same title by K. M. Sherrif take the readers to the lives of Dalit women struggling between the workspace, family and home. The adjectives in the phrases “hungry women,” “sullen face,” “sinking wages,” “cold meal,” “empty hovels” and “battered woman” reveal the struggles and compromises taken by the Dalit women. Even after a day’s labour with low wages, Dalit women remain hungry and battered. Highly figurative poetic diction is used in the poem. Many diminishing things are used in the poem to show the uncertainty in the life of Dalit women. The “sinking wages” (Atholi line 5), “parting day’s sullen face” (Atholi line 4), “Clans that vanish in the wild” (Atholi line 21), “goddess shrunken” (Atholi line 26) and “rot in the ditches” (Atholi line 29) are examples. All these expressions show the diminishing happiness and security of Dalit women. The verbs “crushed,” “cracked,” “battered,” “beaten” and “baken” indicate the violence and exploitation imposed upon the Dalits.

The visual, kinesthetic, organic and tactile images in the poem include that of “Kandathi,” the one who works in the fields before the readers. The visual images picturise a peasant woman waiting hungry before the heaps of garbage in the first stanza of the poem. The poem is narrative and the visual images contribute to bringing the theme of exploitation. The visual and kinesthetic images bring the strenuous physical

labour in breaking the stones. The organic, visual and kinesthetic images of a Dalit woman nursing and breastfeeding her baby under the hot sun evoke emotions. Taking the baby to the workspace indicates the helplessness of the Dalit woman. Even during the maternity period Dalit women had to engage in hard physical labour. The poem is also noted for the presence of organic images. Dalit writing is emotional and is written from experience. The emotions of a mother and the cry of a child can be seen in the lines “child was nursed with tears” (Atholi line 28). The dilemma of the mother caught in between her work and her baby is expressed with the organic images. The image of a woman hungrily waiting before the garbage is at a time cruel and emotional.

The poem is noted for its startling analogies. The analogy of Kandathi as a goddess shrunken into an old crone points fingers at the social situations that are against the Dalit women in Kerala. Her hopes are getting rotten in the ditch like coconut husk. Making coir from coconut husk is a major work of the Dalit women in Kerala. The comparison is both startling and stunning. The cold meal in the poem symbolises the patriarchal society that keeps a woman waiting for her husband. The garbage heap symbolises the dirty and unhealthy places in which Dalits are doomed to live. The poem is modern and lyrical.

Sunny Kavikkad in his modernist poem “An Uncharted Map” uses sharp and penetrating language and diction while presenting the destiny of Dalits. The poet’s choice of words is not simple. He uses abstract and difficult diction in picturing the grave realities. The expressions like “Truth / dissolves in sighs” (Kavikkad lines 1-2), “flower of ingratitude” (Kavikkad line 4), “struck with poisoned fangs” (Kavikkad line 5), and “shadow of destiny” (Kavikkad line 10) suggest the dark and devastating conditions.

Abstract nouns “truth,” “shadow,” “damp hair,” “darkness” and “thunderbolt” show terrible experiences. The adjectives in the expressions “poisoned fangs,” “unsanctified mother” and “uncharted map” are disturbing and frightening. One gets startled by the expression, “unsanctified mother,” describing a mother as impure is quite disturbing and uncanny. The uncertainty in life appears with the expression, “fell / pierced by an arrow” (Kavikkad lines 10-11) and “swept away by the sea” (Kavikkad line 16). The terrific expressions are used to convey the danger that one confronts in life.

The visual, kinesthetic, auditory, tactile and olfactory images in the poem emphasize the aspects of danger and violence in the poem. Kinesthetic and visual images are used in the slithering of a serpent in the bowl of plenty in which alphabets are struck with their poisoned fangs. Visual and kinesthetic images in offering eyes for “darkness to write history” (Kavikkad line 8) and falling after being “pierced by an arrow” (Kavikkad line 9) show the intensity of violence. A child drawing an uncharted map on the seashore and it being swept away by the waves shows the uncertainty Dalits had experienced in the past and that uncertainty still lingering in their life. The last beautiful expressions in the lines are appealing to the senses, a combination of visual, kinesthetic, tactile and auditory images creates the magic:

Thunderbolt descends-

Kisses the green.

My love, a torso

that yields the taste of salt. (Kavikkad lines 18-21)

The uncharted map in the poem symbolises the landless Dalits. Symbolism is a technique adopted in the poem to express dark realities and experiences. Poisoned fangs and

alphabets symbolise the education and knowledge that was once denied to the marginalised. Arrow symbolises the injustice and violence inflicted upon the Dalit bodies. The poem is noted for the use of symbols. The poem is written in free verse and is non-lyrical. It challenges the traditional way of writing poetry.

G. Sasi Madhuraveli's poem "With Love" is different in the sense that it directly addresses the issues of Dalits. The poet is addressing "Saumini," his dear one. The poem is written in such a way that readers get a feeling that the poem is addressed to them. The poem is subjective and the first-person pronoun "we" and the second-person pronoun "you" effectively portray the direct communication between the poet and the readers. The use of everyday language in the poem helps in convincing the ideas put forth by the poet. G. Sasi Madhuraveli is a distinct poet with his simple language and diction. The probing questions in the poem lead the readers to the darker realities of caste and colour. A question is followed by another two questions at the beginning of the poem. "Didn't you say that black is beautiful? / And haven't the poets sung so too? / How then were Blacks disgraced?" (Madhuraveli lines 2-4). The interrogative sentences are then followed by the poet's justification regarding the negligence and humiliation experienced by Dalits. When Kaviyoor Murali and Sunny Kavikkad expressed themselves in figurative language G. Sasi Madhuraveli chose a touching emotive language to speak about his people. The verbs "drink," "drain," "hide" and "sung" suggest exploitation, escape and violence. The selection of vocabulary in the poem powerfully introduces the violence, exploitation and negation of the marginalised class. Poetic devices and the figurative language of the poem perfectly portray the discrimination based on caste and colour. Flames of the sun are described as blazing and

the earth is described as red-hot and is blistering. The poem uses the words “blazing” and “blistering” to show the intensity of the hardship, toil and struggles of Dalits. The expression “shooed away” questions the concept of dignity and respect. The elite class treats Dalits as if they are animals. Casteism is one of the cruelest and most dangerous social evils in the world. The expression “drink and drain” (Madhuraveli line 17) connected with blood in the poem is used in two different perspectives of exploitation and revenge in this poem. In the first stanza the expression “drink and drain” suggests the violence and torture exercised on the Dalit bodies. In the third stanza, “drink and drain” suggests the revenge taken by Dalits against the elite class. The repetitive use of the word, “black” denotes how the colour of a skin decides the life of a person.

Visual, organic, tactile, gustatory and auditory images make the poem heart-touching and sensible. Malayalam Dalit poets write about their own life and social situation. Their poetry is thus a narration of their own experiences and images. The poems perfectly portray their bitter experience. The entire poem, “With Love” is beautifully picturised in visual images. One can find visual, tactile, and gustatory images in “we the ones who drink and drain sweat and blood” (Madhuraveli line 5). Getting fatigued under the “blazing flames of sun” (Madhuraveli line 8) and the “blistering red-hot earth” (Madhuraveli line 9) is described using tactile and visual images. The old songs and proverbs about black being beautiful are presented with auditory images. Organic images in the poem support the emotional aspects of Dalit poetry. When G. Sasi Madhuraveli presents black as “the seed of self-rage” (line 22), “mount of tumult” (line 23), “shadow of endurance” (line 24) and “shade of love” (line 25), the organic images arise from the emotions of revenge, anger, love and endurance.

The poem compares mother earth to a bird that protects the flora and fauna of the world. But Dalits do not have shelter under her wings. They are landless and marginalised. The poet is addressing earth as “Amme,” which means a mother and says that “we Blacks lack space to hide under your wings” (Madhuraveli lines 10-11). Black colour symbolises the marginalised lower caste throughout the poem. The mythical allusion to the goddess Kali is common in Malayalam Dalit poetry. Goddess Kali, with a garland of freshly severed heads is a symbol of victory over injustice. The probing question, “Mother Kali whose severed heads / form the garland round your neck?” (Madhuraveli lines 13-14) is an allusion to the mythical story of Goddess Kali and her battle against Raktabija. Mythical allusion to Kali's rage, her death dance after winning the battle and Lord Shiva lying under her feet to calm her is denoted in the line “Whose chest do you mount / to cool your rage?” (Madhuraveli lines 15-16).

“With Love” written in free verse is a narrative poem. The use of enjambment and alliteration adds to the rhythm of the poem. Alliteration in the phrase “drink and drain” (line 17) repeated twice in the poem is remarkable. Even though the poet has not used any rhyme and metre in the poem the poetical devices provide a rhythm to this beautiful poem.

G. Sasi Madhuraveli's poem “Mother” is a simple narrative poem written in an emotive language that deeply goes into the heart of the readers. The narrative technique in the poem gives the effect that it is written from the memories of the poet. The poem narrates the different stages and roles that a woman plays in her life. The choice of diction directs the readers to the labour and endurance of the mothers in Kerala society. The diction carefully addresses the issue of poverty in Dalit families and the struggles of

women as housewives. The domestic exploitation of women can be identified from the verbs “battered,” “oozed,” “howled,” “failed,” “drenched” and “disheveled.” The expressions like “suckling mammal” (Madhuraveli line 9), “battered kanji-bowl” (Madhuraveli line 2), and “creeping reptile” (Madhuraveli line 13) describe the exploitation and utilisation of the women by the family members and how they are unrecognised in the end. The stereotyping of women as slaves in the kitchen is easily identified from the expressions “dirt-smearred” (Madhuraveli line 21) and “drenched in soot” (Madhuraveli line 22).

The organic, visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile images in the poem support the narrative of the poem. Visual images of the hard labour and toil of the mother and her kitchen stories of getting dirt-smearred and drenched in soot are captivating. The touch of the soot and dirt getting attached to one's body and the toil and the physical labour attached to it evokes kinesthetic images. The visual and kinesthetic images of creeping reptile, suckling mammal and the mother delivering her children in regular intervals suggest her life without rest. Even giving birth to children is a great labour for women. The auditory and organic images in “abuses howled back and forth” (Madhuraveli line 12) indicate the disruptions and disharmony that one can see in the Dalit families for many reasons.

Analogies used in the poem to present a mother and her suffering give a perfect poetic language to the poem “Mother” by G. Sasi Madhuraveli. The most striking comparison is “Mother is a sucking mammal” which explains the utilisation principles enjoyed by the family members. Comparing the mother with “a battered kanji-bowl / a few grains of rice / and many tears” (Madhuraveli lines 2-4) appears more domestic and

discusses the kitchen matters. The horrifying analogies about the mother are a “burden on brother's head” (Madhuraveli line 11) and “for father, a creeping reptile” (Madhuraveli line 13) pointing to the way the family looks upon a woman. Society perceives women as a burden to someone's head and considers them as a creeping reptile in the poem. The analogy is sharp and puts society under the nail. She is then compared to sight, sound and source of wisdom in the following lines. Thus she is at the same time a burden and a source of wisdom. Finally comparing mother to an “unclaimed carcass of the cow” (Madhuraveli line 28) is terrifying and saddening. It explains how a woman gets utilised by her family and is thrown away at the end.

In the end

like the unclaimed carcass of cow

that yielded milk no more

Amma rots away. (Madhuraveli lines 27-30)

Symbolism is a technique frequently used by Dalit poets to introduce their issues before the readers. “Amma,” meaning mother in English symbolises the entire Dalit women of Kerala who are exploited and later neglected by their families and society. The battered kanji-bowl in the poem “Mother” symbolises the poverty and torture experienced by the women. Mythological allusions are also a recurring poetical device peculiar to Malayalam Dalit poetry. Reference to Kannaki and Sheelavathi represents the myriad forms in which women are presented in the *Puranas*. The creators of *Puranas*, *Ithihasas* and mythical stories are men and their representation of women is from a patriarchal point of view. Thus stereotypical representation of women as chaste and pure is common in Indian mythology. Kannaki, the prominent figure in

Silpathikaram by Ilango Adigal a mythological chaste woman was powerful enough to set fire to the city of Madurai. The power she earned through her loyalty and chastity towards her husband is noteworthy. The poem portrays how chaste and virtuous Sheelavathi who was the wife of King Ugrasravas¹⁰⁰ was able to stop sunrise through the power she obtained from her chastity. Her loyalty extends to the limit that she is even ready to carry her bedridden husband to a concubine's house as per her husband's wish. Patriarchy creates such women characters in the *Puranas* that define ideal and chaste women.

The rhythm of the poem "Mother" is the rhythm of everyday life. The poem is written in free verse. The poet has used enjambment as a poetical device to express the unending labour of the mother. The poet has used punctuation marks commas and periods to mark the pause in the poem.

G. Sasi Madhuraveli's poem "Shambuka" translated by T. M. Yesudasan is noted for its revolutionary tone accompanied by emotive language and diction. In the poem there are many interrogative and imperative sentences. The poem begins with a declarative sentence, "A martyr was born / from the sudra's tapas" (Madhuraveli lines 1-2). The poet revolts against the injustice experienced by Dalits from the Vedic period onwards. The second stanza directly addressed to the mythical Shambuka¹⁰¹ is followed by an interrogative sentence, "Did you not know that chewing / and spitting out Vedanta / was not your way?" (Madhuraveli lines 4-6). The question appears sarcastic. The second question, "What was your role / in the profane life of the people?" (Madhuraveli lines 7-8) is followed by an answer, "An intelligent steed / harnessed and whipped" (Madhuraveli lines 9-10). The verbs harnessed and whipped prove the violence against

the low caste. The adjective “intelligent” explains the calibre and talent of the Dalits who are subdued by the elite upper castes. The emotive language powerfully stimulates the revolutionary vigour of the poem. The verbs “spitting,” “chew,” “pushed,” and “questioning” suggest the subjugation in the past and the reaction in the present.

The visual, organic, kinesthetic and auditory images support the narrative nature of the poem. The poem begins with a reference to Shambuka. It moves on to talk about the injustice and ends with the reversal of the situation, where Dalits rise to create their own Ramayana. The visual and organic images are successful in creating the magical narrative. The actions involved in the violence against Dalits and their response in the form of protest are recorded with kinesthetic images.

The analogies in the poem add beauty to it and create a poetical language. Here Shambuka is compared to an intelligent steed who is harnessed and whipped. Comparing a Dalit to an intelligent steed is a perfect analogy. Dalits are then compared to the ebony children who beat the drum of time. The poet has used the technique of symbolism to speak about Dalits in the poem “Shambuka.” The poem uses symbols representing power and valour. Here steed symbolises strength and power. A steed is a horse used for riding. Unlike a wild horse, the steed is a tamed one. His strength is under the control of his master who whips and tames it to subdue. The drum beat symbolises the changes happening in society that welcome the identity of Dalits.

Dalit poets always use mythology as a tool to speak about themselves. Mythological allusions point fingers at the injustice that started in the past and continues up to the present. The story of Shambuka was mentioned in the *Uttara kaṇḍa*¹⁰² of Valmiki’s epic *The Ramayana*. According to *The Ramayana*, a Brahmin priest once came

to Rama¹⁰³ and made a grievance that his son died at a younger age due to the wrongful reign of Rama in his Kingdom. Muni Narada¹⁰⁴ informed Rama that the death of the Brahmin's son was due to the violation of the Vedic rule which prohibits Dalits from doing austerity. Rama went in search of the Dalit and found the penance undertaken by Shambuka. Rama beheaded the transgressor to protect *dharma*¹⁰⁵. Here G. Sasi Madhuraveli has written about Shambuka to discuss the marginalisation and exclusion of Dalits in the varna system. G. Sasi Madhuraveli was inspired from *The Annihilation of Caste* (1936) by Ambedkar who criticises Rama and his *dharma*. By beheading Shambuka, Rama ended the act of transgression and reestablished the conventional rules. Here the poet then goes on to say that the transgressors have now started to beat the drum of time and reverted Valmiki's *The Ramayana*. "Valmiki reverts to Kaattalan" (Madhuraveli line 23) and a new Ramayana of the Dalits is born. "Valmiki" and "Kaattalan" refer to the story of the epic poet Valmiki. Valmiki was a *Kaattalan*, a Dalit hunter in his early life. He was a bandit and once he had attacked Muni Narada. Narada made him realise that robbery is a sin. He asked the *Kaattalan* to ask whether his family members would share his sins. But his family was not ready to share his sin. The *Kaattalan* was heartstruck and went back to Narada. Muni Narada asked him to do penance by chanting "Rama," the name of Lord Vishnu. But when *Kaattalan* failed to pronounce "Rama," Narada advised him to say "*Mara*" instead of "Rama." *Kaattalan* continued his chanting and he was covered with anthill or *Valmika*¹⁰⁶. Lord Brahma appeared before him and called him Valmiki. He became saint Valmiki and composed the epic poem *The Ramayana*. No one stopped *Kaattalan* from doing penance, because as per the mythical story, he was the son of a Brahmin priest, lost in the forest and adopted by a

tribal hunter. The epic he wrote was full of *savarna* ideology. Here, G. Sasi Madhuraveli presents a Valmiki who reverts to *Kaattalan* and composes The *Ramayana* of the Dalits. G. Sasi Madhuraveli has written the poem in free verse. The poet has not used any rhythm in the poem “Shambuka.”

S. Joseph’s poem “Group Photo,” discusses the identity crisis experienced by Dalits in Kerala. The poet is raising questions regarding the feelings of Dalits. He asks “How does a poor, low-caste fellow, / And dark at that - live in Kerala?” (Joseph lines 16-17). The poet uses both open-ended and closed-structured questions to make the readers think about the situation of Dalits in Kerala. The questions, “What do you think?” (line 14) and “Have you any idea?” (line 18) are simple yet thought-provoking. An emotive language is used for expressing the deep feelings of the poet. The narrativity of the poem revolves around the poet’s own experience in life. The poet directly states about the experiences as “this is the experience of different people, in different places” (Joseph line 19). The poem is subjective and confessional. The first person pronouns “I,” “we,” “me” and the second person pronoun “you” give a direct connection between the poet and the reader. The third person pronouns “she” and “he” denote the people from the society. The extensive use of auxiliary verbs “don’t,” “do,” “does,” “is,” “can,” “could,” “may,” and “will” portrays the uncertainty and insecurity that every Dalit feels in Kerala. The verbs “hiding” and “disappear” give an idea about the humiliation of caste faced by Dalits. The poet directly mentions the word “caste” in the poem to portray the inequality associated with it.

The visual and organic images in the poem give it an emotional appeal. The poem portrays the images of the girl paying for the poet to get a copy of the group photo, the

poet hiding from everyone and not appearing for the group photo, someone else from the girl's caste standing close to her, the poet's thoughts about removing that someone and copy-pastes his picture instead before the readers. The poem is also noted for the organic images that aroused the feelings of love, insecurity and inferiority experienced by the poet.

Analogy and symbolism are the other poetic devices that are seen in the poem "Group Photo." The poet is comparing the caste as a disease hovering in the minds of the people with a metaphor, "It's because of this disease that / he chose to stand just there" (Joseph lines 33-34). The group photo in the poem "Group Photo" is symbolic of the society with indifferences and dissimilarities among people. A class group photo unites students from different castes, classes, communities and religions. Students representing different social hierarchies stand together to pose for a still photograph. The poet's choice of disappearance from a group photo indicates the identity crisis experienced by Dalits. It is the caste that determines who should be near to whom in a group photo. The nearness and farness in a relationship are decided by the caste.

The language in S. Joseph's poem "Chila Irunda Idagal" translated by K. Satchidanandan as "Some Dark Spaces" is exotic and emotive. With simple diction and language the poet has created a dream-like exotic space in the interiors of the forest. The poem is distinct with its non-rebellious and exotic way of presenting the concept of the education of Dalits. The choice of diction creates a binary between the high-class and the low-class people in society. High/low distinction is maintained throughout the poem with the image of the birds flying low and high. The birds from the forests fly low but the poet is flying high above the forests like a dragonfly. The poet has used nouns representing

nature to create the dark spaces in the poem: “noonday sun,” “rubber groves,” “birds,” “tree,” “nests,” “hill,” “waterfalls,” “rocks,” “bushes,” “meadows,” “deer,” “elephants,” “cave” and “woods.” The noun words picturises the dark spaces and the exotic forest described in the poem. S. Joseph’s poems are not reactionary like his predecessors. In the poem “Some Dark Spaces” the poet moves into a kind of slumber and dawdles in the exotic space in the deep forests. The action words or verbs used in the poem are not rigorous. Instead they move at a slow pace. The words “remain,” “arrive,” “leaned,” “listened,” “wake up,” “showed,” “lying” and “search” in the poem are examples. The poet has used limited analogies in the poem except for the comparison to a dragonfly. When he says “I flew up the hill like a dragonfly” (Joseph line 16) a perfect simile appears before the readers. The poet like a dragonfly flies up to the hill to see the waterfalls gnawing inside the hollowed rocks. The laughter of the forest girl is described as jingling. Here a metaphor of comparing the laughter to the jingling sound of bells can be heard.

The visual, kinesthetic, auditory and organic images have created an Edan-like space in the middle of the forests. The images create beauty in the poem “Some Dark Spaces.” Readers can feel the poem by evoking their senses. Visual images dominate the poem and create a narrative quality to the dream-like poem. The arrival of the birds to the rubber groves at noon time, their flight and their cries that lighten the dark spaces give an impression of watching a movie. The poet’s quest to find the nest of these birds, his encounter with the forest girl and their loitering around the forest is portrayed with the help of visual images in the poem. Visual images are created with a descriptive and precise language:

One day she showed me a cave

in the heart of the woods.

The sounds that go into it would come back

The lights that go into it would also come back. (Joseph lines 34-37)

Along with the visual images kinesthetic, organic and auditory images are used in the poem. The birds are a central element in the poem. The setting of the poem is inside the forests. Hence the poet uses various images to create a poetic effect. The cries of the birds, the jingling laughter of the forest girl and the conversation between the poet and his father are examples of auditory images. The phrase “jingling laughter / of a forest girl” (Joseph lines 26-7) creates an auditory image. The silence and the music of the forest create a great harmony as it is ironically rich with the sounds of birds and animals. The poet describes that “while I leaned and listened / the crickets struck to my shoulders” (Joseph lines 20-21). The sounds of the birds are important in the poem as their cries light up the dark spaces. The auditory images play a great role in the poem. The poem is about the quest of the poet to find the nests of birds like *uppan* and *olenjaali*, which involves a journey and a movement. Kinesthetic images are employed in describing the arrival of the birds in a leisurely mood. The poet as per the advice from his father went in search of the birds. But his movements are fast, like a dragonfly he flies above the forests. The quest for birds moves at a slow pace as the poet is leading a mundane life with the forest girl. Building the house and loitering around the forests, enjoying life with the family is presented with visual, kinesthetic and organic images. The organic images talk about the intimacy between the poet and the forest girl. The poet lying on her lap talks about his inability to find the nests of the birds, she then talks about their children. The organic

images here portray family bonding. Appan appearing in a dream and calling the poet picturises the emotional bonding between the father and the son.

Symbolism in the poem “Some Dark Spaces” helps in creating the poetic diction. The extensive use of symbols gives beauty and charm to the poem. The birds in the poem symbolise the knowledge and wisdom that lighten the dark spaces. The poet is talking about the birds like *uppan* and *olenjaali* that are commonly seen in Kerala. The cries of the birds symbolise the spreading of knowledge. The poet then sets out on a quest to find the nests of the birds that symbolises the source of knowledge. The dragonfly in the poem symbolises the freedom and change happening to the poet. The poet like a dragonfly flying high above the forests denotes the freedom and the virtue of free-living that one enjoys. The forest girl in the poem symbolises freedom and earthly pleasures. The poet gets struck by the forest girl leaving the quest to find the spirit of life. The herd of deer symbolises the elite class and the elephants that turned dark in search of sunlight represent Dalits who are seeking knowledge. The poet has used living and nonliving things as symbols in this poem. The cave in the heart of the woods symbolises the vagina of nature from where the birds and men came from. The sounds and the light that enter that cave full of water come back. The dark spaces in the poem symbolise the life experiences and ignorance of Dalits. The light symbolises the wisdom and spirit of life.

The poem gives a biblical allusion to the Garden of Eden. The forest in the poem is like the Garden of Eden described by Milton in his *Paradise Lost*. The poet enters that dream-like forest. He falls asleep under a tree: “I wake up / under the tree, / fruits are falling” (Joseph lines 22-24). The fruits remind us about the forbidden fruit of the forbidden tree that represents wisdom in the garden of Eden. He then hears the tempting

“jingling laughter” of the forest girl who reminds about Eve. Her presence tempts the poet and he then forgets about his quest and lives with her. It is the appearance of *Appan*¹⁰⁷ in a dream that reminds the poet about his house and his quest. *Appan* here represents God the creator of the universe.

The poem is written in free verse. Even though the poet has not used any rhyme scheme, the alliteration, assonance and the rhyming words in the translation give some lyrical quality. Assonance can be seen in the expressions, “here and there.” The repetition of /p/ in “Plot by plot” (Joseph line 7), /t/ in “tree by tree” (Joseph line 8), /l/ in “leaned and listened” (Joseph line 20), /w/ in “One there, one here” (Joseph line 25) adds a lyrical quality to the poem. The run-on lines in the poem represent the continuity of the life cycle.

S. Joseph’s poem “Malayala Kavithakku Oru Kathu” translated by K.

Satchidanandan as “A Letter to Malayalam” poetry is remarkable with its revolutionary approach in freeing Malayalam poetry tangled in metres and rhymes. A new era of Dalit poetry writing begins with poems in free verse. The language is simple and marks the distinction between the life of elites and Dalits. The diction of poetry presents the lives of the lower class and the higher class in society. The poet himself is a ragpicker and his life is associated with tins, sandals, bottles and paper. Expressions like father calling him a dog, clearing mother’s shit and piss are not commonly seen in the earlier Malayalam poems. Here the poet has dismantled all the norms in poetry writing. The words like “shit” and “piss” are considered offensive to be included in a poem and the diction is highly revolutionary in that sense. The vocabulary used for presenting the elite class marks the difference between the elites and Dalits. “Silks” and “big buildings” stand out

from the rags and the “thatched hut.” Elites are considered as narrow-minded and the poor Dalits are presented as broad-minded. The diction precisely marks the distance between them. The poem is subjective. The first person pronouns “I” and “me” represent Dalits, and the second person pronouns “you” and “your” address the elite class. The poem can be divided into three parts representing the past, present and future of Malayalam poetry. The experience of the poet’s first encounter with the Malayalam poetry personified as a young lady is described at the beginning of the poem. Then the poet is telling about his present life as a ragpicker. The future of Malayalam poetry is discussed in the last stanza where the poet takes her to his hut where she enjoys freedom.

Malayalam poetry is compared to a beautiful girl locked up in stanzas and metre in the poem “A Letter to Malayalam Poetry.” The analogy is startling and discusses the revolutionary change in poetry writing. The *savarna* writers in the earlier times had confined the poetry to metres and rhythm. The poets do not have any other choice but to follow the norms created by the elite for poetry writing. Malayalam poetry is portrayed as a girl who is confined in a big house, “tripped and fell against household things” (Joseph line 26). She is in her silk dress and travels in a car but is unable to breathe the fresh air. The river is compared to a house in which the girl is confined. The house is compared to a jail. The poet describes that “If the river has a window, it must be a house; / If you wanted to fly away, it must be a jail” (Joseph lines 7-8).

The narrativity in the prose poem is presented with visual, organic, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic images. Visual images are maintained throughout the poem. The readers can visualise the meeting of the poet with the Malayalam poetry which is personified as a girl sitting near a riverside and they “sat together for a long while”

(Joseph line 2). Visual, kinesthetic, auditory and organic images are involved in describing the present condition of the poet as a ragpicker. Fetching water from far-off places and picking rags, tin, old sandals, waste bottles and paper are presented with the help of kinesthetic and visual images. Father calling the poet a dog involves the auditory imagery and cleaning mother's shit and piss is described with organic and visual images. The image of a son taking care of his sick mother despite ignoring the abuses of the father portrays the emotions of love and care. The lives of the downtrodden are presented here with the images. The dramatic personification of Malayalam poetry which is locked up in metres and stanzas is attaining its poetic diction with the aid of the images in the poem. The confinement of Malayalam poetry following the Sanskrit tradition is well presented with the visual image of a girl who is imprisoned and can see the world only through a hole in the wall. Kinesthetic images are involved when the girl trips on household things, falls and visits the temple in a car. Tactile images are seen in discussing the future freedom of Malayalam poetry. The lines portray the fact that if she comes with the poet she can "wade through the filth and slush" (Joseph line 34) and "she will burn in the sun, / catch a fever in the rain" (Joseph lines 35-36). Tactile, kinesthetic, and visual images are used here. Auditory, kinesthetic and visual images explain the kind of freedom the girl is going to enjoy. She can say what she likes and can chirp with the wagtails. The auditory imagery of the phrase "Owl's hooting" (Joseph line 50) sounds beautiful.

Symbolism is used as a poetic device in the poem "A Letter to Malayalam Poetry." The window of the river symbolises hope and freedom. The girl wants to fly through the window of the river. The poet has not followed any rhythm and metre in

writing poetry. The use of punctuation and alliteration is specific to the poem. The repetition of the phoneme /s/ in “silks and smile” (Joseph line 28), /b/ in “big buildings” (Joseph line 22) and /b/ in “bathe in the brook” (Joseph line 40) adds a lyrical quality to the prose poem in free verse.

Colloquial and regional language and diction are used in the poem “Basket” by S. Joseph. The translator M. T. Ansari has used the colloquial common names of the plants mentioned in the poem to retain regionalism in the poem. Nature plays a great role in the poems of S. Joseph. His choice of diction encompasses the flora and the fauna of a region. The proper nouns in the poem are mostly from nature: “*ottal* reeds,” “paddy fields,” “ponds,” “canal,” “hillocks,” “ray fish,” “pony fish,” “jackfruit” and “creepers.” The poem is about the celebration of the carnivalesque Dalit experience that is unknown to the elites. The caste division in Kerala was based on the division of labour. Each caste group excels in a specific skill-based labour. The poem “Basket” is about the making of baskets. Unlike the other poems of S. Joseph discussed here, the poem “Basket” is not subjective. The poet is here standing apart and objectively describing the culture and life associated with the making of a basket. The carnivalesque culture is presented by mentioning the festivals and activities like “well of death,” “merry-go-round” and “circus.” Through descriptive language, the poet is writing about the making of a basket and selling and exchanging it. The vibrant carnivalesque language turns negative at the end of the poem mentioning the death of a carnivalesque culture. The poem describes:

Today, *ottal* reeds are no longer brought
from fields or from around the ponds.

No *theru* slats are brought from hillocks

There are no songs, no more. (Joseph lines 49-52)

The poet has used poetic devices like personification and analogy in the poem, "Basket." Analogies of people going to markets and festivals and selling baskets and buying other things are created through the personification of the basket. The lines describe how "Baskets go to market. / And come back with ray fish and pony fish" (Joseph lines 27-28). Instead of describing the people who are going to the market, the poet has used a beautiful figure of speech here. The metaphor of comparing the half-plaited basket to a little sun and the analogy in tying two baskets to form a globe explains the concept of earth and universe. The sun and the globe together represent the universe of Dalits. The analogy of the creation of the basket to the birth of a child is the central attraction of the poem. The poem describes about the making of a basket. Unlike the tiresome labour pain and struggle during the delivery of a child here, the basket is made in a relaxed way. The lines describe how:

Sipping black brew,

Basking in red afterglow of betel,

Ottal reeds, *theru* slats and a knife without a handle

- a basket is born. (Joseph lines 12-15)

S. Joseph creates a different world in his poems with the use of imagery. The visual, kinesthetic, auditory, tactile, organic and gustatory images create the culture and life of a region in harmony with nature. The first part of the poem is about the making of the basket. The substances for the basket are collected directly from nature. Visual and kinesthetic images together create the collection of materials required for a basket. The

regional bamboo reed *ottal* is used for the making of the basket. Collecting *ottal* reeds from the edges of the paddy fields, confines of the canals and walking around the plantations are presented with kinesthetic and visual images. The readers can view and experience the movement of the people in search of the plants. The palm front slats, the *vazhuka* used to make the rim of the basket (*theru*) are collected “from among boulders / entangled in creepers atop hillocks” (Joseph lines 8-9). A long-distance walk through the forests and lands is involved in the collection of materials. Tactile, gustatory, visual and kinesthetic images work in the poem to describe the making of a basket. Gustatory imagery of sipping the black brew and chewing betel leaves explains the culture of the land. The fast movement of the hands in the creation with a knife without a handle is an example of the kinesthetic imagery in the poem. The auditory imagery of a “song thrown in” (Joseph line 18) during the making of the basket blends with the other images in the poem. The analogy of comparing a half-plaited basket to a little sun is presented with visual imagery. The entire poem is written with visual and kinesthetic images. The next stage of the poem is about the marketing and distribution of the basket and how an object like a basket becomes part of a culture. The sale and purchase of baskets in the markets and exhibitions at fiestas and festivals are poetically presented with visual and kinesthetic images. The poet describes how “Baskets also go for *aarattu*¹⁰⁸ festivals and *perunnal*¹⁰⁹ fiestas / and return with namesake-moms happily met over there” (Joseph lines 32-33). Through these images in the poem the readers get to know about the culture of the region and how baskets become part of it. The baskets are bought by the women who go to different houses and are used for many things. Visual images of keeping rice, draining the steamed rice and storing jackfruit in the basket give an idea of the lifestyle of Kerala in

the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even a bottom-tone basket is pragmatically used “for the hen to brood under” (Joseph line 42). The generation practically uses every product wisely till it gets damaged.

The poem “Basket” is about the nostalgic memories of a culture and generation. The poet has used symbolism to express his emotions about a regional culture. The little sun in the poem symbolises the hope for the future and the creativity of the marginalised. The song sung during the making of the basket symbolises the harmony in life and the enjoyment of their work. The making of a basket involves artistic creativity. The song symbolises their involvement and pleasure derived from their labour. The basket symbolises the skills and hope of a generation. The use of punctuation and run-on lines adds beauty to the poem. The commas, semi-colons, periods, hyphens and exclamation marks slow down the fast pace of the run-on lines. The use of alliteration gives lyrical beauty at times. The repetition of /t/ in “tugged tight with toes” (Joseph line 21), /b/ in “a basket is born” (Joseph line 15) and /p/ sound in “pots and pans” (Joseph line 35) provides a natural rhythm to the poem. S. Joseph has dismantled the traditional concepts regarding rhythm and metre while writing poetry. His poems are like everyday conversation and hence do not follow any rhythmical pattern. The technique of enjambment gives an effect of continuity throughout the poems.

Sivadas Purameri’s poem “Chilatharam Viralukal” translated as “Some Types of Fingers” by E. V. Ramakrishnan is written in bold language that discusses the exploitation experienced by the marginalised class. The poet is not using simple language and diction. The language of the poetry turns much more serious as the poem is about the deceit faced by the tribals and Dalits. The use of figurative and rhetorical language gives

a different dimension to the poem. The authoritative language in the poem supports its objective nature. The poem takes the readers to view the realities around them. The poem discusses the deceit and exploitation experienced by Dalits from the past up to the present. The *Puranas* and *Itihasas* eulogise the exploitation of Dalits and support the varna system.

Extensive use of imagery can be seen in the poems of Sivadas Purameri. Visual, kinesthetic and olfactory images are used in the poem to create a poetic effect. The raw visual images intensify the disturbance in the mind of the reader. The visual images help the poet in presenting the incomplete album of fingers. The “severed thumb” (Purameri line 1) and “the drops of blood / splashed on the forest green” (Purameri lines 8-9) provide a visual impact of the cruelties encountered by Dalits. The movement of the sliced fingers like the twitching tail of a lizard is picturised with both visual and kinesthetic images. The poet uses olfactory images while portraying the kitchen and the presence of the mother. The lines “last finger smells / of the kitchen” (Purameri lines 42-43) are attached to the organic imagery of a mother’s care and love.

Several analogies are attached to the fingers in the poem “Some Types of Fingers.” The severed thumb is compared to the symbol of the defeated at the beginning of the poem. The poem thus starts with a disturbing analogy. Sliced fingers are compared to the twitching tail of a lizard. The analogy of thumbs to arched question marks and to straight answers probes into the indifferent experience of Dalits. The severed thumbs in the East India fields are picturised as the seeds awaiting rain.

Symbolism is one of the poetic devices that we can find in the poem “Some Types of Fingers” by Sivadas Purameri. The poem is about an incomplete album of fingers.

Here the album symbolises history. An album is a collection of memories as it preserves precious moments in life. But here the album exposes the betrayal of the mainstream against the marginalised. The fingers symbolise the defeated ones who were betrayed by the elite class. The poem itself says that the severed thumb as a forward is like the symbol of the defeated. Mythical allusion to Ekalavya¹¹⁰ a character from *The Mahabharata* is the central theme of the poem. Ekalavya was portrayed as the disciple of Dronacharya¹¹¹ in the great epic *The Mahabharata*. But unfortunately, Dronacharya did not accept the request of Ekalavya to teach him archery as he is the son of a tribal king who exists outside the varna system. The determined Ekalavya went back to his forest and made a statue of Dronacharya and practised archery before it. One day Dronacharya and his royal disciples went to the forest for hunting. They were accompanied by a dog who barks incessantly. Ekalavya filled the dog's mouth with arrows without harming the dog. Dronacharya then found Ekalavya and was amused by his skills. Dronacharya expressed his wish to meet Ekalavya's Guru. But he was surprised to find the statue of himself as the symbolic Guru. Dronacharya felt impatient as he promised Arjuna¹¹², the royal prince of *Kuruvamsa*¹¹³ that he will train him to become the topmost archer in the world. Now Ekalavya stood before him as the undefeated archer in the world. To fulfil his word Dronacharya asked Ekalavya's right thumb as the *guru dakshina*¹¹⁴. Without any hesitation and second thought Ekalavya cut his right thumb and gave it to Dronacharya. The story points fingers to the deceit and treachery against Dalits from the Vedic period onwards. Dronacharya is not ready to accept Ekalavya and his skills. He is putting halt to his talent as it is not possible to practise archery without right thumb. Even though the epic supports the varna system the present Dalit critics are criticising and questioning the

concept of varna system through the myth of Ekalavya. The varna system prohibits Dalits from learning through the *gurukula*¹¹⁵ system practised in India. Dalits and tribals are not allowed to enter the *gurukula* and learn directly from a *Guru*¹¹⁶ or *Acharya*¹¹⁷. The treachery against the tribal boy Ekalavya was concealed under the myth of promise to be kept. Under the guise of keeping Dronacharya's promise to Arjuna, the talent of a tribal boy was destroyed. The story of Ekalavya and his severed thumb was mentioned throughout the poem "Some Types of Fingers" to prove the treachery of the elite class. Another notable allusion is the mentioning of the policies of the British East India Company in engaging trade that resulted in the decline of the muslin industry in Bengal. To save the nation from the trade policies made by the East India Company the silk weavers from Bengal in the 1890s cut their fingers and ended their job. The poem alludes to the resistance of the weavers in accepting the trade policies put forward by the East India Company. The poet is describing different kinds of injustice faced by the marginalised across the country. "Some Types of Fingers" is a modern poem written in free verse. The enjambment and the run-on lines in the poem explore the indifference of the elites toward the marginalised class. The use of alliteration in the poem includes the repetition of the /t/ in "twitching tail," "traits of traitors" and the /d/ in "drop down.

The figurative and ornamental language in the poem "Chornnolikkunna Muri" by Sivadas Purameri translated as "A Leaky Room" makes it a heart touching poem. The poem is highly subjective and emotional as it stems from the direct experience of the poet in confronting death. The language and diction are chosen from everyday life. The mattresses, clothing, bedsheets, pillows, books, medicine, hearth and firewood become the characters in the poem. The poet discusses the poverty that one experiences in life.

The vocabulary and expressions thus define the poverty and the family experience. The poem is highly emotional as it is about the choice of life and death. Here, the family is caught up in a limbo between life and death. The decision to take one's own life is both cruel and pathetic. The circumstances that pull into such a horrible and uncanny decision to commit suicide are pathetic. Here it is poverty and debt that pushes the family towards it. The poetical diction creates the fear, threat and dilemma in confronting death in the form of suicide. The phrases “poisoned supper” (Purameri line 1), “columns of debt” (Purameri line 18), “poisoned rice” (Purameri line 21), “embrace death” (Purameri line 14), “drowned” (Purameri line 32), “shadowy figure” (Purameri line 35) “unnatural death” (Purameri line 47) and “pierced skulls” (Purameri line 40) depicts death. The entire pessimism about life is wiped out in the last two stanzas where the poem ends with an optimistic decision to wash out the miseries of life in the rain and embrace life instead of death. The poem then celebrates the successful decision the poet and his family take: “No, I am incapable of / snuffing out the light of life” (Purameri lines 48-49).

The visual images in the poem depict the pathetic situation of a family sitting in front of a poisoned supper to commit suicide. The readers can easily visualise the scene and the image of the downpour of rain in the background. The leaky room and the things inside it getting wet in the rain along with the poet's dreams are presented with the visual images. The organic images along with the visual images make the poem highly emotional. The family bonds of love and the last moments before death are evocative of the emotions. The poet describes about the family bondage in the lines ““Let us share a few moments of love, / before we embrace death. Let us awaken / the children”” (Purameri lines 13-15). The poet still holds the lust for life, though the circumstances are

pushing them towards suicide. The throbbing love of the mother towards the kids is dramatically introduced. The poet's decision to wash off his miseries, pain, debt and grief into the rain is highly touching, emotional and optimistic. The heavy rainfall in torrents evokes kinesthetic, visual and auditory images. The poet waking up his children who sleep like faded buds, the rain plowing the floor and the movements of ants, mites, insects, and cobwebs are examples of kinesthetic images in the poem. The auditory images are presented differently and distinctly. Here the poet is bringing the auditory images from the absence of sounds. When the poet says that the rainfall is not like a touching ballad or a lullaby for him, the readers are reminded of the ballad songs and lullaby through its absence in the poem. The same is true in the case of the nocturnal love song. Rain is not a nocturnal love song for the poet. But here, readers get the traces of the nocturnal love song from the lines. Similarly when the poet says that rain is "nor the footsteps / of the dead that come crossing times past" (Purameri lines 5-6) the readers feel and hear the footsteps of the dead. The auditory imagery in the "laughter of an aged patient" (Purameri line 46) adds emotions to the poem. Tactile imagery can be identified in the lines, "You are scorched within, though it is bitter / cold outside; the last lesson of love!" (Purameri lines 11-12).

Grotesque and uncanny analogies are used in the poem to relate the troubles in life and the alarming danger of confronting death. Death vibrates throughout the poem. Similes and metaphors in the poem always remind the readers about the uncertainty in life. The metaphor of the word getting soaked along with the eyes and dreams brings sustained dilemmas and troubles in life. The sleeping children are compared to "faded buds, fatigued" (Purameri line 24). The word faded suggests the uncertainty and fatigue

suggests the vulnerability that they face at this younger age. The analogy of comparing life to a theatre is remarkable and philosophical. Life is compared to a theatre where the poet and his family are mere actors getting ready for the fine scene. The poet states that “you wait callously, / before the final scene” (Purameri lines 20-22). The very thought of his house becoming a monument of unnatural death brings him back to life. A series of analogies depicts the horror of an unnatural death. The filtering of light into the house through the roof is compared to a strand of grey hair. The roof is compared to a pierced skull. The silence in the closed house is introduced with an analogy that “moth-eaten door will remain shut / like the laughter of an aged patient” (Purameri lines 45-46). The analogies state the gravity and danger of an unnatural death like suicide. Here phrases like “grey hair” and the “laughter of an aged patient” remind us of old age. But here, the poet is choosing an unnatural death at a younger age. The contradiction thus brings in associating the old with the young. The poet is making clear that death at an old age is natural but suicide at a younger age is unusual. The terror of death brings him back to life.

Rain that “pours from darkness in torrents” (Purameri line 2) is symbolic of the arduous and challenging lives faced by Dalits. The life of the poet and his family is in darkness. Rain is presented in multiple dimensions in the poem. The rain becomes symbolic of the dark lives of Dalits in the beginning and it turns into a saviour at the end of the poem. The rain pours inside and outside in torrents. The rain symbolises the inner conflicts and mental struggles of the poet. Dark images are associated with the rain at the beginning of the poem. Everything in the leaky room is getting soaked in the rain. Even their words, dreams and eyes are soaked in the rain that pours outside and inside the poet.

The poet becomes aware of the rain inside him when he says “Within me a torrent!” (Purameri line 25). Rain takes a different dimension at the end of the poem as it brings back the poet to embrace life. The poet decides to wash off his debts and issues in the rain. The rain from the darkness is now a soothing one. The leaky room in the poem symbolises the poverty and helplessness experienced by the poet. Death symbolised through the image of grey hair and pierced skull is a recurring theme of the poem “A Leaky Room.” The poem is not rhythmical except for the alliteration in “faded buds, fatigued” (Purameri line 24). The translator has used the punctuation marks in the poem to slow down the pace of the poem. The fast pace of the downpour is limited and controlled using punctuation.

M. R. Renukumar’s poem “The Silent Beast” translated by K. Satchidanandan is about the unending hard work of women in families. The language and diction of the poem represent the domestic affairs and household works. Cattle rearing and milk yielding is a common practice in families of Kerala. The families look after at least two or three or more cattle. The family earns through that. The women in the houses do unending hard work. The proper nouns in the poem describes the domestic things. The phrases “cattle shed,” “cow dung,” “milk pot,” “oil bottle,” “calendar,” “haystack,” “rice-water,” “earthen jar,” “oil-cake,” “bran,” “sickle,” “grass-bundle,” “gruel,” “bowl” and “lamp” suggests the domestic life. The recurring use of the auxiliary verb “must” indicate the urgency and obligation of doing the labour. The auxiliary verb “must” is used to give orders, strong obligations and necessities. The word shows the invisible yet visible authority and power of the patriarchy over women. The work begins early in the morning even “before the crow lands” (Renukumar line 2) and continues till late at night. The

vocabulary describing the poverty and the inequality that exists among the downtrodden class can be seen in the poem. The “thinning haystack” (line 14) reminds the decreasing measure of the haystack which is not replaced with a new stock. The “thinning haystack” reminds the poverty experienced by families. As the haystack gets thinner new stocks of hay are purchased in the elite families. When the poet mentions collecting the rice water from neighbouring houses he uses the word “backyard” (Renukumar line 16) to prove that domestic affairs are associated with the backyard. The front yard is considered sacred and people from lower castes are not allowed to come to the front yard. The poem “The Silent Beast” by M. R. Renukumar is written in plain and simple diction instead of figurative language. One cannot find poetic devices like analogy in this poem, yet it conveys a great theme in simple words. But even though there are no direct analogies applied in the poem the title “The Silent Beast” suggests a comparison between the silence of a woman and the silence of an animal.

Visual and kinesthetic images in the poem record the laborious job done by the women in the families of Kerala especially the women from the lower caste. The kinesthetic images dominate the poem as it is about the action or movement in the work. The readers can feel the fast pace and necessity of the woman’s work. Visual and kinesthetic images are used to portray the continuous job of the women. Her works include cleaning and clearing the cow dung from the cowshed before milking, keeping the milk pot ready for collecting milk, marking the measure of day’s milk in the calendar with a pencil, climbing the loft to pull out hay for the cattle, collecting rice water from the backyards of the neighbouring houses, mixing oil-cake and rice-water in bran, stirring rice water for the cow to drink, collecting grass for the cow from nearby places, carrying

grass bundle over the head, doing household duties and washing the bowl before putting off the lamp before sleep. Organic and tactile images in the poem define the love and care that the woman shares with the cow. Crushing the glad fly that sucks blood from the body of the cow and “stroke and scratch the cow’s dewlaps / when it chews the cud”

(Renukumar lines 30-31) involves touch and care.

The poet does not mention the woman in the poem “The Silent Beast.” Some hints and images in the poem suggest that the hard worker mentioned in the poem is a woman. Even though the poet does not directly mention the name and gender of the worker, the readers get the image of a housewife's unending task of maintaining the family. Suggestions of the male gaze following her even at her work give us a clear-cut impression of the sexual objectification faced by women in society. The lines describe how the woman does her job:

Must cross the singeing stares
of the anglers on the canal bank
while returning with
the earthen jar against the hip. (Renukumar lines 18-21)

The image of a woman who is engaged with household duties for the entire day symbolises the hazards and toil of women from the lower strata of society in Kerala. She is doing her work without any complaint. Like the silent cow, she takes care of the family. The family is the responsibility of the women in Kerala. The social and living conditions of Dalit and elite class women differ in Kerala even though all of them are facing gender inequalities.

The poem “The Silent Beast” is written in free verse. Though the poem does not

follow any rhyme and metre the repetition of the auxiliary verb “must” create a rhythm, the rhythm of the unending work in life. Alliteration can be seen in the repetition of /s/ in “singeing stares” (Renukumar line 18) and “stroke and scratch” (Renukumar line 30).

The refrain “Must wake up / before the crow lands” (Renukumar lines 1-2) at the beginning and end of the poem suggests the continuity of the work in the next day.

The poem “The Poisoned Fruit” by M. R. Renukumar is written in simple and colloquial language. The translator K. Satchidanandan has retained the colloquial expressions in translation. The poem is subjective. The use of the first person pronouns “I” and “my” gives an impression that the poem is written from the perspective of the poet. The themes of love, friendship, sex and death are connected in a peculiar way to get the poetic diction. Hence the choice of diction includes vocabulary that defines love, friendship, sex and death. The proper nouns in the poem give an impression of the rustic village life, people and their culture. The poem is shocking in the way in which the poet presents the suicide. The proper noun “poisoned-fruit tree” (Renukumar line 1) at the beginning of the poem hints about the unusual death in the poem. The expressions “My brother and / her brother” (Renukumar lines 8-9), “My appan’s younger brother” (Renukumar line 16) and “her amma’s younger sister” (Renukumar line 19), “my appan and her appan” (Renukumar line 29) and “my amma and her amma” (Renukumar line 35) suggests the relationship among people in villages. The vocabulary that represents the elements of nature denotes the village landscape. The words “pond,” “grass,” “rock,” “coconut grove,” “stream,” “mud” and “fish” are natural. The figurative use of language appears natural and beautiful in presenting love and lust. The poet describes about it in the lines “trying to find / dust mote in her eyes / with my tongue” (Renukumar lines 21-23).

The images in the poem “The Poisoned Fruit” evoke the five senses to create an effect on the readers. The images in the poem played a great role in the popularity gained for this poem. The poem was discussed and popularised by the readers as well as the academicians. The poem can be visually perceived like a short film. Each stanza moves like the scenes of the movie. Readers can visualise the lovers sitting under the poisoned tree. The bond of friendship that their families share passes through the poet’s mind like a flashback like the stream-of-consciousness technique. The cinematographic technique of screening two different scenes simultaneously is imitated here. The visual, kinesthetic, organic and gustatory images give an impression of a movie to the poem. The poem is written in free verse.

The poems of M. B. Manoj directly address the issues and problems faced by Dalits. The poem “The Survey of India” by M. B. Manoj translated by K. Satchidanandan under the same title vehemently challenges the varna system that existed in India. The sarcastic language in the poem compares the life of a cow and a Dalit. The poem interrogates the issues of casteism. The poem thus begins with the probing question, “Who weighs more, / An outcaste or a cow?” (Manoj lines 1-2). The simple language and diction in the poem allegedly avoid figurative and ornamental language. The poem turns more prosaic than lyrical. The poem continues with a series of imperative sentences that discuss the comparison and contrast between a cow and a Dalit. The poem is written in a compare and contrast manner. It ends with a conclusion that substantiates the entire poem. The poet says that:

dead cow weighs

five times a live outcaste.

A live cow's weight equals

two hundred and fifty million outcastes. (Manoj lines 31-34)

Cows are considered sacred and worshipped by the elite caste whereas a Dalit is an outcaste who stands outside the varna system. While a Dalit starves for food a cow enjoys its food. The verbs related to food and consumption repeatedly appear in the poem as “eats,” “eaten,” “drinks,” “drunk” and “bitten.” Hunger is an unresolved and persistent problem in India. A cow is a major source of food for the people in India. Milk is a direct source of food. Curd, ghee and butter are its byproducts. By worshipping cows as goddesses and keeping them only in the households of elites, they are taking control over the production and consumption of the economy and food industry. Dalits are only allowed to eat the meat of a dead cow thus keeping them outside the varna system. The repeated use of the auxiliary verb “can” suggest the freedom and priority enjoyed by the cows. The predominant sarcasm in the poem makes it different. The poet asks that:

Can piss in public

grand.

Can shit

Grander. (Manoj lines 10-13)

The lines question the casteism and untouchability that prohibits Dalits from entering public roads and spaces while a cow can piss and shit anywhere. The urine of cow and cow dung is considered sacred and even taken for worship. The underlying sarcasm is visible in the lines. The vocabulary chosen to define a cow and a Dalit is interesting. The proper nouns “milk,” “curd,” “ghee” and “butter” talk about the cow whereas “earth,”

“stone,” “steel” and “cement” define a Dalit. Life of Dalits associated with hardship, toil and labour under the scorching sun outside. The politics hidden behind the vocabularies “enter” and “wander” are interesting. A cow can enter anywhere while a Dalit can wander anywhere. The poet uses the word “enter” to show the freedom and authority a cow enjoys. It also shows the permission granted to cows by the elite class to enter anywhere. But the word “wander” gets associated with the nomadic life. The upper class denies entry to some places to Dalits.

The line “one who sleeps in ancient legends” (Manoj line 26) alludes to the Hindu mythology which mentions the worship of cows. The story of little Krishna¹¹⁸ and his bond with cows and calves is celebrated in the Puranas. *Krishnaleela*¹¹⁹ is associated with little Krishna’s playful nature and adventures in the forest areas of Vrindavan¹²⁰, where he and his friends graze cattle. Little Krishna is also renowned for his love for butter. The way he tricks his mother Yashoda¹²¹ for butter is presented cutely and adorably in the mythologies. Cows are worshipped as Mother Goddess in the Puranas and legends. The cow in the poem symbolises luxury and freedom that is denied to Dalits in India. “Holy hands” with which cows are milked symbolises the elite class. Even though the poem sarcastically describes and compares the value of a cow and a Dalit in Indian society it also finds an analogy between the cow and a Dalit. The poet says that a Dalit is “milked by unholy hands, / the udders get sucked empty and bitten” (Renukumar lines 16-17) the poet makes it clear that like a cow the resources and energy of the Dalits are plundered and used by the elite class.

The visual, kinesthetic and gustatory images help in creating the poetical diction. Visual and kinesthetic images in the poem “The Survey of India” mark the freedom of

movement in society. The gustatory and kinesthetic images of cows eating grass and Dalits being eaten suggest the theme of exploitation. The visual and kinesthetic images of milking the cow, children drinking the milk and milking Dalits till emptying their udders shows the extreme level of exploitation. When we closely scrutinise the lines in which a cow is “milked by holy hands” (Manoj line 14) and Dalits “milked by unholy hands” (Manoj line 16) it unfurls the exploitation of the cow as well as a Dalit. In the name of rearing and worshipping a cow’s milk is taken for the benefit of the elite class. The milk that is supposed to be the food of the calves is plundered by human beings. But the exploitation of the Dalit is at its extreme level as their life itself is sucked out by the elite class. Cow’s freedom to enter anywhere without any prohibition and Dalits' wanderings in search of food are presented with visual and kinesthetic images. The poem is written in free verse. The only refrain in the poem is “Who weighs more, / An outcaste or a cow?” (Manoj lines 27-28). Enjambment is another poetic device used in this poem.

The simple language and diction in the poem “Mothers” by M. B. Manoj translated by K. Satchidanandan powerfully criticises the stereotypical notions of society against Dalit women. The diction plays around the concept of the binaries of good and bad. A chaste woman is considered good while an unchaste woman is bad in society. The vocabulary problematizes the concept of body and chastity. The words “sold-out body,” “polluted” and “bad” bring attention to the stereotypical notion of chastity and purity that is associated with women. The poet is here challenging and questioning such stereotypical notions. The choice of diction grabs the readers’ attention to the extreme poverty and hunger that leads a Dalit woman to sell her body. The terms “rice-ball” and “curry” eaten by the son in the poem suggest that the primary need of a human being is to

quench his/her thirst and to take food. When the poet says, “I like a mother turned bad / more than / a father who is good” (Manoj lines 1-3) the readers can notice the confidence in the language. The expression “sold-out body” speaks about the pathetic situation of Dalit women who sell their bodies for food. The son realises the situation of his mother and is even ready to hit his father if he says that the mother is bad. The son is presented as extremely radical and unconventional. The poet strikes against the centre of the patriarchy. The poem is subjective and addresses a relevant issue persisting in society.

The visual and kinesthetic images create a confident and bold mother who pulls the child out of her sold-out body. She puts the child on her shoulder and experiences the first breath of her child. The visual and kinesthetic images present a confident son who rises to hit someone who calls his mother bad even if it is his father. Gustatory, visual and kinesthetic images can be seen in dipping the rice ball in the curry and devouring it. Other than images the poet has not used any other poetic devices. For him poetry is a medium to tell his ideas loudly to society. Written in free verse and run-on lines the poet challenges the conventions and proclaims that he is different in his style and theme. The poet is directly addressing the problems faced by Dalits through his poems.

M. B. Manoj’s poem “Paarakal” translated by K. Satchidanandan as “Rocks” is a simple poem written from a second-person point of view. The imperative sentences in run-on lines give an authoritative language to the poem. The vocabulary in the poem directly marks the dilemma and injustice faced by Dalits. The adjective “dark-skinned” clearly defines that the man in the poem is a black one who is a Dalit. The “broken stone” and “ruined stone” represent the cursed life of a Dalit. Here the adjectives “broken” and “ruined” explain the condition of Dalits and their pathetic life. The confidence level of

the speaker can be identified from the language and diction.

The comparison of the dark-skinned Dalit to a solid rock that “can grow only slowly” (Manoj line 3) is the highlight of the poem “Rocks.” The poet describes that

Each solid rock
is a dark-skinned man
who can grow only slowly,
like the rock. (Manoj lines 1-4)

Each broken stone is compared to the life of Dalits who are scattered from their group. Here a Dalit is compared to a crow who is scattered from its flock by a hurled stone. One can find a series of analogies here. The rock is ruined like the life of a Dalit. His teeth are described as “glass-like” and “his genitals turned into slime” (Manoj line 12) and “his children into pebbles” (Manoj line 13). The rock is here personified as a dark-skinned man who stands firm outside under the rain and sun. The broken stones are compared to the bones of Dalits. The springs from the rocks are compared to the tears of Dalits.

The visual, kinesthetic and tactile images in the poem portray the lives of the stubborn and brave Dalit community. Kinesthetic and visual images of the crow scattered from its flock, the slow growth of the dark stone and the stone receiving the rain on its chest represent a dark Dalit. His growth and progress are restricted and monitored by the elite class. The chest of the dark man receiving rain and sun is an example of tactile imagery.

The dark-skinned man in the poem symbolises the black-coloured Dalits. The solid rocks symbolise the courage, strength and confidence of a Dalit who can bear the burning heat of the sun and the wetness of rain. The crow who is a black-coloured bird

symbolises a Dalit. The poem written in free verse is noted for the refrain at the beginning and end of the poem “Rocks.” The lines describe how “Each solid rock is / a dark man, growing” (Manoj lines 21-22).

Vijila’s poems are presented distinctly. Like the debts and difficulties in the life of Dalits the vocabulary used in the poem is not as simple and lucid as it appears. But it is not as academic as in the poems of Binu M. Pallipadu. The sole woman poet included in *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writings* (2012) stands out in style and approach. The language and diction in her poems are not subjective. The poem “Idam” translated by Lekshmy Rajeev as “A Place for Me” problematizes the concept of space in the life of a Dalit woman. The vocabulary in the poems assures the importance of memory and friendship. The poet feels nostalgic about her life. When she talks about “Father’s stopwatch” (Vijila line 4), “table cloth,” “blanket,” and “Drishya’s gift / the blue diary” (Vijila lines 19-20) it brings an overflow of memories into the mind. Death and disappointment peep into life and reminds the poet constantly about the debts in life. Here debt appears as an emotional owe as in “father’s stopwatch” and memories about the small house. Debt also appears as “forfeited to creditors” (Vijila line 12) and it continues forever. The word debt stands out as it is like a definition of Dalit lives in the poem.

The poem “A Place for Me” is about the thoughts and memories of the poet and it is presented with the help of visual images. “The table cloth to be washed” (Vijila line 5) and “the blanket bought for the house” (Vijila line 6) that stood by the side of the fields are presented with visual images. The blue diary in the poem, a gift from Drishya which is “unmarked by life-policy logos” (Vijila line 22) creates an emotion in the heart of the

readers with the visual images employed. The specification of the colour blue immediately creates a visual impact in the mind of the readers. The dark blue diary symbolises the warmth and care in friendship. It brings an image of togetherness. She describes “Maybe, never ever to remember / that I am all alone” (Vijila lines 23-24). The poem unrhythmically presents the reality before the readers through a narrative technique.

“Enikku Nakham Neettan Kazhiyilla” by Vijila is a short feminist poem translated as “I Can’t Grow My Nails.” The title of the poem is presented distinctly. The translator Lekshmy Rajeev had preferred to capitalise the first letter of the auxiliary “Can’t.” The figurative language in the poem supports the resistance and protest against the dominion of the patriarchy in society. The words “teeth,” “nails,” “pierce” and “scratch” support the resistance. The proper noun “iron” acts as an adjective to describe the strength, here “iron nail” signifies the confidence of the women in resistance. The poem is a reaction against the violence and the sexual abuse of the female body. The words “wounds” and “calluses” indicate the injuries that happen to the body as well as the mind of the woman. The poem begins with an advice not to forget oneself by looking into one’s long nails. The poet makes a sharp contrast between the different stages of women. At a younger age the girls grow long nails as a part of their beauty consciousness. Later after getting married they soon forget about the concepts of beauty and engage themselves in domestic affairs. There are other stages in which they sit and press their mobile phones and search in computers. The lives of women from different caste groups and different economic and social conditions may vary in the current scenario. When elite class women enjoy luxury and leisure the marginalised class continues with their burden of life. When she

gets married her life changes in tune with the kitchen work. The words related to domestic works can be seen throughout the poem. The phrases “grinding stones” and “blackened vessels” are examples. When the nails begin to break it can be trimmed. The poet mentions the influence of television serials on women in society and its role in creating gender stereotyping. The expression “venomous fingers” is enough to explain the sexual abuse in a patriarchal society. The poet is challenging and questioning the stereotypical image of an ideal woman concept supported by the television serials.

The visual images of a woman grazing over her long nails while struggling over kitchen work, fading nail polish, breaking the nails and watching television serials represent different stages in the life of women. Kinesthetic and visual images together portray the resistance and defense. Breaking the nail and piercing the venomous fingers are examples of the kinesthetic images in the poem “I Can’t Grow My Nail.” Grazing at one’s long nails and forgetting everything around is compared to women watching television serials and forgetting the surroundings. Watching Television series in the evenings has become a habit and part of culture. Television series had dominated the households and it had affected the family relationships. Television series had peeped into the personal lives of the characters. It discusses the stories of the families and tries to uphold the concept of chastity and ideal women. The television series began to be popular in the last part of the twentieth century and continued its domain in the twenty-first century. The poem gives an allusion to the change that happened in the culture of the modern age. Beginning with the black and white TV, soon the houses of Kerala decorated their living rooms with colour television. The girls started to imitate the women in popular culture and began to grow nails and decorate them with nail polish. Nails are

symbolic of the resistance as sometimes nails can be used as weapons. Animals use nails as weapons to catch their prey and to escape from their enemies. Here nails are used for self-defense and protection from sexual abuse. A sharp contrast is driven between the nails that are well decorated and the nail polish that “begins to flake / along with blackened vessels” (Vijila lines 14-15). The enjambment and the objective nature of the poem add a different narrative technique in bringing beauty to the poem. The poem “Oru Pennpattiyude Atmakatha” written by Vijila is translated as “The Autobiography of a Bitch” by Lekshmy Rajeev. The first person plural pronoun “we” is used in this subjective poem. The poem generalises the experiences of Dalit women. The vocabulary and diction in the poem depict the darker side of the Dalit lives where Dalit women are compared to the bitches. The words “hungry,” “streets,” “garbage” “backyards” and leftovers can easily take the attention of the readers to the low and mean life that is associated with Dalits. “Bitch” is usually considered as a derogatory word in English. Calling someone a bitch is filthy and vulgar. Women from the lower strata of the society are considered as bitches by the elites. The visual images in the poem associate the life of a Dalit woman with a bitch. The poem describes that:

Our kind
 hides in the backyards
 eye fixed on leftovers
 lies curled up in back-verandas
 finds solace in darkness. (Vijila lines 26- 30)

The analogy in the poem is not as direct as in the case of similes. The poet here carefully selects the vocabulary that can create an analogy between the lives of Dalit women and

stray dogs. The expression “someone chewed and spat out” (Vijila line 5) portrays the exploitation and violence against women. The phrase “breeding incessantly” suggests the sexual exploitation and sexual objectification of the female body. The poem is feministic and portrays gender discrimination that “carry off the sons / and drive away the daughters” (Vijila lines 8-9). Female puppies are abandoned and are blamed for breeding. People believe that the bitches do not have the courage to drive away strangers or the beauty to be kept as a pet at home. Stray dogs are like Dalits and are always near the garbage. “Bitch” here symbolises Dalit women who are marginalised and dominated by the patriarchy. The poem does not follow any rhyme or metre. Enjambment is a technique used in this modern poem.

Binu M. Pallipad’s poem “Aaru Darshanikar Chernnu Amaavasiye Naatakathilninnu Purathakkunnu” translated as “Six Philosophers Unite to Exclude Amavasi from the Play” by E. V. Ramakrishnan is a lengthy sarcastic narrative poem. The language of the poetry is not as simple as the poems of other poets we have discussed in the study. The poem stands out in its theme and style. Blurring distinctions of the genres makes the poem postmodern in its approach. The poem is about the theatrical experience of Dalits and is written in prose-like form. The poem is novel in its approach, form, style, language and diction. Grand and elevated language is used throughout the poem. The diction is highly academic and a commoner finds it difficult to understand. Canon words like postmodernist, expressionist, neoclassic, post-impressionist and surrealist are used to describe the philosophers in the poem. From this it is clear that these philosophers belong to the newly educated class especially those who received a Western education. The proper nouns used to describe the names of the

philosophers: “Thundathil Rajappan,” “Daveed-Converted,” “Puthuvalil Kumaran,” “Chirayil Raveendran” and “Thiruvanchan” suggest the newly educated Dalits in Kerala after the Renaissance movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The expressions like “short dark man” and “laksham veedu” give hints about the Dalit life in Kerala. The use of colloquial, local and unsophisticated diction and language is a reaction against the Sanskrit theatre. For example, the expression ““you-son-of-a bitch”” (Pallippad line 63) is considered unsophisticated and Dalits are stereotyped as the users of mean language. The poet is here creating a counterculture within the theatre that was once overpowered and dominated by the Sanskrit plays. The poem is decentering the overt Sanskritization and the elite class domination from the theatre in this postmodern poem. The poet is trying to prove the inhibition of the elder generation Dalits even though the educated people had come out of the shadows of casteism and Sanskritization in literature. The poet explains: “The panchayat member now insists on seven women / carrying seven headloads of hay / to walk the stage with their hips swaying to this rhythm” (Pallippad lines 53-55). The six philosophers in the play are still attached to the influence of the Sanskrit plays. They describe that:

Presently, we are glued to our seats, entranced,

rendered tongue-tie

Engrossed as we are in this play by Sanskriti.

A make-believe authenticity envelops the scene. (Pallippad lines 56-59)

The sarcasm in the language is maintained throughout the poem. Amavasi represents the youth and is thrown out of the play by the six philosophers.

An allusion to the Sanskrit quatrain, ““snathamasvam gajam mattham”” (Pallippad

line 50) stands as an irony. As per the quadrant written by the elite Brahminical hegemony, an educated Dalit is uncontrollable and untamable like a wet horse and a musth elephant. The quadrant supports the denial of education to Dalits. Knowledge is one of the power tools through which the elites control the Dalit community. When Amavasi the young philosopher sings this quatrain like a favourite film song, it raises certain questions in the minds of the readers. The poem, “Six Philosophers Unite to Exclude Amavasi from the Play” is at a time rejecting the conventions and sarcastically mentions the tendency of Dalits to follow the conventions. Sometimes Dalits themselves are not able to come out of the barriers of casteism. Caste is a haunting memory from the past for them. The play in the poem is an allusion to the KPSC (Kerala People’s Arts Club) dramas popular in the 1950s and their role in the development of the communist party in Kerala. The poem alludes to the major events that happened in the life of the economically backward Dalits. Laksham veedu was one of the greatest projects by the government of Kerala in 1972 to provide a house for all. M. N. Govindan Nair, former minister of Kerala was behind the laksham veedu project that provided homes for one lakh families. The poet mentions the laksham veedu project in the poem.

The visual, kinesthetic, auditory and organic images in the poem “Six Philosophers Unite to Exclude Amavasi from the Play” support its narrative elements. The poem is set in a rural village with thatched huts and paddy fields. Theatrical effect is introduced through the visual images. The minute detailing and the paint-like images constantly remind the readers that Binu M. Pallippad is a poet and painter. From the beginning of the poem itself readers can visualise the lines as different scenes from a play. The five philosophers are seated in blue chairs and another one talking with the

housewife at the kitchen door and the way he rolls a wooden pound and seats himself on it are picturised with visual and kinesthetic images. Minute detailing adds beauty to the poem even the sandalwood marking on the forehead of the neoclassic Thiruvanchan is not missed by the poet. Kinesthetic images of the philosophers are detailed minutely like the script of a play. As the poem is about the making of a play, music plays a great part of it and many auditory images can be found. Amavasi the young philosopher singing the Sanskrit quatrain and Six philosophers raising slogans asking for the exclusion of Amavasi from the play are examples of the sonorous images. The poem satirises the continuing slave thoughts in the mind of Dalits who hesitate to come out of the Sanskritised days. The six philosophers are still following the rules of Sanskriti plays, “The Panchayath member now insists on seven women / carrying seven headloads of hay / to walk the stage with their hips swaying to this rhythm” (Pallippad lines 53-55). The anger, protest and non-conformist attitude of youth is introduced by presenting Amavasi as an angry young man, “Amavasi rises, advances and slaps him across his / face. All ten fingers are imprinted on / Neoclassic’s face” (Pallippad lines 76-78).

Amavasi the seventh philosopher symbolises the youth in the poem “Six Philosophers Unite to Exclude Amavasi from the Play.” The laptop taken by Amavasi is symbolic of the new knowledge of technology that leads Dalits forward. When Amavasi is scolded by the other philosophers it shows the inhibition of the older generations to accept the social changes. The line “water snake with a half-swallowed frog in its mouth” (Pallippad line 26) depicts the water snake, the frog and the entangles of the water lily that allegorically symbolises the hurdles in the life of Dalit. The use of enjambment in the poem depicts the dramatic effects of the long narrative drama-like poem.

S. Kalesh uses simple language and diction in his narrative poems dominated by his memories. His poems directly address the issues of Dalits and bring the social distance created between the elite and the marginalised class. The language and diction in his poem "Siren" translated by Shreekumar Varma marks the distance and the height difference between the two classes. His choice of diction denotes the helplessness, poverty and identity crisis experienced by the Dalit community. The poem is subjective. The poet has used the first person pronoun "I" repeatedly in the poem. The poet uses words representing circles throughout the poem to depict the dilemma and the mental struggle experienced by the poet. The circles give an image of closeness, bonding and the poet's hesitation to be away from the girl whom he loves. The objects "eyes," "pin-wheels," "circles," "winding staircase," and "whirring fan" are circular or semicircular in appearance. The circular motion always takes us to where one has started. It thus represents the poet's bond and love towards his lover. He does not want to be away from her and decides to meet her fiance. He feels that he "Must go to the city and see him / tell him / that he should give her back to me" (Kalesh lines 5-7). The verbs "welled up," "rotated," and "rotating" create a circular motion in the poem. The poet has used many lengthy objects to show the distance created between him and his lover. The poem depicts the distance between city life and village life. It shows the difference in the social status of the poet and the fiance of the girl. The height of the objects depicted in the poem evokes fear in the poet's mind. The poet wonders: "How much higher than the stream-bed back home / would this floor be? / Would it be as high as the coconut tree at the edge of the stream?" (Kalesh lines 35-37). The poet has used proper nouns to indicate height and distance like "express train", "coconut tree", "stream", "huge trees" and "multi

storeyed building.” Verbs like “climbed,” “coming” and “going” also indicate the height, distance and movement. The lengthy lines of the poem and the imperative sentences indicate the prolonged chaos and uncertainty in the life of an outcaste. The interrogative sentences appear like self-questioning as the poet is confused with the distance and the height differences in society. The poet gets confused:

How much higher than the stream-bed back home
would this floor be?”

Would it be as high as the coconut tree at the edge of the stream?

How far from there would this be? (Kalesh lines 34-35)

The poem is a narrative and is presented like a movie with the aid of visual, kinesthetic, auditory and organic images. The images evoke the emotions of the readers. One may empathise with the auditory imagery of the siren that chases away and ridicules the poet. The poet has used kinesthetic images of circular movements like the rotating pin-wheels. The act of climbing the winding staircase suggests the confusion and dilemma that he confronts in the city. The kinesthetic images of workers in blue uniforms “coming and going” create a fear of the unknown in the mind of the poet. The poet gets scared at the closing and opening of metal doors, the sight of the whirring fan and the cars and bikes getting ready to move. The entire poem is full of visual images that talk about the distance between the poet and his lover. The identity crises experienced by the poet and his helplessness at the gaze of the company workers are marked with visual images.

The poet has used many analogies in the poem “Siren” to portray the emotions and the experiences of the protagonist. The company at which the girl’s fiancé works is

personified and it is “gazing at the sky, smoking” (Kalesh line 21). The company is thus compared with the actions of a man and the smoke from the chimney is compared to the smoking. The iron rods of the big buildings are compared to the roots of big trees. He describes: “the iron rods spreading like / the roots of huge trees” (Kalesh lines 23-24). The analogies in the poem evoke fear in the mind of the readers and reflects the fear of the poet. The fear of an unknown distant city constantly haunts the poet. The express train in the poem symbolises the distance between the poet and his lover. The express train is like a bridge that connects city life and village life. The coconut tree also symbolises the height difference in the social hierarchy. The company symbolises the busy urban city life and appears gigantic before the poet. The siren from the company symbolises the domination of the elite class over the downtrodden. The poet feels that the siren is ridiculing him, just like society ridicules Dalits. The poet tells on how “I felt he stood on the top of the multi storeyed / building with his companions, / and chased me away with their hooting” (Kalesh lines 54-56). The poem is written in free verse.

“Hairpin Bend” by S. Kalesh is a subjective and narrative poem. Shreekumar Varma translated the poem into English. The poet is using images of the heights and distance to mark the difference between elites and the downtrodden in this poem. The poet has used the nouns “hill” and “well” to indicate the height difference. The social distance and the height between the girl and the poet are vast. The house is situated on the top of a hill. The poet wonders about the distance: “Were you to dig a well there / even below the visible water-level / is where I stand” (lines 11-12). The poem discusses the plight of a young girl and the sexual objectification that she encounters at her younger age. She often ignores the comments “on the growing heaviness of her tiny breasts / and

the fine down on her limbs” (Kalesh lines 5-6). The verbs “climbing” and “dig” suggest the height and the depth between the poet and the girl. The poet’s infatuation towards the girl can be read from the poem. The girl is far away from the poet to reach. He can only be a silent witness to the traumatic experience of the girl. His social status and age make him helpless to rescue the girl. The language and diction in the poem ironically speak about the sexual abuse experienced by the young girl. The hairpin bends denote the twists, turns and sufferings in the life of that young girl. Even though the poet has not used the diction that represents direct violence, he leaves certain hints in the poem to express the miserable life of the young girl. The terms “Hairpin” and “hairpin bends” thus become puns or wordplay used by the poet. The lines “Slowly spreading / the black legs of the hairpins” (Kalesh lines 14-15) suggest sexual exploitation.

The readers can experience the poem, “Hairpin Bend” like a movie. The visual images of the girl pressing the hairpin on her hair, the vulgar comments she encounters on the road, her silence, the vehicles climbing the hill and the poet’s search for the parts of the hairpin are presented before the readers through a cinematographic narration. The auditory imagery involved in the climbing of the vehicles is presented as the singing of the vehicles. Another example of auditory imagery is the comments of the men on the growing heaviness of the breasts of the girl. The images create disturbances in the readers at the trauma of the girl. The images in the poem portrays the attitude of the patriarchy against the Dalit community and women.

S. Kalesh has used many analogies in his “Hairpin Bend.” The fine down of the limbs of the girl is compared to Arabic letters ready to be read. The noise of the vehicles while climbing the hill is compared to the singing of the vehicles. Here we can see the

personification of the vehicles. Vehicles are climbing the hills in a single breath. The hastiness and eagerness of the man in climbing the hilltop are clear from the lines. “Hairpin” symbolises the sexual exploitation of a young girl. The vehicles symbolise the patriarchy and its approach toward the young girl for seduction. The vehicles are climbing the hill in one breath to exploit the girl. The broken hairpins symbolise her stolen virginity. Through this simple poem, the poet is realistically presenting society's cruelties towards a young girl.

Malayalam Dalit poetry is revolutionary in using simple and strong everyday language. It revolts against the mainstream poetry. Allusions to mythology and biblical stories are commonly seen in the poems taken for the study. Symbolism is a technique used by the Malayalam Dalit poets. The use of imagery had in fact helped the poets in recreating the Dalit experience in the poems.

Chapter Four

Translation: Prospects and Realities

Translations play a great role in the cultural exchange and expansion of knowledge. It also helps in the growth and the scope of the languages by adding new vocabulary and coinages to an existing language. Translation helps in building a cross-cultural bridge. Translation helps us to understand the literature and culture of one region to another. Pooling and sharing of knowledge are also possible through translations.

“Translations that are more than transmissions of subject matter come into being when in the course of its survival a work has reached the age of its fame” (Benjamin 17).

Translations play a vital role in the cultural exchange between nations and regions.

Translations help to carry the voice of the marginalised across the world. The translations of the works of Dalits, tribals, queer and others have reached a wider platform that got attention. In a country like India with a multilingual culture, the marginalised sessions can understand each other through translations.

Dalit writings are a counter-history. Dalit autobiographies, poems, critical essays and fiction are thus a retelling of the Dalit past. Translations of the Dalit texts help us make their writings more visible and open a wide discussion. Through translations, Dalit writers across the nation can understand the culture and history of the various Dalit lives in India. One of the major issues faced by the Dalits in India to form a single organisation is that they are scattered under many castes and sub-castes. The cultural exchange of knowledge about various Dalit lives through translation helps them to form a common emotion of oneness among Dalits. The new academic discussions on the issues of the marginalized in the twentieth century had triggered a widespread translation of the native

Dalit texts into English. The successful English translations of the Dalit autobiographies from Marathi literature had motivated the translation of Malayalam Dalit texts into English. Dalit texts from other Indian languages were widely translated into Malayalam. Malayalam Dalit poetry, short stories and critical interventions were translated into English during the twenty first century. Translations of the biographies and life writings of C. K. Janu and Nalini Jameela were published in Malayalam and translated into English. The anthologies of Dalit writings from Malayalam appeared in the twenty-first century. *Writing in the Dark: A Collection of Malayalam Dalit Poetry* (2008), *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India* (2011), and *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012) presented Malayalam Dalit writing before the world.

The key focus of translating Dalit texts is cultural transmission rather than a word-to-word translation. “Translation into English, more precisely into standard British English, has the danger of ignoring the linguistic, literary, and cultural significance of the source text” (Behera 124). Translating Dalit texts into English can cause linguistic and cultural loss of the source text. Instead of translating into vernacular English, the translators of Dalit texts prefer to use the Indian English variety. The press and publishing industry also have supported the massive translation of Dalit texts into English. The publishers especially the canon publishers were ready to publish the Dalit writings in English because of its high marketability. One must wonder why *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012) and *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India* (2011) gained more attention in academics than *Writing in the Dark: A Collection of Malayalam Dalit Poetry* (2008). The catchy title of the anthology

No Alphabet in Sight points fingers at the marketing technique of the publishing industry. Here the editors choose to use the translation of Poikayil Appachan's "Kanuneeloraksharavum ente vamsathe pattu" (line 1) as the title of *No Alphabet in Sight*. Here instead of a word-by-word translation the marketing industry had chosen a catchy title. *Aksharam* in Malayalam means a letter but the editors chose the word "alphabet" instead of the word "letter" in the title to make it appealing to the readers. New academic discussions on Dalit literature had triggered the translation of Dalit texts from native languages to English in the twenty first century. The publication industry had welcomed this new trend in translation. The wide reading and academic discussions on Dalit texts had initiated the act of translation.

The article "The Politics of Translation" views that "translation is the most intimate act of reading. Unless the translator has earned the right to become the intimate reader, she cannot surrender to the text, cannot respond to the special call of the text" (Spivak 400). For translating a Dalit text the translator needs to understand the cultural and historical background of the text. Dalit poetry is written from the experience of the poets. While translating the poems the translators had to surrender himself or herself to the text and go through the experience of the Dalits. The translators had searched for the meaning as well as the context and culture of Dalit lives and writing. Before translating Dalit texts the translators had to research on Dalit culture.

English as a global language provides a vast canvas to the Dalit authors. "By being translated into English and thereby finding an audience outside the local language community, a Dalit author creates a path that is independent of local politics" (Ingole 64). English translations had gained a nationwide reach with the inclusion of Dalit studies in

the University syllabus all over India. Dalit writers had welcomed the translators and the publication industry as Dalit writings across India were widely translated into English and other languages.

Translating a Dalit text will serve the purpose of its existence by reaching a large number of people. It should also be noted that most of the Dalit literature available in English is through translation against little that is written originally in English. Hence, translating a Dalit literary text is a very crucial contribution to Dalit literature. As it is the case with any literary text, translating a Dalit literary text is enrichment for both the Dalit and the mainstream literature. There is a need for radical translation of Dalit literature into the vernaculars of Indian languages for their fellow Dalit to be able to read them in compassion. Similarly, translations are also needed in English so that the dominant classes and the academia can access them. (Bhagat 39)

Some languages are superior to other languages in the world. For example, learning English is considered superior in India. During the colonial period learning the English language was considered high and standard. Sanskrit was considered as the elite language in India before colonial rule. Thus Sanskrit and English languages were considered superior. Translations were done from Indian languages to English during the colonial period. Even after the independence English continued its elite position. English education had gained popularity over Sanskrit in India. The hegemony of the English language is visible over all the Indian languages as English is the language of the coloniser. Translating in an oppressor's language about the lives of the oppressed is a greater task for the translator. Translating the language of the oppressed to the language

of the oppressors is the irony behind the English translation of Dalit writings. The relationship between the English language and Dalit literature is skeptical as the target language has no history and memories of casteism. The article “Caste in a Casteless Language? English as a Language of ‘Dalit’ Expression” raises questions “about the relationship between caste and English Language, the two phenomena that represent considerably antithetical signs” (Kothari 61). English is one of the languages with a large vocabulary. English the colonisers’ language does not have a suitable vocabulary to introduce the language of the marginalised. Dalit writings are the representation of Dalit identity. Bringing that Dalit identity into a foreign language with a different culture is difficult in translation.

Critics have often observed that poetry gets lost in translation. When it comes to lyrical poems the task gets tough. The rhyme and rhythm in the poetry make it untranslatable. The article “Is Poetry Lost in Translation?” remarks that “Poetry is notorious for its quality of untranslatability” (Sreedevi Nair 1). “Untranslatability” is a frequent word that we come across while translating Indian languages into English and other foreign languages. Cartford distinguishes two types of untranslatability - linguistic and cultural. Culture-bound words are untranslatable. Many instances of over translation and under translation can be experienced in the translations of Malayalam Dalit poetry. The task of the translator is to find equivalence for community specific terms like kinship, culture, lifestyle and food. Finding equivalence for regional specific plants, herbs and trees is difficult. The translator normally gives footnotes about these. Difficulty in translating offensive words, slang and curse words into English is a problem that the translators encounter with Dalit texts. “Colloquial expressions, slangs, curse words and

proverbs are difficult to translate for there is no one to one correspondence between one culture and another or one language and another” (Pramanik 20). Maintaining the tone and spirit of the text is another difficult task. Punctuation marks normally play an important role in maintaining the pace and tone of the poem. While something is lost in translation something can also be gained.

Rhythm makes poetry distinct from the other genres of literature. The greatest problem in poetry translation is the rhythm of the source text. The rhythm of English is stress-timed. Maintaining the rhythm of the source language is a challenge for the translator. Unlike the stress-timed English language music and singing part constitutes the rhythm of the Malayalam poetry. The figurative speech, poetic diction and stylistic features are also difficult to translate.

Equivalence is a term constantly associated with translation. “Equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern of linguistics” (Jakobson 114). Dalit poetry is written with a purpose and is about the life, experience, memory and culture of the poets. The English language does not have enough vocabulary to express those emotions and language of the Dalits:

The linguistic vocabulary of Dalit scholars is located in their personal experiences and occupations marked by their caste status. The world of Dalits has never been a part of mainstream society; they lived on the periphery, outside of the village society. Many times Dalit writers derive words from the dialects they speak, thereby in mainstream translation one cannot find the analogy between the source text and the target text. (Ingole 42)

Linguistic and cultural untranslatability can be experienced while translating Dalit poetry. Dalit poetry is a marking of Dalit identity in words. The vocabulary and language of the poetry is thus a celebration of Dalit identity. English as a colonisers language does not have the vocabulary to bring the Dalit identity in translation. English translations face the cultural untranslatability. The words representing kinship do not have equivalence in the English language.

Malayalam Dalit poetry is written in simple Malayalam language which is considered to be the standardized version popularised by the print media. Dalit poetry is written to give an awareness of the problems of the Dalits. Malayalam Dalit poetry is written by educated Dalits to reform the marginalised who are still living under the shadows of caste in its early period. Early Malayalam Dalit poets like Poikayil Appachan in his songs “Poikayil Appachante Paattukal” and Pandit Karuppan in his poem “Jathikummi” have done it with this purpose. Poikayil Appachan sang his songs in various parts of Kerala to reform the society. Twentieth-century poet Kaviyoor Murali has followed this. The poetry aims to raise awareness about the identity crisis, injustice, inequality and violence experienced by the Dalits.

Kaviyoor Murali’s “Dalitarkkezhuthiya Suvisesham” is a long poem with thirty seven chapters and one thousand two hundred and twenty one lines written in the form of a Gospel. *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012) has included the first, third and twelfth chapters of the poem translated by Valson Thambu. Even though the poem is written in the form of a Gospel, Kaviyoor Murali has used a simple but standardised version of Malayalam different from the Bible translations. As Kaviyoor Murali himself says in the forward of “Dalitarkkezhuthiya Suvisesham”:

I am not a prophet or an Apostle, but what I have written is a Gospel. The existing four Gospels contain many words which are destructive to the Dalits. This gospel criticises it in some ways. Partly it agrees with it also. But first and foremost, my work is for the Dalits. (Murali 9)

There is a purpose for writing the text. The poet aims to uplift the Dalit community from the shadows of casteism and make them realise the injustice and inequalities that they experience.

Translating the names of regional-specific trees, plants and herbs creates problems in translation. All these faunas could have some kind of association with the folklore and mythologies of a land. *Pullanji*¹²², scientific name *Getonia Floribunda* is a vine commonly seen in the forests and sacred groves in Kerala. The vine is a lifesaver for the tribals during the summer season. During summer when rivers get dried up forest dwellers drink water from the stem of the vine, as the stem sections can store water. Here “Murija pullanji vallikalil ninnu / avar vellam kudichu” (Murali 18) is translated as “And they quenched / with water dripping / from broken stems of forest creepers” (Murali 134-36). Translating *pullanji* as a forest creeper misses these details.

*Kanjirathila*¹²³ is translated as bitter neem leaves to satisfy the target readers. *Kanjiram*¹²⁴, scientific name *Strychnos nux-vomica* is a deciduous poisonous tree with bitter leaves, fruits and seeds. It is a medicinal tree commonly seen in Kerala. Neem, the Scientific name *Azadirachta indica*, is also commonly seen throughout India and is famous for its bitter leaves. The leaves are widely used for medicinal purposes and seeds are used to make neem oil. Neem leaves are also used in temple rituals and worship. Even though *Kanjiram* and Neem are bitter and toxic they belong to different plant families.

Thus translating *Kanjiram* as Neem appears inappropriate and causes a loss in cultural translation. In the source text, chewing the leaves of *Kanjiram* is shown as an act of bravery and *Kanjiram* is more toxic and bitter than Neem. There is even a popular saying in Malayalam that *Karaskarathin kurupaalittal Kalandare kaipusamippathundo*¹²⁵. It means even if we put the seeds of *Kanjiram* in milk for many years its bitterness will never go away. The English translation “crunching dead chillies and bitter neem leaves” (Murali line 6) is inappropriate. This occurs when translators choose the vocabulary to appropriate and satisfy the target audience. This leads to a cultural loss of meaning. There is another instance at which “14. *Neethiyum niyamavum nookkukuthikalayi nilkunnu*” (Murali line 39) is translated as “14. Law and justice stand still like signposts” (Murali line 39). Here *nokkukuthi* meaning scarecrow is translated as a signpost. In Kerala scarecrows are made of straw and stick to place in the middle of the paddy fields. Its main purpose is to scare the birds and prevent their entry into the fields to eat the grains. The scarecrow resembles a human being and is a prototype of a person without any emotions or feelings. The scarecrow connotatively means a person without any voice or opinion of his or her own. Dalits who are labourers in agricultural lands live the life of a scarecrow without any objection or hesitance against the injustice inflicted upon them. Signposts are familiar to the modern English audience. This prompted the translator to use the word “signpost” for a *nokkukuthi*. Such translations can cause cultural loss.

Some instances of over translation that gained beauty to the target text can also be seen. “31. My works, balm for the broken” (Murali line 66) is an over translation of “31. *Ente krithi dalitherkku vendiyullath*” (Murali line 68). Instead of simply saying my poetry is for the Dalits the poet has used figurative language with an alliteration. The poet

translators sometimes use magic in the translations. The target text is faithful in keeping the form and style of a Gospel as in the source text. The translated poem “The Gospels for Dalits” outwitted its original in many aspects including form and style. There is no addition or reduction in the length of the poem. When coming to stylistic features and figurative language it is difficult to follow the source text. Target text sometimes does not have an equivalent for the same. Here, “31. *Chattupoya pitrikkalude chavukale / avar manam nonthu prarthichu*” (Murali 18) is translated as “31. They cried out in prayer / to the ghosts of their ancestors dead” (Murali lines 127-28) Here the rhythm or the *prasam* of the line through the repetition of */cha/* sound in Malayalam is lost in translation. Forefathers are here translated as the “ghosts of their ancestors dead” (Murali 138). Forefathers or dead ancestors were considered as spirits and worshipped by Dalits in Kerala. It is part of the custom and culture to worship the spirits. This is not familiar to the English speaking natives who have different concepts about ghosts. The rituals and concepts after death are different in different cultures across the world. There are cultures in which ghosts of the dead are considered evil. The problem of cultural translation lies in finding an equivalence in the target language.

Translation has beautifully retained the metaphoric language of the source text in the twelfth chapter. The target text is much more attractive than the source text in bringing analogies. “*Udayanakshatrathinte prabhayulla vairyagalum*” (Murali line 32) is translated as “Diamonds dazzling like morning star” (Murali line 45). The alliteration with the repeated */d/* brings an added beauty to the poem. The translation is a hideous task when it comes to mythologies and folk tales in the source text. A judicial way of

translation can be seen in rendering the myth of *Vaamanan* in the poem “The Gospel for Dalits.” While translating mythologies a footnote can be given.

In the 24th psalm in the twelfth chapter, “*Purananoorum pathitrupathu / athu sakshyapeduttiyittund*” (Murali 34) was translated as “A multitude of witness, / bears it testimony” (Murali line 183). The *Purananooru*¹²⁶ and the *Pathitrupathu*¹²⁷ are Tamil classical poems during the Sangam age which tells about the stories of Kings and wars. Here Kaviyoor Murali is trying to prove that the Dalits had a great tradition as Kings and warriors. The English translation had omitted this. The untranslatability of the cultural texts forces the translators into the deletion of ideas and thus causes much loss in translation. The twelfth chapter of the gospel is full of folk stories, *Puranas* and *Itihasas* not even familiar to the Keralites. The 36th psalm of the poem is about Imayavaramban Nedum Cheralathan the second Chera ruler who is the son of a *Kurathi*¹²⁸. The stories of Nalini, Avvaiyyar, Elaveini, Vennikkulayathi, Kanni and Kaamakanni the women poets of the Sangam literature are not familiar to the natives. When translating stories from the past into a foreign language the translator needs to be careful. All these stories are from the oral tradition and the translation itself is a preservation of oral culture. The untranslatability of the oral tradition and the past is a major problem in the translations of Dalit writings.

Considering the translation of poetic diction, cultural-specific analogies are difficult to translate. The comparison of Dalits with “a baby elephant / fallen to a deep ditch” (Murali lines 230-31) can be related to the cultural specificities, geographical conditions and fauna of India. Asian elephants were abundant in the forests of India. People used to catch them in the past by digging deep holes in the forests and covering

them with leaves. Elephants used to fall in such traps and they were taken into human settlements with the help of trained elephants called *Kunki*¹²⁹ elephants. These elephants after training were paraded in the temple festivals, used for labour and were even used in war during ancient times. Taming elephants was considered a symbol of valour and strength as the elephant is the largest land animal. During temple festivals elephants are decorated and exhibited with the background of *panchari melam*¹³⁰ which is a musical ensemble performed in temple festivals with the musical instruments *Chenda*¹³¹, *Kombu*¹³², *Kuzhal*¹³³, and *Ilathalam*¹³⁴. A *kolam*¹³⁵ symbolising the idol of the deity gets fixed over the heads of the elephants. Temple festivals are part of the elite culture and only high-caste Namboodiris, Kshatriyas, and Nairs were allowed to enter the temples. Here “52. Avarude devanmare / ninte talayil vechu kettunnu” (Murali 36) means their gods were loaded on your heads is translated as “52. They, upon your heads, / load their demons and deities” (Murali lines 240-41) Demons and deities are given a rhythm through its alliteration. It also adds sarcasm against the elite culture. Demon is an evil spirit or devil whereas deity is a god or goddess. In the source text, *devanmar* refers to gods but *devanmar* as demons and deities appear sarcastic in the target text. From the point of view of a Dalit, “demons and deities” in the target text is an over translation. But it can also give wrong information to the target readers about the source culture.

K. K. S. Das’s modern poem “Ente Mannu” was translated by Lekshmy Rajeev as “My Soil.” The target text is modern as well as a faithful translation in all aspects same as in the source text. Cultural specific terms and caste names are reproduced in the source text. Footnotes on the caste names are missing. The caste names Paanan and Pulayan cannot be familiar to an English speaking society that does not have caste or caste names.

The mythical and culturally specific word *Kaalakkodam* also deserves a footnote. The problems of translation lie in finding equivalence to caste specific and cultural specific words in the target language. Words like *elukakallu*¹³⁶ in the source text are culturally specific and related to the history of Kerala. The new generation of Malayalis are not familiar with such vocabulary in Malayalam. The English translation of *elukakallu* given as boundary stones fails to carry out the historicity of the word.

K. K. S. Das's poem "Karumaadi Nritham" is entirely different from his "Ente Mannu" in structure, form, diction and style. The vernacular language in the source text makes it distinct. English translation of "Karumaadi Nritham," "The Black Dance" by Ajay Sekher carries the spirit and vigour of the poem to the English world. One of the major problems in poetry translation is its loss of rhythm. "Karumaadi Nritham" is written in a folk rhyme similar to the *taramgini*¹³⁷ metre popularised in the *thullal pattukal*¹³⁸ by Kunjan Nambiar. Folk rhythm is untranslatable. Folk rhythm from any source language is difficult to translate into a target language as the rhyme scheme varies in different languages. Even though folk songs do not follow any metre or rhyme it always maintain a lyrical quality. Here the repetition of the words and sounds is the beauty of the "Karumadi Nritham." The source text is rich with the repetition of *vyanjanam*¹³⁹. Repetition of *vyanjanam* creates a *prasam*¹⁴⁰ or rhyme in the poem. *Anuprasam*¹⁴¹, the adjacent repetition of consonants in the lines is defined as "*anuprasam vyanjanathe- / yavarthikkilidaikkide*" (Varma 93) in *Bhashabhooshanam* (1902). It is not easy to retain that *prasam* or rhyme in the target text.

Karutha manninu

Kalima nalkiya

Karutha Kuttikale

Karimbuli chembuli

Simha kuttikale! (Das lines 13-17)

The lines are peculiar with the repetition of the *ka* sound. The repetition of the same sounds at the beginning of the lines and in between the lines can be seen here. We can also see the rhyme in *karimbuli*¹⁴² and *chembuli*¹⁴³. Here *bu* sound is repeated. The English translation goes this way: “O black cubs / you shade the black soil / you cubs of lions and panthers” (Das lines 6-8). The limitations of poetry translation lie here. The rhyme in the source text is lost in translation. Here is another example,

Valante valeduth

Velente veleduth

Kalante Kayareduth

Maadante nadanadannu vaa (Das lines 18-21)

Repetition of the sounds *ka*, *va*, *ve*, *aa*, *na* and *da* in the poem creates a rhyme that cannot be reproduced in translation. *Anuprasam*, which is the repetition of adjacent consonant sounds in these lines is untranslatable. Even though something is lost in poetry translation, something can be gained through adding the poetic diction of the target language. The use of alliteration and refrains creates a new rhythm in the target text: “we will pay them back for sure! / We will pay them back!” (Das lines 24-25), “Blood for blood” (Das line 36) and “the dark-dark ones danced too” (Das line 56) are examples. Here the translator has done a more sensible translation than a word-by-word translation.

Cultural specific words in the poem “*Karumaadi Nritham*” make it untranslatable.

The poem is a historical record of the tumultuous past of the Dalits. It is also a protest

against the injustice experienced by Dalits in the past. K. K. S. Das discusses the murder of Dalits by the *thampurans* in the name of rituals and points fingers towards the brutal inhuman violence. *Cherumar* and *Pulaya* are the Dalit castes who worked in the agricultural fields owned by *thampurans*. Agricultural fields are mainly lowland water logging areas and paddy is one of the main crops. Bunds are created in between the fields to store water. Boundary walls known as *chira* are made with mud to prevent the entry of excess water and soil erosion. During the rainy season, *chira* collapses and excessive water enters the fields and destroys the crop. There was a belief that if human sacrifice was done and blood spilled over the *chira*, the gods and goddesses would be pleased and the *chira* would become strong. Dalit blood is thus spilled over to please the deity. The lives of Dalits are sacrificed during the construction of temples and buildings. The words *chira* (boundary wall) and *ara* (room or storage space) are culturally specific.

Chirakku pasayai

Arakku parayai

Pulayathala vetti

Chorayozhichoru

Pulavum nilavum (Das lines 27-31)

The translation, “many Pulaya heads were chopped / and the blood drained into the fields and farmlands” (Das lines 16-17) carries the meaning successfully but the omission of culture specific words *chira* and *ara* creates loss. The reason for the spilling of the blood of Dalits and the culture and story behind it is also missing in the translation.

Untranslatability here hinders the mentioning of the cultural specific words in the target text.

Dalits in Kerala had a strong belief in spirits and hence they used to worship primitive gods associated with nature. *Kali*, *Pothi*¹⁴⁴, *Thevan*¹⁴⁵, *Moothan*¹⁴⁶, *Maadan*¹⁴⁷ mentioned in the source texts are such deities. Each of these deities is associated with specific folk stories and myths. The translation fails to take these cultural and regional specific myths and folktales to the target culture that does not have any such experience or equivalence about it. Here the form of the song itself is like a folk ritualistic performance. The revolt of the Dalits presented in the form of a ritual in the source text is untranslatable. Here we can see a complete change in the form of the poem in the target text. In the source text the lines are smaller with not more than two words in each line. The untranslatability of the text brought a change in the form of the target text. There is a reduction in the length of the lines. Instead of a word-by-word translation, the target text focuses on articulating the theme and the sense of the text.

Problems of translation are visible in the case of the plants and herbs mentioned in the source text. The poet is discussing plants like *taalu*¹⁴⁸, *thakara*¹⁴⁹, *pulinji*¹⁵⁰, *maandal*¹⁵¹, *nooron*¹⁵² and *eenda*¹⁵³ in the source text. *Maandal* and *nooron* refer to various edible taproots, tubers and rhizomes seen in Kerala. Dalits and tribals of Kerala take it as a main food. Most of these plants are not cultivated but Dalits collect them from the forest areas and vegetative land. These plants are a part of their culture. *Thakara* plants, *Cassia occidentalis* sprout during the rainy season and its leaves and flowers are edible. *Thaalu* refers to the petiole of a colocasia plant. Colocasia plants are commonly seen in Kerala during the rainy season and its petiole and rhizome including the stem modifications are edible. The poet is referring to the Dalit women collecting these plants from the vegetative lands and forest areas. *Pulinji*, *Oxalis corniculata* is also an edible

medicinal plant. *Eenda*, scientific name *Cycas circinalis* is a wild variety seen only in the forests of South India. It is one of the main sources of food for the Dalits and tribals. The plant is a primitive variety dates back to the Jurassic period. The Dalits mainly depend on the plants from nature for their appetite as the grains and vegetables from the agricultural lands belong to the feudal lords. The lines from the source text and the flora included are untranslatable:

Thalum thakarem

Kaadum padalum

.....

Maandal nooron

Eenda pulinji

Arichu parichu

Perukkiyedukkan

Arivalarayil

Thirukiyiragiya

Cherumi pennale (lines 1-12)

The above lines address the *Cherumi pennal*, the black peasant girl who collects the plants *thaalu*, *thakara*, *maandal*, *nooron*, *eenda* and *pulinji* with her sickle, for a protest. The untranslatability of the text reduces the source text to “O black girl / you reap the paddy fields / you reap everything with your sickle” (Das lines 1-3). There is a reduction in the number of lines due to the untranslatability of the text. The culture and ethnography of the Dalits which are mingled with the plants described in the source text is missing in the translated text.

The beauty of Raghavan Atholi's poem "Kandathi" lies in its folk rhythm. K. M. Sherrif had translated the poem under the same title. The primitive and natural life of Dalits is presented in poetry through the folk rhythm. The oral renderings appear natural and original through the primitive folk rhythm. The English language which is stress-timed cannot bring that rhythm of nature in translation. The poem "Kandathi" is about the culture of peasants or the working class in Kerala. The poem is a celebration of the Dalit identity. The music and the rhythm of the poem are untranslatable.

The poem is noted for its cultural and linguistic untranslatability. The entire poem records the cultural history of the Dalit women in Kerala. The untranslatability of the text compels the translator to make use of his creativity in translation. The translation appears as a creative text. The lines:

Velutha nerathe

Karuppilekkeduthakanna

Sooryane mannassu prakunnu.

Karuthading moolam

Kodutha koolikku

Thikaikkuvan pullu

Parichunilppaval (Atholi lines 9-15)

is translated as,

On the parting day's sullen face,

Clutching at her sinking wages,

A bundle of fodder

Wrenched out of the earth

Balanced on her head,

She waits. (Atholi lines 4-9)

The translation appears as a new poem in the hands of the poet-translator K. M. Sherrif. Instead of a word-by-word translation the translator uses a creative approach. The article “The Politics of Translation” observes that “the author’s stylistic experiments can produce a different text” (Spivak 400). When the translator is creative, the poem appears as a new different text in translation. The source text presents a Dalit woman who is still collecting grass for the cattle at the parting time of the day. The translator takes the liberty to apply his creativity. The translation focuses on the concept of waiting. A Dalit woman is presented as waiting on the parting day’s sullen face with a bundle of grass above her head. The entire poem presents the waiting of women in a patriarchal society.

The lines,

Eravilathazha

Vakayumai

Vilakkananja koorayil

Thanichirikunnu. (Atholi lines 5-8)

portrays a Dalit woman who is waiting at the late night for someone probably her husband before a meal. The late night is indicated through “*vilakkananja koorayil*” meaning a hut that puts off the light. The poem depicts the culture of Kerala in which women ate their food after their husbands ate food. Such culturally specific things are untranslatable. The translation attempts to overcome the untranslatability of the text through over translation. The woman sitting alone before the food in the source text is

presented as waiting before a cold meal for her husband. The term “cold meal” denotes the late night in the poem. The above lines are translated as:

Late into the night

In her pitch black hut

Guarding a cold meal

She waits. (Atholi lines 10-13)

“Kanakkukalillatha Bhoopadam” is a modern poem by Sunny Kavikkad translated by Catherine Thankamma. The poem is written in the standard variety of Malayalam language that is popularised by the print media. Instead of writing in a vernacular Dalit dialect, the poet has chosen the language of the educated class in this poem. Catherine Thankamma has made a faithful translation of the text following the modern style and poem into the target text. For example, “*Thamassinu charitramezhutan / dhaanam cheyyunnu / njanente kannukal*” (Kavikkad lines 9-11) is translated as “For darkness to write history / I offer my eyes” (Kavikkad lines 8-9). Here we can see some differences in the use of punctuation but a word-by-word translation is done faithfully. Due to the difference in the structure of sentences in the Malayalam and English language here we can see a reduction in the lines. The prosaic and unrhythmical source text less challenges the act of translation. The poet has used symbolism as a major poetic device in representing the pathetic state of the Dalits. The translation successfully portrays the deplorable feelings of the Dalit community from the source text to the target text.

G. Sasi Madhuraveli’s poem “Pranayapoorvam” translated as “With Love” by Lekshmy Rajeev discusses the discrimination faced by Dalits in the name of caste and colour. Western readers are familiar with negritude literature and tend to read Malayalam

Dalit poetry with the issues of African American blacks. The socio-cultural experience and atmosphere of the Dalits are different from the African American community.

Translations can create confusion with the discrimination faced by Dalits and African Americans. The concepts of caste and race are entirely different. These are some of the issues faced by translators in translating Dalit literature. Since this translation is included in *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012) the readers get an idea about the historical background and rise of Dalit literature. In the source texts, the poet mentions a popular saying in Malayalam that black is beautiful, “*Karuppinu ezhazhakanu*” meaning black has the beauty of seven colours: “*Soumini, / karuppazhakanennu / nee veruthe parayaruth*” (Madhuraveli lines 20-22). When the poet asks Soumini to not say that black is beautiful, it implies many underlying meanings that accept something wrong with the colour black. Translations carry such limitations in carrying the regional culture to the target language.

The simple language and diction in the poem “Shambuka” by G. Sasi Madhuraveli allow an effective translation to the English language. The unrhythmic simple language of the modern poem appears good in the translation by T. M. Yesudasan. We can see a line-by-line and word-by-word faithful translation. Interestingly, the modern Malayalam Dalit poems are much more translatable than the rhythmical traditional poems.

Translations of poems with the mentioning of *Puranas* and myths demand a footnote or endnote. The translation of the poem “Shambuka” by G. Sasi Madhuraveli under the same title would be better with a footnote or an endnote. The title character in the poem represents a Dalit from the epic, *The Ramayana*. The mythical Shambuka was

beheaded by Rama for doing penance. Such stories from the epics and *Puranas* stereotypically agree with the notion that Dalits should be kept away from learning and worshipping. Translating such texts always creates difficulty as the target readers are not familiar with the myths referred to in the source text. For example the lines “*Ninte Seethakku / agnisakshiyorukkanda / meenum murukkan pathayum chandiyumanaval*” (Madhuraveli lines 11-13) is translated as “No ordeal for your Sita / A mere pack of fish, / Betal or chew, spittle” (Madhuraveli lines 11-13). The lines are noted for the underlying connotative meanings. Here “your Sita” in the source text refers to the wife of a Dalit. Sita in *The Ramayana* is the wife of King Rama. On her return to Ayodhya, the kingdom of Rama after she was rescued from Ravana she was asked to face an ordeal to prove her chastity. Sita was abducted by Ravana and was imprisoned in the kingdom Lanka. After a long battle with Ravana, Rama rescued her and brought back to his kingdom. Sita passed through a fire ordeal named *agnipareeksha*¹⁵³ to prove her chastity. As a king Rama insisted Sita go through the ordeal to prove his wife’s chastity before the public. The poet is here questioning the stereotypical notion that a woman should be chaste and pure. Here a Dalit woman is described as a *betal*¹⁵⁴ to be chewed by the elite class. She does not have to prove her chastity before the society. Implied sarcasm in the lines is clear and visible. One of the greatest challenges in translating poems with mythical references is the absence of such myths in the target language. The target readers are not able to get the meaning in full essence.

S. Joseph’s poem “Chila Irunda Idangal” translated as “Some Dark Spaces” by K. Satchidanandan is noted for the regional and cultural specific words. The poem confronts linguistic and cultural untranslatability. Even though the poem does not follow any metre

and rhythm there are instances of the use of *prasam* or rhyme in some lines. For example, in the lines “*Thottithottayi / maram maramayi / thottuthottava parakkunnu,*” (Joseph lines 7-9) the repetition of the sound /tt/ indicates a consonant doubling, and /ma/ sound gives a rhyme or *prasam*. The English translation is admirable with an alternative alliteration: “plot by plot / tree by tree / they fly close to one another” (Joseph lines 7-9). Even though something is gained with an alliteration in the target text something is lost with the rhythm of the source text. Interestingly, creative translations take such liberty of using the poetic diction available in the target language to give an aesthetic beauty to the poem.

The aspects of seasons are difficult to translate as the people of different places and nations experience seasons differently. In Kerala we have a moderate type of climate where we experience the rainy season, winter in a mild way and summer. We have seasons for flowering and ripening. But we are not experiencing it exactly like spring and autumn. Festivals in Kerala are associated with the seasons. For example, Onam¹⁵⁵ and Vishu¹⁵⁶ are our harvest festivals. We experience winter not like in Western countries. In Kerala there is no autumn/fall in which trees shed their leaves. But there are trees in the forest that shed leaves. Trees like Mahogany and Banyan shed their leaves. Normally these trees shed leaves either before a cold season or before a dry season. Tribals and Dalits living near the forests have different experiences with these trees that shed their leaves. Forest dwellers in Kerala have a unique experience of seasons than people living in villages and cities. In the poem “Chila Irunda Iddagal,” the poet is mentioning about a season at which the trees shed their leaves *ningal*: “*madagiyethumbol / ilapozhiyum kaalamavum*” (Joseph lines 64-65). The English translation is, “By the time you return / The leaves will be falling” (Joseph lines 68-69). The source text gives a supernatural

aura to the forest. The birds, trees, rivers and the entire forest are viewed as something beyond the human. Even the falling of the leaves can be associated with that supernatural effect which is different from the Western culture. In Kerala, forests are treated as divine, and considered to be a source of knowledge or wisdom. It has nothing to do with Western magic and witchcraft. It is difficult to carry all this to a foreign language with a different culture.

The fauna mentioned in the source text is presented with the original Malayalam name in translation. The bird names *uppan* and *olanjali* are given in the original name. Both these birds are commonly seen in Kerala. In the word *uppan* the sound /pp/ is a consonant doubling in Malayalam language, as English language does not have a consonant doubling, here double 'p' is used in spelling to represent the consonant doubling. *Uppan* is the Malayalam regional name of the crow pheasant, the *Centropus sinensis*. The arrival of *uppan* is considered as a good omen in Kerala. It is believed that seeing the bird and hearing its call brings good luck especially if someone is set for a journey. *Olanjali*, scientific name Rufous treepie is believed to be a harbinger of bad luck in some regions. Different cultures have different beliefs associated with the flora and fauna of the region.

S. Joseph's poem "Kotta" translated as "Basket" by M. T. Ansari is a cultural specific poem. The poem particularly talks about the making of baskets and how it merges with community life. The regional specific words and kinship words in the poem lead to an untranslatability. The regional names of the plants used for making baskets are given in the original Malayalam name in the target text. Basket weaving is part of the Dalit culture. Caste is associated with labour and sub-castes are associated with doing

different kinds of labour. Each sub-caste is associated with a particular kind of work. Dalits and tribals are excellent in skilled work. For skilled or craft work, the raw materials available from the regions where they live are used. Bamboos (subfamily Bambuseae), screw pine leaves (*Pandanus* species), palm front slats, and different kinds of reeds are used to make baskets depending on the availability of the material in the region. The names of the plants used in the poem are the common names used near the Kottayam district of Kerala. *Ottal*, *vazhuka* and *theru* are the regional names used in the target text. *Ottal* is a kind of bamboo variety used for basket making, *vazhuka* refers to the palm front slats and *theru* refers to the side part of the basket. One of the problems with translation is that it fails to carry the experience and emotions associated with the source culture. The translators use the exact words from the source language to retain the regional flavour. Then pronunciation creates some problems, the sounds from the source language may not be available in the target language. The consonant doubling in the /t/ sound in Malayalam is not brought into English as the English language does not have such a sound. Here the translator has used double ‘t’ in spelling in the case of *ottal* to solve the problem. The source text describes about the raw materials: “*Parambukalilekku keru valajukidakkuna / paadagalil nunnu / Ottalu konduvarunnu*” (Joseph lines 1-3). This is translated as “*Ottal* reeds are brought / from the edges of paddy fields / encircling plantations” (Joseph lines 1-3). “*Kudappanayude madalil ninnu / vazhukayum therum kittunnu*” (Joseph lines 10-11). The translation mentions the raw materials: “Fronts of the talipot palm / yield *vazhuka* silvers and *theru* slats” (Joseph lines 11-12). Talipot palm, *Corypha umbraculifera* is a palm variety commonly seen in the forest area of Kerala. The

front part of the palm leaves is taken as it is strong to make the basket. The stanza division in the source text is avoided in the target text.

The poem is rich with the culture, festivals and celebrations of Kerala: “*Kottakal aarattinum perunnalinum pokunnu / avidekanda perammayumayi tirike porunnu*” (Joseph lines 32-33). The translation goes like this, “Baskets also go for *aarattu* festivals and *perunnal* fiestas / and return with namesake-moms happily met over there” (Joseph lines 32-33). People meet at festivals and go to their relatives and friends from there. *Peramma*¹⁵⁷ is the kinship name for the father’s sister in Kottayam district and Alappuzha district. Such cultural specific and regional specific kinship words are untranslatable as the target language does not have an equivalence. Father’s sister has different names in different parts of Kerala. Even native Malayalam speakers from a different region cannot be familiar with such kinship related words. The carnivalesque culture of the Dalits and the middle class of Kerala in the late twentieth century is portrayed in the poem. The poem adds more details including how the baskets are sold out in the festivals and comes back home with many more things brought from there. The readers are presented with a carnivalesque culture full of games, festivals and merriment. “Well of death,” “merry-go-round” and circus are performed at the festivals. The translation is thus bringing the ethnography and culture of land and community to the world.

Similarly, as basket making is part of a culture it is attributed to the natives with emotions and is considered as a part of an ethnography. Sometimes the translator gives emotions to the target text through his poetic creativity. Translations become more attractive here with the alliteration with the /b/ sound and the poetical language. The line “a basket is born” (Joseph line 15) excels the source text:

kattan kudich

murukkichuvapich

ottalum therum pidipoya avayum cherthu

.....

kotta kettunnu. (Joseph lines 12- 18)

The poet translators excel in the art of translation. The making of the basket is described in the target text as:

Sipping black brew,

basking in the red afterglow of betel,

ottal reeds, *theru* slats and a knife without handle

- a basket is born. (Joseph lines 12- 15)

The making of the basket in the source text is transformed as “a basket is born” (Joseph line 15). This is an example of how an over translation can bring beauty to the target text without losing its meaning.

“A Letter to Malayalam Poetry” is the translation of S. Joseph’s poem “Malayalakavithakku Oru Kathu” by K. Satchidanandan. The translation has followed the same style, form, and language as in the source text. Through simple diction and language the poem is challenging the mainstream literature of the period. The analogy of the Malayalam poetry trapped in metres and rhythm is brought in translation. In this poem also the poet is depicting the Dalit culture and life with nature and love. The pathetic life of a Dalit is depicted contrast to the sophisticated elite culture: “*Appan enne patti ennu vilikkunath / kelkanam / Ammayude teetavum mullim eduthu kalayanam*” (Joseph lines 12-14). The language used here is stunning and offensive for an elite reader.

The Sanskrit poems do not dare to call someone a dog or speak about faeces and urine. The translation goes this way: “hear Father calling me dog, / Have to clear mother’s shit and piss” (Joseph lines 13-14). Here we can see that the translation also uses offensive words like “shit” and “piss” in the target language. The target readers should know about the resistance through the language. The life of the ragpicker is given in detail picking tins, bottles and paper. People do not allow his sack in a public vehicle. The contempt for the poor and low caste is evident. The insult and humiliation experienced by Dalits are countless and untranslatability lies in taking these emotions to a target language.

The culture specific proper nouns for kinship like *Appan*¹⁵⁸ and *Amma*¹⁵⁹ are translated as “father” and “mother” in the target text. Kerala is a state with divergent cultures. Different names are used for words representing kinship in different communities, regions and religions. For example the words *achan*¹⁶⁰, *appan*¹⁶¹, *chachan*¹⁶², *appachan*¹⁶³ and *uppa*¹⁶³ are used to address the proper noun father in different regions, communities and religions of Kerala. The name *appan* used in the source text is normally used by Christians from the Kottayam and Pathanamthitta district of Kerala. The word “father” does not carry these cultural differences.

When it is about the names of birds the problem occurs. The lines “*parambilethunna karikilampidakalodoppam / chilakkam*” (Joseph lines 40-41) are translated as “can chirp with the wag-tails / visiting the compound” (Joseph lines 41-42). *Karikilampida*¹⁶⁴ is a poetic version of *kariyila kili*¹⁶⁵, the Jungle babbler commonly seen in Kerala. These birds have the colour of dry leaves and hence are named *kariyila kili* in Malayalam, *kariyila* means dry leaves and *kili* means a bird. It is known as jungle babbler in English because these birds come in flocks and make babbling sounds. Such

cultural specificity is lost when it is translated as the wagtail. A wagtail is a different bird from a different family. The use of the word “wagtails” is much more lyrical to the target language but we can experience the cultural loss. The same is the case with *tazhapaaya*¹⁶⁶ translated as a “mat.” Even though “mat” is an exact equivalent of the word *tazhapaaya* we can see a cultural loss. It takes us to the mat-making culture and life associated with the Dalit lives. Certain sub-castes are engaged in handicraft mat making and are part of a culture. There is a limitation in carrying such information into a target language.

The major problems in translating Malayalam Dalit poetry are associated with the cultural aspect rather than the linguistic aspect. The poem “Chilatharam Viralukal” by Sivasdas Purameri translated as “Some Types of Fingers” by E. V. Ramakrishnan depicts the difficulty in cultural translation. The postmodern poem is complicated with the intertextuality, mythical reference and use of analogy. Ekalavya the tribal boy referred to in the epic *The Mahabharatha* is the central figure of the poem. The story of Ekalavya is familiar to Indians. This is not the case with readers from other cultures. The translation is provided with an endnote that provides the details of Ekalavya. The reference to the places known for the tribal colonies Attapadi and Wayanad is also problematic. The non-native speakers are not familiar with the places and the treachery faced by the tribals of the region. It also speaks about how the tribals became landless and were driven from the forests. The reference to the “*East India paadathu / muriju veena / viralukal*” (Purameri lines 29-31) translated as “sliced fingers / that fell in the East India field” (Purameri lines 20-21) is also problematic as it is from the unwritten history of the past. The struggles and protests of the marginalised were ignored from the mainstream history of the Indian Independence movement. The process of translation gets problematic with the translation

of such texts with an unwritten history. The translation could be effective if it is incorporated with an endnote or footnote explaining the unwritten history of the silk weavers of Bengal. The silk weavers from Bengal cut their fingers so as not to get engaged in the trade agreement with the East India Company. Like the mythical Ekalavya they had also cut their father fingers and said adieu to their traditional labour.

While discussing the loss and gain principles of translating poetry, what comes first in mind is the loss of rhythm in translation. Sivadas Purameri's "Chornolikkunna Muri" is a poem written in rhyme and metre unlike his "Chilatharam Viralukal." The English translation of "Chilatharam Viralukal," "Some Types of Fingers" follows the form, style and structure of the source text and is written in free verse. "A Leaky Room", the English translation of the poem "Chornolikkunna Muri" by E. V. Ramakrishnan confronts problems in linguistic translation with the rhyme scheme and metre of the source text. The source text is written in *keka*¹⁶⁷ metre, a rhythm popularised in Vyloppilly's masterpiece "Mambazham." The Keralapanini mentions the rule of the metre *Keka* in Vrithamanjari as:

Moonum randum randum moonum randum randennezhuthukal

Pathinallinnaru ganam paadam randilumonnpool

Guruvonnengilum venam marathoroganathilm

Nadukku yathi paadadiporuthamithu kekayam (Varma 81)

In *Keka* metre a line is considered as a *paadam*¹⁶⁸ with 14 letters. Six words or six *ganam*¹⁶⁹ are formed with these 14 letters in a line. *Guru*¹⁷⁰ means a long vowel and *leghu*¹⁷¹ means a short vowel. In Malayalam mere letters with *swaram*¹⁷² the vowel sounds are counted. Even in the *venjanakshara* the consonant letter, a vowel sound or

swaram is included. For example the “ka” letter in Malayalam is a *vjanjanakshara*, which is a consonant letter. It is formed by combining the /k/ and /a:/ sounds. There are certain letters like *chillaksharam*¹⁷³, without vowel sounds. But these letters without long vowel sounds are not considered in metres. There should be a long vowel or guru in each word. So keka metre is created by combining 3 syllabic, 2 syllabic, 2 syllabic, 3 syllabic, 2 syllabic, and 2 syllabic six words respectively in a line or *paadam*. *Nadukku yathi*¹⁷⁴ indicates a pause or line break. If all these come in a poem, it can be considered as a poem with *keka* metre.

One of the major problems in the translation of poetry is the untranslatability of the metre. The lines “*makkaleyunarthuka mrithyuvepulkum munpe- / yittiri sneham koodi pankuveikkuka nammal*” (Purameri lines 13-14) are translated as “Let us share a few moments of love, / before we embrace death. Let us awaken / the children” (Purameri lines 13-15). The lyrical quality of the poem is lost in translation. A complete change in the form and structure can be seen in the target text. The source text is divided into three parts. The translation took liberty in making the poem creative to overcome the untranslatability. The target text is divided into stanzas. The ornamental and rhythmical language in the source text made it into a simple free verse poem. The poetic devices used in the target text resolve the untranslatability. The alliteration by the repetition of the /f/ sound in “faded buds, fatigued” (Purameri line 24) gives an added rhythm to the translation. The analogies like “The moth-eaten door will remain shut / like the laughter of an aged patient” (Purameri lines 45-46) appear natural like that in the source text.

The themes of death and sadness permeate the poem. Rain appears in myriad forms in the poem. The mood of the rain changes from sadness and hopelessness to an

optimistic note at the end of the poem. Rain is here associated with the emotions of the poet. People have different experiences with rain in different regions. For example, people living near desert areas have a different experience of rain than the people living in the regions with the highest density of rainfall. The experiences of the people from the coldest regions are entirely different. Kerala experiences two heavy monsoon seasons which are *edavapathi*¹⁷⁵ and *thulavarsham*¹⁷⁶. Expressions like “floor ploughed by rains” (Purameri line 41) become familiar to people who have witnessed heavy rainfall. One can see the untranslatability of the lines:

nanayunnalo kidappayakal, uduppukal,
puthappu, talayana, puthakam, marunnukal,
aduppu, nanavaran sookshicha virakulal,
nanayunnalo vakku, mizhikal, kinavukal... (Purameri lines 7-10)

The experience of a Dalit living in a leaky room soaked with bedsheets, books, medicines and pillows is untranslatable when it is about emotions and feelings. A literal translation is possible as in the target text:

Soaked are the mattresses, clothing, bedsheets,
pillows, books, medicines, hearth, the firewood
kept to dry. The word is getting soaked,
so are the eyes and dreams. (Purameri lines 7-10)

In the past people of Kerala were living under thatched houses made up of coconut leaves. Then people started to use bricks and lime to build walls. Later the roofs began to be made with terracotta tiles. It is only recently in the twentieth century that concrete houses began to appear. A leaky room is something associated with poverty and debt.

The poem does not leave any clue regarding the type of house. The soaked clothing, bedsheets, pillows, books and medicine mentioned in the poem indicate a terracotta tiled roof. Broken roof tiles permit leakage. “Hearth” is common in the coldest regions where people sit near the hearth to get comfort from the cold. Translating *aduppu*¹⁷⁷ as “hearth” does not carry the cultural meaning. *Aduppu* is something like a stove made of clay. Fire woods are burned inside an *aduppu* and cooking utensils are placed above it. Dried coconut leaves and small branches of trees are used as firewood. The word hearth cannot carry this meaning of *aduppu* to the target readers. Cultural untranslatability makes the act of translation difficult. Translating emotions is also a bigger task. The words and dreams that get soaked in the rain are highly emotional. It is interesting that the target text has overcome such difficulties and thus conveyed the meaning and helplessness of the poet successfully.

M. R. Renukumar’s poem “Mindaprani” is translated as “The Silent Beast” by K. Satchidanandan. The word *mindaprani* in Malayalam refers to a silent and poor animal. It also mentions that an animal cannot speak like a human. The connotative meaning can be associated with a human being who is silent and endures pain. Here the title of the target text is “The Silent Beast.” The Cambridge Dictionary defines a beast as “an animal, especially a large or wild one.” The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines it as “an animal, especially one that is large or dangerous, or one that is unusual” (118). Webster’s New World College Dictionary definition is “any large, four-footed animal; sometimes specifically a domestic animal” (126). According to Oxford and Cambridge dictionaries, a beast is a dangerous animal whereas for Webster’s New World Dictionary, it is a four-footed domestic animal. Here Satchidanandan’s title “The Silent Beast” can be

considered as an over translation giving new dimensions and reading to the source text. The term *Mindaprani* means a helpless and silent animal. The title “The Silent Beast” gives the impression of a tamed and silenced animal especially a silenced Dalit.

The poem is highly culture specific as it is about the life of a Dalit woman. Translating a culture is a difficulty as the target readers are not familiar with the culture and ethnography mentioned in the source text. The urgency and need to complete the hard work of the women in the source text is brought to the target text with the repeated use of the word “must.” Rearing cattle for milk is part of the culture through which people make a living. The background of the poem is set in a Post-Independent India, where feudalism ended. A new middle-class culture evolved with the education, reservation of government jobs and the rise of industries. The changes began to be reflected in the Dalit families. The toil and labour of the women in the families had mounted up. The poet is discussing a day of a woman struggling with her duties. In Kerala people get up early in the morning for work even before the crow lands. Birds wake up early in the morning. To wake up before the birds, one must get up before the sun rises. The poet is giving details of the work, “Must keep the milk pot / and the oil bottle ready” (Renukumar lines 6-7). The readers may wonder about the purpose of the oil bottle. Oil is used to apply at the hands of the milker who milks the cow. The twenty first century young Keralites are not even familiar with such a culture of cattle rearing that had once dominated in the middle class families from the villages. By collecting rice water from the neighbouring houses to feed the cows, a good neighbourhood relationship is also maintained. Such minute details about the ethnography and culture of a land are difficult to translate. Collecting water from the canal and bringing it back on one’s hip

requires physical exercise and body balance. Emotional bonding between the mother and the cow is depicted in the poem. Translating emotions becomes a challenge. Collecting grass from the lonely lands and waiting for someone to lift the grass bundle to the head are the experiences. Now those lonely and deserted lands are changed into house plots and buildings in Kerala. Even villages have changed, marking the end of a culture. The translations face difficulty in transcending those emotions and cultures to an entirely different target language. After a long day's labour women go to sleep with an empty stomach. Poverty and hunger are difficult to translate. Women endure the pain of poverty by feeding other members of the family. It is a custom that women must eat at last, only after serving food to all other members of the family. Sometimes they have to go to bed with an empty stomach.

M. R. Renukumar's poem "Vishakkaya" translated as "The Poisoned Fruit" by K. Satchidanandan discusses the cultural past and ethnography of a region. The source text contains the vernacular Dalit dialects used near the Kottayam district of Kerala. The regional dialects and vernacular are linguistically untranslatable. It is unable to bring the beauty of the vernacular language in translation. The same is the case with the kinship words. For example *Appan* is a vernacular name for father used in the Christian families in Kottayam district. The name is retained as in the source text in the translation. The father's younger brother is called *kochachan*¹⁷⁸ and mother's sister is a *chitta*¹⁷⁹ in certain regions of Kerala. Translating *kochachan* as uncle and *Chitta* as aunt will not convey the meaning properly. Thus *kochachan* is translated as "appan's younger brother" and *chitta* is translated as "amma's younger sister" in "The Poisoned Fruit." The target text thus resolved some of the problems in translation.

Othala tree, scientific name *Cerbera odollam* commonly known as the suicide tree is seen in the coastal salt swamps and marshy regions of Kerala. People commit suicide by eating its poisonous fruit. Here an over translation retains the original Malayalam word into the target text and defines the tree: “sitting under the *othala* tree, the poison-fruit tree” (Renukumar line 1). The poetic creativity of the translator turned the target text into an excellent one. For example, “*orumayude puthappinullil / chundukal koorthu / kidakkumbo!*” (Renukumar lines 42-44) is translated as “while lying lip-locked / under a slimy blanket of mud” (lines Renukumar 39-40). The analogy of mud as the slimy blanket is an over translation as the source text only gives a hint of that. The source text only gives a connoted meaning of lying together in the mud. The poet translators excel in such creativity. The poem records the Dalit life and the bonding. Toddy culture is something that is associated with the labourers. Drinking toddy from the same bottle indicates the depth of the relationship. Men drink and enjoy at the toddy shops. The poem also takes to the games played by children. *Itooli* is a game played by children. The translation is provided with a footnote on *itooli*. Taking a bath in the river and women going to collect grass for the cattle form a part of everyday life in Kerala. Target text successfully brings these cultural elements to non-native Malayali readers. Love and death are given a new dimension with the repeated use of binaries. The terms “My *appan* and her *appan*,” “My brother and her brother,” “My sister and her sister,” “My *appan*’s younger brother and her *appan*’s younger sister,” “my *amma* and her *amma*” are used. Through these expressions the poet marks the bondage between the families. Surely readers get confused with the reason for their suicide. Castes and subcastes can only be

the villains. When it comes to marriage and love caste becomes a decisive factor in Kerala. Inter-caste marriages were not accepted even in the twenty first century.

M. B. Manoj's "Survey of India" is translated by K. Satchidanandan under the same title in English. The poem is noted for its simple language and diction. Caste killing and violence against Dalits were common in India. The land is also known for cow worship. The poem "Survey of India" sarcastically criticises caste killing and cow worship. For an Indian reader the concept will be clear. However the problems of translation are confronted by the non-Indians. In India cows are worshipped as mother goddesses. Epics and Puranas speak about the cows as divine. Lord Krishna is associated with cattle rearing at his Vrindavan the place of Krishna. The problems of translation lie in the cultural difference between the source language culture and the target language. For non-Indian readers a cow is just a domestic animal reared for milk and meat. Killing a cow and eating its meat is a sin among upper caste Hindus in India. Dalits are accused, attacked and killed in the name of eating cow meat. Even communal riots occur in the name of cows. The poem clearly distinguishes the life of Dalits and cows in India. Describing a cow as "one who sleeps in ancient legends" (Manoj line 26) talks about cow worship. For a non-Indian the concept is problematic.

The poem is radical in the sense that the source text uses offensive words and slurs. These words are not usually used in mainstream poetry. Underlying sarcasm in the lines describing a cow can be noted:

parasyamayi mullam

vishistam

thooram

athivishistam (Manoj lines 10-13)

The colloquial words for defecate and urinate are given in the source text. The words no one dares to use in a poem are used to show the unending freedom enjoyed by cows. Cow dung and urine are considered holy and are taken for many rituals. The translation goes like this:

Can piss in public

grand.

Can shit,

grander. (Manoj lines 10-13)

The translation has carefully chosen the words “piss” for *mullaam* and “shit” for *thooraam* the words which are less formal in usage. Translation thus goes hand in hand with the linguistic revolt of the poet. A wise and tactful translation is done. The target text follows the form and structure of the source text. There is no omission or extension of the lines from the source text to the target text.

M. B. Manoj’s poems are different due to the colloquial usages and offensive language in poetry. His poems choose a different path from his fellow poets. The poet is driving the readers to the realities and irregularities in the Dalit lives. His choice of diction thus deviates from the elite once mainstream literature. He dares to speak what others do not:

oramma cheeyanennarelum

parajal

thandayanelum

swantham udal uyarthi pidich

thallan chellendi varum (Manoj lines 18-22)

The lines are extremely radical, locale, unusual and offensive at the same time for an elite reader. The word *cheetha* in Malayalam means bad. When it says that a woman is bad it connotatively means that she has committed adultery. *Thantha* in Malayalam is a locale and substandard version of calling one's father. *Thantha* is thus an offensive word for "father." The above lines mean that if someone says that your mother is bad even if your father says it, you must rise with your body and hit him. *Thallu* is a colloquial word for hitting. The lines are extremely radical and feminist in approach. Translating region specific and culture specific words is problematic. The poet is trying to speak about sexual and social violence against women. He is against stereotyping Dalit women as sluts. The concept of the body is problematised here. The task of translation is to bring harsh realities to global readers. When the poet says "A stray fellow / polluted the passage / we had come by" (Manoj lines 27-29) it means a lot. Instead of the stereotypical way of blaming women for everything the poet is here contemplating the men behind it. The poet fearlessly raises his voice against the stereotyping of women as bad.

Unlike the other two poems of M. B Manoj the poem "Paarakal" translated as "Rocks" by K. Satchidanandan directly addresses the issues faced by the Dalits. An analogy in simple language compares rocks with Dalits: "*Uracha Paarakaloronnum / manushyaranu, karutha nirathodu koodiravar*" (Manoj lines 1-2). Here strong rocks are compared with black people. The lines are translated as: "Each solid rock / is a dark-skinned man" (Manoj lines 1-2). The poet has used the standard variety of Malayalam

used by the educated class in this poem without any rhyme or metre. The free verse translation faithfully conveys the meaning to the target language.

One of the greatest problems of translation is the inability to bring emotions from the source language to a target language. Emotions can be best expressed in one's mother tongue. The poem "Idam" by Vijila translated as "A Place for Me" by Lekshmy Rajeev goes through such challenges in translating emotions. The memories of the land and place are moving through the poem. The poet is always reminded about the houses in which she once lived. The property at which the small house resides is detailed as a place with many pits made to dig stones. The poem "Idam" is about life experiences. When Vijila talks about an old house in the middle of paddy fields she becomes nostalgic:

"Mazhakkala dinangalil / dweepine oormippikuuna / vayalkkarayile veedu" (Vijila lines 6-8). The lines are translated as: "the house / by the side of the field / resembling an island / on rainy days" (Vijila lines 6-9). During the rainy season the house is surrounded by water and it looks like an island. Again, people in different regions have different experiences of rain. The lines thus carry many emotions and experiences hidden under them. It is about the experience of crossing the water to reach the house. It also hides the farmers' debt and their habitual shift to the rescue camps during the rainy season. Words like *kooniparambu* which refers to a plot or a lowland are region specific and untranslatable. *"Aanjukottiyal cheliyoorum / kooniparambum kadannu / eethu smasana boomiyilekkini"* (lines 24-26) is translated as "crossing the land / that oozes mud / to which graveyard?" (Vijila lines 26-28). Even though the meaning is conveyed the cultural untranslatability omits the regional beauty of the word *kooniparambu*.

The poem is not written in any metre. The repetition of *vyanjanakshara* brings rhythm to the lines:

kalluvettu kuzhikalulla parambum

kochuveedum

kadakkarkku theerezhutiya orma

kadagalepozhum backyavunnu (Vijila lines 10-13)

The lines are noted for the repetition of /ka/ sound at the beginning. It creates a rhyme or *prasam*. The repetition of the first sound in each line is called *aadhyakshara prasam*. It is not possible to bring the rhyme and the emotions of the lines into a target language. Here the poet is thinking about her old house and the debts attached to it. The lines are translated as:

The memory of the land

and the small house

forfeited to creditors -

debts forever continue (Vijila lines 10-13)

The poem “Enikku Nakham Neetan Kazhijilla” by Vijila translated as “I Can’t Grow my Nails” speaks about the violence, protest and trauma of the women in Kerala even in the twenty first century. The flexible language of the source text reduces the problems of untranslatability. The target text contains a stanza division that is absent in the source text. The symbolism of the nail is perfectly transferred to the source text. The poem speaks about the gender bias and sexual assault against women. The readers across the world can relate easily to the theme. The sarcasm in women watching the tele serials is hidden in the lines:

Neenda nakhagalil nokki

ellam marannirikkaruth

serialinu mumpilirikkum

streyepole (Vijila lines 1-4)

The lines are translated as:

Gazing at long nail,

don't ever forget everything,

like the woman seated

before TV serials. (Vijila lines 1-4)

In the late twentieth century when television began to get popular in Kerala, women had started to watch television series that tell the stories of families. Most of the television series discussed ideologies like marriage, love, divorce and extra-marital affairs. The extreme close-up shots in the television series give the impression that the characters are near to the viewers. Watching television series is like peeping into someone's affairs. The continuity of the television series in several episodes created an addiction to the viewers. Television had thus dominated the drawing rooms of Kerala. The viewers had forgotten everything while watching the tele serials. Here the poet is sarcastic about the new television culture that evolved in Kerala in the last part of the twentieth century that continued to the twenty first century. The translation had failed to bring these elements of sarcasm as the target readers are not aware of the television culture in Kerala.

Vijila's poem "Oru Penpattiyude Atmakadha" translated by Lekshmy Rajeev as "The Autobiography of a Bitch" faces the problems of linguistic and cultural translation. The poem is not written in any metre in the source text. A lyrical quality is maintained

through *prasam*, the repetition of *vyanjanakshara* the consonant like sounds and *swarakshara* the vowel like sounds. The *prasam* in the expressions “*visannu visannu*,” “*chavachu thuppiya chuyigavum*,” “*pettukoottunnavalennu pazhikumbozhum*,” “*pinnampuragalil pathugi*” and “*chaippukalil churundukoodi*” gives poetic charm and beauty. Here the repetition of /*vil*/, /*ch*/, and /*p*/ and /*pa*/ sounds give a poetic rhythm. The repetition of *vyanjanakshara* is known as *anuprasam*. According to the Sanskrit rhetoric the repetition of *Vjanjanakshara* the consonant like sounds can create *anuprasam*. Loss of such rhythm from the source text is compensated with alliteration and repeated words in the target text. The repetition of “hungry, hungry,” “again and again” and “oh world, world” brings some lyrical quality to the otherwise unrhythmic poem. The use of alliterations “drive away the daughters” and “being blamed” can be appreciated.

In Vijila’s poem “Oru Pennpattiyude Atmakatha” translated as “The Autobiography of a Bitch” the vulnerability and humiliation experienced by Dalit women in Kerala is presented with a stark analogy. The lives of Dalit women are compared to the lives of female dogs or bitches. The number of stray dogs is very high in Kerala. These village dogs are disowned and they are roaming freely. Some people keep these ordinary varieties of dogs as watchdogs in the household. When stray dogs breed in the streets male puppies are taken home by the people. But female ones are not taken care of. They are blamed for incessant breeding. Here the poet is comparing the condition of a Dalit woman to a bitch. The cultural untranslatability lies in the lines:

Pettukoottunnavalennu

pazhikkumbozhm

anmakkale-

pankittedukkanum

penmakkale

aattiyodikkanum

varunnathayiragal (Vijila lines 6-12)

The lines depict the gender bias that existed in Kerala where people get happy when a boy is born and are disappointed with the birth of a girl. The above lines depict how the bitches are blamed for breeding incessantly. These lines are difficult for foreigners to relate. The people from the nations where abandoned dogs are taken care of by the local authorities may get strange with the idea. The lines are translated as “breeding incessantly, again and again / to divide up and carry off the sons / and drive away the daughters” (Vijila lines 7-9). The sarcasm in the lines “*avarude daivagalkku / njagal neerkazhchayumala*” (Vijila lines 25-26) is culture specific. The translation is “We’re not offerings / for their gods either” (Vijila lines 23-24). The lines discuss the elite families that worship cows. The bitches in the poems are not presentable before the elite gods.

Binu M. Pallippad’s poem “*Aaru Darshanikar Chernnu Amavasiye Naatakathilninnu Purathakunnu*” translated by E. V. Ramakrishnan as “Six Philosophers Unite to Exclude Amavasi from the Play” is peculiar with the untranslatability of the source text. The poem is noted for its linguistic and cultural untranslatability. The poem is full of culture specific and region specific instances that lead to the untranslatability of the text. The postmodern intertextual poem is different in style and form. The poem is written in the form of a play. The entire poem is about the making of a play. The philosophers in the play are in a discussion about a play that they are planning to stage. Here the readers are quite reminded of the background once set by the popularity of the

Kerala People's Arts Club (KPAC) in the 1950s. The KPAC had taken theatre as a medium for a social reformation. Its alliance with the Communist Party of India is also remarkable. The poem is also critical of the reluctance of educated Dalits to come out of the shadows of the elite hegemony. The philosophers in the poem are not even ready to come out of the Sanskrit plays. A mere linguistic translation will not carry the minute details of regional history to the target language. Something is always lost in cultural translation. When Amavasi loudly renders a Sanskrit quatrain from the *Neethisaram* it reminds the readers about the rules set against the Dalits:

Snathamasvam gajam matham

rishabham kaamamohitham

sudramakshara samyuktam

dooratha parivarjayethu (15)

As per the quatrain a bull ready for mating, a wet horse, a musth elephant and a learned Dalit should be kept away. It also insists that Dalits should be kept away from learning. A bull at its mating time shows aggressive behaviour. A wet horse and a musth elephant are also untamable. So is the case with a learned *sudra*¹⁸⁰. Here the Sanskrit quatrain is presented like a popular film song in the play proposed by the philosophers. The lines also remind the readers about the black and white Malayalam movies and the song sequences. The instance of a boatman singing in full throat is a typical scene in the movies of the period. The translation misses those cultural specific elements.

Sometimes untranslatability of the poem forces it to exclude some regional specific instances from the target text. For example:

Mangalathu mame

thayoli

nintammedottum

CBC kku

(sanghupushpam kannezhutumbol enna mattu) (Pallippad lines 180-84)

These lines are translated as “Hell with the bourgeoisie, even your mother / will vote for communists’ (set to the tune of/ a romantic lyric)” (Pallippad lines 84-86). Here the information about G. P. Mangalathu Madhom an Indian National Congress leader and C. B. C. Warriar a political leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is omitted in the target text. G. P. Mangalathu Madhom and C. B. C. Warriar were opponents during the Kerala Legislative Assembly elections in 1977 and 1980. In 1977 G. P. Mangalathu Madhom defeated C. B. C. Warriar and in 1980 C. B. C. Warriar won the Kerala Legislative Assembly Election against G. P. Mangalathu Madhom. These were a popular slogan by the communists during the election period. The slogan was an insult to G. P. Mangalathu Madhom and he is portrayed as a coward who takes refuge behind his mother. *Thayoli* is an offensive word in Malayalam. As per the slogan even his mother votes for the leader C. B. C. Warriar. Such instances from regional political history are lost in translation due to the untranslatability of the lines. We can also see a change in the form and structure of the poem in translation. The source text consists of short lines whereas we can see long lines in translated text. To render the idea into the target text sometimes translators adopt the text in such a way as to make it relatable to the target readers. The surrealist poem of Binu. M. Pallipadu is difficult to translate.

S. Kalesh portrays the themes of lost love, loneliness and identity crisis in his poems. The themes can easily be related to anyone. The poems “Hairpin Bend” and

“Siren” translated by Shreekumar Varma under the same title are free from the issues of untranslatability. “Hairpin Bend” is about the misfortune of a young girl. The sexual violence experienced by a girl is portrayed in a symbolic language. The poet has left certain hints in this readerly poem to discuss the grave realities that certain girls are doomed to face. The faithful translation successfully carries the meaning and purpose of the text to a global readership. Violence against women and children is a universal issue and the poem picturises the dark realities before the readers. The cultural specific identity of the region is difficult to translate. The lines “*kunninpurathekku pokunna / line bussinte / avasana stoppanavalude veedennariyam*” (Kalesh lines 11- 13) are translated as “I know her house is on the last stop / of the line bus that goes up the hill” (Kalesh lines 9-10). The lines give a faithful translation of the source text. The culture and the lifestyle of people living near the hill stations which a native reader can relate to is not able to bring in translation. The last line bus that climbs a hill station is something important to people living in such remote areas where public transport is less.

The poem “Siren” deals with a universal theme of lost love and triangle love. Money, position and social standards define love in society. The poem is a reaction against the stereotypical notions about love. The poem marks a post-independence period in which many factories were open in Kerala. A new employment culture was developed in Kerala with the factory workers and owners. Dalits continued to be in the periphery. The fear of heights and distance had prohibited them from attaining goals. The poem talks about the lost love and it has many other hidden meanings. When the poet asks “*Nattile thottunirappil ninum / etrayadi pokkathilakum ee nila. / thottuvakkathe tengolam pokkathilavumo?*” (Kalesh lines 42-44) the native readers can

easily identify the culture and the lands described. The translation is “How much higher than the stream-bed back home / would this floor be? / Would it be as high as the coconut tree at the edge of the stream?” (Kalesh lines 35-37). We can see linguistic and cultural untranslatability in the above lines. *Thottunirappu* is translated as “stream-bed” and *thottuvakkam* is translated as “the edge of the stream.” Stream is not an exact translation of *thottu*. It is a small water body that joins a river. The translation cannot take the cultural identity of the coconut trees and the waterbodies to a foreign language.

Malayalam Dalit poetry is written in simple Malayalam and does not use Dalit dialects and languages. The purpose of writing the poems is to make the public aware of the Dalit culture and experience. The poets believe that through simple language and diction they were able to raise awareness about the situation of Dalits and their experiences. Malayalam Dalit poetry is written by educated Dalits to reform the Dalits who are still living under the shadows of the caste system. It also aims to give awareness to society about the identity crisis, injustice, inequality and violence experienced by the Dalits.

Translations of the writings from the marginalised had gained importance and recognition starting from the last part of the twentieth century and continued till the twenty first century. Dalit writers had a positive approach towards English translations as it had provided global discussion about Dalit issues. Dalit writings have a purpose to make social change and hence English translations provide a wider audience to present their issues.

The publication industry had supported the widespread translations of Dalit texts into English. Translations present the Dalit culture, identity and aesthetics to a large non-

native audience. English as a global language takes the issues of the Dalits across the world. Translators of the Dalit writers are engaged in a responsible act of reformation. Translators are mainly focusing on presenting the issue to the world. Instead of a word-by-word translation, the translators are focused on the theme and sense of the source text. The Dalit poems are written in Malayalam not in the indigenous language of the Dalit. So here writing itself becomes a translation for the Malayalam Dalit poets. Instead of using the dialects of different sub-castes, these poets preferred simple Malayalam to express their creativity.

The translations of the marginalised are itself a revolt and protest. According to Sharankumar Limbale Dalit writings are born as a reaction against injustice. The purpose of Dalit writings is “to inform Dalit society of its slavery, and narrate its pain and suffering to upper caste Hindus” (Limbale 20). The translators are thus the ambassadors of Dalit writings and their role is to create social awareness about the lives of Dalits. Translators of Dalit writings are thus social activists who depict the issue of Dalits before the world. Translations of Dalit texts create a historical sense among the foreign as well as the Indian reader. “The inference of historical sense will help the historical recovery of the dalits through the mode of translation” (Armstrong 263). Here translators are also becoming part of a social movement that raises the voice of the marginalised. It is through the translator that the world gets to know about the caste system and caste discrimination. The translator is collaborating with the writer for the socio cultural liberation of the marginalised.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The last decades of the twentieth century had initiated the rise and establishment of Dalit literature in India. The twenty first century had triggered huge translations of Dalit texts. Dalit movements were also strengthened by the Dalit writings all over India. Dalit literature flourished in Kerala as part of the Dalit movements and social reformation that developed in late the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Malayalam Dalit poetry is written by educated Dalits to reform the Dalit community persisting under the shadows of casteism. It also aims to give awareness to society about the crisis, injustice, inequality, and violence experienced by Dalits. Dalit poetry is meant for the public to get awareness about the Dalit lives in Kerala. The language thus chosen by the poets aims for a larger audience. The poets preferred the simple, everyday language of the people to address the issues and problems experienced by Dalits.

The present study had attempted to give a critical analysis of the select English translations of Malayalam Dalit poetry. The select poems that had appeared in *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012), *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writings from South India* (2010) and *Writing in the Dark: A Selection of Dalit Poetry in Malayalam* (2009) were analysed and interpreted with the help of Dalit critical interventions and theories that appeared in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first “Introduction” chapter had discussed the evolution of Malayalam Dalit writings. It also gave an overview of Dalit movements and Dalit Literature in Kerala. The second chapter “The World of Translation and Themes”

had discussed the common themes that appeared in Malayalam Dalit poetry. Protest, rebellion, revolution, exploitation, inequality, alienation, identity crisis, poverty gender discrimination and vulnerability were the common themes discussed in Malayalam Dalit poems. The third chapter “Language and the Aesthetic Domain” had attempted a formalistic analysis of the select poems. The language and diction of the select English translations of Malayalam Dalit poems were analyzed in detail. A detailed study of symbolism, rhythm, mythical and biblical allusions, analogy and imagery that appeared in the poems was done. The fourth chapter “Translation: Prospects and Realities” discussed the challenges and possibilities of translating Malayalam Dalit poetry into English. The concept of equivalence, loss and gain principles in translation and the politics of translating Malayalam Dalit poems into English language was discussed. The fifth chapter titled “Conclusion” included the research findings and limitations of the study.

The limitation of the study is that the present study is based on the select poems of the Malayalam Dalit poets. Only two or three poems of each poet could be chosen for the study. Detailed study of more poems can be done in further studies. Limitations in getting more translated poems of the poets also hindered a detailed study.

Malayalam Dalit poetry had stood as a protest against the inequalities experienced by Dalits. Poikayil Appachan, K. K. S. Das and Kaviyoor Murali had expressed their protest in their poems through a revolutionary approach. The themes of exploitation and humiliation of Dalits, the inequalities and the injustice experienced by the Dalits were discussed in the poems of Kaviyoor Murali and K. K. S. Das. The poems were lyrical during that stage. Modernism in Malayalam Dalit poetry started with the appearance of

the poems of Raghavan Atholi. Atholi's poems were primitive and had followed the rhythm of nature. The plight of the downtrodden and the humiliation experienced by the Dalits were the major themes in the poems of Raghavan Atholi. Sunny Kavikkad, G. Sasi Madhuraveli and Sivadas Purameri wrote poems that recorded the helplessness and the deplorable past of Dalits. The poems turned prosaic with G. Sasi Madhuraveli, Sunny Kavikkad and Sivadas Purameri. Malayalam Dalit poetry had begun to get accepted among mainstream literature with the huge popularity of the poems of S. Joseph. S. Joseph's poems were simple and had expressed the experience of the mundane world. His poems celebrated the presence of nature. Nature appeared as a recurring theme in Malayalam Dalit poetry. Life of Dalits are related to nature and hence the poets celebrated nature in their poems. M. B. Manoj, M. R. Renukumar and S. Joseph had shared a common style and diction in their poems. M. B. Manoj's poems reflected the issues of Dalits directly. Memories and experience had played a great role in the poems of M. B. Manoj, M. R. Renukumar and S. Joseph. Binu M. Pallipad's poems were postmodern, surreal and radical. Vijila and S. Kalash wrote poems from experience and memories. Vijila had written poems from a feminist perspective. The issues of Dalit women became a common theme in the poems of Vijila. Raghavan Atholi, K. K. S. Das, Kaviyoor Murali, Sivadas Purameri and M. R. Renukumar discussed the exploitation and plight of Dalit women in their poems.

Dalit writers had broken all the conventions and created a new style in their poems. Each of the poets taken for the study had created a distinctive and unique style. The earlier poets Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S. Das and Raghavan Atholi had used the primitive rhythm of folk songs in their poems. Only Sivadas Purameri had continued to

follow the metre and rhythm of conventional writing in his poem “Chornnolikkunna Muri.” Most of the other poets included for the study followed an unrhythmical prosaic language in the poems. Dalit poets used simple language and diction and the translators followed the same pattern. Instead of following the traditional style of poetry writing Malayalam Dalit poets had created a new revolutionary approach in poetry writing. The poets had felt that the use of simple language and diction could take their ideas and themes to a wider audience. Symbolism, allusions, images and analogies were the other poetic devices used in Malayalam Dalit poetry. The poet had used similes and avoided other figures of speech that created obscurity in the poems. The poems reflected the turbulent past experiences of the Dalit community. The experience of humiliation and violence from the past dominated the poems of Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S. Das and Raghavan Atholi. Their poems reminded the Dalit community about the deceit that they had experienced from the upper caste. Mythological allusions in the poems thus presented the treachery of the upper caste that started from the Vedic period. Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S. Das, Sivadas Purameri and G. Sasi Madhuraveli gave allusions to mythologies in their poems. The use of imagery as a poetical device made Malayalam Dalit poems unique and genuine. Visual, kinesthetic, auditory, olfactory and organic images in the poems helped to portray the marginalisation and humiliation experienced by the Dalit community. The poets focused mainly on the theme that presents the issues faced by the Dalits in Kerala.

Translations of Dalit writings had appeared across India at the beginning of the twenty first century. Academic discussions on Dalit writings had also contributed to an increase in translations. Academicians and writers Ajay S. Sekher, K. M. Sherrif, Susie

Tharu, Catherine Thankamma, K. Satchidanandan, Lekshmy Rajeev, A. J. Thomas, E. V. Ramakrishnan, Shreekumar Varma, Valson Thampu, Pradeepan Pampirikunnu and M. Dasan had taken initiative in the translations of Malayalam Dalit poetry. “In the context of multilingual and multicultural India, translation into English has become very important in bringing the writing of marginalized sections of society to the fore” (Pai 86). The translations had contributed to global attention to Dalit writings. The poets who were translated into English and included in the anthologies of Dalit writings gained wide acceptance and thus entered the global canon. The poems of S. Joseph were translated and widely discussed among academicians. The simplicity of language and thought made S. Joseph popular among the public. His non-rhythmic poems became famous in the last decades of the twentieth century. His influence is visible in the contemporary Malayalam poetry that appears prosaic without any use of meters and rhythm. The poems of Poikayil Appachan, Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S Das, S. Joseph, Sivadas Purameri, M. R. Renukumar, M. B. Manoj, Raghavan Atholi, Binu M. Pallipadu, S. Kalesh and Vijila are included in the various university syllabus. The poets M. R. Renukumar, S. Joseph and S. Kalesh had received the Sahitya Academi Awards and were considered as mainstream writers. Vijila is the only woman poet whose poems had appeared in *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012). Unfortunately, wide translations of Dalit writing did not consider female poets and writers. The discrimination based on caste and gender had prevented women from expressing creativity. Dalit women poets were not recognised in the twentieth century. They struggled with the issues of caste and gender. The translation attempts had always ignored the Dalit women poets. Apart from that enough emphasis was not given to Malayalam female Dalit poets. When a woman

translates the poems of Vijila, they carry the theme of feminism more strongly compared to a male translator. However male translators had always dominated the translation industry. A few female translators like Catherine Thankamma and Lekshmy Rajeev had translated Malayalam Dalit poems.

The translations of Dalit poetry into English language had faced many challenges. Translating Dalit literature is an act of translating the identity, language and culture of a community. The greatest challenge in translating Dalit literature into English lies in the context of equivalence. English as an imperial language does not have the equivalent vocabulary as in the source language. The Malayalam language is not easy to translate into an imperial language. The humiliation and exploitation experienced by the Dalits are difficult to express in an oppressor's language. The experience of the Dalits is unfamiliar to the English society. The translations of the Malayalam Dalit poetry had followed the simple language and diction that appeared in the source texts. Indian English in the translations had grabbed the attention of the readers across India.

The present study had focused on the multiple challenges of translation. It was observed that the ethnic culture of the Dalits expressed in the poetry was difficult to translate into English. Dalit customs and culture were not familiar to readers across the world. The life of Dalits was associated with nature and their poetry contains elements from nature. The flora and fauna of the region are mentioned in the poems. Translation of the region specific trees and plants is difficult to mention in the target language.

The rhythm, language, figures of speech, form, and style of poetry had made the translation difficult. The translators had attempted to use the poetic devices of the target language to substitute the loss of poetic diction in the source text in the act of translation.

Many of the translations had appeared as new texts before the readers. The rich cultural experience and the folk rhythm in Malayalam Dalit poetry that appeared in the poems of K. K. S Das and Raghavan Atholi are untranslatable. Sivadas Purameri used the popular *Keka* metre in his poem. Retaining these rhythms and metres in the target text is impossible. Hence translators had used a lyrical language to compromise the loss of translation. The translation thus appears as a new poem with its own identity. Some of the translators who were poets had also done experiments in translation. The kinship related vocabulary in the poems of S. Joseph and M. R. Renukumar had created challenges in translation. The slang and offensive words in the poems of M. B. Manoj, S. Joseph and Binu M. Pallipad were difficult to translate. The translation attempts had confronted the issues of finding equivalence. Malayalam Dalit poetry was written to reform the society. Rather than focusing on the loss of rhythm and untranslatability the translation had given importance to the theme of the poems. The translators joined the poets in making the voice of the marginalised visible to a global audience. In fact the translations of the writers had created a revolution that contributed a social change.

Chapter Six

Recommendation

A great scope for translation into various Indian and foreign languages awaits the future of Malayalam Dalit poetry. Twelve Malayalam poets and their two or three poems were considered for this study. There is ample scope for studies on the poems of each of these poets who had entered the mainstream. A detailed and separate study of the poems of individual poets can be done. Individual study on the poems of Kaviyoor Murali, K. K. S. Das, Raghavan Atholi, Sunny Kavikkad, G. Sasi Madhuraveli, S. Joseph, Sivadas Purameri, M. R. Renukumar, M. B. Manoj, Vijila, Binu M. Pallippad and S. Kalesh can be done. Studies on the poems of other Malayalam Dalit poets who had not entered into canon literature can be included. A detailed study of the poems of Kallada Sasi, Kallara Sukumaran, V. K. Narayanan, M. K. Narayanan, V. K. Vasu, Bhasi Arakath, K. K. Sivadas, Valsala Baby, K. K. Nirmla, Pushpa Joy, Praveena K. P., Ambika Prabhakaran, Balu Pulinelly, Shaju Nellai, Jayan Babu, Rajesh K. Erumely, B. Madhukumar, Sajin P. J. and Johnson Cheeranchira can be undertaken.

Studies on Malayalam Dalit women poets and their poetry is an area that offers a lot of scope. A detailed study of the poems of each female poet can be done separately in further studies. Now more women Dalit poets are expressing their poetic talents and are moving against the currents of casteism in the twenty first century. Sathi Angamaly, Ammu Deepa, Dhanya M. D and Sunitha Thoppil are quite famous starting with the beginning of the twenty first century. Their poems can be translated and can be made into an academic discussion. Even though Malayalam Dalit poetry has developed into an independent genre much studies have not emerged regarding female Dalit poets. Malayalam Dalit women's

poetry is an area not much explored by translators. A study on *Irikkaporuthi* (2023) a collection of poems by Ammu Deepa and *Amygdala* (2014) a collection of poetry by Dhanya M. D. can be done. *Muditha* (2014) is a collection of the poems of Malayalam Dalit woman poets edited by M. B. Manoj.

Studies can be done on Malayalam tribal poetry. There is plenty of scope for translation in Malayalam tribal poetry. Tribal poetry is not included and discussed among the Dalit studies in Kerala. Tribal poetry has flourished as a separate genre. S. Joseph talks about the scope of contemporary Malayalam tribal poetry and feels that more studies should come about tribal poetry. A detailed study of the poems of Sukumaran Chaligadha, Asokan Marayoor, Bindu Irulam, Suresh M. Mavilan, Dhanya Vengacheri and Easwaran Kani Vaidhyar can be done.

Endnotes

Chapter one

1. Siddharth College of Law was founded in 1950 in Mumbai to provide legal education to all the sections of the society including Dalits. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was one of the notable personalities associated with the establishment of the college.
2. People's Education Society was an organisation formed by Ambedkar on 8 July 1945.
3. Paraya: one of the lower castes
4. Panas: one of the lower castes
5. Kurava: one of the scheduled castes Dalit communities native to the Kurinji Mountain region of Tamil Nadu and Kerala
6. Adivasis: tribals
7. Malayaraya: A tribal community native to the areas of Idukki, Pathanamthitta and Kottayam district of Kerala. They live in the hilly and mountain regions.
8. Brahmins: one of the higher castes
9. Namboodiri: one of the higher castes
10. Nair: one of the higher castes
11. Ezhava: The most populated untouchable community in Kerala. They belong to the Other Backward Community in Kerala.
12. Thiyya: one of the Other Backward Community
13. thampuran: upper caste aristocrat.
14. Vaikom Satyagraha was a nonviolent agitation of the untouchables to use public roads near the temple premises of Vaikom in the Kottayam district. Under the leadership of Sree Narayana Guru and T. K. Madhavan, agitation started from 30 March 1924 to 23 November 1925. Mahatma Gandhi's visit to the Vaikom gained attention for the agitation.
15. Guruvayoor Satyagraha (1931-32) is a nonviolent temple entry protest of the marginalized communities of Kerala under the leadership of K. Kelappan and Manathu Padmanabhan.

16. Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham: an organization for the welfare of the marginalized.
17. Villuvandi: a cart pulled by oxen
18. Kallumala: Dalit women were forced to wear stone beads on their necks as a sign of their lower caste.
19. Savarnas: those who fall within the varna system consisting of four major castes. Untouchables fall outside this system and are termed outcastes, avarnas.
20. *Ayyankalipada*: A group of trained Dalit men in martial arts fights against societal injustice.
21. Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha: an organization for the welfare of the marginalized.
22. Samastha Kochi Pulaya Sabha: an organization for the welfare of the marginalized founded by Pandit Karupan and Krishnanadi Ashan.
23. Cheramar Maha Sabha: an organisation for the welfare of the marginalized founded by Pambadi John Joseph
24. Aadhi Kerala Dharma Sangam: an organization for the welfare of the marginalized.
25. Sambandham: a relationship between Nair women and Namboodiri men as part of the Nair matrilineal system.
26. Pulaya: One of the Dalit communities in Kerala who works in agricultural fields.
27. Theyyam: a religious ritual in the Malabar regions of Kerala. The performer of the “theyyam” is considered as God.
28. Thira: ritual songs recited to invoke the spirit of the deity during “theyyam” performance.
29. Kakkarassi Natakam: a folk art form of Kerala.
30. *Koithu pattu*: labour song sung by the workers during harvesting.
31. *Chakra pattu*: a kind of labour song.
32. *Ammanappattu*: song sung during the marriage eve of lower castes.

33. *Araya: Dheevara* or *Mukkuva* is the fishing community that belong to the Other Backward community in Kerala.
34. *Misrabhojanam*: The inter-caste feast organized by Sahodaran Ayyapan on 30 May 1917 at Cherai. The *misrabhojanam* challenged the caste system. Earlier people from different castes were not allowed to sit together and eat food. It challenged the ideology of looking food as a symbol of casteism.
35. *Misravivaham*: The inter-caste marriage is known as *misravivaham*. People from one community was not allowed to marry from other communities in the past. *Misravivaham* challenged it.
36. *Tharavadu*: It is the ancestral home of upper castes in Kerala.
37. *Pulaya Pattu*: Song sung by the *Pulaya* Community.
38. *Njattu Pattu*: Sung during the time of planting the paddy in the fields.
39. *Thottam Pattu*: An invocative song sung before the performance of *Theyyam* ritual.
40. *Kumbha Pattu*: Sung by the *Kurichiyar* tribe about the deity, *Malakari* appeared in the form of a hunter.
41. *Sopana Pattu*: Long song of 917 lines sung during the marriage ceremonies of the *Adiyanmar* community.
42. *Malamal Kilipattu*: Sung by the *Paniyar* community in Kerala. The song is composed in the form of a conversation between those who are residing on the hills (*mala*) and those who are from the valley.
43. *Koothu Pattu*: *Pulaya* and *Paraya* communities sang songs at the time of their work in the fields. Sometimes they sing these songs as if in a competition. They divide themselves as two groups in the fields and sing. This is known as *Koothu Pattu*.
44. *Bhadrakali Pattu*: *Paraya* communities worshipped *Bhadrakali*, the fierce form of goddess *Parvathi*. *Bhadrakali Pattu* are the songs sung in praise of goddess *Bhadrakali*.
45. *Edanadan Pattu*: A heroic song sung by the *Parayas* and *Pulayas* of the Kuttanad and Vaikkom while working at the fields. It tells the history of a hero named *Edanadan*.
46. *Pulluvan Pattu*: Song sung by the *Pulluva* community during the rituals at the snake shrine.

Chapter Two

47. Thinnai: Sangam age is known for the five types of tinnai representing five landscapes namely Kurinji (mountain region), Mullai (pastoral area), Marutham (wet land), Neithal (coastal region) and Palai (dry land).
48. Sangam age: Golden period in the history of Tamil Nadu and Kerala reigned by Chera, Chola and Pandya dynasty dating back to c. 6th century BCE.
49. Paanathies: lower caste women
50. Kali: the fierce aspect of Devi, the Goddess
51. Asura: Demon
52. Puranas: literally, old stories.
53. Kannaki: central figure of the Tamil epic *Silapathikaram* who is worshipped as the Goddess of chastity.
54. Tapas: a spiritual practice that refers to penance
55. Kaattalan: a lower caste hunter who lives in the forest
56. Kshatriya: higher caste aristocrat
57. Sheelavathi: a woman who is considered as the symbol of chastity in Hindu mythology.
58. Veranda: a roofed outer space attached to houses
59. Uppan: Crow pheasant (a bird)
60. Olenjaali: Tree-pie (a bird)
61. Ottal: a kind of bamboo used for the making of basket
62. Vazhuka: raw material for making basket. A string made from the palm slats.
63. Theru: side part of the basket
64. Itooli: a game played by children. One throws a safety-pin on the ground and other search for it. The one who finds the safety-pin is the winner.
65. Othala: a kind of poison fruit tree commonly seen at the river banks

66. Mindaprani: literally means a living being especially an animal that cannot speak. Malayalam word for an animal.
67. Laksham veedu: One lakh housing project launched by the government of Kerala in 1972 for providing house for the poor.
68. Manu: The first man in Hindu mythology and the legendary author of the Sanskrit law of code *Manu-smriti*.
69. Vaastu: Vaastu sastra is the science of architecture in traditional India.

Chapter Three

70. Lord Shiva: one of the deities that belongs to the Trimurthi or trio of Gods. Shiva is considered as the destroyer within the Trimurthi. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are together known as Trimurthi.
71. Ezhava Shiva: When Sree Narayana Guru consecrated new temples in Kerala, the upper castes questioned his right to consecrate temples. Then Guru answered that he is not consecrating the upper caste Shiva idol but he is consecrating an Ezhava Shiva, meaning Shiva of the Ezhava community.
72. Mahabali: the legendary mythical king of Kerala noted for his benign rule. He was pushed down to "Paathalam," the netherworld by Vaamanan. His return from the netherworld to visit his people is celebrated as Onam.
73. Vaamana: in Hindu mythology is a dwarf who is the descendant form of Lord Vishnu. He pushed Mahabali to the netherworld "Paathalam."
74. Indra: King of celestial beings or Devas
75. Devas: celestial God like beings.
76. Mahavishnu: one of the great trio Gods of Indian mythology. He is the protector of universe.
77. Paathalam: netherworld or underworld in Hindu mythology
78. Avarna: a Dalit
79. *Parayi Petta Panthirukulam*: one of the popular folktales in Kerala.
80. Vararuchi: According to the folk tale *Parayi Petta Panthirukulam*, Vararuchi is one of the nine wise men in the court of Vikramaditya

81. Vikramaditya: an emperor of ancient India
82. Panchami: the wife of Vararuchi mentioned in the folk tale *Parayi Petta Panthirukulam*
83. Vela: Vel Muruga is the son of goddess Parvathi and Lord Shiva in Hindu mythology.
84. Kaala: the messenger of death
85. Itihasa: epic poem that tells the stories of Gods and Kings. The Ramayana and The Mahabharatha are the ancient Indian Itihasas.
86. Raktabija: an Asura who fought against goddess Kali
87. Sumbha: an Asura, a demon that fought with Raktabija against goddess Kali and goddess Durga
88. Nisumbha: an Asura, a demon that fought with Raktabija against goddess Kali and goddess Durga
89. Durga: goddess Mahadevi
90. Kovalan: son of a rich merchant and husband of Kannaki, a character from the Tamil epic *Silapathikaram*.
91. Yama: messenger of death. Another name of Kaala.
92. Parvati: wife of Lord Shiva in Hindu mythology
93. Muruga: son of Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati in Indian mythology
94. Tandava: the frenzy dance form performed by Lord Shiva which is believed to be the source of creation, preservation and dissolution.
95. Kaalakoodam: in Indian mythology Kaalakoodam is the poison that appeared when the milky ocean was churned by Devas and Asuras
96. Rudraksha: It is the dried seeds of *Elaeocarpus ganitrus* tree. It is associated with Lord Shiva in Hindu mythology.
97. Palazhi: milky ocean in Indian mythology
98. Amrit: the mythical elixir of eternal life which is extracted from the milky ocean
99. Neelakand: name of Lord Shiva

100. Ugrasravas: husband of Sheelavathi in the Ramayana. When Rishi Animandava cursed Ugrasravas that his head would burst into pieces in the next morning, Sheelavathi cursed back that the sun would not rise the next day. Due to the power of Sheelavathi's chastity, the sun failed to rise.
101. Shambuka: a sudra character from The Ramayana. He was beheaded by Rama for practicing tapas or penance.
102. Uttara kanda: Ramayana is different Kandas or chapters namely Bala kanda, Ayodhya Kanda, Aranya Kanda, Kiskinda Kanda, Sundara Kanda, Yuddha Kanda and Uttara Kanda.
103. Rama: The central character of the epic Ramayana.
104. Muni Narada: a sage in Hindu mythology
105. Dharma: Dharma is the law and duty, the truth is established through the practice of dharma in the Ramayana.
106. Valmika: a Sanskrit word which means an anthill
107. Appan: the Malayalam word for father
108. Aarattu: a temple ritual or festival
109. Perunnal: a festival associated with Church
110. Ekalavya: a mythical character from the epic Ramayana
111. Dronacharya: Royal preceptor of Kuru Vamsha in The Mahabharatha.
112. Arjuna: The Pandava prince of Kuru Vamsha in The Mahabharatha
113. Kuru Vamsa: Kuru Kingdom refered to in The Mahabharatha
114. Guru Dakshina: literally, giving back to Guru. It is the payment offered for the spiritual guide.
115. Gurukula: a kind of education system in ancient India in which the disciples live with the Guru, the teacher and learn from him
116. Guru: teacher in the ancient period
117. Acharya: teacher

- 118. Krishna: an incarnation of Lord Vishnu in Hindu mythology
- 119. Krishnaleela: the activities and playful moments of Lord Krishna
- 120. Vrindavan: place associated with the Lord Krishna
- 121. Yashoda: foster mother of Lord Krishna

Chapter Four

- 122. Pullanji: a kind of forest creaper
- 123. Kanjirathila: leaves of *Nux vomica*. The leaves are known for the presence of poisonous strychnine.
- 124. Kanjiram: a poisonous tree known as *Nux vomica* or poison nut tree
- 125. *Karaskarathin kuru paalilittal Kalandare Kaipusamippathundo*: A popular saying in Malayalam which means that one cannot change one's own nature. *Karaskaram* is the *Nux vomica* or *Kanjiram*. Even if we put the bitter leaves of *Kanjiram* in milk its bitterness will never change.
- 126. Purananooru: A Tamil classical poetry during Sangam age.
- 127. Pathitruvalu: A Tamil classical poetry during Sangam age.
- 128. Kurathi: low caste woman from Kurava community
- 129. Kunki: trained elephant used in mahouts for taming wild elephants
- 130. Panchari melam: a kind of musical ensemble during temple festivals
- 131. Chenda: a musical instrument used in panchari melam
- 132. Kombu: a musical instrument used in panchari melam
- 133. Kuzhal: a musical instrument used in panchari melam
- 134. Ilathalam: a musical instrument in panchari melam
- 135. Kolam: an idol of the deity placed over the head of an elephant during temple festivals.
- 136. Elukakallu: boundary stone
- 137. Thullal pattukal: a satirical art form combining performance and recitation by a solo

performer.

138. Vyanjanam: consonant sound in Malayalam
139. Prasangam: rhythm
140. Anuprasangam: repetition of consonant sounds in Malayalam poetry
141. Karimbali: black panther
142. Chembuli: Jaguar
143. Pothi: goddess, especially one who resides in the branches of trees is worshipped by low caste
144. Thevan: devan, deity worshipped by Dalits
145. Moothan: Muttappan or the elder deity worshipped by Dalits
146. Maadan: deity worshipped by the low caste
147. Thaalum: petiole of Colocasia plant. It is edible during rainy season, especially during the Malayalam month of *Karkidakam*.
148. Thakaram: an edible plant commonly seen during rainy season.
149. Pulinjil: a kind of medicinal plant
150. Maandalam: refers to tubers and taproots
151. Noorun: refers to root tubers which the tribals consume as a main source of food.
152. Eendal: *Cycas circinalis*
153. Agnipareeksha: a trial by fire. It was depicted in the *Ramayana* that Sita the wife of Rama had gone through the trial to prove her chastity.
154. Betal: scientific name *Piper betle* is a vine plant. Betel leaves were chewed along with areca nuts or tobacco by the elders of Kerala.
155. Onam: a festival of Kerala
156. Vishu: a festival of India
157. Peramma: father's sister

158. Appan: Malayalam word for father in the Christian families in certain regions of Kerala
159. Amma: mother
160. Achan: father
161. Chachan: Malayalam word for father in the Christian families in certain regions of Kerala
162. Appachan: Malayalam word for father in the Christian families in certain regions of Kerala
163. Uppa: Malayalam word for father in Muslim community
164. Kalikilampida: a female Jungle babbler, a bird
165. Kariyila kili: another name for the bird Jungle babbler.
166. Tazhapaaya: mat made with natural things
167. Keka: a metre in Malayalam poetry
168. Paadam: a line in poetry
169. Ganam: three letters constitute a ganam
170. Guru: similar to long vowel
171. Leghu: similar to short vowel
172. Swaram: vowel sound
173. Chillaksharam: a kind of Malayalam consonant letters. There are five letters that comes under Chillaksharam. Malayalam is a phonetic language.
174. Yathi: break or pause in a line, especially in poetry
175. Edavapathi: southwest monsoon
176. Thulavarsham: northeast monsoon
177. Aduppu: a kind of stove in Kerala. Firewoods are burned in it and cooking pot is placed over the aduppu.

178. Kochachan: Malayalam word for father's younger brother
179. Chitta: name for Mother's younger sister in certain parts of Kerala
180. Sudra: low caste

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