

**MIRRORING THE MOSAIC: ECHOES OF NORTH
MALABAR'S CULTURAL SYNCRETISM IN
MODERN MALAYALAM FICTION**

*Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of*
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

by

SHANIF M K

under the supervision of

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**CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
FAROOK COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), KOZHIKODE**



**Affiliated to the University of Calicut
June 2025**



DECLARATION

I, **Shanif M K**, hereby declare that the thesis entitled, **Mirroring the Mosaic: Echoes of North Malabar's Cultural Syncretism in Modern Malayalam Fiction**, submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by me, under the guidance of **Dr K. Rizwana Sultana**, Associate Professor and Head, Department of English, Farook College (Autonomous), Kozhikode, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles. The contents of the thesis have undergone a plagiarism check using iThenticate software at the 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 content.

Place: Calicut University
Date: 5 January 2026

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the syncretic ethos and composite cultural identity of North Malabar, a region distinguished by its linguistic, culinary, artistic, and sociocultural diversity. Existing studies on North Malabar remain fragmented, lacking a comprehensive scholarly analysis of its distinctive features and regional interconnections. This study has analysed the sociocultural life of twentieth-century North Malabar, as reflected in modern Malayalam fiction published between 1966 and 2023. The selected novels are by U.A. Khader, Punathil Kunnabdulla, Ambikasuthan Mangad, R. Rajasree, and M.V. Janardhanan.

The study uncovers the syncretic elements of North Malabar and traces the social transformations within its composite cultural fabric. Furthermore, acculturation and sociolinguistic theories provide a framework for examining the language, cuisine, and social customs in selected literary works. The study examines the region's social transformation and diverse expressions of modernity, focusing on the changing structures in which patriarchal authority is challenged. The three core chapters trace North Malabar's syncretic cultural evolution, demonstrating its transformation from hierarchical dominance to multiple modernities. The thesis concludes by noting the changing compositeness, as the influences of globalisation lead to a cultural industry that dilutes regional diversity. This research underscores the significance of North Malabar's syncretic traditions as a vital model of coexistence and harmony. By revisiting this historical legacy, the study advocates a renewed commitment to pluralism and mutual respect to foster a more inclusive and harmonious future.

Keywords: North Malabar, Syncretism, Mappila Muslim, Sociolinguistics, Modernity

സംഗ്രഹം

സാമൂഹിക സാസ്കാരിക വൈവിധ്യത്തിലും ഭാഷ, കല, പാചകം എന്നീ തലത്തിലും പെരുമ കൊണ്ടു ഉത്തര മലബാറിന്റെ സ്വാംശീകരണ പ്രക്രിയയെയും സമന്വയ സാംസ്കാരിക സ്വത്വത്തെയും കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഒരു അന്വേഷണമാണ് ഈ പ്രബന്ധം. നിലവിൽ ഉള്ള പഠനങ്ങൾ എല്ലാം പലയിടങ്ങളിലായി ചിതറിക്കിടക്കുന്നതിനാൽ ഉത്തര മലബാറിന്റെ സവിശേഷസ്വഭാവവും പ്രദേശികമായ പാരമ്പര്യവും എടുത്ത് കാണിക്കുന്ന ഗവേഷണസ്വഭാവമുള്ള ഒരു സമഗ്ര പഠനത്തിന്റെ അഭാവം പ്രകടമാണ്. 1966 നും 2023നും ഇടയിൽ പുറത്തിറങ്ങിയ ആധുനിക മലയാളനോവലുകളിൽ പ്രതിഫലിക്കുന്ന ഇരുപതാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിലെ ഉത്തര മലബാറിലെ സാമൂഹിക സാസ്കാരിക ജീവിതമാണ് ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിൽ പഠനവിധേയമാകുന്നത്. യു. എ. ഖാദർ, പുനത്തിൽ കുഞ്ഞുണ്ണി, അംബികാസുതൻ മാങ്ങാട്, ആർ. രാജശ്രീ, എം. വി. ജനാർദ്ദനൻ എന്നീ മലയാളം എഴുത്തുകാരുടെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത കൃതികളാണ് പഠനത്തിനെടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളത്.

ഉത്തര മലബാറിന്റെ സമ്മിശ്ര സാംസ്കാരിക തലത്തിനുള്ളിൽ എങ്ങനെ സമന്വയ ഘടകങ്ങൾ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു എന്നും സാമൂഹിക പരിവർത്തനങ്ങൾ സംഭവിക്കുന്നുവെന്നും ഈ പഠനം മുന്നോട്ട് വെക്കുന്നു. അത് കൂടാതെ, തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത കൃതികളിലെ ഭാഷ, പാചകകല, സാമൂഹികാചാരങ്ങൾ എന്നിവ പരിശോധിക്കുന്നതിനായി സാമൂഹ്യഭാഷാശാസ്ത്രം, അക്കൾച്ചറേഷൻ (acculturation) എന്നീ സിദ്ധാന്തങ്ങൾ ഉപയോഗിച്ച് ഒരു ചട്ടക്കൂട് കൂടി ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. പുരുഷകേന്ദ്രീകൃത അധികാര വ്യവസ്ഥയെ ചോദ്യം ചെയ്ത്, ആധുനികതയുടേതായ വിവിധ ആവിഷ്കാരങ്ങൾ കൊണ്ടുവരുന്ന പ്രാദേശിക സാമൂഹിക

പരിവർത്തനങ്ങളെയും ഈ പ്രബന്ധം പഠനവിയേയും ആക്കുന്നുണ്ട്.

ഉഹനീചത്യാധിപത്യത്തെ പുറംതള്ളി ബഹുതല ആധുനികത മുന്നോട്ട് വെക്കുന്ന ഉത്തര മലബാറിന്റെ സാംസ്കാരിക പരിവർത്തനങ്ങളെ പറ്റിയാണ് മൂന്ന് പ്രധാന അദ്ധ്യായങ്ങളിൽ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നത്. ആഗോളവൽക്കരണത്തിന്റെ സ്വാധീനം പ്രാദേശിക വൈവിധ്യങ്ങൾ ഇല്ലാതാക്കുന്ന ഒരു സാംസ്കാരിക വ്യവസായത്തിലേക്കു നയിക്കുമെന്നതിനാൽ ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള സമ്മിശ്രസ്വഭാവത്തിന്റെ പ്രാധാന്യം ഉന്നിപ്പറഞ്ഞു കൊണ്ടാണ് പ്രബന്ധം ഉപസംഹരിക്കുന്നത്. ഉത്തര മലബാറിന്റെ സമന്വയ പാരമ്പര്യങ്ങൾ സഹവർത്തിത്വത്തിന്റെയും സാഹോദര്യത്തിന്റെയും ഉത്തമ മാതൃക ആണെന്ന് പഠനം അടിവരയിടുന്നു. ചരിത്രപരമായ ഈ പാരമ്പര്യത്തിലൂടെ വീണ്ടും കടന്നുപോകുന്നത് വഴി ഈ പഠനം ബഹുസ്വരതയോടുള്ള ഒരു പുത്തൻ ഉണർവും, സഹവർത്തിത്വവും സാഹോദര്യവും പ്രദാനം ചെയ്യുന്ന പരസ്പര ബഹുമാനവും സാധൂകരിക്കുന്നു.

സൂചകപദങ്ങൾ: വടക്കേ മലബാർ, സമന്വയം, മാപ്പിള മുസ്ലിം, സാമൂഹ്യഭാഷ ശാസ്ത്രം, ആധുനികത

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to trace the evolution of composite cultural elements and their influence on multiple facets of North Malabar society. Through textual analysis, it highlights how these cultural factors foster syncretism in language, cuisine, art forms, and social customs. In addition, the study examines the region's social transformation and diverse expressions of modernity, focusing on the changing structures in which patriarchal authority is challenged. This academic investigation is a textual analysis of the selected novels by U.A. Khader, Punathil Kunnabdulla, Ambikasuthan Mangad, R. Rajasree, and M.V. Janardhanan. Works selected for this study include *Khuraishikkoottam*, *Changala*, *Thrikkottur Peruma*, *Oru Padakali Penninte Charitham*, and *Agorashivam* by U.A. Khader, *Smaraka Shilakal* and *Paralokam* by Punathil Kunnabdulla, *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randhu Sthreekalaude Katha* by R. Rajasree, *Markkappile Theyyangal* by Ambika Suthan Managad, and *Perumalayan* by M.V. Janardhanan. Another method employed in the study includes personal communication. This thesis explores the cultural syncretism of North Malabar through an analysis of select modern Malayalam novels written in the region between 1966 and 2023. This examines the complex transition of authoritative social structures into modernity across various communities in North Malabar with particular attention to the significant role of local dialects in moulding the region's cultural identity. Delving into the rich tapestry of composite culture and syncretism

in the twentieth century, this study aims to provide a comprehensive insight into the dynamic evolution that shaped North Malabar's cultural landscape.

I chose this topic, drawing inspiration from personal experiences rooted in North Malabar. I was raised in Kannur, North Malabar, until graduation, and later went to other states for higher studies. This exposure led to the identification of the differences between my dialect and those of other regions of Kerala. Moreover, a local historian, V.K. Kuttu, facilitated access to resources. Furthermore, the Kannur Muslim Heritage Congress, a conference conducted by the Solidarity Youth Movement, and its proceedings, encouraged further study into the unique and diverse socio-cultural life of North Malabar. The Kannur City Heritage Foundation has also been instrumental in collecting the data required for the study. Following preliminary investigations and insights from various sources, the research formulated a set of key research questions. The thesis seeks to answer the following questions: How is the syncretic culture of North Malabar depicted in Malayalam novels (1966–2023), and what hidden hierarchies reside within this framework? How does the region's linguistic diversity reflect its syncretic history, and how is language utilised in literature to mediate status and social dominance? How do patriarchy, caste, wealth, and *Tharavadu* prestige converge as an intersectional matrix of dominance in North Malabar? How do marginalised voices resist these hierarchies through language and ritual, and how does this facilitate the emergence of region-specific modernities? Hence, these questions prompt academic research to seek answers in the available literature.

The research objectives for this study serve as a roadmap for understanding and comprehensively scrutinising the research question. The objectives are to trace the evolution of North Malabar's syncretic culture and analyse its representation in the selected primary fictions. To investigate the regional linguistic landscape, specifically examining the diversity and syncretic functions of local dialects. To examine the internal hierarchies and power dynamics inherent within the region's syncretic social structures. To explore modes of resistance against these hierarchies and the subsequent emergence of multiple modernities in North Malabar. To evaluate the impact of globalisation and modernising influences on the transformation of traditional cultural practices in North Malabar.

The thesis titled 'Mirroring the Mosaic: Echoes of North Malabar's Cultural Syncretism in Modern Malayalam Fiction'. As the title indicates, the study examines the cultural syncretism of North Malabar through modern Malayalam fiction produced from 1966 to 2023. The term "mirroring the mosaic" refers to images or patterns created by arranging small pieces of coloured stone, glass, or other materials on a surface (*Mosaic*, 2025). Similarly, the study synthesises multiple aspects of composite cultural elements and syncretic cultural features of North Malabar society, as depicted metaphorically in the term "mirroring mosaic". Cultural syncretism refers to the process by which two or more distinct cultures interact and influence each other, leading to the emergence of new cultural expressions. The extent of syncretism or assimilation depends on the degree of encystment (isolation) or on the integration of individuals into the global society. This means that syncretism is fundamentally linked to social position and patterns of

group integration (Bastide, 1994, p. 135). A multicultural environment creates syncretic social practices. Consequently, syncretic culture evolved in North Malabar, as evidenced by select modern Malayalam novels. Modernity evolved in Malayalam literature in the twentieth century, with the influence of Western literary movements and forms, including realism, symbolism, and surrealism, being explicit (*Modernism in Malayalam Literature - Routledge Encyclopaedia of Modernism*, n.d.). The works selected for the study were published in the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century.

The current study on North Malabar covers the geographical areas of the Kasargod, Kannur, Wayanad, and Kozhikode districts of Kerala. Traditionally, the region is bounded by the Chandragiri River in Kasargod to the North and the Kora River in Kozhikode to the South. Its borders lie between Dakshin Karnataka in the North, the hilly regions of Kodagu and Mysore plateau to the East, the Kora River in the South, and the Arabian Sea to the West (Kumaran, 1998, p. 25). The sociocultural history of North Malabar is multifaceted. Thriving trade and commerce in the coastal areas, presence of large ships and numerous businesses with foreign participation, existence of a significant *Pandikashala* (Business hub), transportation and communication to the midlands via rivers, and extensions of trade with adjacent states collectively fostered a conducive environment, making North Malabar a multicultural and multilingual landscape.

North Malabar maintained extensive foreign relations that extended across the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Peninsula, and Central Asia (Kumaran, 1998, p. 101). Anchored in strategic ports such as Kannur, these global networks were sustained by

the combined leadership of the Muslim merchant class and Hindu sovereigns, including the Kolathiri (Kumaran, 1998, p. 101). According to Kumaran,

Kerala has long been a centre of attraction for foreign travellers, renowned for its black pepper and other spices. From the 9th century, when Arab trade became strong, until the 14th century, many Arab travellers and geographers recorded extensive information about Kerala. Among those who wrote about Kerala and Southern India regions during the 9th and 10th centuries are Suleiman (AD 851), Ibn Khordadbeh (AD 844–48), Yaqubi (AD 87...), Ibn al-Faqih (AD 902), Ibn Rusta (AD 903), Abu Zayd (AD 950), Masudi (AD 943–955), Abul Faraj (AD 988), Istakhri (AD 950), and Muqaddasi (AD 985) (Kumaran, 1998, p. 101; translated from the original Malayalam text)

The detailed historical records provide a broader understanding of how Kerala, particularly the Malabar coast, developed extensive relationships with foreign traders. The foreign merchant communities of North Malabar, specifically the *Paradesi* Muslims, were defined by their geographic heterogeneity. Rather than a monolithic group, these traders traced their lineages to diverse centres of the Islamic world, including Yemen, Egypt, Turkey, and Persia (Kumaran, 1998, p. 101; author's translations). Maritime commerce, military alliances, and the migration of scholars and merchants collectively shaped these foreign relations. Leveraging its strategic position in the Indian Ocean, North Malabar successfully integrated into transoceanic networks from the fourteenth century onward, establishing sustained connections with distant powers that extended beyond simple trade. Ultimately, North Malabar's engagement with the world reveals a cosmopolitan maritime power

that was inextricably linked to the pulse of the Indian Ocean. From the medieval period through the early modern era, the region maintained a remarkable breadth of relationships, serving as a commercial and diplomatic partner to Arab, Chinese, Egyptian, and Turkish powers, as well as to Arabian principalities and to incoming European colonial forces (Mailaparambil John, 2007, p. 11).

The broader intercultural interactions of the North Malabar community with foreigners have influenced the development of accommodation and improved hospitality among the local population. This facilitated the settlement of foreigners in the region, culminating in multiculturalism and syncretism. According to Kuttu (2010, p. 11; translated from the original Malayalam work),

The cosmopolitan culture is very evident in the North Malabar society, which speaks through the remains of the Ancient Sri Ram temple from Thiruvangad, Old Juma Masjid, Odathil Masjid, Jagannatha temple built by Ezhava, Narasimha temple of Konkani Brahmin, the Fort British and The St Joseph Church adjacent to it, B E M P high school built with the support of a Parsi businessman, Thulaseedas Building constructed two centuries before by a Gujarati Thulasidas, and Aali Haji Masjid built by Aali Haji, a Kachu Sett.

The archaeological remnants of North Malabar attest to a rich, multicultural social life. The Kannur City Juma Masjid, Arakkal Palace, Sultan Canal, Odathil Palli, and Madayi Masjid illustrate how foreign influences are reflected in the common spaces of the North Malabar community (Premkumar, 2019, p. 131). Therefore, this

analysis of the literature from North Malabar will explore reflections on the region's rich diversity and multicultural life.

Although there is ample literature on North Malabar, an in-depth study of its syncretic culture is notably absent. Some literature reviews provide a broader understanding of specific topics related to the syncretic culture of North Malabar. *Thrikkootur Thazvazhi* is a book written by Dr V. Reeja, published by Kerala Bhasha Institute in June 2008. The book is about U.A. Khader and his writing style. She details U.A. Khader's writings on mythical stories, proverbs, and folk songs from North Malabar. Khader used the original forms of this folklore, created his own version, and incorporated them without diluting the folklore's essence in the novels. Therefore, Reeja analyses how U.A. Khader maintains this folklore in his works and how it is presented in novels. Furthermore, one particular section on folklore in Khader's novel provides substantial input for this thesis. This analysis helps the researcher identify the cultural practices reflected in U.A. Khader's writings across their composite aspects. Apart from Reeja's study, there is little literature on U.A. Khader relevant to this thesis.

Nattu Daivanagal Samsarichu Thudangumbol is a book published by Rajesh Kommath. This work provides a broader understanding of the lives of *Theyyam* performers in the current study. Rajesh Kommath is a member of the Pulaya (caste) community, and his family traditionally performs the *Theyyam*. His personal experiences are incorporated into the work, and he has interviewed several other *Theyyam* performers, incorporating their perspectives. This book offers a broad overview of how contemporary *Theyyam* performers approach the ritual and how the

transformation of *Theyyam* into an art form engenders significant conflict among performers. Kommath draws on the perspectives and experiences of diverse performing communities and individuals, including his family members, who are involved in various roles in preparing the *Theyyam*. Thus, Kommath demonstrates how *Theyyam* brings harmony among the different communities in North Malabar. All these inputs from the book provide a broader perspective for the current study, enabling it to understand *Theyyam* and its sociocultural aspects within the globalised world order and to analyse transformations in *Theyyam* performances.

Vadakkan Malayalam is an important book by P.A. Aboobakker that offers a broad overview of the diversity of North Malabar dialects. This study examines the diverse linguistic practices of North Malabar, particularly in the Kasargod district. Aboobakker focuses on the origin and evolution of North Malabar dialects and has collected data to analyse how different languages contribute to these dialects, thereby assessing their distinctiveness across multiple aspects. He notes the diversity of North Malabar dialects and describes their vowel and consonant sounds. In short, this study provides broader insights into the local dialects of North Malabar, which inform the analysis of these dialects and their composite cultural elements.

Mahmood Kooria and Pearson's 2018 edited volume, *Malabar in the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism in a Maritime Historical Region*, investigates how long-distance sea trade shaped the unique coastal society of Malabar. Drawing on evidence from inscriptions, architecture, and texts, the book demonstrates that North Malabar was a hub of cultural interaction. The authors show that Arab, Persian, European, and local communities did more than live side by side; they actively

intermarried, creating hybrid religious customs and shared traditions. Ultimately, the book argues that North Malabar's culture cannot be viewed in isolation, but must be understood as a central part of the wider Indian Ocean network. This work provides a broader framework to analyse North Malabar's cultural syncretism.

Theodore Gabriel's (1996) monograph, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in North Malabar, 1498-1947*, investigates the history of communal interactions in the region over five centuries. Gabriel challenges the widespread belief that pre-colonial North Malabar was a period of perfect religious harmony. Instead, he demonstrates that early Hindu-Muslim relations were primarily driven by economic needs and trade, rather than by deep religious integration. The study shows how foreign powers- the Portuguese, the Mysore rulers, and the British- changed these relationships through their policies. Gabriel also argues that political interventions, particularly favourable policies toward Muslim communities of the Mysore era, disrupted the region's stability and triggered violence. Ultimately, the book reveals that religion was transformed from a background social factor into a political tool during the colonial period, paving the way for later communal conflicts. This book provides insight into this thesis on how material needs lead to coexistence and religious harmony.

J. Devika's (2007) work, *Engendering Individuals: The Language of Reforming in Early Twentieth-Century Kerala*, explores how the concept of the modern "individual" developed in Kerala. Devika argues that becoming a modern individual was intrinsically linked to becoming a gendered subject; specifically, a modern man or woman. By analysing educational growth and reformist movements, the study demonstrates that reformers sought to replace traditional caste identities

with new gender roles appropriate to both public and private life. Ultimately, the book establishes that gender was not a static category but a strategic project used to shape Kerala's transition into modernity. This book provides insight into the role of gender in the social and cultural life of North Malabar in the twentieth century.

Dilip M. Menon's *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India: Malabar, 1900-1948*, published in 1994, examines how the definition of "community" changed in early-twentieth-century Malabar. Rather than viewing caste movements, nationalism, and communism as separate political ideas, Menon explores how they were shaped by local realities, including shrine worship, agricultural relations, and caste rivalries. He argues that the nationalist movement constrained the struggle for social equality by prioritising temple-entry rights. In contrast, Communism succeeded by reframing caste problems as class struggles, thereby temporarily uniting diverse rural groups. Ultimately, the book demonstrates that strong local loyalties based on family, job, and caste prevented any single political movement from completely unifying the region. This study broadens the understanding of North Malabar's sociocultural life, thereby facilitating a more rigorous examination of the primary text.

P. Sanal Mohan's work, *Modernity of slavery: Struggles against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala*, was published in 2015. This work investigates how the slave castes of Kerala (such as the Pulayas, Parayas, and Cherumas) engaged with Protestant Christianity and colonial changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Instead of viewing these communities as passive recipients of missionary culture, Mohan argues that they actively used Christian ideas of salvation to fight

against caste oppression and demand equality. He uses the Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) movement as a primary example (Sanal Mohan, P. 2015, p. 170). This movement demonstrates how Dalits used the search for their lost history as a political tool for liberation. By doing so, they challenged traditional histories that ignored them and created new ways to define their community and freedom. This analysis of Dalit oppression and resistance provides insight into multiple modernities in the North Malabar social context.

T. K. Gopal Panikkar's *Malabar and its Folk* was published in 1900. This ethnographic study documents the social life and customs of the Malabar region during the nineteenth century. The book provides a detailed list of traditions, including marriage rites, festivals like Onam, Kathakali performances, and the organisation of matrilineal families. Panikkar connects these social practices to the region's religious beliefs, mythology, and astrology. Written during a period of significant change under colonial rule, the work aims to preserve local traditions threatened by Western ideas. Consequently, it offers valuable insights into the complex social hierarchy of the Malabar region before its transformation under colonial rule. The study clarifies social and cultural life across multiple religious contexts in North Malabar, thereby broadening the understanding of the selected novel.

Payangodu oru Cherudesham Swayam Adayalappeduthunnu is a study about Cherukunnu, a small village in North Malabar. This book was published by A K G Vayanasala, Payangodu, edited by Balakrishnan. This work describes multiple aspects of village life and the social engagements among the people. Therefore, it

could be considered a sociological study of Payangodu, in which individual and social lives, culture, economy, food, language, politics, art performances, and *Theyyam Kaavu* are described, with the social life of Payangodu's people highly interconnected across these multiple areas. Therefore, this work offers a miniature study of North Malabar that illuminates current research and broadens its perspectives.

The Ali Rajas of Cannanore: Status and Identity at the Interface of Commercial and Political Expansion, 1663–1723 is a thesis by Binu Mailaparambil John submitted at Leiden University in 2007. Later published as a book by Brill in 2011, this thesis provides a detailed analysis of North Malabar's socio-political life and how multiple factors within the society fostered the development of multiculturalism. This study examines various aspects of historical events in North Malabar, and the detailed literature review presented in this thesis informs the current research.

Regent of the Sea- Cannanore's Response to Portuguese Expansion 1507-1528 (1987) and *Kolathu Pazhama* (1998) are two historical books written by Genevieve Bouchon and P Kumaran, respectively. These works examine the history of North Malabar and various events that occurred in this region. Indeed, these works offer broader insights into the sociocultural background of North Malabar and the social life surrounding it. William Logan's *Malabar Manual* is another historical record examined in this literature review that contributes to understanding the historical events, cultural practices, and lifestyle of North Malabar society.

Scholars have studied Punathil Kunnabdulla's works for their thematic diversity. *Realistic and Supernaturalistic Planes in the Novel of Dr Punathil Kunnabdulla* is one of the studies conducted by R. Bhadran Pillai (2002). This study highlights the use of socialist realism and supernaturalism in Punathil Kunnabdulla's works, analysing these perspectives through the novels *Suryan*, *Aligadhile Thadavukaran*, *Smaraka Shilakal*, *Marunnu*, and *Kavya Vangala*. Realism in art and literature tries to present the subject matter truthfully, without artificiality or exaggeration (Bhadran Pillai, 2002). Punathil Kunnabdulla employed socialist realism, which addresses the real socio-political conditions of the working class, as a means to critique the power structures underlying these conditions. Furthermore, he employed supernaturalism to convey myths and narratives related to Muslim beliefs and cultural practices. Therefore, this study offers insights into how Punathil Kunnabdulla depicts realistic, composite cultural elements in his works, and how socialist realism exposes the hegemonic actions of dominant communities.

The Influence of Spirituality in Modern Malayalam Fiction: A Study based on O.V. Vijayan, Zachariah, and Punathil Kunhabdulla is a PhD thesis submitted by Ramabhai Amma E. at Kerala University in 2005. This study detailed Punathil Kunnabdulla's writing on themes of love, death, lust, depression, and illness, and attempted to analyse spirituality in her writings. The elements of Sufism found in Punathil's writings provide insight into the current study. North Malabar's social culture is not far from the influence of Sufism and the life of Abdul Khader alias Icha Masthan, a Sufi who lived in Kannur in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Therefore, the elements of syncretic culture in Punathil Kunnabdulla's writings can

be traced back to the spirit of Sufism, in which Kunnabdulla portrays realistic characters and social realities in his works. In short, this thesis contributes to the current study, as the author was influenced by the sociocultural life of North Malabar and has reflected its composite cultural elements in his writings.

Muslim Women's Life in Malayalam Novela: Study Based on Selected Novels of Vaikam Muhammed Basheer, Punathil Kunnabdulla, P A Muhammedkoya, and B M Suhara is a thesis submitted by Noorjahan N. at Kerala University in 2021. This study is relevant, as it provides a detailed analysis of the female characters in *Smaraka Shialakal* and *Kaleepha*. The male narratives and objectification of women's bodies, and the lack of recognition of women's struggle to lead a family life, are detailed by the author. Indeed, the thesis guided the current study in examining how patriarchal dominance operates within Muslim families in North Malabar society. In addition, the struggles of women living in a male-dominated society are also explored in this work.

The Politics of Aesthetics in the Stories of Punathil Kunnabdulla is a thesis submitted by Sreekala L.R. at Mahatma Gandhi University in 2018. This thesis examines multiple aspects of Punathil Kunnabdulla's writings, in which Sreekala details Kunnabdulla's uniqueness in the modern era of Malayalam literature. Sreekala found that Kunnabdulla has maintained his political stance, disregarding public opinion about him or his writings. Thus, his works sparked extensive debate about the presentation of the characters and their lives. He maintained the purity of Malayalam literature in the modern era by imprinting his own style on the representation of everyday life. Thus, this thesis offers a broader understanding of

the aesthetics of Kunnabdulla's writing, providing a basis for analysing the composite cultural elements reflected in his works.

Textuality of History: Study Based on the Writings of N Prabhakaran and Ambikasuthan Mangad is a thesis submitted by Smija P.M. at the University of Kannur in 2018. This thesis contributes to the current study by emphasising Ambikasuthan Mangad's New Historicist reading of Marakkappile Theyyangal and Enmakaje. Smija found that historical readings illuminate sociocultural essence, highlighting the resistance of Lawrence and Umbichi, empowered by traditional values, to power structures. Therefore, the detailed analysis of this study on *Marakkappile Theyyangal* will contribute to the current thesis by analysing the power-dominance practices experienced by the people of Marakkappu and how they overcome them.

Numerous scholars across various disciplines have examined *Theyyam* and its sociocultural significance. *Portrayal of Theyyam in Literature and Arts* is a thesis researched by Sreeja J. at the University of Kerala in 2020. This work examines the various literary representations of *Theyyam*. *Marakkapile Theyyangal* is taken for this study. This elaborates on globalisation and commercialisation from the perspectives of *Theyyam* and its surroundings, and examines the involvement of *Theyyam* in the lives of ordinary people. Thus, the current study gets input to analyse the presence of *Theyyam* in multiple contexts and its role in creating a composite cultural society.

Theyyams of Malabar: A Re-reading on the Cult Forms and Traditions of the Marginalised is a thesis submitted by Bhasura Sangeethika M. at the University of

Kerala in 2024. This study reveals how the *Theyyam* performance transforms rituals into platforms for cultural identity and social empowerment, thereby allowing lower-caste participants to assert their status and challenge the existing order. Furthermore, the study emphasises the psychological foundations of *Theyyam*- the deities are worshipped for spiritual advancement and prosperity, underscoring the importance of ritual in the individuals' and communities' lives. This study provides a foundation for the current thesis on how the caste system operates among *Theyyam* performers and on the symbolic representations of *Theyyam* as a form of resistance to upper-caste dominance.

Culture, Polity and Hegemonic Arrangements in the Theyyam Performance of North Malabar is a thesis submitted by Nandakumar K. at the University of Kannur in 2019. This study reveals how the *Theyyam* performance plays a dual role: both a cultural performance and a form of resistance against social oppression, particularly by the *Naduvazhis* (feudal rulers). The *Theyyam* performance evolved gradually and adapted to the changing power dynamics among different caste groups in North Malabar. Nandakumar's field visits and interviews elucidate the cultural significance of this art form, revealing its role in maintaining caste hierarchies and serving as a medium for artistic expression and identity. Therefore, this thesis provides an insight into the current study on how the caste system operates in *Theyyam* performances, in which hegemony undermines lower-caste performers. Furthermore, people use *Theyyam* to empower themselves and to resist all forms of domination around them.

The *Essay Collection- Kannur Muslim Heritage Congress* by Ajmal Mueen (2019) is a compilation of essays on the rich culture and heritage of North Malabar. This collection comprises multiple sessions, including land, beliefs, culture, resistance, struggle, language, art, literature, society, the Renaissance, journals, publications, migration, developments, economic life, and the contributions of notable personalities. All these short essays provide a foundation for the current study, with multiple references from this collection contributing to an understanding of syncretic culture. The researcher has utilised essays by Sabah Bin Aluva, Abdulla Anjillath, Shefi A.E., G. Premkumar, V.K. Kuttu, and Moyin Hudavi Malayamma. Thus, this work provides insights into the syncretic culture, language, art forms, and sociocultural life of North Malabar.

V.K. Kuttu, a local historian, offered significant insights through personal communication, strengthening the study with firsthand knowledge. He has written four books on the sociocultural life of North Malabar. They are: *The Journey Through the Land of Pepper*, *Childhood in the Shadow of War*, *The Journey Through the Muslim History of Thalassery*, and *Ancient Malabar and Arakkal Beevi*. His two books, *The Journey Through the Land of Pepper* and *Ancient Malabar and Arakkal Beevi*, are held in the Kerala Council of Historical Research library collections. Renowned historians, including Prof K.K.N. Kurup, K.K. Marar, and Prof. T.K. Veena, have written forewords. These books describe multiple aspects of North Malabar's social life, cosmopolitan culture, linguistic diversity, foreign relationships, trade and business, and cuisine. All these primary sources and direct historical records have informed this study.

Sufficient data exists about North Malabar's history and sociocultural life. However, a gap exists in academic discussion. Existing studies on North Malabar address specific areas, including history, sociocultural life, art forms, and cuisine. However, there is a lack of scholarly analysis of North Malabar that examines its unique features and the connections among its regions. Most emphasise factual and historical dimensions while minimising the literary imagination of the social space. Although a rich body of literary works by regional writers exists in North Malabar, scant attention has been paid to their contributions to the social formation of North Malabar as a syncretic society. Ample scope exists to study the syncretic culture and composite nature of North Malabar in the selected primary texts, underscoring the relevance of this study.

This analysis of North Malabar's syncretic culture reveals the diversity and uniqueness of its compositional complexity. The authors' influence on the cultural syncretism of North Malabar and its reflection in their writings. The primary texts reveal syncretic elements found in these works, making a new discussion in academia. The concept of acculturation examines multiple aspects of syncretic culture and its development, thereby advancing understanding of syncretic development. Local dialects of North Malabar and the composite nature of this delineation reflect the region's diverse cultural influences. The oral functions of regional dialects in people's daily lives uncover new perspectives in this study. The study also reveals that patriarchal authority existed within the matriarchal system of North Malabar and examines the interplay among patriarchy, other dominant powers, and subordinate resistance through the novels. Therefore, the study

examines the social transformations from a dominant hierarchical society to multiple modernities in North Malabar. In short, the study exposes the composite culture of North Malabar and the social transformations of this society through historical analysis and the examination of primary texts produced in this social context; thus, it is significant to academic discussions of North Malabar.

U.A. Khader is one of the key authors included in this study. Born in Myanmar and raised until age seven, he then moved to Koyilandy, Kerala. His mother is from Myanmar, and his father is a Keralite. His childhood experiences and the sudden shift in mother tongue influenced his curiosity about this language, as reflected in his writings. He is an artist, and his detailed delineation of the social nuances of North Malabar in his writings is noteworthy (Eeppan, 2020). U.A. Khader has depicted the syncretic culture of North Malabar in his writings, accommodating multiple aspects of society. The *Puyapla* [groom] system¹, Muslim family life, food and its importance, hospitality, cultural practices such as *Theyyam* and the customs surrounding them, multiple religious beliefs and their influence on people, *Tharavadu* (ancestral home) and life around it are discussed in his works, where a composite culture is evident.

Changala is a novel by U.A. Khader, published in 1966, that depicts the Muslim social life of North Malabar. The lives of expatriates, Tharavadu, Masjid, market, beach, and other aspects of village life are detailed in this novel. People meet at temples, temple ponds, Aalthara, [Platform around a banyan tree], temple festivals, and marriage functions, creating bonds of community. He describes the

¹ A culture found in North Malabar, where the groom enjoyed different privilege after marriage

socio-political life of North Malabar, rather than purely religious affairs, and these details introduce elements of syncretic culture into the novel. Therefore, this text provides enough input for this study to understand the composite culture of North Malabar.

Khuraishikkoottam is a novel by U.A. Khader, published in 1974. This novel deals with the family life of Muslim communities in North Malabar. The novel delineates the importance of *the Tharavadu* in North Malabar society, how people are connected to it, how it becomes a symbol of status and pride, and the status upgrade associated with forming marriage relationships with a prominent *Tharavadu*. The novel further examines the functions of marriage in North Malabar and the cultural practices associated with it. Marriage functions and related food culture describe the composite cultural elements found in North Malabar. U.A. Khader argues that food culture and hospitality are key features of the North Malabar community, and that wealth and status are reflected in the preparation of food for guests. Therefore, this text provides enough input for this study to understand the composite culture of North Malabar.

Thrikkottur Peruma, a novel by U.A. Khader published in 1982, describes the sociocultural life of the people in Thrikkottur. This novel delineates village life, its cultural practices, and how multiple beliefs shape daily lives. U.A. Khader developed this novel using the mythical stories and proverbs found in the North Malabar social contexts. The novel examines the social setting of the 1950s, the role of the Tharavadu, the power and dominance of the Adhikari, and patriarchal authority over women- all of which are described in detail. The caste system and its

untouchability are embedded in the social landscape of North Malabar, where the novel's belief systems and resistance to dominance are evident. The role of *Theyyam* and its social transformations are discussed. Furthermore, it reflects the social life of a woman and the struggles women faced in multiple social structures of North Malabar during the 1950s. Therefore, this novel provides enough input for this study to understand the composite culture of North Malabar.

Agorashivam is another novel by U.A. Khader published in 2006. The novel elaborates on the lives of villagers surrounding the Pandalayini railway station. The myths and beliefs associated with the Shiva temple near the railway station present how different sociocultural engagements produce syncretic expressions in this space. It is Khader's semi-autobiographical work, in which he appears as the narrator and elaborates on the social transformations that occurred in this society. Khader introduces his grandchild's perspective into the novel to emphasise how people are acculturated into a changing world and adopt new forms of compositeness. In short, this novel reveals intimate community connections that symbolise harmony and coexistence. The novel's multiple characters illustrate how syncretism operates in a pluralist society that accepts diverse forms.

Oru Padakali Penninte Charitham is a short novel written by U.A. Khader, published in 2007. This novel emphasises the social engagements of self-sufficient women, who live with financial stability and decision-making agency. Kuthira Mariyam earns her daily income from coir making and factory jobs. She lives alone in Nochingakkadu without the support of any relatives. Financial stability renders her self-sufficient and enables her to make decisions in accordance with her wishes.

This character depicts social changes in North Malabar, a region that earlier novels by Khader did not portray in such terms. Khader presents several mythic narratives associated with the life of Kuthira Mariyam, which confer on her power and protection from patriarchal authority. This novel represents Khader's effort to introduce modern values into the social context of North Malabar. Thus, the novel contributes to this current study on North Malabar compositeness.

Punathil Kunnabdulla was born in Vadakara, part of North Malabar. He completed his education at Government Brennan College, Thalassery, and later at Aligarh Muslim University. Trained as a physician, the author developed a distinctive writing style that became a distinct narrative trajectory in Malayalam literature. Thus, by transcending social and religious boundaries in his writing, he created his own space. Multiple aspects of North Malabar's syncretism are evident in Punathil Kunnabdulla's writings. He included the life around the Masjid, *Jarath* [cemetery of a religious cult], Kabarthani [cemetery], Kaavu [sacred grove dedicated to local deities], Aalthara, and multiple beliefs associated with them in his writings on North Malabar. *Smaraka Shilakal* and *Paralokalm* are the two novels by Punathil Kunnabdulla included in this study; *Smaraka Shilakal* won state and national literary awards.

Smaraka Shilakal (1976) recounts the story of Karakkad and its surrounding region. Arakkal *Tharavadu* and Pookkoya Thangal are the primary foci of this novel. Feudal life and Thangal's actions are detailed in this novel. Muslim family life and cultural practices are emphasised in it. The novel further elaborates on women's experiences and struggles in society to find a secure space of their own.

Multiple cultural practices, beliefs, customs, and norms of North Malabar appear in the novel across different contexts, thereby facilitating a broader understanding of the syncretism of North Malabar social life. Therefore, this text provides enough input for this study to understand the composite culture of North Malabar.

Paralokam is a novel published in 2003 in which Punathil Kunnabdulla depicts life in Algara, a fictitious location in North Malabar. He describes commercial connections between Algara and Burma. Furthermore, people from various parts of the world visit Algara for business and to promote multiculturalism. Punathil Kunnabdulla introduces multiple characters who represent a cosmopolitan culture and lifestyle through their exposure to foreign countries. Furthermore, the novel delineates beliefs about the afterlife, thereby exposing the multicultural and multilingual social life of North Malabar. In short, *Paralokam* provides a comprehensive overview of the composite cultural elements of North Malabar, thereby enabling this study to examine multiple aspects of North Malabar social life.

Ambikasuthan Mangad is a writer from the district of Kasargod, North Malabar. Ambika Suthan's writings engage with the sociocultural life of North Malabar, where cultural practices such as *Theyyam* have received ample attention in literature. His writings are known for their environmental activism, as he emphasises ecological protection. His childhood experiences with the cultural practices and belief systems of North Malabar make him a writer who can effectively address its syncretic culture. His parents came from two different *Tharavadus*, both of which maintained their own family temple and performed *Theyyam*. Thus, Ambika Suthan's writings are highly influenced by these cultural practices and beliefs.

Marakkappile Theyyangal is a work that examines the *Theyyam* performance and the beliefs associated with it.

Marakkappile Theyyanagal was published in 2003, in which Ambika Suthan describes the lives of people in Marakkappu and Kamballoor Kotta. The novel emphasises the relevance of cultural practices in the common man's life through the bond formed between the natives of Marakkappu and the *Theyyam* and its beliefs. Brahmashassu, Kuttichathan, and other thirty-nine *Theyyam* figures appear in the novel as characters; they interact with one another and are involved in the daily life of the natives. Furthermore, the author describes how globalisation and its product tourism destroyed the cultural practices of this community and led to the materialisation of their culture and customs. In short, this novel examines the social transformations of a society from a rich culture and tradition to a product of globalisation, where the natives become tools for the dominant group to fulfil its tourism projects. Therefore, the novel presents a broad view of the social transformations in North Malabar's cultural life and the depth of interconnections between people and their beliefs. Thus, the current study presents multiple viewpoints on North Malabar's social life as depicted in this novel.

R. Rajasree was born in Taliparambu, Kannur district, North Malabar. Her parents, government school teachers from Southern Kerala, relocated to Northern Kerala and settled there. Her experience of moving between the North and the South gave her extensive knowledge of both regions and their cultures. She is an Associate Professor of Malayalam at Brennan College, Thalassery. This novel, *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha*, was initially published on

Facebook and later appeared in print. The use of local dialects of North Malabar and the portrayal of strong female characters are the highlights of this novel. The story uncovers women's struggles in society to fulfil social norms and ensure their self-sufficiency. The author appears in the story and engages in a conversation with Kalyani, sharing their struggles in a male-dominated society. The story progresses by discussing the life events of Kalyani and Dhakshayani from the author's perspective. Kalyani and Dhakshayani face many struggles in their roles as wives, having enjoyed considerable freedom in their single lives, which they lost after marriage. Therefore, the novel presents women's perspectives and their struggles in social life, where multiple events and social processes in North Malabar restrict their freedom. Consequently, the study offers a new perspective on the social life, composite cultural elements, and the local dialects of North Malabar.

M.V. Janardhanan was born in Eramam, Payyannur. He worked as a bank employee for twenty years and is now settled in Manjeri. Janardhanan was inspired by his childhood experiences and his close connections to the *Theyyam* performances and their surroundings, which led him to write the novel *Perumalayan*. This novel, published in 2023, examines the life of *Pottan Theyyam* and its performers. The novel is distinguished by its use of local dialects of North Malabar, which remain constant throughout. Thus, a reader outside this geographical area might not interpret the novel in its in-depth context. A detailed examination of caste hierarchies affecting lower-caste communities is presented in the background section on *Pottan Theyyam* performers. The author has grasped the depth of hierarchy and dominance practised by the upper caste toward the lower-caste

community. The novel not only exposes the humiliation faced by the Malaya community, who perform *Pottan Theyyam*, but also expounds on people's belief systems and the hope they derive from the ritual practices, leading to a quest for freedom. The *Pottan Theyyam* itself symbolises the resistance against the hegemony of the upper caste. Therefore, the novel provides valuable input for this study by detailing the cultural practices of the caste system.

The ten primary texts selected for this study, written by U.A. Khader, Punathil Kunnabdulla, Ambika Suthan Managad, R. Rajasree, and M. V. Janardhanan, represent the significant literary aspects of North Malabar's syncretic culture and social transformation in twentieth-century Malayalam literature. These works, written between 1966 and 2023, employ diverse narrative approaches to regional identity, enabling a comprehensive representation of how literature documents hierarchies and modernities in North Malabar. Each work addresses the themes reflected in the thesis, including cultural syncretism, linguistic diversity, the hidden hierarchy within syncretism, and multiple modernities. This thematic alignment ensures that the literary analysis directly elucidates the thesis's arguments, rather than peripheral explanations. These writers are natives of North Malabar, and North Malabar is the primary setting for their work; thus, rather than general illustrations, region-specific sociocultural representations and their literary analysis are possible. The selected authors bring diverse social perspectives to their literary representations of North Malabar: U.A. Khader was born in Myanmar and raised in Koyilandi; Punathil Kunnabdulla is from Vadakara; Ambikasuthan Mangad was raised in Kasargod; and M.V. Janardhanan is from Payyannur. Their families' social

environments influenced all four writers. R. Rajasree, on the other hand, was raised in Kannur by parents from Southern Kerala. Multiple social contexts, women's perspectives, and North-South differences are discussed through the selected works of these writers. The study of all these novels helps identify the evolution of syncretism and its functions in North Malabar society.

The above descriptions of the primary texts create a broader understanding of the social life and cultural practices found in North Malabar. Cultural syncretism and elements of composite culture are prevalent in the novels. These novels create fictional places such as Thrikkottur, Pandalayini, Karakkad, Algara, Sadookka, and Eramam that symbolise North Malabar societies. Thus, the writers attempt to recreate the social situations of North Malabar through their novels, drawing on their personal experiences. These sources inform the analysis and justify the arguments regarding the composite cultural elements and syncretic culture in North Malabar. Furthermore, this study emphasises the aspects of patriarchal authority within the matriarchal system of North Malabar and the social transformations from a patriarchal dominance to multiple modernities.

The researcher has used multiple theories and concepts to delineate the analysis of this study. Cultural syncretism is employed in this study to examine the social processes underlying the development of the North Malabar culture. Syncretism is not merely a religious process but a social one, shaped by the groups' positions within the social hierarchy and their degree of participation in wider societal structures (Bastide, 1994, p. 135). This syncretism may vary, depending on the degree of boundary maintenance with other cultural societies. Cultural

Encystment denotes the separation or minimal interaction between two cultures, in which the purity of the original cultural practices is preserved, and syncretism is minimal. Social integration denotes the highest degree of interaction between two cultures, resulting in the synthesis of cultural practices. Syncretism is higher in this context than in the first. Composite culture is defined as a blend of multiple cultures, traditions, practices, and shared identity (Mahajan, 2007, p.10); the coexistence and interaction of numerous cultural influences are evident in this context. The definitions of composite culture are derived from the text *Composite Culture in a Multicultural Society*, edited by Bipin Chandra and Sucheta Mahajan (2007). This book, a collection of essays on composite culture, presents multiple perspectives and case studies. In sum, syncretism in North Malabar is the process of integrating diverse cultures, and the composite culture is the outcome of this integration. These two terms are used interchangeably in the thesis to denote the evolution of a multicultural social system in North Malabar. The degree of interaction between communities is reflected in their syncretism, which is examined through the lens of acculturation theory. This details the depth of interactions and their impact using different strategies.

Acculturation is a term first used by American geologist John Wesley Powell in 1880. He used the term to denote the psychological changes induced in individuals by cross-cultural imitation arising from interactions with different cultures (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 16). Acculturation occurs between two cultures in contact, which may affect the existing culture of an individual or group through the influence of the new culture. The term “acculturation strategies” is introduced to

understand the multiple impacts of acculturation. Acculturation strategies are classified into four outcomes: *assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalisation*. These strategies are used to identify the mode of acculturation in North Malabar, thereby uncovering the multiple functions and impacts of acculturation on North Malabar society. Consequently, syncretism in the sociocultural life and the evolution of composite cultural elements are evident in North Malabar society. The key texts for studying the term acculturation are *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, edited by David L. Sam and John W. Berry, and *Acculturation: A Personal Journey across Cultures* by John W. Berry. These two texts help to derive multiple concepts related to acculturation and analyse different cultural elements in the novels.

To examine how people from different cultural backgrounds interact and acculturate to one another's cultural features, the thesis employs acculturation theory at the micro level. The Integration strategy focuses on how people integrate new culture as a result of their interaction with a diversified community; the assimilation strategy focuses on absorbing and integrating new culture into the existing system; the separation strategy focuses on how people keep other cultures away from them; the marginalisation strategy is used to discriminate against people from joining mainstream culture. This analysis, using acculturation theory, will identify individual-level interactions (micro level) within the North Malabar social context and employ syncretism to elucidate how these occur at the societal level (macro level) throughout this thesis. In the first chapter, acculturation theory helps identify

how multiple cultural interactions led to syncretism in North Malabar and elucidates the hierarchy within syncretism.

A sociolinguistic framework is adopted in the second chapter to analyse the composite cultural elements found in the local dialects of North Malabar. Thomas Callan Hodson first used the term in his 1939 article titled “Sociolinguistics in India”, published in the journal *Man in India*. Sociolinguistics is a tool for understanding the diversity of language use and the creation of meaning across multiple contexts. According to Llamas,

Sociolinguistics could be anyone who ever noticed an accent, or puzzled over a dialect phrase, or wondered why road signs are in several languages; anyone who adjusts their speech or writing in different situations, or cannot imitate the way that older people or younger people talk, or feel excluded by the way another group speaks; anyone who has ever tried to create an impression of themselves in an interview or e-mail, anyone who has ever been in an argument - in all these situations you have been involved in the field of sociolinguistics. (Llamas et al., 2007, p. 15)

So, every aspect of language use and its contextual meanings can be understood using this methodology. Another scholar, Wardhaugh (2006, p. 15), notes that sociolinguistics investigates the relationship between language and society to improve understanding of the structure of language and its function in communication. In a broader perspective, sociolinguistics is essential for understanding the role of language in social contexts and for examining the nuances

of its functions. Consequently, this chapter employs sociolinguistics to uncover the functions of North Malabar local dialects and their multiple aspects.

The key texts used to formulate the sociolinguistic approach are: *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (2006) by Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (2013) by Janet Holmes, *Introducing Sociolinguistics* (2009) by Rajend Mesthrie, Joan Swann, Ana Deumert and William L. Leap, and *The Routledge Companion to Sociolinguistics* (2007) edited by Carmen Llamas, Louise Mullany and Peter Stockwell. These books and edited companions address multiple aspects of sociolinguistics, including multilingualism and its functions, speech communities and their oral functions, regional dialectology, language and power, language and inequality, language and gender differences, the deficit and dominance approaches, and, finally, social constructions and positive politeness. A detailed examination of the primary texts, using sociolinguistic theory, explored the diversity and syncretism of the North Malabar local dialects. Furthermore, the use of language to suppress and subjugate the downtrodden is investigated using critical sociolinguistic theory. Therefore, sociolinguistics provides a comprehensive understanding of the composite cultural elements of North Malabar local dialects and of the functions of multilingualism in people's daily lives.

Theoretical perspectives on patriarchy are employed in the third chapter to analyse the patriarchal authority within the matrilineal society of North Malabar. The matrilineal system and matrilocal practices in North Malabar denote women's empowerment and agency. However, this analysis reveals the elements of patriarchal authority in North Malabar, which is studied using Sylvia Walby's (1989,

p. 213) theoretical framework of patriarchy. Walby elaborates on the concept of patriarchy beyond traditional notions. At the same time, her analysis decodes six major and two evolving structures of patriarchy. The primary structures are the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions, such as religion, the media, and education (Walby, 1989). The structures presented here provide an opportunity to reveal the elements of patriarchal dominance practised within the matrilineal system in North Malabar. The book *Theorising Patriarchy*, written by Sylvia Walby (1989), is used in this study to analyse the patriarchal authoritativeness in North Malabar. In addition, J. Devika's study is used to uncover patriarchy within the matrilineal system of North Malabar. Furthermore, caste, class, wealth, and the status of *Tharavadu* work in combination with patriarchy to create a hierarchical ecosystem against oppressed people. All these perspectives are scrutinised using the study of the above-mentioned scholars.

Multiple modernities is a theoretical framework developed by Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt to explain the coexistence of diverse forms of modernity; this framework is employed here to analyse the modernity of North Malabar. He introduced this idea in the mid-1990s, building upon his comparative studies of civilisation. Modernity denotes a cultural shift characterised by the decline of traditional worldviews and the rise of secular, individualistic, and rationalist perspectives that have become foundational to contemporary societies (Hall & Gieben, 1992). Eisenstadt rejects this view of modernity as a singular, Western-centric process and argues that each

society has its distinct model of modernity (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 5). The concept of multiple modernities includes: cultural specificity, rejection of hegemonic standards, emphasis on local agency, and integration of tradition and modernity (Jameson, 2002, p. 10). The modern values and thought that emerged in North Malabar cannot be understood within a Western model of modernity; instead, they reveal a regionally specific quest for modernity articulated through traditional social forms. Thus, the concept of multiple modernities provides a framework for understanding the experience of modernity in North Malabar. A few texts, such as *Multiple Modernities* (2000) by S. N. Eisenstadt, *A Singular Modernity* (2002) by Fredric Jameson, *Formation of Modernity* (1992), edited by Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben, and *On Alternative Modernities* (1999) by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, are used to understand this theory. The study by P. Sanal Mohan and J. Devika examines the regional modernity of North Malabar and a unique variant of it. It argues that North Malabar modernity has distinct features that differ from the universal model introduced by Western scholars. In sum, this study will explore the multiple modernities of North Malabar within a broader framework.

The methodology followed in this study is centred around qualitative analysis. The syncretic culture and compositional nature of North Malabar, as analysed in this study, necessitate an interdisciplinary approach. To understand the cultural syncretism of North Malabar, the researcher visited multiple heritage places, including Odathil Masjid, Kannur City Juma Masjid, Pattala Masjid, St. Angelo Fort, Mappila Bay, Arakkal Museum, Key Ee *Tharavadu*, Arakkal Palace, and the old *Tharavadu* around Kannur. Personal communication with various senior citizens

in North Malabar helped the researcher understand the region's multiple cultural syncretism. Personal communications were conducted with V.K. Kuttu, Aluppi. K.E., Banuthatha, Salam C.V, T.P. Abdu Salam, Abdul Majeed N, and C.T. Basheer. The study does not employ structured interviews; rather, it draws on unstructured personal interviews, valuing them for their ability to capture lived experiences and everyday practices of syncretism. Furthermore, the interviews directly articulate the dimensions of North Malabar regional life that are absent from published texts.

Close reading of the primary texts enabled the identification of syncretic elements and composite cultural formations of North Malabar. The primary texts were filtered for themes related to syncretism. The methodological approach adopted in this study explicitly acknowledges the researcher's positionality by drawing on lived experiences of the region's syncretic culture, linguistic diversity, and social structures. Rather than viewing this insider position as compromising objectivity, this study explicitly recognises the researcher's positionality as epistemically valuable. A researcher positioned within the community is better able to access distinctive knowledge, linguistic competence, embodied cultural understanding, historical proximity, and insider awareness of hierarchies that are unavailable to external researchers. There are sections in which the researcher's personal reflections are explicitly marked and contextualised, enabling readers to distinguish between scholarly analysis and the researcher's positionality. This transparency allows readers to assess claims with full awareness of the researcher's standpoint while recognising that an insider perspective provides distinctive analytical insight.

To present the thesis and its findings comprehensively, the researcher has structured the thesis into three core chapters. The first core chapter, titled “Cultural Syncretism in North Malabar,” traces the evolution of North Malabar's composite culture from its historical milestones. The researcher has used the concept of “acculturation” to analyse how integration led to syncretism and a composite culture in the North Malabar region and to delineate its elements from primary texts. Thus, diverse concepts related to acculturation helped uncover the presence of syncretism and composite culture across multiple social contexts of North Malabar. Furthermore, this analysis examines how hierarchy operates within a syncretic society, where cultural dispositions perpetuate such dominance.

The second core chapter, titled “Multilingual landscapes of North Malabar”, details the syncretic culture and compositeness in local dialects of North Malabar. Furthermore, the study examines the functional aspects of this language, which were found to be unique and diverse due to multiple factors. The multilingual and multicultural milieu of North Malabar, manifested in its local dialects, is examined through sociolinguistic theory to explicate the nuances of these languages. Sociolinguistics examines the relationships between language and society and how language is moulded through multiple social processes. This chapter identifies the diverse functions of North Malabar local dialects, in which language functions as a tool of power, perpetuating inequality and dominance over subordinates. In addition, it is found that the subordinates are institutionalised into this system of dominance through language. The language perpetuates such dominance in multiple ways, all of which are analysed in this chapter.

The third core chapter, titled “Multiple Modernities in North Malabar”, is where the researcher analyses the development of the patriarchal authority found in a matriarchal society. Despite its matrilineal system, patriarchal elements persist across familial, social, and cultural structures in North Malabar. The power combinations of *Adhikari*, wealth, and *Tharavadu* status create hierarchical dominance over multiple groups. The works of Sylvia Walby and J. Devika deepen this analysis of gendered and social hierarchies. Consequently, the subordinate community raises its voice against these hegemonic actions and quests for freedom. These modern values are considered unique and diverse, as they produce region-specific differences that differ from the European model of modernity. The integration of modernising values is initially observed at the individual level, followed by their formal recognition by the collective community structure. The region’s cultural trajectory necessitates an analytical approach that explicitly de-links its assessment from the normative expectations established by the Western model of Modernity. Furthermore, the study identifies significant transformations in cultural practices in North Malabar, shaped by globalisation and increased human mobility. These transformations reveal the growing influence of material conditions and global cultural currents on everyday cultural practices.

CHAPTER II

CULTURAL SYNCRETISM IN NORTH MALABAR

This first core chapter examines how syncretic culture and compositeness evolved in North Malabar society and how the syncretic elements catalysed this process. The selected Malayalam novels are analysed to investigate the manifestation of composite cultural aspects in North Malabar society. This study demonstrates that North Malabar's social structure is substantially shaped by its composite cultural identity produced through the dynamic confluence of diverse socio-historical and ritualistic elements. This chapter draws on acculturation theory to provide a nuanced analysis of the syncretism and composite culture of North Malabar society. This chapter examines how acculturation processes facilitated the unique formation and subsequent evolution of the composite culture, resulting from sustained interaction over several centuries between indigenous populations and multiple international communities connected through North Malabar's global maritime networks. Furthermore, the research details the hidden hierarchy within the syncretism of North Malabar and its impacts on social structures. Therefore, this chapter will examine the composite culture of the North Malabar society, its elements, and functions, through a textual analysis of modern Malayalam fiction.

The North Malabar syncretic and composite cultures developed gradually, shaped by multiple factors that influenced the socialisation process of the natives. The interactions between natives and diverse cultural groups in North Malabar fostered a multicultural milieu that facilitated syncretism. Syncretism is traditionally

understood as the mixing of different religious or cultural traditions, often seen as producing new but impure hybrid forms, rather than stable, pure traditions. It is metaphorically described as cultural hybridisation, which may evoke fear of contamination but also represents negotiation and adaptation of alien elements into a particular tradition (Leopold & Jensen, 2004, pp. 2-3). Composite culture is a blend of multiple cultures, beliefs, norms, customs, and practices within a society, leading to a rich tapestry of shared and diverse identities. It also characterises coexistence and interactions of multicultural influences (Mahajan, 2007, p. 11). The syncretic nature of North Malabar's culture is evident in the ongoing historical interaction and cultural exchange among diverse communities, fostering shared commonalities even as distinctive identities persist. The North Malabar social context creates conditions conducive to the development of a syncretic and composite culture. The selected authors who lived in North Malabar were influenced by this compositeness and reflected it in their works. In summary, the evolution of composite culture in North Malabar can be analysed from these perspectives to elucidate its nuances.

North Malabar society is characterised by distinctive linguistic, culinary, and cultural features such as Mappila *Theyyam*, Thalassery Biryani, and unique regional dialects. This region is also widely known for its linguistic diversity, with a rich collection of local dialects with distinctive phonetic features. In addition, North Malabar's culinary traditions showcase distinctive food preparations and regional varieties. Its diversity and multicultural features can be traced to the evolutionary facets of its rich historical and sociocultural heritage. North Malabar society has been substantially influenced by its geographical features, which ultimately

determined its economic and socio-political formations. The intersection of climatic features, such as monsoons and the Arabian Sea opening and land borders, made this region a trading hub. The traders who migrated for commercial purposes subsequently played a significant role in shaping the multicultural nature of North Malabar.

Historical analysis of North Malabar provides a comprehensive understanding of how its syncretism and composite cultural formations have evolved over time. According to Mailaparambil John,

By delving into its past, we gain valuable insights into the diverse influences that have shaped this region's vibrant cultural tapestry. The historical evidence for North Malabar and its society is limited, with many documents recorded under different names than those used in the present nomenclature. However, this scarcity enhances the intrigue of studying the region's history and understanding its unique cultural identity. In the medieval period, various regions of Kerala were divided into numerous principalities (Nadus), and Kolathunadu (a significant portion of the current North Malabar region) was one of them. (2007, p. 11)

North Malabar's unique geographical features facilitated specific socio-political relationships that developed through economic exchanges, creating a distinctive historical context. Historically, the region belonged to the Mushikavamsam kingdom, with its centre at Ezhimala (known in European accounts as Mount Eli). The Mushika rulers functioned as an autonomous political authority, distinct from the neighbouring Kerala raja (Mailaparambil John, 2007, p.10). This political

independence is also attested by Marco Polo, who, during his twelfth-century expedition to the coast, remarked on the autonomy of the region's ruler (Mailaparambil John, 2007, p. 11). Later, in the fourteenth century, Ibn Battuta, an Arab traveller, reported that the ruler of this region resided in Balipattanam (Valapattanam), indicating that the political headquarters had been relocated from Ezhimala to Balipattanam. Duarte Barbosa, a Portuguese official, confirmed that the residence of the Cannanore King was Balipattanam. Subsequently, the Kolathiri rulers rose to prominence, followed by incursions by the Kingdom of Mysore and, later, by the involvement of European colonial powers, who established commercial and trading relations with North Malabar (Mailaparambil John, 2007, p. 11). The unique geographical position of North Malabar facilitated access to this land by outsiders, thereby creating a distinct socio-political relationship.

North Malabar's distinctive geographical location facilitated commercial interactions that contributed substantially to the region's syncretic development. Geographically, North Malabar is located in the state of Kerala. North Malabar includes the districts of Kasargod, Kannur, and Wayanad. Certain taluks in the Kozhikode district, including Vadakara, Koyilandy, and Thamarassery, are administratively classified as part of North Malabar. According to Kumaran,

The traditional view is that North Malabar is located between the Chandragiri River and the Kora River. Its borders lie between Dakshin Karnataka in the North, the hilly regions of Kodagu and Mysore plateau to the East, the Kora River in the South, and the Arabian Sea to the West. (Kumaran, 1998, p. 28, translated from the original Malayalam work)

North Malabar's geographical features, particularly its coastal access and monsoon patterns, substantially influenced the region's economic development. Trade relations with foreign countries have been a primary economic activity since antiquity. The monsoon season facilitated traders' access to the coastal areas of North Malabar. As significant political powers, the Arakkal *Swaroopam* [ruling family] and Chirakkal kingdoms facilitated trade relations. Traders from neighbouring states, such as Urdu-speaking Dakkini Muslims, Kachu Settu, Parsis, and Gujaratis, also came here for business. Pepper, cardamom, and sandalwood attracted international trade, with gold and silver coins received in exchange (Kuttu 2010, p. 12). Interactions with diverse communities and their subsequent settlement facilitated the establishment of multiple religious institutions. Madayi Palli, Odathi Palli, the Jagannatha temple built by the Ezhava community, the Narasimha temple built by the Kongini Brahmins, and St Joseph Church are known for their architectural marvels and their relevance to social harmony (Kuttu 2010, p. 14).

North Malabar's geophysical conditions created both opportunities for and constraints on communication and transportation with neighbouring regions. Although these facilities are limited, the coastal belt has remained accessible to foreigners. Geographic conditions influenced settlement patterns and social organisation, contributing to North Malabar's distinctive character. Settlements in North Malabar were distributed across the midlands and lowlands, with most located between the highlands and the coast (M. R. & Gurukkal, 2004). Due to the parallel positioning of the Western Ghats, a narrow midland could be found here. Unlike neighbouring Canara and Tamil regions, North Malabar lacked suitable conditions

for paddy cultivation. This land mass was filled with laterite formation, which was ideal for cashew production and other cash crops; although suitable for cashew and cash crops, these laterite formations were unsuitable for paddy cultivation. The staple diet of the local people, such as rice, was usually imported from the Canara region (M. R. & Gurukkal, 2004). This indicates the trade relations of North Malabar with its neighbours. British colonial documents noted poor road conditions, which limited bulk transportation. Most people travelled on foot to markets. However, important mountain passes, such as the Perambadi Ghat connecting Cannanore to Mysore via Coorg and the Pariah Ghat through North Wayanad to Mysore, facilitated some trade. On the other hand, river systems were extensively used for transportation and trade (Logan 2019, p. 21). These river systems depended primarily on monsoon precipitation, which limited year-round commercial utility. Key riverine systems used for commercial purposes include the Neeleswaram, Ezhimala, Taliparamba, Valapattanam, Anjarakandy, and Tellicherry (Logan 2019, p.22). North Malabar's ecological and climatic characteristics substantially shaped the distribution of settlements and economic activities.

Monsoon patterns substantially influenced the distribution of settlements across the midland regions of North Malabar. The coastal plain parallel to the Western Ghats provides sandy soil that suits coconut plantations. The long coastal plain provided scope for small-scale port towns across North Malabar. In addition, the natural conditions of the Mappila Bay port facilitated the docking of large ships. Ports functioned as major socio-economic centres, where Mappila Muslims became the dominant commercial community (Logan 2019, p. 56). The Western Ghats, with

dense forest cover, served as the habitat of tribal peoples such as the Vettuvans and Mavilans. High-quality pepper, ginger, and cardamom were cultivated in the lower tracts of high-range areas and transported from inland producing regions, including Kottayam (Kannur district) and Wayanad, to Cannanore ports (Mailaparambil John, 2007, p. 26). These environmental conditions facilitated the emergence of distinctive social and commercial networks that differed from those in adjacent regions. Before the Mysore ruler invaded Malabar, overland transportation infrastructure remained undeveloped. However, inhabitants relied on alternative modes of transport, primarily waterways and established footpaths. The Western Ghats posed formidable geographical barriers to the development of overland transportation infrastructure.

The Western Ghats functioned as a geographical barrier, which facilitated the development of a distinctive regional identity. According to K. G. Vasantha Madhava (as cited in Mailaparambil John 2007, p. 16), “Important passes in Western Ghat provided a line of communication between Canara and Tamil with Malabar. This route attracted different merchant groups to Malabar, such as Tamil Pattar Brahmins, who were present even before the invasion of Europeans.” During the Vijayanagar reign, regular trade traffic connected the Cannanore port to West Asian markets, particularly in the horse trade. The Vijayanagara cavalry relied heavily on West Asian horses imported through Malabar ports, particularly Cannanore. This trade persisted until the decline of Vijayanagara (Kuttu, 2014, p.16). Although North Malabar is similar to other parts of Kerala in terms of the coastal belt and the Western Ghats, its land area is narrower than that of South and Central Kerala. This

geographical constraint shaped distinctive settlement patterns and social organisation.

North Malabar's strategic location and monsoon patterns substantially facilitated commercial activities and merchant settlement. These geographical and climatic factors attracted diverse groups that recognised economic advantages and commercial trade opportunities. Before European invasions, there were good trade relations with the Arabs and Persians. Mountain passes and coastal routes with natural harbours such as Mappila Bay facilitated trade; the Vijayanagar horse trade exemplifies this commerce (Kuttu 2010, p. 17). The coastal proximity in North Malabar catalysed social changes, such as *muthwa* [temporary] marriage, in which Arabs and Persians married local women. When Arab traders visited North Malabar for commercial purposes, they remained in the region until favourable monsoon conditions enabled their return voyages. Their stay often lasts up to six months. This facilitated the formation of temporary marital alliances, within which the men resided in the woman's matrilineal household. (Sirajudheen, 2019, p. 341). Additionally, Urdu-speaking Dakkini Muslims, Parsis, Kachu Settu from Gujarat, and Bhatkal Muslims were important communities that interacted with the North Malabar people for various purposes, particularly trade (Kuttu 2014, p. 17). In addition, during the pre-European period, traders such as Chettys, Jews, and Christians frequently visited these ports. The Geniza papers (historical Jewish documents from Cairo), dating from the twelfth century, mention the brass factory of the West Asian Jewish merchant Abraham Yuju at Dharmapatanam (as cited in Mailaparambil John, 2007, p. 24). The account of Ibn Battuta (trans. 1953, p. 181),

who visited the Malabar Coast in the fourteenth century, indicates the increasing influence of Muslim traders in Kolathunadu. People of diverse castes in North Malabar actively participated in trade. Although they engaged in trade, their involvement was typically limited to peddling commerce, constrained by limited resource bases. Folk traditions of the region, which encode collective memory, support this interpretation of limited-scale commerce. The *thottam* [a ballad sung before performing *Theyyam*] of the Kativannur Veeran *Theyyam* of the Thiyya community in North Malabar recounts the peddling trade conducted by Kativannur Veeran and associates to the Kudagu region, Canara (Mailaparambil John, 2007, p. 25).

Mappila traders developed substantial resource bases and established extensive connections within the Indian Ocean Islamic trading networks. Portuguese official Duarte Barbosa observed that,

During the pre-European period, Mappila traders held significant commercial advantages, particularly in controlling spice export markets. They established important trading centres in Sreekandapuram, Irikkur, Taliparamba, Kottayam, and other places, including Mappila Bazaars, even before the Portuguese arrived (Barbosa, 1921, p. 175).

The procurement of highly valued spices- pepper, ginger, and cardamom- from inland regions surrounding Cannanore facilitated international commerce (Kumaran 1998, p. 41). Forest products, particularly timber required for shipbuilding, were transported from Western Ghat forests via the Kolathunadu river systems to coastal ports (Mailaparambil John, 2007, p. 24). Furthermore, the demand for essential

goods like rice, cotton, salt, and opium fueled the growth of inland trading hubs. The necessity of importing essential commodities: rice, cotton, salt, and opium, from distant sources, stimulated the development of inland commercial centres and met regional demand. In addition to the local trading groups, the Malabar society also welcomed foreign traders known as *paradesi* (foreign traders). Foreign merchant communities, termed *paradesi*, included the Chetty traders from the Coromandel Coast and Gujarati Baniyas, among others. These foreign traders played a significant role in shaping the commercial landscape of Malabar (Barbosa 1921, p. 58). North Malabar's distinctive cultural formations emerged from sustained interaction between geophysical factors, economic structures, and diverse merchant and migrant communities. These intersecting factors contributed substantially to the development of North Malabar's composite cultural character.

Geographical features, agricultural systems, and caste structures in North Malabar intersected to produce distinctive social formations. In Mailaparambil John, Ravindran Gopinath pointed out that,

Geographical factors and the consequent differences in dominant agricultural production regimes are decisive in shaping social relations in the southern and northern Malabar. Garden crop cultivation predominated in North Malabar, whereas paddy cultivation dominated in South Malabar. Paddy cultivation required intensive labour, thereby enabling economic exploitation that was justified by political ideology. (as cited in Mailaparambil John, 2007, p. 19)

Consequently, South Malabar is less egalitarian than North Malabar. These divergent agricultural systems have produced more hierarchical social structures in South Malabar compared to the relatively more fluid social organisation of North Malabar. North Malabar's distinctive social-political organisation emerged from multiple intersecting factors, including geographical features that shaped agricultural practices and labour systems.

North Malabar's socio-political structures were substantially shaped by geographical conditions that influenced economic systems and labour. According to Mailaparambil John (2007, p. 11),

During the eighth century, Brahminism provided ideological backing to the regional agrarian principalities of South India by linking them to a pan-India Vedic-Puranic tradition. However, due to the limited access to the North Malabar area, Brahminical ideological structures had limited influence in Kolathunadu. In addition, Dravidian traditions have a much greater voice among the local people.

Kerala's distinctive caste system emerged from multiple factors, particularly its geographical position between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. North Malabar's caste systems and inheritance practices differed substantially from South Malabar and the rest of Kerala. According to Miller (1954, p. 415),

Inheritance systems in North and South Malabar differed, with this division marked by the Korapuzha River. Inheritance systems varied by community and region: Namboodiri Brahmins followed *makkathayam* [patrilineal] in

South Malabar but *marumakkathayam* [matrilineal] in North Malabar.

Similarly, Thiyya and Mappila Muslims in North Malabar practised *marumakkathayam*, whilst their counterparts in South Malabar followed *makkathayam*.

Only a limited number of Namboodiri Brahmin temples exist in North Malabar.

Among the thirty-two Brahmin settlements of Bhargava Kshetram (Kerala), only two are located in North Malabar. These two settlements are Payyannur and Chellur (also known as Perinchellur, Taliparamba) (Mailaparambil John, 2007).

Consequently, these two Brahmin villages exerted limited influence over North Malabar as a whole. In Kerala, the Nairs constitute a dominant caste, particularly when compared with the Kshatriya and Vaisya castes prevalent in the varna system of other regions of India. Nairs sustained their elite sociopolitical status in alliance with Brahmins, often through *sambandam* [customary marital relationships] (Mailaparambil John, 2007). These sociopolitical dynamics underwent significant shifts in North Malabar, where Brahmin presence was relatively limited. The Nairs, traditionally recognised as a martial community, developed expertise in *kalaripayattu* [martial arts] and frequently served as bodyguards to Naduvazhi rulers. Barbosa (1921, p. 55) pointed this out as “All Nairs are mighty warriors and the Nairs of Cannanore were ‘knighted’ directly by the raja himself”. In addition to the Nairs, other caste groups held comparatively high status within the Malabar social hierarchy. Barbosa (1921, p. 55) identified other prominent castes, including Biabares [Vyaparis], Cuivem [Kusavan], Maintos [Vannattan], Caletis [Chaliens], among others. Mailaparambil (2007) analyses Pyrard de Laval's accounts, noting

that the practice of untouchability was considerably more relaxed than what Barbosa's earlier descriptions suggest. Groups such as Tuias (Thiyya), Manen (Mannan), Canaquas (Kaniyan), and Ageres (Asari) were considered higher classes within outcaste hierarchies. The Thiyya community in North Malabar held a significant social status, in contrast to their marginalised counterparts in South Malabar. Barbosa (1921, p. 55) described "the Thiyya as people engaging in various trades such as tending palm groves, working as quarrymen, agricultural labourers, and men-at-arms; in short, those who earn their living by work of all kinds." Mailaparambil John (2007, p. 25) further observes that the economic and ritual status of Thiyya in North Malabar was elevated to non-polluting, in contrast to their counterpart Ezhava in South Malabar. In summary, North Malabar's socio-political environment developed through complex interactions among diverse communities, social hierarchies, and cultural practices, culminating in the region's distinctive composite culture.

Maritime relations between North Malabar and foreign traders influenced syncretism and cultural blending among local populations. These multifaceted interactions fostered coexistence and cultural exchange across religious boundaries. Maritime trade networks created essential infrastructure that brought diverse communities together, with mosques serving as "a first point of call for foreign travellers, lodging for itinerant traders, and safe storage of their merchandise," which allowed practical cooperation between Hindu and Muslim merchants despite theological differences (Prange, 2018, p. 350). This sustained contact produced tangible cultural benefits. The development of Arabic-Malayalam, still in use among

parts of Malabar's Mappila community today, enabled local Muslims to pursue Islamic learning whilst maintaining a cultural connection to Malayalam traditions (P A, 2015, p. 26; author's translation). Furthermore, Hindu rulers publicly endorsed Muslim religious life by endowing mosques with daily stipends, as recorded in bilingual inscriptions that represented public confirmation of patronage. They symbolised institutional recognition of religious plurality (Prange, 2018, p. 346). These syncretic practices reveal that pragmatically motivated coexistence generated genuine cultural achievements and functional institutions. Moments of interreligious respect documented through ritual exchanges and institutional patronage enriched North Malabar's distinctive composite society.

North Malabar's multifaceted culture reflects its complex history, shaped by the influences of foreign visitors and neighbouring communities. The selected primary texts (1966-2023) address the social backgrounds and sociopolitical events of the twentieth century, including World War II, migrations to Burma, Malaya, and Ceylon, the independence struggle, Gulf migrations, and globalisation. Key settings within these works include Koyilandy, Vadakara, Taliparamba, Payyannur, and Kasargod. Authors often use fictionalised places, such as Pandalayini, Thrikkottur, Karakkad, Onchiyam, and Emaram, to represent real locations. Examining these texts illuminates the dynamics of power relations structured around caste, class, *Tharavad*, wealth, and status. In short, the evolution of syncretism and composite culture in North Malabar can be comprehensively understood through close analysis of these primary texts. Moreover, North Malabar's social structures demonstrated a significant capacity for accommodating diverse immigrant cultures. This continuous

blending of local and external influences has produced syncretism and a composite cultural landscape evident in North Malabar.

Trade networks connecting North Malabar with foreign merchants and neighbouring communities facilitated the development of multicultural social formations and syncretic cultural practices. These syncretic cultural practices generated a cosmopolitan society characterised by religious and cultural plurality. As V.K. Kuttu notes in *Thalassery Muslim Charitratholoode Oru Yathra* (2010, p. 11; translated from the original Malayalam text):

The architectural heritage of Thalassery and Kannur includes: Ancient *Sri Ram* temple of Thiruvananthapuram, Old Jumath Masjid, *Odathil* Masjid, *Jagannath* Temple built by Ezhava (lower caste), *Narasimha* Temple of *Kongini* Brahmins, St Joseph church and fort built by the British, B E M P high school built over one and a half centuries with the support of a Parsi merchant, *Thulaseedas* building constructed by Thulasee Das, a Gujarati Merchant. *Aali Haji* Masjid was built on Ali Haaji Main Road by *Kachu Settu* Ali Haji. These monuments collectively testify to the religious and cultural plurality that characterised Thalassery.

The examples cited by Kuttu demonstrate how Thalassery, a core North Malabar centre, developed into a cosmopolitan urban space through religious and cultural coexistence. The emergence of composite cultural practices has reshaped North Malabar's social dynamics and community relationships. Bhikhu Parekh (2007, p.32) acknowledges that “A composite culture tends to emerge in some areas of life more easily than in others. Music, dress, the arts, cuisine, and literature are generally

most hospitable to it.” This theoretical framework finds expression in North Malabar's contemporary literature, where writers explore these syncretic cultural domains. In North Malabar, syncretism and composite culture are reflected in the dressing, arts, cuisine, and literature. Multiple writers from North Malabar have captured the region's cultural nuances in detail. Isaac Eeppan (2020, p. 4) observes that U.A. Khader, drawing on Chinua Achebe's critical approach, has provided an in-depth literary analysis of North Malabar society. According to Achebe (1988, p. 140), “Historians should sometimes visit imaginative literature for insights into the life of a people which history books may not provide. Literature can sometimes give you a much better sense of the reality of a period than historical works.” U.A. Khader, through his literary works, functions simultaneously as a historian, sociologist, and cultural psychologist in his representation of the North Malabar society. This analysis examines the syncretic elements and social reflections in the works of U.A. Khader, Punathil Kunnabdulla, R. Rajasree, M.V. Janardhanan, and Ambikasuthan Mangad.

The term 'acculturation' was first employed by the American ethnologist John Wesley Powell (1880) to describe cultural and psychological adaptations resulting from sustained cross-cultural interaction (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 2). A more formal definition was proposed by Redfield et al. (1936, p. 150): “Acculturation is a phenomenon that results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent change in the original cultural pattern of either or both groups.” Acculturation leads to

changes at two levels: the individual and the group. Sam and Berry argue that the kind of change that takes place at the two levels is often different:

At the group level, the change may involve the group's social structure, economic base, or political organisation. At the individual level, the changes may include identity, values, attitudes, and behaviour. Moreover, the rate at which the change takes place within the individual may differ. (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 14)

Therefore, the evolution of North Malabar's syncretic culture and its resulting societal impact need to be understood at two levels: the individual and the group. Acculturation theory thus provides a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding syncretism at both personal and collective levels in North Malabar society.

The acculturation process is developed based on three building blocks: *contact, reciprocal influence, and change*. Contact is a significant prerequisite for acculturation; a “meeting” between at least two cultural groups or individuals who come together in a “continuous” and “firsthand” manner. However, there may be many different types of contact in contemporary societies (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 14). Reciprocal influences are the “changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 15). Redfield et al., in *Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation*, define acculturation in terms of reciprocal influence as:

Acculturation entails mutual or reciprocal influences, where, in theory, both groups influence each other. However, due to power differences, in terms of

either economic power, military might, or numerical strength, one group exerts more influence than the other. Since one group often exerts more influence (i.e., the dominant group) than the other (i.e., the non-dominant group). (Redfield et al., 1936, p. 151)

Change is an inherent aspect of contact, which involves both a dynamic process and an outcome that may be relatively stable (Sam & Berry, 2006). Acculturation changes are often thought of as limited to only “cultural” changes. Sam and Berry pointed out that,

Acculturation changes could be either physical (e.g., setting up a temporary house), biological (e.g., change in people’s resistance to disease), political (e.g., introduction of immigration policies), economic (i.e., the financial contribution of foreign workers), social (e.g., racial and ethnic discrimination), and cultural or a combination, at the group level. (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 16)

These three building blocks are clearly observable in the historical development of North Malabar. North Malabar society emerged through centuries-old cross-communal contact, trade, and multicultural interaction. Sustained trade relations between Arab merchants and indigenous coastal communities in North Malabar facilitated the circulation of Islamic ideas, commercial networks and linguistic diversity, reshaping existing social structures. There is evidence that Mappilas (Muslims) in North Malabar creatively adapted local kinship systems. Gabriel (1996, p. 26) notes that North Malabar Mappilas emulated the high-caste Hindus of their region by adopting the joint-family Tharavadu system, thereby preserving their

inheritance. This demonstrates a conscious adoption of matrilineal *Marumakkathayam* patterns by the North Malabar Mappilas rather than the patrilineal model, which was more common among the South Malabar Mappilas. Mappila Muslim communities engaged in local culture, practising Islam, while maintaining connections to local kinship systems and ritual practices. Gradually, syncretism permeated multiple aspects of social life in North Malabar, and a composite culture emerged as a sustained cross-communal synthesis.

Acculturation resulting from sustained contact between two cultures may alter the culture of an individual or group, as the new culture exerts influence over it. Sam and Berry analyse this process as:

The acculturation process proceeds according to the degree to which the individual simultaneously participates in the cultural life of the new society and maintains his or her original cultural identity... This led to four outcomes: *assimilation*, *integration*, *separation*, and *marginalisation*. These four outcomes are collectively referred to as “acculturation strategies.” (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 19)

Assimilation emphasises the adoption of the dominant culture at the expense of one’s original culture. This may result in the loss of cultural identity. Whereas, separation focuses on rejecting the dominant culture and retaining only the original culture. This approach can preserve distinct cultural identity, but may also result in social marginalisation. On the other hand, integration emphasises maintaining aspects of one’s original culture while also engaging in daily interactions with different groups and adopting elements of the dominant culture. In this approach,

cultural integrity is partially preserved, as individuals seek participation both within their ethnocultural group and as integral members of a wider society.

Marginalisation is a concept that emphasises the limited capacity for, or interest in, cultural maintenance (often due to enforced cultural loss) and a limited interest in forming relations with others (often due to exclusion or discrimination) among non-dominant cultural groups (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 20). Of these categories, integration is the most prominent outcome observed in North Malabar, resulting in the emergence of its composite culture.

Integration between dominant and non-dominant groups occurs when non-dominant groups adopt the fundamental values of the larger society, and the dominant group is willing to fulfil the needs of non-dominant groups. Therefore, multiculturalism is the outcome of mutual accommodation by both dominant and non-dominant groups (Sam & Berry, 2006). According to Sam and Berry,

The integration strategy can be pursued only in societies that are explicitly multicultural, where certain psychological preconditions are established. They are: the widespread acceptance of the value to a society of cultural diversity (i.e., presence of a positive *multicultural ideology*), relatively low level of prejudice (i.e., minimal ethnocentrism, racism and discrimination); positive mutual attitudes among ethnocultural groups (i.e., no specific intergroup hatreds); and a sense of attachments to, or identification with, the larger society by all individuals and groups. (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 36)

The North Malabar society is explicitly multicultural, owing to the presence of diverse communities. Psychological preconditions such as the promotion of cultural

diversity, the reduction of prejudice, mutual support among ethnocultural groups, and attachment to the larger society are evident in this society. All of this consequently resulted in the hospitality and welcoming attitude of the North Malabar society. In sum, North Malabar encourages cultural communities to maintain and share their heritage and identities; it accepts the resulting cultural pluralism and takes steps to support the continued preservation of cultural diversity as a shared communal resource (Sam & Berry, 2006).

Acculturation studies place greater emphasis on changes in the dominant group than on those in the non-dominant group. However, dominance is not considered a necessary prerequisite for acculturation. Dominance is nevertheless an essential variable in explaining the rate of acculturation and the direction of change during acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2006). Similarly, Bogardus suggested that:

There might be three forms of acculturation when discussing cultural pluralism: blind acculturation (i.e., when people of different cultures live near one another and culture patterns are adopted on a chance basis); imposed acculturation (i.e., where there is the forced imposition of one's culture on other people's culture, such as during colonisation); democratic acculturation (i.e., where representative of cultures view each other's culture with respect). (1949, p. 127)

North Malabar's syncretic culture is the outcome of ongoing acculturation within a pluralistic society, in which democratic acculturation predominates over other forms. Furthermore, North Malabar acculturation could be bidirectional, rather than unidirectional. From the bidimensional perspective, the assumption is that it is

possible to identify with or acquire the new culture independently, without necessarily losing the original culture (Sam & Berry, 2006). North Malabar society demonstrates evidence of bidirectional rather than unidirectional acculturation, with both Hindu and Muslim communities actively adapting to and influencing each other's cultural, religious, and social practices. Muslim preachers and judges served as gatekeepers to the Arabic language for local converts, while the extensive superstructures of traditional Malabari mosques provided spaces for learning, illustrating how Muslims simultaneously preserved Islamic knowledge while embedding themselves within the local architectural and spatial traditions (Prange, 2018, p. 353). Murphy's pluralistic cultural perspective could deepen the understanding of the pluralistic culture of North Malabar. According to Murphy

Societies that are supportive of cultural pluralism (i.e., with a positive multicultural ideology) provide a more favourable settlement context for two reasons. First, they are less likely to enforce cultural loss (assimilation) or exclusion (segregation and marginalisation) on immigrants. Second, they are more likely to receive social support, both from broader societal institutions and from continuing and evolving ethnocultural communities that typically constitute pluralistic societies. (1965, p. 231)

North Malabar's sociocultural history demonstrates that this society has long been supportive of cultural pluralism and has promoted multicultural elements in its social practices. Furthermore, the composite cultural aspects of the region can be analysed through acculturation theory, which further provides insight into how the integration strategy fostered pluralism and a positive multicultural ideology, thereby

accommodating diverse cultures in North Malabar. In short, the composite cultural elements of North Malabar, as represented in the primary texts, are the result of acculturation within this society. The detailed analysis of these novels reveals the composite cultural aspects of North Malabar, including the acculturation strategies that functioned within it.

Intercultural interactions characterise syncretic and composite cultural societies, in which diverse individuals engage in acculturation processes that reveal the dynamics of cultural exchange and adaptation. North Malabar has experienced diverse intercultural interactions, including merchant trade networks, labour migration patterns (particularly to Burma, Malaya, and Ceylon), and subsequent post-WWII return migration. U.A. Khader's personal experiences as a migrant from Burma significantly shaped the social contexts depicted in his novels, in which intercultural interactions and hybrid cultural elements recur prominently.

Intercultural elements are repeatedly evident in Khader's stories. His childhood migration forms a significant narrative strand in his *Ormayude Pagodayil* (semi-autobiographical novel). His early writings reflect the memories that he acquired while visiting the Burmese street with his father. On these streets, he observed pagodas (Buddhist temples), the dances of Burmese women during festivals, and flags atop Buddhist monasteries (Eeppan, 2020). The elements of foreign relations are evident in *Thrikkottur Peruma*, where Mappila Muslims migrated to Burma, Malaya, and Ceylon and subsequently returned after World War II, introducing sociocultural changes. In the narrative, characters subsequently migrated to the Middle East, seeking to accumulate wealth and establish prosperous lives upon

return to North Malabar. These narrative patterns reveal U.A. Khader's creativity in detailing the composite culture of North Malabar and the intercultural interactions of its people.

Punathil Kunnabdulla's novels depict the sociocultural dynamics of twentieth-century North Malabar, illustrating syncretism through detailed expressions of his characters. Manarkadu Mathew (2022, p. 16; translated from the original Malayalam work) points out that,

Punathil Kunnabdulla's stories are elaborated from the viewpoint of the socio-cultural lives of that period. In the 1940s and 1950s, Burma (now Myanmar) and Malaya (now part of Malaysia) were the primary destinations for migration from Kerala, especially North Malabar, mirroring the later Gulf migration. Before that, the Pathans and Burmese Muslims, who were silk traders, had reached the Malabar coast. Young men from Malabar sailed to Malaya in search of fortune and successfully worked on plantations, traded, and conducted business in the streets of Burma and Malaya. Merchants became rich and settled there by marrying Burmese women. Following Burma's and Malaya's independence, military rule was established in Burma. In the 1950s, we could find a Malaya-returned *Sahib* on the lonely paths of North Malabar, like Sir Pathmanabhamenon, wearing a hat and *Kalsarai* (trousers), holding a cigarette, and going for an evening walk.

These historical patterns of intercultural migration are central to Punathil Kunnabdulla's literary representations. The acculturation processes documented in the history of North Malabar are reflected in his literary narratives, particularly in

his characters. He depicted characters from *Smarakashilakal* and *Paralokam*, illustrating how they were influenced by diverse cultural practices in their society. North Malabar's syncretic cultural environment shaped Punathil Kunnabdulla, and his literary works represent the nuances of how communities negotiated and adapted to intercultural contact.

Cultural adaptation, the integration of new cultural elements into existing frameworks, enhances multicultural exposure within North Malabar communities. These cultural adaptations are exemplified in the character of Dhali, who appears in Punathil Kunnabdulla's novel *Paralokam*. Dhali is a typical example of cultural adaptations, where Punathil Kunnabdulla (2003/2022, p 105; translated from original Malayalam work) describes him as:

Dhali, Musaman's cousin, was poor. He did not inherit any property because his father had squandered it. Education was the only asset left to him. British teachers taught him in school, and he was very fond of their culture. At the age of eighteen, he sailed to Rangoon with a foreigner and worked with him for a while. In the meantime, he met a close friend of his boss, Ratan Lal Settu, a prominent Gujarati industrialist and shipping agent. Settu had only a daughter, who would inherit all his properties. Dhali spoke English with a Victorian accent. Over time, Settu became immensely convinced of Dhali and married his daughter, Uma, to him before his death.

Dhali's trajectory from rural poverty to global merchant through English education networks illustrates the cumulative advantages of cultural capital accumulation, a key mechanism in the integration strategy theorised by Sam and Berry (2006).

Through Dhali, Punathil Kunnabdulla demonstrates that cultural adaptation is not passive absorption but strategic navigation; characters selectively adopt foreign practices when they promise economic or social advancement. Material consumptions: the smoking pipe, the English dress, etc., function in the narrative as visible markers of acculturation, signalling Dhali's liminal positioning between multiple cultural spheres and his aspiration toward elite cosmopolitan identity. Dhali's business success correlates with his strategic adoption of foreign commercial practices and networks, suggesting that acculturation facilitated economic mobility. He owns businesses in shipping, hospitality, and entertainment. He also plans to establish a golf centre at Sadooka to attract foreign clients. Dhali is encircled by a multicultural community; he is very close to Richard Sayip, Varadaraja Mudaliyar, a Tamil businessman, and Baramies, foreign guests. Dhali navigates acculturation through selective strategies: adopting foreign cultural capital (language, dress, business practices) whilst strategically leveraging local kinship networks (marriage to Settu's daughter), thereby operationalising both integration and assimilation. Therefore, Dhali's trajectory demonstrates that individuals strategically navigate multiple acculturation pathways: integration, assimilation, and selective adoption to pursue economic and social mobility.

The intergenerational dynamics of acculturation are illustrated through the characters Yakob Muthassan [grandfather] and Kabara Muthassi [grandmother]-grandparents of the protagonist of the novel *Paralokam*. Punathil Kunnabdulla constructs these characters through their multicultural exposure and cultural adaptations (Kunnabdulla, 2003/2022, p. 20). Yakob is a member of the Pattan

(merchant community) and travelled to Algara for business purposes. In contrast, Kabara is of Yemeni origin and visited Algara as part of a business group. They met, married, and settled in Algara. This transnational marriage between a Pattan merchant and a Yemeni trader exemplifies how commercial networks generated cross-cultural kinship ties, creating composite family units that embodied multiple cultural frameworks. Yakob engaged in trade across numerous regional markets and interacted with multicultural and multilingual people. His business ventures in Burma achieved substantial commercial success. His brothers joined him in Burma, where they established commercial operations. Yakob returned to Algara and visited Burma twice in a year. Intercultural interactions substantially shaped Yakob's character development and business practices. He adopted the cultures of Algara and Burma, as well as ethical business practices. Punathil Kunnabdulla depicts Yakob's character to illustrate how individuals adapt culturally when exposed to wider multicultural societies. Yakob embraced new cultures and peoples, which enhanced his capacity for empathy and cultural sensitivity. He maintained an empathetic attitude toward his workers and demonstrated a commitment to family welfare. Through Yakob's narrative, Punathil Kunnabdulla illustrates that acculturation can be pursued through integration strategies that maintain family/cultural ties whilst adopting new practices. Furthermore, it yields benefits that extend to economic success and the development of ethical character, thereby reinforcing composite cultural resilience across generations.

Although Kabara Muthassi was born in Yemen, she successfully adapted to the sociocultural environment of Algara and became integrated into the local

community. She acquired Malayalam quickly, demonstrating her linguistic integration with her Tamil friend Shivashankari. Her transnational trajectory from Yemen to Algara necessitated continuous cultural negotiations, shaping her evolving identity and lifestyle practices. Punathil Kunnabdulla (2003/2022, p. 35; translated from original Malayalam work) describes her as:

Grandma Kabara was beautiful. Good height, broad, strong shoulders, grey hair, thin lips, broad forehead, light blue eyes, always smelling fragrances... The presence of guests will bring immense joy to Kabara. She is depressed if there is a gap between guest presence. Then she instructs Yakob to send invitations to guests from Hyderabad and Mysore. She visits Algara Hills with guests if anyone is present.

Kabara Muthassi, a native of Yemen, settled in the town of Algara and learned Malayalam to ensure effective communication with those around her. She wakes up early, takes a bath in hot water, cuts her nails, polishes her face, wears silk clothes, and walks in and around the *aramana* [huge mansion] (Kunnabdulla, 2003/2022, p. 37). The diverse cultural experiences influence Kabara Muthassi's life and negotiate between heritage and adopted contexts. Yakob and Kabara are exposed to new cultural settings in Algara and explore and adapt to local practices. Their acculturation followed an integration strategy; thereafter, they integrated into the Algara community. However, Kabara's lifestyle indicated that her Yemeni background predominated over Algara's, particularly in her personal space. This pattern suggests that, in addition to integration, the separation strategy is also evident in the acculturation of Kabara's personal space.

Sustained acculturation generates cultural hybridity, as individuals integrate multiple cultural practices into daily life. Kannirathu Madathil Narayani is a character in the novel *Agorashivam*, written by U.A. Khader, whose life is shaped by sustained engagement with multicultural influences and diverse cultural practices. She was raised in Pandalayini, later married a military officer, and moved to Kolkata. Each year, she returns to her hometown to participate in temple festivals. Khader depicts Narayani's religious commitment as:

Narayaniamma consistently arrives every year on the designated ritual days. These include the day of the *vilakku* (lamp festival) at the Mangoorankara Temple, the day of the *kaliyattam* [worship of Goddess Kali] festival at Pisharikavu, and the Mother Goddess worship ritual at the Kolluramma *kavu* [sacred grove] belonging to the Chathoth ancestral family. (Khader, 2006/2022, p. 96; translated from original Malayalam work)

Narayani maintained North Malabar's Hindu ritual calendar despite residing in the metropolis, creating a deliberate hybridity that bridged geographic and cultural contexts. Later, Narayani left Kolkata and relocated to Pandalayini following her separation from her husband. Once she reached Pandalayini, she strategically built a residence near the railway station, as it provides easy access to nearby Shiva temples. She named the house 'Kolkata Bungalow'; this detail reveals that, beyond a religious purpose, Narayani wishes to recreate metropolitan amenities within her rural setting, thereby signalling her hybrid cultural identity. Narayani's acculturation reflects selective integration with strong cultural anchoring: she participated in urban social life whilst maintaining distinctive ties to rural religious practices, ensuring

that her original culture remained salient to identity. Narayani's trajectory demonstrates that individuals can sustain hybridity through selective engagement with multiple cultural domains, without necessarily experiencing cultural dominance or marginalisation.

Velukkutti's character exemplifies how individuals strategically adopt hybrid identities through linguistic and sartorial practices. Velukkutti is a member of Kalarikkavu Tharavadu, a wealthy family. He left home during early adulthood and roamed around Mumbai and Haridwar, and became part of the drug mafia, criminal groups, and numerous other criminal enterprises. Upon learning of property partition proceedings, Velukkutti returned home to secure his inheritance rights. Thus, he stayed in his hometown to stop the partition process. There, he found Kannankutti, his younger brother, thriving in the betel leaf business. Velukkutti entered the betel leaf market, directly competing with Kannankutti's established business. Here, Velukkutti expresses the elements of hybrid culture; he used multi-linguistic words to attract customers as “*Hey beeda, meeta beeda, kaara beeda, murukkam kettu...khavo meeta beeda khavo*” [Introducing different types of betel leaf combinations and asking people to purchase] (Khader, 2006/2022, p. 160; author's translation). His multilingual marketing language, mixing Hindi/Urdu terms with Malayalam context, signals a cosmopolitan commercial sophistication, marking him distinct from local merchants despite rural residence. He appeared in saffron-coloured clothes, like a Swami, and thus people began calling him Vettila Swami. Whenever speaking with people, Velukkutti uses “*Hey Alakranchan*” [a word used to attract people's attention] (Khader, 2006/2022, p. 160; author's translation). This

phrase expresses his emotional exuberance and performative urban sophistication, signalling cultural distinctiveness despite his rural context. Through the adoption of new linguistic registers and visual markers, Velukkutti employs a selective integration strategy: adopting urban culture to promote economic growth while fostering a distinct identity and remaining committed to rural life. By introducing North Indian commercial practices and urban linguistic registers to the rural market, he created new economic opportunities and cultural prestige, demonstrating how individuals reshape local contexts through strategic hybridity.

Intercultural contact does not necessarily produce harmony; differential power, incompatible values, or identity threats can generate conflict and contestation. Acculturation between two cultures may not follow a single strategy; the same society may employ multiple approaches to accommodate diverse cultures (Sam & Berry, 2006). Madhavan, in *Agorashivam*, is the son of a military officer and Narayani of Pandalayini, a lineage that reflects intersecting regional and institutional influences. They settled in Kolkata. Following the dissolution of the relationship, Narayani left the city; however, her husband prevented her from taking Madhavan with her. His military upbringing without maternal care produced rigid hierarchical expectations and aggressive communication patterns incompatible with village social norms. Madhavan's relocation from the metropolitan to a rural context generated profound dislocation: cultural mismatch, linguistic incompatibility, and behavioural alienation. Madhavan's persistent use of Hindi and English refused any linguistic accommodation in Malayalam. This signalled his rejection of village norms and assertion of a metropolitan identity. He also employed abusive language

and threatening rhetoric (using words like *badmash*, *behan chut*, rascal, and shoot you) (Khader, 2006/2022, p. 170). Villagers labelled Madhavan '*nossan*' [person with mental disorder], stigmatising him as socially aberrant, in response to his behavioural volatility and violation of social norms. His public displays of emotion and disregard for hierarchical social protocols marked him as fundamentally incompatible with village habitus. Conflict in cultural norms often produces social deprivation and marginalisation of minority cultural practices. Madhavan constructed a self-contained world in Pandalayini, maintaining metropolitan routines despite residing in the countryside. He maintains routines within the Kolkata Bungalow, conducts public displays of emotion, and remains socially isolated. Village residents actively rejected Madhavan's lifestyle, which they perceived as transgressive and threatening to social order. In short, Madhavan experiences failed acculturation: he is unable to negotiate integration (the village rejects him) and unable to embrace separation (he resists village norms). Instead, he experiences marginalisation and exclusion from mainstream society, combined with an inability to maintain his original identity.

Beyond cultural conflicts, individuals reconcile conflicting cultural values and practices, thereby fostering the formation of new cultural identities and expressions. Shivashangari, a Tamil lady, came to Algara in the novel *Paralokam*. She characterises herself as '*Panayapandam*', a Tamil term meaning collateral or stake in gambling, reflecting her position as an object of male economic transaction. Following Varadaraja's gambling loss, Shivashangari was transferred to Musaman as settlement of debt, becoming his wife, a transaction reflecting her legal and social

position as male property. Musaman took her to Algara and introduced her to the culture and beauty of North Malabar. Upon arrival in Algara, Shivashangari adopted an open, exploratory orientation toward local culture, displaying receptiveness to new experiences rather than resistance. Moving to a new place and meeting individuals such as Kabara Muthassi, Elia, Mariyam, Dhali, and Panoos exposed her to new cultural elements. Rather than resisting new cultural practices, she strategically adopted them and negotiated cultural boundaries with residents. Once Kabara asked her, “*Malayalam Padicho?*” [Did you learn Malayalam?], she replied: “*korachu korachu*” [little bit] (Kunnabdulla, 2003/2022, p. 37; author’s translation). Despite a limited period in Algara, she rapidly acquired proficiency in Malayalam and the regional linguistic patterns. She engaged with Algara’s culinary, cultural, and social practices, often mediated through Musaman’s guidance and introductions. Shivashangari’s openness and strategic flexibility, in contrast to Madhavan’s psychological rigidity, produced opposite social outcomes: community integration versus marginalisation. Their divergent outcomes reveal that social reception emerges from interaction between individual agency and community willingness to accept.

Musaman, son of Yakob *Muthassan*, was born to his Burmese wife (second wife). Musaman exhibits cultural resilience by adapting and incorporating diverse cultural experiences, thus contributing to the dynamic nature of cultural identity. Musaman’s material consumption and sartorial practice signal cultural capital and elite positioning. Punathil Kunnabdulla described it as:

He prepares every day at home, as if for a wedding party. After a bath in warm and scented water, step out of the bathroom wearing a Persian-made towel. Brill cream was applied, and hair was polished. Open the shelf as it's displayed like textiles. Everything except underwear is made of silk. He prefers urban attire, such as loose pyjamas and a kurta. (Kunnabdulla, 2003/2022, p. 45; translated from original Malayalam work)

Musaman's Burmese upbringing occurred within cosmopolitan merchant networks and elite material conditions. This background shaped his expectations for social positioning and consumption practices. He subsequently negotiated these expectations in rural Algara. Musaman's relocation from Burma to Algara entailed a transition from a cosmopolitan urban context to a rural village, necessitating substantial cultural and social adjustment. Anticipating Algara's material scarcity, Musaman brought imported consumer goods, such as a soda machine. He aimed to recreate metropolitan consumption practices in a rural context. Despite Aramana's material grandeur, Algara's social structures and cultural practices differed fundamentally from Burma's cosmopolitan context. Thus, Musaman recreated cosmopolitan urban networks by associating with Dhali and other elite merchants. Later on, his gambling and alcohol consumption led to financial ruin. He relocated to Sadooka with Ammalu. She was a woman from a marginalised caste. This relocation represents spatial and social withdrawal. Her influence toward sobriety and simplicity catalysed his transformation of identity. Musaman transformed himself once the situation demanded it and reformed his lifestyle. Musaman's trajectory reveals his capacity to navigate multiple cultural contexts through

strategic adaptation and cultural flexibility. He integrated into Algara society through his relationship with Ammalu and the adoption of ascetic practices. This integration represents an adaptation to village social norms rather than a 'smooth' continuation of elite status. His voluntary adoption of an ascetic lifestyle suggests that successful acculturation requires more than mere cultural adaptation; it demands a reformation of identity. This involves rejecting prior status to enable community acceptance.

Prior analysis had examined syncretism and the formation of composite culture in North Malabar, as depicted in select novels. The literary representation of syncretism in North Malabar novels suggests that these writers drew on authentic historical experiences. Composite culture was a lived practice before it became a narrative subject. Acculturation theory, specifically Sam and Berry's (2006) multi-strategy model, provided frameworks for this analysis. These frameworks enabled a systematic study of how syncretism operates through individual character choices and social consequences. The analysis revealed that the characters employ divergent acculturation strategies: integration (Dhali, Shivashangari), marginalisation (Madhavan), and identity reformation (Musaman). These strategies suggest that acculturation outcomes depend on individual agency, structural positioning, and community receptiveness. They do not follow predetermined trajectories. Individual acculturation choices at the micro level cumulatively produce societal syncretism at the macro level. When sufficient individuals employ integration strategies (rather than assimilation or marginalisation), composite cultural formations emerge institutionally. North Malabar exemplifies this process. Individual accommodation

of differences accumulates into structural integration. Individual accommodations in North Malabar produce syncretism, which manifests in specific domains, including the Puyapla system, food culture, and art performances. These practices appear in literary representations and warrant detailed analysis in subsequent sections.

North Malabar's cultural formations produced distinctive marital and culinary practices through deliberate institutional accommodation of religious and cultural differences. Its integration strategy produced composite cultural formations across multiple domains, such as marital practices (E.g., Puyapla and Ara, a room allocated for the groom at the bride's house) and culinary traditions. Literary representation of these practices in U.A. Khader's and Punathil Kunnabdulla's novels validates their historical significance. The *Puyapla* (groom) system, documented in Kannur and Thalassery, evolved through deliberate institutional accommodation and continues to adapt across contemporary contexts. Historical evidence suggests that the *Puyapla* system developed to facilitate temporary residence for Middle Eastern merchants whose trading cycles aligned with the monsoon seasons. Thus, they remained in North Malabar for approximately six months and entered into temporary marriages with locals termed *muthwa* [Temporary marriage] (Sirajudheen, 2019). The provision of residential space for the groom in the bride's household, known as Ara, emerged from this temporary marriage practice. Mappila Muslim communities adopted or maintained matrilineal inheritance practices, *Marumakkathayam*, which granted women control over property and inheritance. The *Marumakkathayam* pattern, which predominates among the higher classes of the North Malabar Mappila community, appears to

indicate that these families originally belonged to matrilineal Nayar castes (Gabriel, 1996, p. 30). Additionally, Matrilineal systems granted women control over inheritance and property, substantially increasing their economic and household authority (Gabriel, 1996, p. 31). Institutionally, the *Ara* accommodation served multiple functions, including providing shelter for temporary husbands who lacked a permanent residence. Women's matrilineal authority enabled this accommodation; they possessed household authority to welcome and shelter newcomers.

The *mamool* (practices) structuring the *Puyapla* system, particularly *Ara*, embodies syncretic elements: Hindu matrilineal property logic combined with the Islamic temporary marriage contract, producing a hybrid institutional form. The institutionalisation of *Puyapla* and *Ara* demonstrates that composite cultural formations, once established through practical necessity, develop substantial resilience and persist across centuries despite external pressures.

Literary representations of *Puyapla* and *Ara* in North Malabar fiction reveal how marital practices encode status aspirations and the intersection of the composite culture with class mobility. *Kuraishikoottam* depicts *Puyapla* as a mechanism for status commodification, showing how wealth is converted into lineage prestige through calculated marital alliances. Aaminumma's character exemplifies *muthwa* vulnerability: despite marital sanction, the contractual nature of temporary marriage enables the husband's abandonment, leaving Aaminumma stranded in her natal village. This narrative foregrounds the gendered risks of cross-border *muthwa* arrangements (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 21). Khader portrays *Puyapla's* selection as deliberate status performance. Individuals strategically invest dowry to

marry across lineage boundaries. This reclassifies family position within caste/class hierarchies. Kunnabdulla says,

For the daughters, Hairu and Ramla, we require two educated grooms (*puyapla*) who are suitable for [our] current status and belong to honourable ancestral families (*tharavadu*). We are prepared to provide any amount of dowry and to expend any amount on wedding expenses. It must become the most significant event in the locality. (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 10, translated from the original Malayalam work)

This passage exemplifies how *Puyapla* operates as a status transaction. Kunnabdulla is seeking a groom for his two daughters, Hairu and Ramla; he is willing to pay a dowry and arrange a luxurious marriage. But he needs an educated groom from a high-status *Tharavadu*, which will change his status as a fisherman. Therefore, the brokers proposed Jamal, the son of Aroottikkattu Aboobakker Haaji, and Yusuf, the son of Manammal Mammu Haji, as the potential grooms. Jamal was a doctor, and Yusuf was an engineer. Kunnabdulla is wealthy but lacks membership in an elite *Tharavadu*. The broker reassures him that money can overcome lineage barriers. This exposes the logic of commodification: dowry converts economic capital into social prestige (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 18). Kunnabdulla employs dowry as currency for status purchase: paying premium amounts to secure high-status grooms, thereby reclassifying his family position. Beyond residential accommodation, *Puyapla* encompasses interconnected *mamool* (practices) and elaborate wedding spectacles, each extending the composite culture into new domains. These practices

institutionalise the principle that cultural difference can be accommodated through economic transaction and status negotiation.

Cultural practices surrounding *Puyapla* encode hierarchical respect and status display through interconnected *mamool*. For example, engagement ceremonies at the groom's house traditionally conferred the groom's family's decision-making authority over cultural form and scope (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 60). Kunnabdulla's ability to arrange the engagement at the bride's house, a departure from tradition, exemplifies how wealth enables the renegotiation of ritual authority and spatial control. Another function, called *Naaloori* [date-fixing ceremony], takes place in the groom's home, where important relatives and neighbours gather to decide on a date; they then proceed to the bride's home to confirm it. Aboobakker Haaji conducted the *Naaloori* for his son, Jamal, at Aroottikkattu Malikappurath (house name). Then everyone moved to Aysha Manzil (groom's house) (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 61). Another practice is *Ayalimmelidal* (the groom's family's gift of clothing and valuables to the bride and her household), which constitutes a public display of *Tharavadu* prestige and economic capacity. Aroottikkattu Aboobakker Haji sought to demonstrate his pride in his *Tharavadu* by purchasing luxurious clothing and spending four thousand rupees (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 62). A tea party for *Puyapla*'s friends arranged at the bride's house can be found in the novel. Kunnabdulla's manager approaches Jamal to obtain the address so that Jamal can invite his friends to a tea party.

Puyapla thedal (A group visits the groom's house to invite him to the bride's house) is another essential ritual found in North Malabar Muslim marriages.

Important family members of the bride visit the groom's house and invite him back to the bride's house. Based on the wealth and status of the people, they arrange crackers, *Duffmuttu* (art performance), and other musical instruments to make the trip colourful. Then the groom moves to the bride's house, where his brother-in-law will be waiting outside to clean the leg pan with a mug of water, where the groom will throw a gold coin into the *mug* (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 65). *Maniyara Chamyikkal* (the practice of decorating the groom's room at the bride's house) is also observed in Muslim marriages in North Malabar. In the novel *Changala*, Khader depicts these actions from the viewpoint of a character as "*Ivdennu kalyanam kayicha Puyapla ivde thenneya koodendath*" [Once the groom married from here, he was supposed to be here] (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 78; author's translation). Before the groom visits the bride's house, *Ara* is beautifully decorated to please the Puyapla, as he will stay there with the bride. In *Changala*, Khader characterises *Ara* as "The bridal chamber is prepared by placing two beds side-by-side. If the family is rich, they habitually use up to seven pillows." (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 60; translation from original Malayalam text). Furthermore, U.A. Khader elaborates on the features of *Ara*, which depicts the cultural importance attributed to this practice. He describes that:

The bedding placed atop the two beds was the *Bulūt* mattress. On the decorated tabletop rested a large mirror, framed with ivory. Even the floor was covered by a Kashmiri carpet. A shining, gold-hued cuspidor (*kōlāmbi*) was positioned under the bed, with a *kindi* [traditional water vessel] placed beneath it. The ceremonial shawl (*killa*) was made of silk and featured tassels

woven with gold thread (*kasavu*). The bedspread (*kaḍakkāviri*) was embossed with the sovereign [gold coin] motif, and the velvet mattress was covered with a spread of Singapore silk. (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 60; translation from original Malayalam text)

Detailed decoration of *Ara* with imported furnishings signals elite status, performance and the display of material wealth. The specificity of Khader's enumeration: Persian carpets, ivory frames, Kashmiri textiles, etc, reveals how *Ara* functions as a stage for status exhibition. Once the groom reaches the bride's house, there is a practice called *Arayil Koodal*, where *Puyapla* is seated in a special chair, and *Oppana* is performed (dance performance by young girls), then takes *Puyapla* into the *Ara*, and the bride is also taken in by the eldest person in the family. All the relatives watch the scene. The bride moves to the room and gives betel leaves to the groom; he returns a gift to her (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 65). Then the bride's mother takes a cup of hot milk and gives it to *Puyapla*, along with a gold ring (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 66). This is another practice observed among wealthy families; in Changala, we observed it in the marriages of affluent families. Khader also mentioned *Visham Vekkal*, another practice related to *Puyapla*. After fifteen days, the groom invites all his relatives and friends once again, and they all give some amount to the groom. He collects all these amounts and sends them to the groom's house as *Chelavinu Kodukkal* (monthly expenditure paid by the groom to the bride's parents). Other things accompanying this are a hundred betel leaves, a hundred areca nuts, a hundred tobacco leaves, and other cosmetics for the bride and a dress for the brothers-in-law (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 67). These interconnected

mamool function as an established cultural system, gradually institutionalised through repeated practice and community transmission. Despite nomenclatural modifications, contemporary North Malabar practice maintains the structural logic of the *Puyapla* system, suggesting underlying institutional resilience. Contemporary terminology has shifted: the traditional 'tea party' is now called *Manara*; *Ayalimmelidal* is termed *Petti Thuni*. However, globalisation has facilitated the adoption of pan-Indian marriage rituals such as Mehandi Kalyanam (henna day marriage), Punjabi Kalyanam, and Gujarati Kalyanam, thereby disrupting traditional North Malabar practices. Earlier practices, such as “Mandap Pakadna” [a decorated cloth held over the bride as she moves to the stage during marriage], remain rare in North Malabar marriages, except among North Indian settler families (Mohamed Saleem, personal communication, 25 September 2023). North Malabar's traditional marital practices are undergoing syncretisation with pan-Indian rituals. Social media visibility of alternative marriage formats accelerates this process. The result is composite practices that blend regional and national traditions.

Food practices surrounding *Puyapla* encode ritualised status display, intergenerational hospitality, and culinary syncretism in North Malabar. Furthermore, some food habits are closely linked to specific rituals. North Malabar's food culture emerged from sustained contact with maritime traders, Arab merchants, and populations of neighbouring states, producing distinctive culinary forms that blend regional and transregional elements. Furthermore, North Malabar's cuisine synthesised influences from multiple traditions, creating unique hybrid forms that embody the region's composite cultural identity. A variety of foods and their

combinations are found in North Malabar, particularly snack items and bakery products. For example, Thalassery's emergence as a cake-making centre (Logan, 2019, p. 25) exemplifies how European culinary technologies adapted to local materials and tastes, contributing to North Malabar's distinctive bakery culture. Food culture and its practices may be connected to the *Puyapla* system. *Puyapla Thakkaram* (forty-day groom care) institutionalises the bride's family obligation. Intensive provisioning during this period signals alliance, commitment and status performance through providing specific food. Most relatives on the bride's and groom's sides invite the newlyweds to their homes and treat them to delicious food. They visit relatives' houses and enjoy the food they serve. Furthermore, *Puyapla* is served fish only after forty days of marriage; therefore, *Meenchor Adiyanthiram* (the first day the groom begins eating fish after marriage) is celebrated in the bride's house. Khader (1966/2014, p. 85; translated from the original Malayalam work) described it in *Changala* as:

Forty days after the wedding, the groom's ceremonial feast, known as the *Meenchōr Adiyanthiram* (Fish-Rice making day), is performed. The groom purchases a large fish and sends it to his wife's family, who then cut it into portions and distribute them to their relatives. That evening, the *Mīnchōr Adiyanthiram* rite is completed with many guests. It is customary that only after the completion of this specific rite is the groom permitted to be served fish [in his in-laws' house]. Until that point, the custom dictates that the groom must be served meat and not shown fish.

Puyapla Thakkaram institutionalises the bride's family's obligation to provide elaborate meals. This signals alliance, commitment and status display through controlled food provisioning. The bride's family takes extra care of Puyapla as he relocates to the bride's house, leaving behind all the comforts of home.

North Malabar's food culture demonstrates a syncretic formation: people from North Malabar settled in the region, and visitors from other regions of the world introduced diverse culinary traditions. Thalassery *biryani* and *Aleesa* exemplify culinary syncretism: *biryani* adapted Mughal techniques to local spices; *Aleesa* (meat–grain–spice preparation) adapted Arabic *harees* to regional ingredients (Bin Muhammed, 2019, p. 259). These influences were indigenised into distinctive regional practices. Imported ingredients and techniques were adapted to local taste profiles: spicing practices, cooking methods, and ingredient combinations were modified to produce distinctive regional variations. Food practices function as cultural icons signifying hospitality and community care. Intergenerational transmission of hospitality practices is evident in contemporary North Malabar, where older women maintain gift-food traditions that signal care and the continuity of relationships. U.A. Khader characterises the influences of this culture through his characters. Kunnabdulla says, “Did all of you rise to dishonour me? Do you truly believe it is acceptable to come to my home, sit and converse, and then depart without consuming any of the refreshments?” (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 22). Kunnabdulla’s words show the kind of concern people developed for serving food and ensuring others eat well. Furthermore, festivals and celebrations in North Malabar are colourful, with food items prominently displayed. U.A. Khader's ability

to capture these nuances in his works illustrates the depth of food culture and hospitality among the local population across various occasions.

In *Kuraishikoottam*, U.A. Khader shows Kunnabdulla arranging delicious food on the day of the engagements, ensuring that people are satisfied and make no complaints. He instructed the cook that,

I am not able to rush and be present everywhere simultaneously. Therefore, all of you must compensate for that deficiency. You must prepare high-quality food to feed two hundred people. There must be absolutely no deficiency in the supply of ghee or meat. If such a shortcoming occurs, I will retaliate by severely punishing you [literally: I will kick and break your back]; thereafter, you will lose the desire and capacity to prepare chicken biryani in the future. (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 75; translated from the original Malayalam work).

By assigning Beeran responsibility for food preparation, Kunnabdulla highlights how the organisation of labour functions as a marker of status and social distinction. It is not merely wealth but a deep cultural value; people from North Malabar prioritise providing high-quality food to others; they give their best. Therefore, the acculturation found in the food habits of the North Malabar community is evident in the novels; consequently, the attitude of hospitality is the icon of the North Malabar community.

Food culture in North Malabar is closely linked to social rituals and practices. Specific dishes are ritually compulsory; their presence or absence determines the event's significance. For example, *Muttamala* is a special recipe

found in most of the *Puyapal Thakkaram*. *Muttamala* functions as a prestige marker in *Puyapla Thakkaram* ceremonies, signifying elite status through elaborate preparations. In *Changala*, Khader discusses the exceptional food prepared for women who are part of *Puthukkam* and *Maruputhukkam* (bride dresses up on different occasions). The bride's family arranges food for *Puthukkam* when the groom's relatives come to take the bride to their house, and the groom's family arranges food for *Maruputhukkam* once the bride goes back to her house. These women-centred food occasions provide ceremonial spaces in which women control the scope of ritual and social performance, suggesting that food practices enable female agency and community influence. Similarly, Ambikasuthan Mangad's work, *Makkam Enna Pen Theyyam*, represents *Poorada* (a special dish made during the Pooram festival) as a ritually essential practice performed during the Pooram season to fulfil ritual obligations. These rituals indicate how access to special food and ritual performance structures kinship formation and marriage negotiation. Furthermore, certain practices in North Malabar highlight the importance of serving food and of the preparation behind it. Khader (1966/2014, p. 42; translated from the original Malayalam work) depicted this *Mudakuthal Adiyandaram* in *Changala*:

The event occurred two days before the wedding. Women from nearly all households in the locality participated in the *Mudakuthal Adiyandaram* (The Pounding Rite). This ceremony involves untying the sack of *Jeerakashala* rice, the grain intended for the ceremonial *Neiychoru* (ghee rice) feast and placing it into a mortar, where the working women collectively pound and clean the rice. Women from all the affluent *Panakkal* [wealthy] households

arrive to witness these scenes, offer encouragement to the labourers, and engage in discussions concerning the wedding preparations. On this day, they socialise, chewing betel quid (*vettilakdaykka*), sharing jokes, and laughing. The gathering culminates with the serving of *Neiychoru* and various confections.

U.A. Khader depicts the composite cultural nuances of food in North Malabar and successfully details how people's lives revolve around it.

Food expertise and locational specialisation shape culinary reputation: named cooks (Aleesa specialists, biryani experts) and places (Thalassery cake-makers) become identity markers, attracting economic patronage and social prestige. When particular cooks or locations achieve culinary renown, community members preferentially select these specialists, converting expertise into economic patronage.

U.A. Khader (1974/2012, p. 74; translated from the original Malayalam work) elaborates on this as:

Even before the *Naloori* ceremony began, the matter had become a subject of intense conversation in the marketplace. The chef preparing the renowned '*Aleessa*' dish at the Aroottikkattu residence was Aramba Kunnali. Aramba Kunnali is a cook from Thalassery, and the chefs from Thalassery are famous for preparing first-rate *Aleessa*, especially Aramba Kunnali, whom the people of Thalassery refer to as '*Aleessa Kunnali*.' As these matters were discussed, the guests arrived at the Aroottikkattu mansion, filled with high anticipation. After all, this was Jamal's *Naloori* ceremony.

Contemporary North Malabar similarly recognises culinary specialists. Cooks such as Biryani Rafeek and Veppukaran Andu, as well as bakers such as Appakarathi Katheeja, function as cultural icons. This suggests that food expertise remains central to social identity and prestige. Food practices in North Malabar exemplify how composite culture operates through material practices: ritualised dishes encode status, gendered labour reveals community structures, and named expertise creates social hierarchies. Food functions simultaneously as sustenance, a status marker, and a practice of solidarity. The representations serve as means for these groups to express their identity and collective values. Several traditional practices persist in North Malabar. However, contemporary globalisation produces gradual transformations and selective extinctions of conventional practices.

Mappila *Theyyam* performances in North Malabar exemplify religious syncretism: Muslim figures are incorporated into Hindu ritual performances, demonstrating institutional accommodation across religious boundaries. R.C. Karippathu's study in his book, *Malabarile Mappila Theyyangal*, details the various Mappila *Theyyam* performances that existed in North Malabar and the history underlying these cultural practices. There are around fifteen Mappila *Theyyam* performances found in North Malabar, which include Aalikkutti *Theyyam*, Kalandan Mukri *Theyyam*, Mukri Pokker *Theyyam*, Bappiriyan *Theyyam*, Koyikkal Mammadu *Theyyam*, Pekkadath Mappila *Theyyam*, Kallayi Mammu *Theyyam*, Neythiyar *Theyyam*, Soolikkallu Beevi *Theyyam* (Vaidaru Muthachi *Theyyam*), and Ummachi *Theyyam* (Vadakkiniyil & Anjillath, 2019, p. 281). Each *Theyyam* embodies a distinct origin myth that encodes cross-religious accommodation and communal

reciprocity. Contemporary practice of these performances institutionalises cross-religious solidarity, with Hindu communities ritually honouring Muslim figures. These composite cultural practices appear to influence North Malabar writers, who recreate similar syncretic contexts in their fiction.

The origin myth of Kalandan Mukri *Theyyam* illustrates how syncretism operates through ritual and the institutionalisation of cross-religious respect. According to the myth, the Kalandan Mukri *Theyyam* was traditionally performed at Kamballoor Kotta, near Chittarikkal. The *Tharavadu* of Kamballoor Kotta was a wealthy family that supported poor villagers. In the absence of medicine and health care, the *Tharavadu* developed a vast collection of natural medications to treat the public. The *Tharavadu* of Kamballoor Kotta and its surroundings were under the authority of Bhagavathi (mother goddess) and Chamundi (*Theyyam*), and Chamundi Bhagavathi's orders and wishes were executed. When Sainudheen, an Islamic religious propagator, visited Pulingom, the Kamballoor *Tharavadu* provided him with shelter and space to build a mosque. The famous *Uroos* [religious prayer festival] of Pulingom Juma masjid was established with the approval of Kamballoor *Kotta Tharavadu*. Therefore, the Kamballoor *Tharavadu* plays a crucial role in fostering a harmonious social structure. Kalandan, the *Mukri* (who led the prayers in the Masjid), was renowned for his knowledge of Vaidhyam (traditional medicine) and his ability to treat people with mental disorders. The local people's growing belief in Kalandan's power led them to neglect Chamulassi, their native God. In response, Chamulassi caused Kalandan to drown in the river. Subsequently, the Kamballoor family faced several issues in their daily lives until they consulted a

Kaniyan to resolve them. The *Kaniyan* suggested that Kalandan Mukri be honoured for his abilities by creating a *Theyyam* in his name. Thus, Kalandan Mukri Mappila *Theyyam* was established, continuing his legacy among the natives (Vadakkiniyil & Anjillath, 2019). This myth signifies how syncretism operates: rather than eliminating difference, the community institutionalised respect for the Muslim figure through Hindu ritual performance. These syncretic dynamics are evident in literary representations: Khader's and M. V. Janardhanan's novels depict similar forms of cross-religious ritual participation. The chapter "Dubai *Theyyam*" in the novel *Thrikkottur Peruma* by U.A. Khader deals with the life of Perachutti, a former performer of Narasimha Moorthi *Theyyam*. After leaving the performance and taking on other work to earn more money, he observed an expatriate Mappila Muslim performing the *Theyyam*. Perachutti recalls Narasimha Moorthi *Theyyam* and its associated rituals. U.A. Khader (1982/2022, p. 241; translated from the original Malayalam text) describes that:

In the past, the *Theyyam* performer, when journeying toward the Shyaravy, would first arrive at the house known as Mammadu Mappila's Pandikashala. The Mappila's home is situated immediately adjacent to the Perumalpuram *Kavu*. The moment the *Theyyam* deity figure reaches the Mappila's courtyard, he cries out. At that moment, Mammadu Mappila also cries out [in recognition], saying, 'You must certainly receive the ceremonial offering from the Mappila, isn't that right?.'

This passage demonstrates how the *Theyyam* ritual incorporates Muslim households into sacred geography: the *Theyyam* deity must receive offerings from Mappila

households, thereby institutionalising cross-religious participation. While Khader does not explicitly reference *Mappila Theyyam*, his literary depiction of cross-religious ritual participation reflects the same syncretic logic that underlies these performances. Khader's depiction of a Muslim performing *Theyyam* mirrors the logic of *Mappila Theyyam*: the ritual incorporation of cross-religious figures. This parallel suggests that North Malabar's syncretic traditions inform literary imagination, with writers drawing on cultural patterns of cross-religious accommodation.

Tharavadu systems and elite individuals functioned as cultural organisers, creating shared dispositions that structured daily interactions and institutionalised class hierarchies. Furthermore, people's daily lives in North Malabar have evolved through their interactions with diverse cultural dispositions. Literary representations of *Tharavadu* systems and their leaders reveal how elite households structured social hierarchies and institutionalised cultural dispositions. Arakkal *Tharavadu* and Khan Bahadur Pookkoya Thangal, Kunikkela Kuruppu and Chettiyaru Kandi *Tharavadu*, Kunnabdulla and Aysa Manzil, are examples in this direction. The analysis reveals how *Tharavadu* and its leaders created cultural dispositions. The elite *Tharavadu* across North Malabar played crucial roles in the lives of people in that society. The *Tharavadu* functioned as the central organisational unit of North Malabar's agrarian, social, and religious systems. Beyond being a family household, it represented a comprehensive institutional structure that integrated multiple dimensions of rural life. More specifically, the term *Tharavadu* also denoted the family house and the land on which the ancestors' ashes were interred, usually

within the house compound (Menon 2001, p. 17). The adoption of *Marumakkathayam* by Muslim families indicates cultural accommodation and synthesis at the foundational level of family organisation. Muslim families adopted *Marumakkathayam*, thereby continuing the structural organisation of the *Tharavadu* (Gabriel, 1992, pp. 28-30). These *Tharavadu* and *Karanavar* (head of the family) played essential roles in the social and political events of the society. For example, elite *Tharavadus*, such as Key Eee Tharavadu, mediated cross-cultural exchange: their commercial networks and patronage facilitated foreign trade in the nineteenth century (Kuttu, 2010, p. 14). Likewise, the Chirakkal *Swaroopam* and Arakkal royal families (the only Muslim royal families in Kerala) enter the social life of North Malabar and shape cultural dispositions in the day-to-day lives of the local population (Kuttu, 2010, p. 17). In short, the *Tharavadu* system and its *Karanavar*, as depicted in the novels, reflect the social and cultural context of North Malabar in the twentieth century.

Punathil Kunnabdulla's literary characterisation of Pookkoya

Thangal portrays elite household leadership as combining mercantile success with social welfare. Aattakkoya, his father, had a business in Singapore, and whenever he visited the town, he purchased various properties at low prices. After Kovilakam Thamburan, most of the town's landholdings came under his control. After Aattakkoya's death, Pookkoya Thangal continued the business for the next ten years and earned substantial profits, purchasing numerous properties and building a large house, Arakkal *Tharavadu*. Upon returning to his hometown, he resumed his social service. Therefore, the title of Bahadoor was conferred on him by the British in

recognition of his social service. In total, thirty or more people stayed at the *Tharavadu*, including Thangal's three sisters and their families. The natives looked at him adoringly as he walked in a Japanese silk shirt, a squirrel-stripped Singaporean lungi over it, a coat over everything, a moustache with a red face and shoes polished better than his face and scent of Singapore spread over the path he walked (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000, p. 25). The narrator's attention to material display (Japanese silk, Singaporean fabrics, Singapore scent) reveals how elite status is performed through cosmopolitan consumption, signalling worldliness and wealth to community members. Elite identity combines feudal authority with welfare provision: Thangal exercises paternalistic control through both resource accumulation and calculated charity. There are a lot of occasions when Thangal does welfare for the people around. Aside from the workers of Arakkal *Tharavadu*, the natives, too, respected Thangal for his actions. People adopted behavioural norms reflecting *Thangal's* social position, demonstrating how elite status becomes institutionalised through community recognition. In short, Arakkal *Tharavadu* and Pookkoya Thangal established status hierarchies and normative behavioural expectations that structure community interactions.

Arakkal *Tharavadu* and Pookkoya Thangal played a crucial role in the lives of the people around them. Once, a lady was found unconscious in the *Jarath* (cemetery) of Aattakkoya Thangal. Pookkoya was informed of the news by the Eramulla, *Mukri* (person who takes care of the mosque's affairs) of the mosque. Then Pookkoya Thangal tried to save Neeli by giving her protection under Pokki, his manager's wife. When they found Neeli pregnant, he ensured facilities for her

delivery as she was reluctant to inform the responsible person of her pregnancy.

Punathil Kunnabdulla describes Thangal's kindness in protecting the newborn after the mother dies. Then the baby boy grew up at Arakkal *Tharavadu*. This narrative exemplifies elite paternalism: Thangal's charity operates through control; he determines Neeli's fate and integrates the vulnerable into his household hierarchy. In another context, once diarrhoea spreads in Karakkad, affected people suffer from a lack of care and proper hygienic treatments, and many people start to die. Punathil Kunnabdulla (1977/2000, p. 152; translated from original Malayalam work)

describes it as:

No one dared to enter houses afflicted by the plague/cholera. The disease-stricken homes became completely isolated. Sons fled, abandoning their fathers who were overcome by the illness, and wives ran outside, leaving their husbands... But [the heroic figure] moved in and out of every house. Pookkoya Thangal lifted the cold and numb bodies away from the filth and squalor. He managed to serve food and nutrition to the diseased individual, opening several tender coconuts and plucking them until the crowns of the coconut palms were destroyed. He continually gave the patients both salt water and tender coconut water to drink.

On this occasion, Thangal is proactive in caring for individuals and raising awareness of the disease. He saved several lives, provided basic nutrition, and cleaned their bodies and environment to prevent further cases. These actions reveal how elite authority becomes institutionalised: welfare provision creates dependency relationships that reinforce status hierarchies and elite control.

On another occasion, Pookkoya Thangal visited the school to enrol Kunnali and Pookkinibee. It is a small school up to the fifth standard, where three to four teachers conduct classes in a large room partitioned with wooden benches. The presence of Pookkoya Thangal astonished the school staff. Then, the Arabic teacher responded, “Good heavens, what is this affair? We should have been told something!” Thangal replied: “This is a public place, why should I inform you in advance?” (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000, p. 81; author’s translation). The presence of Pookkoya Thangal created fear and respect, with school staff deferring to his authority. Thangal attempts to assess the school's facilities and teachers' qualifications, then tests the head teacher's English proficiency. Then he took admission for the kids and gave a gift of two rupees to each teacher (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000). Thangal's school visit demonstrates how elite authority functions in institutional spaces: his presence alone commands deference, revealing how status penetrates even ostensibly public/educational domains. The cultural dispositions cultivated by Arakkal Tharavadu and Pookkoya Thangal reflect both charitable service and the display of accumulated wealth/status. This pattern reveals how acculturation operates: individuals adopt behaviours that reflect elite-status hierarchies to gain material/social benefits.

The literary characterisation of Kunnikkela Kuruppu and his Chettiyarukandi *Tharavadu* reveals how elite individuals institutionalise cultural authority through wealth, martial prowess, and hierarchical positioning. U.A. Khader (1982/2022, p. 13, translated from the original Malayalam work) begins the novel with a description of Kurup and his *Tharavadu*:

If you are unfamiliar with Kunnikkela Kuruppu, allow me to introduce him: He is a resident of our village. He is the present custodian (*kaikarya karthavu*) of the Thodipparambil Chettiyarukandi ancestral family (*tharavadu*), which is situated beyond the Chathukkutti deity's sacred grove, to the west and above the *Gulikan Thara* [ritual platform]. He is a dignitary (*Sthani*) of local standing. He is a trained martial arts expert (*meyyabhyasi*) who has achieved the rank of initiation at the Chingapuram *Kalari* [traditional training school]. He is a *Periya Swamy* [senior devotee] who climbed the sacred [Ayyappa] hill seven times during a period when few from Malabar undertook such a pilgrimage. He is the embodiment of Southern tradition. His perfect physique compels one to stop and stare upon sight. When tested or pressed, he is like a rock, but when softened, he is pure jaggery.

Khader establishes Kurup's authority through institutional positioning: *Tharavadu* ownership, martial expertise, and religious devotion combine to confer elite status. He is a highly skilled *Kalari* practitioner and has visited the Ayyappa temple approximately ten times, whereas very few from Malabar have visited at least once. His martial bearing and selective kindness establish status differentiation: those who comply receive benevolence; dissidents face coldness. Khader's characterisation of Kunnikkela Kuruppu connects individual identity to *Tharavadu* authority. Community members adopt behavioural norms that reflect Kurup's authority and the *Tharavadu*'s positioning. *Tharavadu* systems function as primary institutional units that structure social hierarchies, as evidenced across

literary representations. Khader's narrative strategy links individual identity to spatial/institutional positioning: each character is introduced through location markers (family, locale, jurisdiction). For example, "Kurup is from the Chettiyarukandi Ancestral Family (*Tharavadu*) of the Paaloor Locality (*Desam*), which falls under the Thrikkottur Administrative Division (*Amsham*)." (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 13, translated from original Malayalam work). This passage reveals how identity is constructed institutionally: location (*Desam*), family (*Tharavadu*), and administrative affiliation (*Amsham*) combine to position an individual within the hierarchy.

Khader portrays Kurup as an accessible authority figure, suggesting that elite gatekeeping functions through controlled availability. He listens to them and provides solutions. Chettiyaru Kandi *Tharavadu* is always open to accepting people and listening to their concerns. "Consequently, for us, the residents of the Paaloor Locality (*Desam*) in the Thrikkottur Administrative Division (*Amsham*), Kunnikkela Kuruppu is cherished as life itself. We strictly obey whatever Kurup instructs. affix our signature wherever he places his finger." (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 33). Khader then cites the example of Manammal Haider Haji, the son of *Rairothu Parambil* Kunnirayan Mappila. Kunnirayan Mappila died with a lot of debt to the family, and his son became responsible for these debts. However, he joined Kurup as his assistant, gradually cleared all his debts, and became Kurup's trusted assistant. Kurup purchased multiple properties in Haaji's name and ensured that Haaji would manage them. Once he died, Kurup came forward to protect his family by providing all kinds of support. The love and care of Kurup is described as: "*Ora mukaru*

thelinna neram kaninnoruvithum chorinnalakkum, ora mukaru ilanna

neramkurupporalakkum nannannooru.” [He is generally kind towards others.

However, if people do not act according to his expectations or fail to maintain good relations with him, he may punish them.] (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 13; author’s translation). Khader further highlights the cultural dispositions shaped by the Kurup and Chettiyarukandi *Tharavadu* by describing his life in Paaloor. Pathmanabhan Adiyodi, his maternal uncle, raised him. Due to some issues between Chandu Kurup, his father, and his maternal uncle, Kurup did not return to Pallikkara, his father’s place. When his father died and informed him, he replied:

I am setting out for the hunt. Therefore, do not wait for my return. If a pyre needs to be lit there, just call the person who does it; I won't be around to object. Please convey to my mother that this is what I said: simply tell her that the son has left for the hunt. I have Father's gun in my hand, after all.
(Khader, 1982/2022, p. 19; translated from the original Malayalam text)

Those who heard this reply from Kurup and responded as "Kurup’s pledge is absolute certainty itself. His will [mind] is truly as solid as stone." (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 20; author's translation). These representations reveal how composite culture operates: elites create authority through multiple mechanisms (institutional positioning, patronage, norm-breaking), whilst community acceptance reproduces inequality. This pattern shows how acculturation operates: community members internalise elite-defined norms to navigate hierarchies.

The authority and power of Kurup and his *Tharavadu* are evident in this novel, as they are recognised and perpetuated by society. After Hyder Haji died,

leaving his family orphans without a mature child to manage the property, Kurup devised a solution to protect the family. Here, the entire community equally agrees that Kurup is the right person to protect the family: “Who else will do like Kurup could? You're the right person to protect his family.” (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 16; author’s translation). The acceptance and recognition enjoyed by Kurup in Thrikkottur have been widely used to compound his wealth and status. Once, a shoal of fish arrived at Thrikkottur beach, and fishermen and traders had trouble loading them, as there was no public road to approach the coast. When Kurup acknowledged this issue, he sought immediate solutions and instructed that the fish shoal be loaded. He said:

Are the Lorry and the workers ready to load the fish? Ask them to come to the beachside. Let them transport the fish to the market, and we can obtain permission from the landowner later. I will not allow the beauty of this place to be compromised through negligence (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 28; translated from the original Malayalam text)

Here, Kurup enquired about the availability of facilities and ordered them to carry the fish to avoid its wastage, where he allowed them to use the private route to transport the fish, and commented that, “I cannot afford such an act to stench our beach since I am aware of it” (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 28; author’s translation). Once Vaidaru Valappil Mammadu Haaji, owner of the land, appeared and stopped the lorries, saying: “Stop this nonsense, I won’t allow you to move a vehicle through my land.” (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 29; author’s translation). One of Kurup’s managers

informed Haji that the action had been authorised by Kurup himself. Then Haaji leaves the scene and goes home.

In another context, Beeran Mullakka's daughter was killed and found in a well. Kurup approached to assume command of the scene and instructed the police to take action.

Kunnikkela Kuruppu also raised his voice, demanding that the culprits be identified and that concrete leads be established in the case. He exerted himself, rushing around to meet those who needed to be seen and to execute every necessary action. Kurup himself was at the forefront of matters at the police station and in the judicial offices...Beeran Mullakka approached Kurup and tearfully pleaded with him not to allow his daughter's body [and the matter of the tragedy] to be buried without justice. Kurup sent Beeran Mullakka back, telling him, 'Beeran Mullakka, you may go; this situation must not happen to any other girl tomorrow.' (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 27; translation from the original Malayalam work)

Kurup's interventions demonstrate how elite authority operates: he can override institutional rules without opposition. Despite rumours of Kurup's involvement, community members refrain from questioning anything, revealing how cultural authority silences dissent. Khader demonstrates how elite authority operates through multiple mechanisms: wealth accumulation, institutional positioning, and caste hierarchy, enabling elite figures to override formal rules. This pattern illustrates how composite culture reproduces inequality: communities accept elite domination in exchange for access to resources and protection.

Individuals lacking a *Tharavadu* pedigree can acquire cultural authority through economic capital; Khader's Kunnabdulla exemplifies the limits of this mechanism. U.A. Khader depicts the life of Kunnabdulla, a fish seller who becomes a prominent businessman in the fish export and trade industry. Upward mobility through economic capital does not automatically confer status; inherited symbolic categories resist displacement. Ascriptive categories (e.g., caste, occupation) retain symbolic power despite economic mobility, thereby preventing full status equivalence. Here, Kunnabdulla sought to improve his status and cultural dispositions through the opportunities he encountered. First of all, he built a beautiful house named "Aysha Manzil" with the latest decorations inside and out, then tried to get educated sons-in-law for his two daughters, and was ready to spend any amount of money to attract the grooms and their families. In terms of dowry and marriage expenses, he influenced society to recognise his ability to become an icon before others (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 43). Kunnabdulla used his money to enhance his status by serving the best food at marriage functions and other related occasions. Later, he bought a car to invite people to the marriage functions, which attracted most attendees because there were few cars in their vicinity. After one of his daughters' proposals fell through, he secured another groom from a business family within a short period (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 50). Khader demonstrates how wealth enables the performance of elite status through architectural display, marital alliances, and conspicuous consumption. His narrative reveals that Kunnabdulla's wealth elicits ambivalent responses from community members. Yet underlying caste-class attitudes persist, as evidenced by community members' use of the occupational epithet "Poosilan" (fisherman) to delegitimise his elite performance (Khader,

1966/2014, p. 62). This incident reveals that economic capital cannot permanently override occupational stigma; status reversal occurs when hospitality fails, triggering reversion to caste-coded ridicule. This dynamic illustrates the fluidity of cultural disposition, with acculturation strategies shifting between integration and marginalisation based on contextual factors. Khader's narrative exemplifies this variability within single interactions, highlighting that status acceptance is contingent and performative, rather than fixed.

This chapter explored the development of North Malabar's syncretic culture through the lens of acculturation. Applying Berry's model, the analysis revealed that integration, marginalisation, and separation exist simultaneously within the region. While integration allows for religious blending in public life, marginalisation and separation are utilised by elite groups to uphold traditional hierarchies. The study of the selected novels shows that this evolution is non-linear. Ultimately, the complex culture of North Malabar emerges from two dimensions: horizontal accommodation among different faiths and vertical stratification among social classes and castes. This confirms that acculturation in this region is a sophisticated, non-linear process.

Syncretic culture is central to the definition of North Malabar, and the selected novels highlight its deep sociocultural complexity. Characters such as Yakob Muthassan, Kabara Muthassi, Dhali, Narayani, and Vettala Swami embody this cultural hybridity, conflict, and resilience. Traditional forms persist and transform across key practices, including marriage rituals (such as the Puyapla and Ara systems), food norms, hospitality customs, and *Tharavadu*-based social organisation. Changes in nomenclature and evolving customs signal shifts in

community identity without abandoning ancestral roots. These practices simultaneously institutionalise community identity and negotiate cultural differences in daily life, proving that syncretism successfully accommodates religious plurality (horizontal integration) while rigorously upholding entrenched class and caste hierarchies (vertical marginalisation). The following section examines how language diversity in North Malabar exemplifies syncretism: speech communities, multilingualism, and regional dialectology simultaneously facilitate cross-cultural communication and reinforce class, caste, and gender-based discrimination and inequality.

CHAPTER III

MULTILINGUAL LANDSCAPE OF NORTH MALABAR

This chapter examines the language diversity and syncretic use of dialects found in North Malabar. The linguistic practices of North Malabar exhibit syncretic features distinct from those of adjacent regions: lexical borrowing (short words from Persian/Arabic), multilingual code-switching, and oral performance traditions. This detailed analysis further examines the functions of these local dialects in discriminating and subjugating marginalised people based on class, caste and gender. Pavithran, a retired professor in Malayalam, points out that “We can find myriad language uses in North Malabar spaces, where prominent use of Kannada, Konkani, Urdu, Arabic, Tulu, Persian, and Parsi Gujarati are found in different parts of North Malabar.” (Pavithran, 2015, p. 15). Furthermore, Kuttu V. K. observed that “Certain regions within North Malabar have a rich diversity of languages where people know and use more than three or four languages” (V. K Kuttu, personal communication, February 19, 2022). The rich diversity of languages and local dialects can stem from multiple factors, including geography, socio-economic and political scenarios. North Malabar’s geographical positioning as a coastal trade zone facilitated extensive linguistic contact. Historical evidence, including port locations, merchant networks, and colonial administration, substantiates the significance of location. Nonetheless, religious demographic composition and institutional structures also contribute to this dynamic. This chapter analyses language patterns in North Malabar novels, examining how linguistic diversity functions to signal class, caste, and regional identity.

Language, as a tool for communication within society, reflects social life in detail. Therefore, being aware of a language in a society is equal to being aware of the society as a whole. As Roger Fowler puts it, “Language is a reality-creating social practice. Rather than reflecting society, there is a sense in which language misrepresents (or distorts) the key social relations within a community” (as cited in Mesthrie et al., 2000, p. 311). Furthermore, language reflects preexisting social culture and values, such that social divisions ultimately lead to a predetermined dialect in that context. Here, language use varies with who is speaking to whom and in what context. In short, language and society are interlinked, where they reflect and shape society and the relationships between people.

The above discussions indicate that a society's language is closely connected to its social events. Here, the North Malabar local dialect and its nuances are the outcome of the social life that evolved there. Thus, sociolinguistics provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the regional dialects of North Malabar and their nuances. Sociolinguistics, as a discipline, was developed out of necessity to study the nuances of social phenomena that other disciplines have not examined. As Mestherie et al. observe:

There are some in which society acts upon language and, possibly, in which language acts upon society. We have seen several ways in which language and society are interrelated. A study of language totally without reference to its social context inevitably leads to the omission of some of the more complex and interesting aspects of language and the loss of opportunities for further theoretical progress. One of the main factors that has led to the

growth of sociolinguistic research has been the recognition that language is a highly variable phenomenon and that this variability may have as much to do with society as with language. (Mesthrie et al., 2000, p. 6)

Holmes (2013, p. 1) acknowledges that sociology examines what we say and why we say it in different contexts, as well as its functions. Examining how people use language across social contexts provides a wealth of information about how language functions, how social relationships exist within a community, and how people convey and construct aspects of their social identity through language. To illustrate this principle, Holmes (2013, p. 1) provides the following conversation between a mother and son discussing a school day: “Ray: “Hi, Mum.” Mum: “Hi. You are late.” Ray: “Yeah, that bastard Soot bucket kept us in again.” Mum: “Nana’s here.” Ray: “Oh, sorry, where is she?”” This simple conversation illustrates the kind of informal relationship between the son and his mother, and the word he used to refer to his teacher is easily understood by the mother; however, he became worried upon learning that his grandmother was present. This phenomenon demonstrates that language use is significantly influenced by social context. Factors such as the audience, conversational setting, and the speaker's emotional state shape how messages are conveyed. Consequently, the same message may be articulated differently depending on the interlocutors involved (Holmes, 2013). In our day-to-day conversations, we use multiple word forms depending on the context. For instance, the vocabulary used at home differs from that in the office. Within the house, people speak differently with elders and younger family members. Similarly, husbands and wives may use distinct dialects in different contexts, and

conversations with younger children differ from those with older children. The diversified use of word combinations reflects the functional aspects of language across multiple situations. Holmes' analysis of the conversations between Ray and his mother also emphasises that language functions according to the contextual demands placed on it. In short, language serves a range of functions across social contexts, and sociolinguistics studies these functions and their correlations with context.

It is essential to understand the relevance of sociolinguistics as a methodology, as its scope has been explored by various sociolinguists in numerous studies. One of the most famous studies in sociolinguistics was conducted by Blom and Gumperz in the small village of Hemnesberget, Norway (Holmes, 2013). Among the locals, two varieties of language were found: Bokmal, used as the official language, and Ranamal, used on informal occasions. Thus, in schools and government offices, Bokmal was relevant, whereas Ranamal was found in homes and local markets where the same communities gather. The study extended to the university, where it found that students from this village switched their language based on the context and topics they discussed. In addition, the choice of one dialect over another reflects similar social considerations: the participants, the social setting, and the topic or purpose of interaction (Holmes, 2013). Therefore, to analyse this process, sociolinguists used the term “variety”. Variety is a sociolinguistic term referring to language in context. As a broad term, it encompasses the study of accents, linguistic styles, dialects, and languages that differ from one another for social reasons (Holmes, 2013, p. 6). Thus, sociolinguistics developed as a

subdiscipline within linguistics, concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon. North Malabar's local dialects and its society are closely interrelated, and sociolinguistics provides an appropriate framework for analysing these developments in detail.

The multiple languages found in North Malabar can be observed as a form of linguistic syncretism. The interchangeability of Malayalam words with those from Kannada, Konkani, Urdu, Arabic, Tulu, Persian, and Parsi Gujarati is found across different parts of North Malabar (Pavithran, 2015, p. 15). The presence of multiple languages in a region, with the use of diverse words from these languages in day-to-day life, could be considered as linguistic syncretism (Wilson, 2001, p. 186).

Furthermore, according to Suazo,

The linguistic structure of the Garifuna language comprises 45 per cent Arawakan words, 25 per cent Kallina (Carib) words, 15 per cent French words, and 10 per cent English words. The remaining 5 per cent comprises technical Spanish terms for Garifuna speakers in Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, and English in the Garifuna communities of Belize and among residents of the United States of America. (Suazo, 1991, as cited in Wilson, 2001, p. 188).

This example demonstrates how linguistic syncretism emerges through historical multilingual contact: foreign words from multiple languages enter a region through trade, migration, or colonialism, and become systematically integrated into the local language structure. Similarly, North Malabar's linguistic syncretism reflects historical processes of multilingual contact. The presence of Persian, Arabic, Byari,

and Urdu alongside Malayalam stems from multiple historical factors. Pre-colonial maritime trade networks introduced Persian merchant languages. Arab traders and Islamic communities established an Arabic linguistic presence. Additionally, traders from neighbouring states brought Byari and Urdu influences; however, beyond this structural similarity to the Garifuna, North Malabar's linguistic syncretism functions as a distinct marker of social identity and status differentiation.

North Malabar's Malayalam demonstrates systematic linguistic influence from Urdu, Persian, Arabic, and Byari through sustained contact with traders, settlers, and religious communities. *Kachu Meman Settu*, a member of the Gujarati business community, visited Thalassery, North Malabar, for trade, and later settled with their family. This community is familiar with both the Kachu and Urdu languages. Since the Kachu language lacks a written script, they use Urdu as a medium of communication. Gradually, they popularised the Urdu language in North Malabar by using it in multiple interactions with locals. The *Settu* community initiated religious education at the *Sufiaya Madrasa* (religious education centre), marking the beginning of Urdu education in Kerala's history. In addition, they began to perform *Hamdu* [praise God], *Gazal*, and *Nath* [prayers] in public, which are related to *Uroos* (R A, 2019). All of these are performed in Urdu, which sustains interest among native speakers in learning the language. Consequently, North Malabar speakers systematically incorporated Urdu vocabulary into daily communication.

The numerous Urdu words used by the people of North Malabar in various contexts underscore the language's significant role in their daily socio-cultural

interactions, reflecting a deep-seated linguistic tradition that integrates Urdu into the fabric of their everyday lives. Words like *Thayyar* (ready), *Savari* (journey), *Rotti* (bread), *Paisa* (money), *Saada* (standard), *Vakkeel* (advocate), *Inaam* (tax), and *Dosth* (friend) were used by most of the natives in North Malabar. Urdu continues to exist as an in-home communication medium within the Kachu community in Thalassery, maintained across generations. The words in verb forms are primarily borrowed from Urdu, even when they are speaking Malayalam (Mohamed Saleem, personal communication, September 25, 2023). Furthermore, we identified Urdu-influenced names in several ways, as they were used to name locations in North Malabar and its neighbourhood, such as Uppala, Paal, Thabooth Street, Naya Bazar, Makaam, and Sulthan Batheri. The naming of locations with Urdu etymologies, such as *Naya Bazar*, *Makaam*, and *Sulthan Batheri*, reveals the institutional incorporation of Urdu into administrative and commercial domains. This process signals how merchant communities' linguistic practices become embedded in spatial organisation and collective memory, marking economic zones and religious sites with markers of external linguistic authority. Therefore, Urdu remains relevant in the daily lives of North Malabar residents, who incorporate Urdu vocabulary across contexts to articulate their emotions more fully. This linguistic practice reflects the region's enduring cultural and historical connections, highlighting Urdu's role in enriching communicative expression.

The Persian language holds a significant place in the sociocultural life of North Malabar. Centuries-old Persian trade relations with North Malabar resulted in

direct Persian influence on the local dialect. According to Bin Muhammed (2019, p. 258; translation from the original Malayalam article)

During the Prophet's time, the Persians were at the forefront of controlling trade. Arab of Persian origin also contributed to the propagation of Islam. Historical evidence indicates that Malik Dinar and his group, who arrived in Kerala, were Persian Muslims. Many historical works state that they started in Basara, Iraq. Furthermore, these Arabs and Christians arrived in Kerala primarily from Yemen, Persia, and Egypt, and the maritime route facilitated their access to Kerala's coastline. (Bin Muhammed, 2019, p. 258; translation from the original Malayalam article)

The proximity of the sea route catalysed the Persian presence in North Malabar; thus, daily intercultural interactions with North Malabar natives increased the presence of Persian words in local dialects. For example, Bin Muhammed (2019, p. 259) noted that the term 'Malabar' was coined by combining the Persian word '*Bar*,' meaning 'hills' or 'bank,' with '*Mala*' [Hill area] from Malayalam.

The influence of Persian is evident in Malayalam. During the medieval period, the Malabar Coast was a valued centre for trade and cultural exchange. The interactions between Persian traders and residents led to a positive exchange of linguistic features and vocabulary. Bin Muhammed (2019, p. 260; translation from the original Malayalam article) emphasises that,

Some Malayalam words, such as *Rumal*, *Kakki*, *Thoppi*, *Salvar*, *Shawl*, and *Dupatta*, derive from Persian. Common words in governance, such as *Sarkar*,

Cassava, Gumasthan, Jawan, Diwan, and Shipayi, are of Persian origin. Additionally, some rituals in North Malabar are similar to those of the Persians. For example, one can connect *the Nercha* [offerings] found in North Malabar to Persian cultural influences. *Ururkku Kettu* [A protective thread worn on the body to guard against bad luck or the evil eye] is frequently adopted by the North Malabar community from Persian cultures...Malayalam is not a language that developed under the influence of a single mother tongue. However, the work is influenced by multiple languages, including Sanskrit, Tamil, Persian, and Arabic, and scholars such as Sulaiman, Abu Said, Al Masoodi, Al Birooni, Al Idreesi, and Abul Fida ensure the accuracy of their studies. (Bin Muhammed, 2019, p. 260; translation from the original Malayalam article)

Moreover, Moyinkutty Vaidyar from Malabar extensively used Persian words in his Mappilappattu. Thus, the influence of the Persian language and its presence in North Malabar require separate analysis.

The Byari language is another language spoken in Northern North Malabar. Byari is a Muslim community found in southern Karnataka and northern Kasargod. They represent the syncretic culture of Arabs, Islam, Tulu, and Mappila of Malabar, and follow the Shafi *Madhab* (a way of life) in their religious life. It is generally believed that the word *Byari* originated from *Malabari* (Muslims of Malabar). Another belief is that the Tulu word *byara*, which denotes trade and business, was used to coin the term (Malayamma, 2019). According to studies by Ahammed Noori and Susheela Upadyay (as cited in Malayamma, 2019, p. 92), the Byari community

is among the earliest Muslim communities in India, as evidenced by practices observed at the Zeenath Baksh Masjid in Bander, Mangalore. The use of Byari as a nominal suffix is shared among community members and serves as an identity marker in names such as Muhammad Byari and Badulla Byari. The Byari community was influential, as it was wealthy enough to support local kingdoms. However, they gradually lost this status in most regions, except in a few areas of Mangalore. They settled in North Malabar and have been instrumental in shaping the region's syncretic culture, with their linguistic contributions significantly influencing its multicultural dynamics.

The unique features of the Byari language offer profound insights into the multicultural social framework of North Malabar. Malayamma (2019, p. 91; translation from the original Malayalam article) claims that,

Byari, though not officially recognised as a separate language, is regarded by its speech community as indexing a distinct linguistic and cultural identity.

While Byari has often been classified as a divergent variety of Malayalam, it is conventionally written in the Kannada script. It exhibits a contact-induced profile shaped by sustained interaction with Arabic, Tulu, Konkani, Kodava, and Urdu.

This community resides in the coastal regions of North Kasargod, where their culture and social life have evolved. Influences from foreign communities led to the development of various multifaceted languages among the Byari people. Even the names given to people reflect the depth of these relationships; for example, Kayiri, Saayiri, Saayirabba, and Kayinni are among the most common names used among

these groups. These symbolise Arabic names in the Malayalam language (Malayamma, 2019). In short, the Byari language plays a vital role in the evolution of composite culture in North Malabar and has catalysed the process.

The Arabic language was familiar in North Malabar even before Islam arrived in Kerala. Traders from the Middle East often visited Malabar, particularly North Malabar, for trade and thus interacted with local inhabitants. The historical analysis of Ibn Battuta's account of Kerala describes how the coastal areas of North Malabar facilitated trade in ancient times (A E, 2019). Researchers suggest that Arabs moved to multiple regions to engage in trade, interact with local populations, and establish a common medium of communication. Arabi-Malayalam could be such an initiative between Arabs and natives of North Malabar. Here, the Arabic script was used to write Malayalam words, facilitating communication between Malayalam speakers and Arabs. Later, Arabi Malayalam was extensively used for religious propagation, and, gradually, much literature was produced in this medium (Ariyil, 2019). Another influencing factor for Arabi-Malayalam could be the Tamil language. Later, its literature was significantly influenced by *Arvi* (Arabi Tamil), particularly in the Mappilappattu (a song popular among the Mappila community). For example, more than fifteen per cent of the words in *Muhyidheen Mala* are Tamil. Kunhayin Musliyar, from North Malabar, has extensively employed complex Tamil words in his *Nool Madhu* and *Kappa Pattu* (Ahammed, 2019). Aboobakker (2019, p. 204) acknowledges that Mappila Muslims have incorporated Arabic words into their mother tongue and culture. Consequently, they integrated features from

both languages, thereby developing Arabi-Malayalam as a medium of communication.

Arabic lexical items are frequently integrated into Malayalam, particularly in the Mappila dialect spoken by Muslim communities. These items are used to enrich religious knowledge and facilitate spiritual communication. Common words found in Muslim communities are *Haram* (prohibited), *Halal* (acceptable), *Hamuk* (idiot), and *Ibleese* (evil). However, Arabic words are used by all communities in North Malabar due to their trade relations with Arabs. People in North Malabar use *Hakku* (truth) and *Hisab* (quantity) to communicate others' duties and responsibilities in financial transactions. However, this multilingual syncretism operates not merely as cultural accommodation but also as a hierarchical marker; speakers use these local dialects to discriminate on the basis of caste/class positioning, gender, and economic participation.

North Malabar's sustained multilingual interactions demonstrate how speakers systematically incorporate foreign lexical items into daily communication, reflecting institutionalised linguistic contact through trade, religious practice, and occupational specialisation. For example, Kuttu (2010, p. 16; author's translation) states that "North Malabar is a multilingual society, where we can find multiple languages, words used in people's daily lives." Susan Gal defined Multilingualism as "using more than one language by a single individual or a community" (Llamas et al., 2007, p. 149). Arabic, Urdu, and Persian vocabulary appear systematically across the selected North Malabar novels examined in this study (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000; Khader, 1982/2022; Rajasree, 2019/2022), indicating a consistent

textual representation of multilingual communication as a defining feature of regional linguistic identity. Native speakers systematically employ such multilingual vocabulary across diverse social contexts, as evidenced by the linguistic diversity documented in regional scholarship. According to Pavitran,

Kasargod used to speak twelve Dravidian languages: Malayalam, Koraga *Bhasha*, Kodava *Bhasha*, Koppola *Bhasha*, Malavettu *Bhasha*, Malakkudia *Bhasha*, Madiga *Bhasha*, Tamil, Kannada, Tulu, and Byari, and four Indo Aryan languages: Konkani, Marathi, Urdu, and Hindustani. Thus, no other district in Kerala can claim this high level of language density. North Malabar is known for its linguistic diversity, owing to sustained interactions with diverse languages. (Pavithran, 2015, p. 15)

The presence and influence of other languages are evident in the studies of North Malabar. According to Aboobakkar (2015, p. 206), certain words in North Malabar are strongly influenced by Kannada and Tulu. Loanwords from Kannada and Tulu include *Ponnu- Pennu*² (woman), *Bela- Vila*³ (Crops), *Betta- Vetta*⁴ (Hunting), and *Alli- Kugramam*⁵ (Rural area). In addition, North Malabar and Kerala as a whole are influenced by ancient languages such as Pali through the spread of Buddhism and Jainism. Pali entered Malayalam through sustained interaction with Buddhist and Jain communities, resulting in the systematic borrowing of religious and philosophical vocabulary (Aboobakkar, 2015, p. 208). Words such as *Battam*

² *Pennu* (Kannada), *Ponnu* (Tulu)

³ *Bele* (Kannada), *Bule* (Tulu)

⁴ *Bette* (Kannada), *Bomtte* (Tulu)

⁵ *Halli*-Kannada word for *Palli* (Masjid) in Malayalam

[circle]-*Vattam*⁶, *Orikka- Orikkal* [once], and caste names such as Baaniya, Chaliya, and Aashari are all influenced by traditional ancient languages (Aboobakkar, 2015, p. 211). Persian culinary vocabulary, including *Dammu Kettuka* (to stifle/seal), (exemplified in the preparation of Biryani), *Kosi* [Happy]⁷, *Sirkka* [Vinagiri], *Seeru* [Sugar solution], and Arabic words like *Musaappu* [Quraan], *Dasbia* [Chain of beads used for counting prayers], *Bayalu* [Religious speech], and *Ulu* [Cleaning body for prayers] (P A, 2015, p. 25; author's translation), merged into the everyday vocabulary of daily North Malabar discourse, reflecting the systematic integration of Persian and Arabic religious and culinary practices into local linguistic repertoires. Therefore, it could be hypothesised that North Malabar local dialects with multiple foreign words are an outcome of their exposure to the outside community. In sum, North Malabar's local dialects exhibit a marked accommodative incorporation of lexical items from multiple languages, which constitutes a central linguistic feature of regional syncretism and composite cultural formation.

The literary representation of the multilingual culture of North Malabar is explicitly found in selected novels. Punathil Kunnabdulla's *Smaraka Shilakal* examines Muslim community life in North Malabar, where characters such as Khan Bahadoor Pookkoya Thangal, Mukri Eramullan, and Bappu Kanaran employ extensive Arabic, Persian, and Urdu vocabulary in their dialogue. For instance, *Rabbe* [Oh God], *Bejar* [fear], *Saboon* [Soap], *Athar* [perfume], *Saan* [plate], and *Supra* [table sheet] (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000, p. 29; author's translation) are used.

⁶ *Vrutham*-Sanskrit

⁷ *Khushi* in Persian

U.A. Khader's works *Thrikkottoor Peruma*, *Agorashivam*, and *Khuraishikkootam* depict the influence of the multilingual culture of North Malabar. U.A. Khader is an expert in the use of foreign-language words in the North Malabar context to integrate multicultural elements into a composite cultural society. *Thrikkottur Peruma* illustrates how Khader used foreign-language words in local dialects, which fulfilled contextual meanings. There are several instances in the novel in which the characters use Arabic words. The relationship between Kunnikela Kuruppu and Haider Haaji is depicted through the words of *Naattukaranavar* (village senior person) as "*Hayathilum Mouthil Onte Aalu Kunnikela Kurappanu*" [Within the realm of life and death, Kurup is present to undertake the care of Hyder] (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 16; author's translation). In the same novel, U.A. Khader uses the word *Swalih* (good character) to depict Beeran Mulla. In *Khuraishikkootam*, Khader introduces words like *Urudi* [religious speech], *Aahiram* [world after death], *Murad* [wishes], and *Hairu* [better] from foreign languages (Khader, 1974/2012, pp. 65-70; author's translation). Khader's strategic deployment of multilingual vocabulary signals how language operates as a marker of social positioning within a composite culture.

Rajasree's *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha* exemplifies the novel's multilingual context, in which characters use multiple languages to convey their feelings. Rajasree's favourite character, Cheyikkutti, uses Arabic words in everyday speech: "*Olde oru Baisulla Andi Porukkal*" [yer blasted bum! Sthopp fidgetin' an' get going bith work inside o' thissplac'] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 71). Kamala is uncertain about her recipe and considers how to satisfy

her husband, Lakshman. She questions herself as, “*Endu koduthalanu puruvante varkath kettu povvathirikka*” [what could she do to keep his strength] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 185). Aboobakker, in conversation with party members, explains his capacity to arrange people as *Thakkalth* [capacity] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 200). North Malabar social contexts demonstrate a nuanced understanding of multilingual communication: speakers interpret meaning fluidly, whether communicating in Malayalam or in foreign languages, reflecting a linguistic competence that developed through participation in multilingual communities. All these examples reveal how authors comprehensively depicted the multilingual cultural practices of North Malabar and the composite culture that emerged from them. In short, the literary representation of North Malabar's multilingual environment reveals a systematic correlation between characters' linguistic choices and social positioning, suggesting that multilingual syncretism functions as a mechanism for reproducing social hierarchies within composite cultural frameworks. Therefore, the language and uniqueness of these local dialects require detailed analysis.

The speech community is a sociolinguistic concept used to analyse a multilingual society and the patterns of communication within it. According to Saville-Troike (2003, p. 15), “The essential criterion for 'community' is that some significant dimension of experience has to be shared, and for the 'speech community', the shared dimension is related to ways in which members of the group use, value, or interpret language.” In a community where people speak a dialect distinct from that of other regions of Kerala, North Malabar's local dialects demonstrate speech community formation, characterised by shared pronunciation

patterns and communicative practices. The speech community in North Malabar is a product of its accommodating nature and the adoption of multilingual practices from foreign communities that visit the area. Therefore, a distinctive mode of pronunciation is found in North Malabar, which is currently celebrated in art forms such as cinema, rap songs, and regional album songs. For example, the song "*Benki Boom*," performed by Sayanora Philip (Sayanora Philip, "Benki Boom," Kappa TV, 2019), and the film *Kasargold*, directed by Mrudul Nair (Nair, M. 2023. *Kasargold*. Mallu Movie Media). Some words commonly found in local dialects, such as *Benki* (to get down quickly), *Boo* (to fall), *Bidgal* (to swallow), *Aroolu* (in the corner), and *Makkarakkal* (insulting), convey meaning, value, and shared interpretations within the community. Furthermore, this speech community in North Malabar is a product of the oral functions embedded in the region's local dialects.

The oral functions of the local dialects of North Malabar contributed to the development of speech communities in the region. Many facts support this view, including the use of short words, the adoption of foreign words, and social and regional dialectology. Moreover, the contextual meaning of local dialects is an essential fact that sheds light upon the oral functions of North Malabar. Aboobakkar (2015, pp. 189-197) demonstrates that multiple words in the pronunciation of North Malabar are absent from other parts of Kerala. However, these words appear in Malayalam dictionaries with different pronunciations. The words *Kee* (get down), *Keecham* (deep slope of a hill), *Keekkuka* (put down), *Keeku* (get down), and *Keechu* (put down) explain the short words used in North Malabar. *Thachu-Thalluka* (beat), *Bari*, *Baa*, *Bannatte* (come), and *Tau* (depth) explain the oral

functions practised in North Malabar dialects using short words for convenience. It is assumed that short words facilitate linguistic accommodation for outsiders and traders. Therefore, people who came to North Malabar, particularly for trade, could communicate more easily with the local inhabitants. Hence, the selected works for this study exhibit similar word usage, which supports the oral functions of the North Malabar dialects.

It also observed that some sounds, such as *Uyy/Uyish*, are frequently used among natives of North Malabar, and that the same sound, when used with other words, conveys an emotional attachment (Aboobakkar 2015, p. 19). Linguistic analysis suggests an etymological connection between *Ayyo* and *Uyy*, both of which express surprise/excitement. The sound *Uyy* conveys a sense of excitement and wonder; when used with other words, it adds emphasis. For example, like *Uyyante Daive* [Oh my God], *Uyyante Bhagavane* [Oh my Bhagvan], and *Uyyante Muthappa* [Oh my Muthappan], the sound *Uyyante* is used in several common talks in North Malabar (Salam. C. V, personal communication, 4 February 2022; author's translation). The sound *Uyy* appears consistently in the literary works of Rajasree and Khader across diverse social contexts. To take a case in point, Lakshman sarcastically talks about the capacity of Kalyani to hold a heavy drum and says, *Uyyanttappa Ninagala* [*Uyyi*, oh my yuh? *Ingala?*] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 40). Lakshman expected that she could not lift the weight, as he had failed to lift it when Cheyikkuuti fears that Kalyani's weak health is due to her being possessed by an evil spirit and says, "*Uyyanttamme! Patticho?*" [*Uyyinttamme! Patticha!*] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 41). Analysis demonstrates that the sound *Uyy* functions as an oral

marker conveying emotional intensity in the North Malabar dialects. In short, North Malabar is a society with unique local dialects, organised into a speech community in which a common language use has matured.

The novel *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha* effectively employs the region's local dialects. The use of short words to communicate people's feelings and emotions characterises the author's assimilation of the composite culture of North Malabar. Short words or short pronunciations in the local dialects of North Malabar are very common; long words are spoken simply and pronounced quickly. Some of the words are *Meedu- Mukham* [face], *Ayendittu- Athu Endu Kondu* [why, is that so], *Meengari- Meen Curry* [fish curry], *Eada- Evide* [where], *Eeda- Ivide* [here], *Payyi- Pashu* [cow] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, pp. 35-50). All these word collections show how words are used in short instead of long pronunciations.

U.A. Khader is a distinguished writer known for his compelling portrayal of the dialects of North Malabar in his literary works. Works such as *Changala*, *Thrikkottur Peruma*, *Agorahsivam*, *Khurashikkootam*, and *Oru Padakali Penninte Charitam* reveal his command over the North Malabar dialects, demonstrating his ability to represent the composite culture of this society. Khader employed North Malabar dialects in these works to reconstruct North Malabar society as accurately as possible. Words like *Oon-Avan* [He], *Ool-Aval* [She], *Naneeda- Nan Ivde* [me here], *Eathanolee- Eathu Aanu Aavo* [who is that], *Olde- Avalude* [Her own] (Khader, 1982/2022, pp. 50-65; author's translation) can be seen in his works. He extensively uses short words in his works to convey the essence of North Malabar's

syncretic culture. Apart from R. Rajasree and U.A. Khader, Punathil Kunnabdulla, Ambika Suthan Managad, and M.V. Janardhanan also highlight the short words and oral functions of North Malabar dialects in different contexts.

To take a case in point, offensive words in the North Malabar social context do not always convey literal meanings; instead, they provide contextual meanings that ultimately reflect the speaker's emotions. These contextual expressions function as linguistic tools rather than as inherently profane expressions, conveying emotional intensity and social positioning rather than literal meaning. Rajasree's *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha* contains numerous such words, and characters such as Kalyani and Cheyikkutti bring considerable conflict and cooperation between them as mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Here, both use offensive language that sometimes conveys a tone of love and care, rather than hate. When Kalyani decided to leave Koppukaran's house, Cheyikkutti tried to stop her and said: "*Nadakkallu keenengi ninte kaalu naagothum. Endene orumbottole... eaduthekkane ninte chudukattilekkulla keechalu. Polayadichi*" ['Don' yuh walk a stepp more! Yuh try to go, I'll chop an' mince yer leg! Wha's got inta yuh, damn'd floozie! Tak' bekk thath leg of yers, goin' to yer death! Fuckin' whor?!']. "If am a whore, thath's tha fault of yer son," said Kalyani without raising her voice (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 90). Cheyikkuuti felt bad because she had not meant the literal meaning; she stopped speaking, and her eyes filled with tears. In this case, Cheyikkutti did not convey the literal meaning of Polayadichi [whore]; instead, she used the term to express her disagreement with Kalyani's action. In another context, Cheyikkutti and Kalyani began quarrelling. Cheyikkutti

said: “*Naanom konom ketta polayadichi, berum kaisadu. Thukkichi*” [Sham’less hussy! Justh a kaissad! Yuh tukkichi!] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 91). Here, Cheyikkutti uses obscene words to insult Kalyani and depict her as an evil woman. Therefore, it can be concluded that obscene words in the local dialects of North Malabar acquire contextual meaning, whereby the exact words convey different meanings depending on the emotions expressed by the speaker.

In Punathil Kunnabdulla’s *Smaraka Shilakal*, Rairu, Neeli's father, is very angry as he does not know the cause of Neeli’s pregnancy. Then he scolds her mother as “*Naayinte mole, mindaruth, mindiyal konnukalayum*” [You daughter of a bitch! Don't speak, I will kill you if you talk.] (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000, p. 20; author’s translation). In another incident, Pookkoya Thangal found the Kuraishippathu (the chief cook of the *Tharavadu*) in the room of Andrumaan (the Horseman). He called him: “*Irangi vaada Nayinte mone*” [Son of a bitch, come out] (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000, p. 49; author’s translation), then he arranged a marriage for them. Kunnabdulaa used the same word, *Naayinte mone* [son of a bitch], in both contexts with different emotions. When Rairu expresses anger, Thangal uses it as part of his routine for calling people. Punathil Kunnabdulla's own use of these expressions (Kunnabdulla, 2017) demonstrates that these dialectal features function as integrated linguistic practice rather than literary artifice.

There are a few obscene words in North Malabar that are very frequently used by the natives without any hesitation. Words such as *Nayinte mone*, *Kurippu*, *Kaisadu*, *Pandaaram*, *Belal*, *Hamku*, *Ibleese*, and *Harath* are commonly used in the everyday conversations of natives. The ways native speakers use these words and

how they flow as they serve oral functions in their dialects depend on the social context and personal emotions. Linguistic analysis demonstrates that these words function not as inherently profane words but as contextual markers that convey emotional intensity. In the novel *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha*, Dhakshayani faced child abuse from her teacher; she cursed him as “*Puythu povumeda Nayinte mone*” [Rot in ‘ell, yuh sonofabitch] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p 11). In another context, Dhakshayani is dissatisfied with her life with her husband, Aanikkaran. She hates his approach and attitude. Once, she cursed him by saying, “*Pullani pidichu kadichupottu kattukalane*” [Leth tha cobra geth thi *kattukalana*, this dreadfulegre] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 22). Kalyani saw a person sitting on the veranda at midnight, and she was shocked. When she knew it was Cheyikkutti, she murmured, “*Marikkurippinu polachem paathirem ille?*” [‘Thissbulb o’ pesthilenc’ hassno midnight, no mornin’!'] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 86). In U.A. Khader’s *Thrikkottur Peruma*, he employs similar word usage among the characters, such as with Vaidaru Valappil Mammadu Haaji, where Haaji becomes angry when he sees people transporting fish through his land near the beach without his permission. Then he stops them and says: “*Nirthinadaa naykkale, lorium cherakkam, nan sammathikkoola*” [stop this lorry, I won’t allow it to trespass] (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 29; author’s translation). All these examples demonstrate how expressive words function as oral markers enabling conversational flow.

These expletives used in North Malabar are not only of Malayalam origin but also of foreign origin. The oral functions of North Malabar dialects can convey

strong emotions using a few words. In Punathil Kunnabdulla's *Smaraka Shilakal*, Arakkal Pookkoya Thangal instructs Aattabee, his wife, to breastfeed the son of Neeli when Neeli dies. Aattabee is dissatisfied with this decision. However, she cannot disobey Thangal's command, and she expresses her anger by calling Kunnali (son of Neeli) *Harath* [illegitimate son] (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000, p. 68; author's translation). The same Aattabee used to call Kunnali *Hamuke* [Idiot] to degrade him to a lower status. The word *Belale* is another filthy word used in North Malabar. Arakkal Pookkoya Thangal uses this word in his usual talk once he calls his servants, for instance, "*Eda, Andrumane Belale ennek, puthiya kuthira bannikku*" [Hey Andrumaan, new horse is here, walk up] (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000, p. 120; author's translation). Khader's *Khuraishikkootam* is set in a Muslim community, where numerous Arabic words are used. When Manammal Mammu Haji and Aboobakker Haji quarrel, they use offensive language, such as *Hamke* (Khader, 1974/2012). In another scene of *Khuraishikkootam*, Kunnayan Uppava, the masjid president and feudal lord, punished Chekkutti, a lower-class fisherman, for entering the masjid. He calls him and asks, "How dare you enter the masjid and do namaz where we do?", and calls him *Hamke* (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 25; author's translation). The above examples support the argument regarding the oral functions of North Malabar's local dialects, in which foreign words are also widely used to convey feelings and emotions. Furthermore, the foreign expletives used by authors depict how effectively the characters in these novels absorbed the social realities of North Malabar.

North Malabar dialects exhibit greater regional variation than those of other parts of Kerala. Regional dialectology is another term used in sociolinguistics to analyse the diversity of language use. According to Mesthrie (2000, p. 42), “Regional dialectology analyses how geographical location and social dynamics influence the development and evolution of regional linguistic varieties.” People from North Malabar are readily identifiable in other regions of Kerala due to distinctive pronunciation patterns and lexical features. If a new person arrives from outside North Malabar, they require extended exposure to comprehend local dialectal features. Typically, government servants from South Kerala come to North Malabar, face these conditions, and gradually adapt to them. Rajasree’s parents came to North Malabar for work and encountered a similar situation when attempting to understand the region’s local dialects (Rajasree, 2019). Regional dialects and their features are necessary for understanding a society in detail. Therefore, regional variation, another essential feature of the composite culture, is evident in North Malabar.

Rajasree’s *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha* depicts the North-South language conflict through the marriage of Dhakshayani and Aanikkaran. Dhakshayani finds it difficult to speak her local dialect after moving to Aanikkarana’s home. Her mother-in-law gives her a brief description of their neighbours and instructs her, “*Ningalavdokke kandedam nerangunnapole ivde angeluingelu keriyerangi nadakkalla ketto*” [Youw shuddu nottu behaive like you did baack home! Don’tu knocku yeround these houses-u? Youw hear-u?] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 101). When Dhakshayani found no

companion who understood the North Malabar dialect and her emotions, she tried to interact with a cow in the next house. Still, it disappointed her, thus Dhakshayani says that, “*Uyyanttappa. Oru pashoonte athirakkali nokkiyatte*” [Uyyanttappa!! Lookitt tha cow! So brash!] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 101). Mother-in-law continued, “*Ithanu nangade kenaru oru kalahtum vattilla pinne ninagldethe polethe pathalavalla.*” [These ees ouwer well. Yet never dries up. Yit doesn’tu haave to go downnu to the netherworlddu, like yin youwer plaice] “*Ithellom oru keranda*”, [Ah is ith eben a well?] Dhakshayani replied (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 103). Here, the regional difference is explicit in the use of the word *Kenaru* (South Kerala) versus *Kerandu* (North Malabar). Aanikkaran asked Dhakshayani: “*Engenand nanagade naadu? Ayinu odthu ningade naadu, ee beedintatha naadu?*” [Howw is ouwer naadu? Yer plac’ is all inside tha ‘ouse? Justh thainside?] Dhakshayani replied (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 103). The words *Nangade* [ours], *Ningade* [yours], and *Beedu* [house] show the difference in word usage, apart from the cultural difference in socialisation reflected in Dhakshayani’s words. Upon returning from the temple festival, Dhakshayani met the *Garbini* [pregnant woman] and decided to assist her, as she is an expert in caring for pregnant women. Later, she learned that she was a ghost and that no one could see her except her. Following interactions with the ghost, Dhakshayani is affected by *Baadha Koodal* (an additional spiritual power). On this occasion, she uses the North Malabar dialect to scold Aanikkaran and his family. She says: “*Odthuu ninte mon, aa kaattukalan? Menikkunna paisakku oon paniedukkan padichonnu choichinaa nee?... Bannalla pattinikkanni? Pullanni pidichu parichittileda inna inium? Eedayonnum pullanni illenaa? Alla ninneyennum pullannikk bendenaa?*” [Where’s yer son, thath BLACKGUARD,

SCOUNTHREL, BLOODY ROUGE? Did yuh ask him if he eber learn'd to fuck hard enough' to earn tha money he tak's?'] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 131). Here, Aanikkaran is frustrated with translating words for his mother, as she is unable to follow Dhakshayani's dialect. In short, regional variation in the North Malabar dialects is more pronounced than in other regions. North Malabar dialects employ more expressive linguistic features and oral functions, enabling speakers to communicate emotional nuance through linguistic choices.

Sociolinguistics provides a space to analyse language and the power it exerts. In the socio-cultural context of North Malabar, power operates through local dialects. Mesthrie (2000, p. 42) argues that language is a tool through which power dynamics are exercised and sustained in society. Language practice reflects and reinforces existing power structures across social contexts. Therefore, people use certain words to maintain the status quo of their social position. As R. Brown and Gilman define

Power is the ability of one individual to control the behaviour of another.

Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is non-reciprocal in the sense that neither can have power in the same area of behaviour. This non-reciprocal relationship showed up in language (as cited in Mesthrie et al., 2000, p. 310).

Beyond this, critical sociolinguistics examines the intricate relationship between language and power, delving beyond traditional analyses of power, politeness, and face in discourse to uncover the underlying power dynamics that shape communication patterns (Mesthrie et al., 2000). In short, a comprehensive analysis

of characters and incidents in the selected works on North Malabar society will give a detailed understanding of the workings of language and power.

U.A. Khader's character Kunnayan Uppava in *Kuraishikkottam* embodies power through his distinctive use of language, which reflects authority, confidence, and cultural rootedness. His command over the local dialect not only asserts his dominance in social interactions but also reinforces his identity within the North Malabar community. As the *Muthavalli* (manager) of the masjid and a feudal lord, Kunnayan Uppava asserts his authority by emphasising class distinctions, particularly toward those outside the *Tharavadu* lineage. This use of language to assert class superiority reveals both his pride and the broader social dynamics of a stratified society. Khader skillfully uses Kunnayan Uppava's character to expose the subtle and overt ways in which linguistic and social power operate in traditional North Malabar society. Once, he noticed Chekkutti, a *Poosilan* (fisherman), coming to the masjid to pray, where the rich pray. Then he questioned him as “*Ennada nee thanikkam pirannavan aayathu? Samadanam para Hamke*” [When did you become equal to us?] (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 9; author’s translation) and beat him ruthlessly. Finally, he warned Chekkutti and said: “*Eda ninte shareerathimmelu ippalu ente adikondur olikkana chorayundallo athonnu nakki nokku. Uppikkum, kadalil pokunna poosilano tharavattu karananonu ariyan athaneluppam. Pha Hamke*” [Taste the blood flowing in your body to determine if you are a fisherman or a *Tharavadu* member.] (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 9; author’s translation). These words are used by Kunnayan Uppava to maintain the status quo and ensure that othering persists among different classes.

Kunnikkela Kuruppu, a key character in *Thrikkottur Peruma* by U.A.

Khader, is a prominent member of the *Tharavadu* and the son of a feudal lord, Chandhukkurup Adikaari. Although he was born in Pallikkara, he was brought up in Thrikkottur. Since childhood, he was nurtured by his uncle Pathmanabhan Adiyodi, who was not on good terms with his father, Chandhukkurup Adikari. This was gradually reflected in Kurup; he did not visit his home or parents. In short, Kurup holds many privileges and powers in society, as reflected in his language on several occasions. When he was informed of the death of Chandhukkurup *Adhikari* (Father), he replied: “Do not wait for me, I am going hunting, his nephew is there to do all the rituals, call him. Inform the same to the mother” (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 19; author’s translation). People in the scene respond with “*Kuruppinte urappu urappu thanne, manassu kallu thanneyaney*” [Kurup's decision is absolute; his heart is truly stone] (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 19; author’s translation). Khader successfully depicted the power of language in this context, where Kurup is portrayed as powerful. In another context, when an abundance of fish was brought near Thrikkottur beach, workers struggled to transport it because there was no facility to process it. There is only a private path available to move the fish from the seashore, and the workers sought permission from the landowner. Kurup intervened and permitted them to transport the fish. He said, “Once you get permission from the owner, the fish become spoiled and smell bad, just go ahead. I would not allow spoiling this sea once I am here” (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 28; author’s translation). Vaidaru Valappil Mammadu Haaji, the owner, learned of this and remained silent, as Kurup was already on the scene. These incidents demonstrate the power Kurup wields through his interventions in society, primarily through his words. Language power functions as a mechanism

through which people establish and maintain social positions. Here, Kurup is successful in using language to interact with others and establish authority.

Krishnakurup, *Agorashivam*, is another key character who could be analysed using the same theme. Krishnakurup comes from a wealthy family and manages substantial ancestral wealth. He has a tea shop near Pandalayani railway station, but does not serve tea; he comes, sits there for a while, and observes. People in Pandalayani obeyed Krishnakurup's words and supported his actions because he ensured that no one could prevent him from achieving his goals. Once he invites Koyyottikka, the owner of the Beedi company, and his helper, Andruman, for tea, but Koyyottikka needed to reach home as early as possible. Kurup consoled him by saying, "I am here, friend, why worry about it getting late? I know this route and region by heart, don't I? Even if we leave now, if I am with you, no one will say anything" (Khader, 2006/2022, p. 58; author's translation). Another context in which Kurup's word is final is the temple festivals around Pandalayini; his words determine the festival markets in those areas. It has become a ritual, as *Palolikandi Madam Rairothu* (family name) Krishnakurup is the ultimate authority for resolving these matters, and without his acknowledgement, nothing is possible. These characters highlight the power dynamics explored in North Malabar through their interactions within the social environment.

Punathil Kunnabdulla's character, *Arakkal* (tharavadu) Pookkoya Thangal, is an efficient example of a person who uses language to assert his power over others. Aattakkoya, the father of Arakkal Pookkoya Thangal, was a wealthy businessman in Singapore. Aattakkoya acquired various properties during each visit from Singapore.

Later, Pookkoya Thangal went to Singapore and remained there for ten years, returning with substantial wealth. Thangal's life in Arakkal *Tharavadu* and its surroundings involved exposure to the power of a feudal lord, as evidenced by his speech. When an unconscious female was found in Masjid's *Jarath* (cemetery), Thangal informed his assistant to take care of her. Later, after being told that she is pregnant, and when society did not accept it easily, Thangal says: "*Athinenda chekuthane? Vayattil undengil aval peratte, eettedukkan ee naattil aalund*" [So what? Let her deliver the baby; there are a lot of people to take care of her.] (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000, p. 31; author's translation). In another context, when Neeli died after giving birth to a boy child, Thangal called his wife Aatabee and said: "*Mola koduk nee eratta pettannu vijaricha mathi*" [Assume you got twins in this delivery, feed him] (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000, p 35; author's translation)- Thangal does not consider the feelings of his wife. Pookkoya Thangal's use of language is highly assertive, as he implements his decisions without considering the opponent's condition.

Rajasree's *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha* describes how power dynamics functioned within the North Malabar social context. Aanikkaran, who marries Dhakshayani from North Malabar, uses language very diplomatically to ensure the power he has at Dhakshayani's house. A compromise meeting was held at Dhakshayani's house to resolve issues between Aanikkaran and Dhakshayani. Aanikkaran wants to establish that Dhakshayani should obey his words and follow his commands. Therefore, he said: "*Ningadeyokke faryamaru inganayanno? Ningalu vendannu paranna cheyyuo?*" [When I toldu h-

er nott too...aar youer wivesu like this? They do when you tell them no-ttu to?]

(Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 28). The entire group in the discussion supported Aanikkaran, as Dhakshayani had done wrong by not obeying her husband. Later, they compelled Dhakshayani to accompany Aanikkaran to his home. Here, Aanikkaran used the edge of patriarchal social practice and the importance accorded to the *Puyapla* system in North Malabar. In addition to the male character's language-power exercise, Rajasree demonstrates how strong women use language to assert their power in their surroundings. Cheyikkutti is a great woman with a powerful command of the language, which enables her to present the situation in her favour. Once, Kalyani, Cheyikkutti's daughter-in-law, left Koppukaran's (Her husband's) home due to a conflict between them and returned to her home. Subsequently, Cheyikkutti visits Kalyani's house, resolves the couple's problems, and returns her to Cheyikkutti's home. The commanding power of Cheyikkutti here persuades Kalyani through her words. She says, "*Eelu jayichu thottunnum illa mole. Ayinu nammal aarum eeda kaliyonnum kalikkunnillalo. Kannunni ballam beevandu kayiyanam. Ayinu enne bendennu becha cheyyanam. Athanu manushyante sheri*" [There's no winnin' or losin' in this, mole, we aren' playin' a game fo' thath. Justh lookin' to libe a life bithou' tears. Justh hab to do whateber we musth do fo' thath. Thath's the righth thin' for us humans] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 157). Kalyani immediately accepted Cheyikkutti's statement and spoke with Koppukaran, who had been sitting on the veranda. The analysis demonstrates that language power depends on its deployment and on how word combinations are presented, as Cheyikkutti deftly negotiated issues between Kalyani and Koppukaran.

Since language exercises power, it perpetuates inequality in society. The language used to express inequality denotes certain polarisations and categorisations among people. Critical sociolinguistics also emphasises the role of language in reflecting and perpetuating social inequalities, illuminating how language use can reinforce or challenge power structures within society (Mesthrie et al., 2000). Social inequalities are evident in the North Malabar dialects. However, the analysis demonstrates that North Malabar dialects create space to challenge the social inequalities reflected in language use. Social dialectology is a method to analyse the inequality perpetuated through language. According to Mesthrie (2000, p. 74), “Social dialectology focuses on language variations related to social factors such as class, occupation, or ethnicity, exploring how societal aspects shape linguistic diversity.” Based on people’s status, privileges, and wealth, language use and linguistic diversity can be analysed in the North Malabar social context. Kunnikanna Serappu is a character in *Thrikkottur Peruma* who possesses substantial wealth and exchanges money for land, known as *Unduthiram*. Once he begins an illicit relationship with Malootti, Malootti and her mother, Madavi, cheat Serappu and seize his property. Society treats Serappu differently when he loses his wealth and becomes insolvent. People start to mock him and his actions as he gets drunk and shouts in front of Malootti’s house. He scolded Ottakkutti (a coconut picker) for collecting coconuts from a plot that he had sold to Maalootti. Then he replied, “*Munnum pinnum nokkandu sugikkunbam aalochikkadeni. Thenga thalayil veezum, maari ninnolin. Chellu*” [You should have been alert while seeking pleasure; move now to avoid hitting the coconut] (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 79; author’s translation).

This shows how language explicitly reflects social inequality once people lose their status in society.

In U.A. Khader's *Khuraishikkoottam*, linguistic diversity is used to both elevate and diminish others' social status. This highlights the deep-rooted social inequalities within the community. *Tharavadu* is an essential indicator of status in North Malabar. Khader demonstrates how people differentiate others on the basis of their *Tharavadu* status, particularly in marriage alliances. Kunnabdulla, a fisherman who later becomes wealthy, has no specific *Tharavadu* lineage. While finding suitors for his daughters, he sought grooms from reputed *Tharavadus*, aiming to elevate his social status through these alliances. When the character Kunnabdulla expressed interest in an alliance with Aaruttikkattu Maaliyekkal *Tharavadu*, the latter agreed, as he was very wealthy. Once the discussion took place in Aboobakker's home, his wife justified Kunnabdulla's job like this: "*Pakke on meenkaranalla meenachodakkarana*" [He is a fish merchant, not a fisherman] (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 11; author's translation). At the same time, Aaminumma, their distant relative, replied, "*Tharavadu nokkatholu nokkanda, pakke meenchooru ente mookkathuu adikkunnund. Ini mook pothand kayyoola*" [If you choose to disregard our *Tharavadu* [ancestral house] status, that is your concern. However, I find the smell of fish intolerable, and I am closing my nose in disgust.] (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 12; author's translation). In short, language reflects social inequality, as the same linguistic variety is used to conceal people's status.

In the novel *Agorashivam*, Chami Ayyar is a Palakkattu Brahmin who came to Pandalayali and settled down. He owns a tea shop in the Panthalayani railway

station. Chami Ayyar takes great pride in his culinary skills and makes a point of expressing this to everyone who visits his shop. Thus, he uses his craft as a reflection of both personal identity and cultural pride. As a Brahmin, he is sensitive to caste hierarchy and upholds it in his words. In literary representation, Khader depicts Chami Ayyar demonstrating differential treatment based on the customers' social status. In the novel, when a student visits the shop, Ayyar neglects him. Later, he learns that he was a member of the lineage of Malikapurayil Abdulla, a wealthy *Tharavadu* member. Abdulla, who drinks costly Spenser coffee from Calicut, a place where only British people drink from, compares Ayyar's coffee to it. For usual customers, Chami Ayyar collects payment in advance to prepare food. However, people from wealthy families receive many privileges in his shop: "*Maduram jasthi podengi parannoloo*" [If you want more sugar, please let me know] (Khader, 2006/2022, p. 20; author's translation). In addition, he is proud to report that people from higher castes or classes are highly dependent on his food daily. All of these expose the social inequality perpetuated by Chami Ayyar's words.

The social inequality reflected in language can be analysed in the framework of symbolic domination. This concept was introduced by P Bourdieu, a French sociologist. He pointed out that,

The linguistic interactions between speakers depend largely on their social relations. Interactions take place within a linguistic market; the latter term demarcates the structured space in which people interact via language. Examples of such a market include the education system, the labour market, 'high society', the government, and ordinary daily interactions between

people. Favoured patterns of language (style, discourse, accents) are conceived of as symbolic assets that can receive different values depending on the market in which they are offered (as cited in Mesthrie et al., 2000, p. 333).

Therefore, symbolic domination in the linguistic market helps identify how people use diverse languages to maintain the status quo. In *Khuraishikoottam*, U.A. Khader presents language not merely as a tool for communication, but as a powerful medium of social control and hierarchy. Furthermore, the character of Arakkal Pookkoya Thangal in *Smaraka Shilakal* embodies the symbolic domination prevalent within the traditional social structures depicted in the selected works. Once, Thangal visited the Mappila school to seek admission for Kunnali and Pookkinni. He shows off his knowledge in English by asking, “*Evde English padippikkunnudo? Aarkkengilum English ariyuo?*” [Is English language instruction available, or is anyone here proficient in English?] Shankara Kurup, the headmaster, replies, “*Illa, pakshe enik ariyam, Z vare, irupatharu aksharam ottayayum koottayum eyuthan ariyam*” [No, but my English literacy is rudimentary; I know the alphabet and can write simple words]. Thangal continued to ask a few more questions until Kurup was unable to answer (Kunnabdulla, 1977/2000, p. 80; author’s translation). Pookkoya Thangal has maintained a form of symbolic domination in society through his attitude toward others, as evidenced by his use of language across contexts.

His interactions with his servants, such as Adruman (Horseman), Buhari (Security), and Eramullan (Masjid’s Mukri), demonstrate how he maintains the

status quo of social inequality. Eramullan maintained the Masjid; he did *Azaan*, cleaned and filled the water tank for *Vulu* (for cleaning the body before prayer), and led the cremation process once someone died. Although he is an important person who does extensive work, he is paid less. Andruman is the one who maintained Thangal's horse. He came from Singapore with Thangal. He ensures that the horse is healthy and vigorous for Thangal's daily ride. Buhari is always present at the *Tharavadu* as an ardent security guard; he stays at the *Padippura* (entrance) overnight and guards the *Tharavadu*. All these people serve Thangal in different ways, and he ensures they work for him when he demands it. Thangal calls them with different words like *Hamke*, *Chekuthane*, *Belale*, and *Himare* to dehumanise them in front of others. This is a kind of unequal treatment Thangal gives to them, which ultimately ensures the status difference between Thangal and his servants in society.

A comprehensive analysis of linguistic power in North Malabar reveals intersecting mechanisms through which language simultaneously marks and reproduces caste, class, and gender hierarchies. As Brown and Gilman (as cited in Mesthrie et al., 2000, p. 310) theorise, power operates through non-reciprocal relationships wherein dominant speakers exercise control over subordinated speakers' behaviour. In North Malabar, non-reciprocal power is manifested through various mechanisms. One example is Kunnayan Uppava's dehumanising address of Chekkutti by calling him *Hamke* rather than by his name. This act denies the fisherman's humanity and linguistic personhood, effectively marking him as out of place within shared social spaces. Similarly, Pookkoya Thangal issues imperious

commands to his servants. He refuses to learn their names, addressing them instead with dismissive terms. These actions enact linguistic domination that reinforces class hierarchy through everyday speech. Gender introduces complexity to this analysis. Female characters such as Cheyikkutti display linguistic agency through persuasive and diplomatic language use. Cheyikkutti's effective command of language helps resolve family conflicts. However, this diplomatic labour remains unpaid and unrecognised, indicating that female linguistic agency is accepted only when it upholds patriarchal family structures. Thus, North Malabar dialects function as sites where caste, class, and gender hierarchies are simultaneously expressed, naturalised, and reproduced. This occurs through linguistic choices that grant authority to elite males (Kunnayan Uppava, Pookkoya Thangal, Kunnikkela Kuruppu) while constraining the linguistic agency of women, lower-caste individuals, and the poor.

Sociolinguistics further explores the relationship between language and gender. Language is a tool to perpetuate patriarchal ideologies and ensure the subordination of women within society. A male-dominated society that developed language and vocabulary is highly favourable to male actions and preferences. Dale Spender, in her book *Man-Made Language*, points out that:

By promoting the use of the symbol man at the expense of women, it is clear that the visibility and primacy of males are supported. We learn to see the male as the worthier, more comprehensive, and superior sex as we divide and organise the world along these lines. (as cited in Mesthrie et al., 2000, p. 331)

Robin Lakoff's seminal 1977 work is widely credited with establishing and formalising the modern academic field dedicated to observing and analysing gender differences in language use. He pointed out that the differences were directly related to the relative social power of male speakers and the relative powerlessness of female speakers (Lakoff, 1977, p. 35). Later, researchers argued that men did not prefer certain linguistic forms because they were (biologically) male, but because they aligned with the norms of the culture in which they lived (Coates, 2007). Later observations in this area of the relationship between language and gender led to multiple perspectives, like the deficit approach, the dominance approach, the difference approach, and the social constructionist approach. All these aspects will provide a broader framework for analysing North Malabar dialects and gender relationships. Furthermore, in the North Malabar socio-cultural context of the *Puyapla* system, we could examine how a male-dominated society creates its own space through local dialects. On the other hand, resistance to powerful language and social structure was also found in the selected novels. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the North Malabar local dialects in the process of socio-cultural synthesis emerges.

The deficit approach is the earliest among these, with Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place* presenting initial ideas in this regard. She pointed out that:

The idea of 'women's language' (WL) is characterised by linguistic forms such as hedges, 'empty' adjectives like charming, divine, and nice, and 'talking in italics' (exaggerated intonation contours). WL is described as weak and unassertive, in other words, as deficient. Implicitly, WL is

deficient by comparison with the norm of male language. (Lakoff, 1977, p. 38)

Certain characters in the novels depict women's language, presenting them as weak in comparison to the male characters who appear in their lives.

The character Kunhippennu in Rajasree's *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha* exemplifies a weak voice, representing the silenced or marginalised perspectives within society. Through this, the author highlights the cultural and social contrasts between South and North Kerala, with particular attention to the unique life and practices of North Malabar. Kunhippennu is from Kollam, Southern Kerala, and is a neighbour of Aanikkaran, Dhakshayani's husband. Kunhippennu is married to a military man, and the next day, she begins training herself to become an obedient wife. Rajasree depicts Kunhippennu's unassertiveness or weakness as:

Kunhippennu's permanent expression was one of perpetual worry: 'Oh my deayer Goddessu, whatever is happening?! That expression did not leave her face that night when the soldier pounded her to a pulp as though she were a hard-husked *thettaambaral* nut. She woke up in the morning, got up, went to the bath shed, took a bath with cool water, and turned up at the kitchen. In other words, it was like taking an insurance policy. That is, Kunhippennu herself was to never really lay her hands on the savings, ever; but she kept making payments. In the middle, all sort of weighty events passed. All through, Kunhippennu lived through substantial existential crises. (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 204)

The author details how women become weak and unassertive when they assume the role of wife in accordance with societal demands. They are too busy as homemakers, even forgetting about themselves and their identity, as Rajasree quoted

“Kunhipenninu pinne swayam kandu kittiyathe illa” [That is Kunnippennu herself was to never really lay her hands on the savings, ever; but she kept making payments] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 204). Once her husband left for work, she was alone and cared for Chitrasenan, her elder brother, and her mother-in-law.

Chitrasenan was not married, and during his thirties, he became a victim of police violence due to political activities. Once Kunhipennu came to this house, they had a good friendship. There was a custom in which widowed women married their husband’s brother, thereby avoiding the loss of family property to outsiders.

Kunhipennu faces the patriarchal custom requiring her to marry her husband's brother. The author reflects on how social customs silence women's voices while benefiting men. Customs developed in patriarchal societies fulfil male needs while perpetuating female weakness and institutional subordination. Here, no one speaks up for women, and no one listens. *“Aarodu Parayan?”* [to whom should I say] - Kunhipennu expressed her helplessness to Chitrasenan once he asked: “If you didn’t like yit, you could’ve said that when you wrote yit Kunnipenne?” (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 220). While Southern Kerala promoted the remarriage of women to the husband's siblings and weakened her agency, North Malabar practised the matrilineal system, particularly among the Nair and Mappila communities. Women are granted power in family, descent, and inheritance through the female line, thereby empowering women. However, there are some occasions where male dominance still works.

Aaminumma is another female character who demonstrates a deficit in language use: she is weak and unassertive, particularly in front of Aboobakker Haaji, a pattern that stems from her social situation. *Aroottikkatt Tharavad* Aboobakker Haaji was a distant relative of Aaminumma, daughter of Kunnayan Uppava. Aaminumma was alone with her daughter, Safiya, when her husband left for Rangoon immediately after marriage and never returned. Aaminumma was highly dependent on Aboobakker Haaji for her daughter's marriage arrangements. She believes that, since her father has passed away, no one else can arrange her daughter's marriage except Aboobakker Haaji. Aboobakker Haaji exploits Aaminumma's vulnerability and dependency to appropriate her properties. Aboobaker Haaji planned to acquire Aaminumma's old house after Safiya's marriage. Then, he wanted to build a mansion in the same place for his son Jamal with the help of his father-in-law, Kunnabdulla. Therefore, Aboobakker Haaji arranged a groom for Safiya from the South, as the bride is taken with the groom after marriage; thus, he could seize Aaminumma's house and property. Aboobakker Haaji dominated the situation of Aaminumma and her dependency upon Haaji. This is explicit in Aaminunna's reply to Haaji on this proposal:

All of you must carefully deliberate and decide the path forward. You must investigate the facts, take action, and accomplish the task for me. What authority do I possess today, living as I am, dependent on the goodwill of others? Who besides you is left to execute this decision and provide for my sustenance? (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 43; translated from the original Malayalam text).

Deficits in female voices result from social conditions created around women.

Aaminumma depends on Abookker Haaji because she lives without any financial or mental support from anyone, like her husband or any family or blood relatives.

Therefore, she is compelled to obey Aboobakker Haaji's instructions and accept his demands.

The second approach to analysing the relationship between language and gender is the dominance perspective, whereby the male voice is privileged over the female voice, as women are subordinate to men. According to Coates, she points out that:

Researchers use this model to show how male dominance is enacted through linguistic practice, as 'Doing power' is often a way of 'doing gender too'.

Moreover, all participants in the discourse, women as well as men, collude in sustaining and perpetuating male dominance and female oppression. (Coates, 2007, p. 65)

The practice of the *Puyapla* system provides more room for the male part to dominate over women, where a lot of linguistic coinages related to marriage practices keep males on top compared to women. The male voices of Aanikkaran, Arakkal Pookkoya Thanga, and Aboobakker Haaji convey a broad sense of how they dominated their female counterparts in the North Malabar language. In addition, several women around them agreed with this domination and facilitated the same.

Abdulla's two daughters, Hairu and Ramla, need two grooms, and brokers find two: *Puyapla* Jamal, son of *Aroottikkattu* Aboobakker Haaji, and Yusuf, son of Manammal Mammu Haaji. These marriage proposals and the associated functions are detailed in the Novel *Khuraishikkootam* by U.A. Khader. Grooms (*Puyapla*) receive priority in all marriage ceremonies, as reflected in the linguistic vocabulary that privileges male status. After marriage, they are provided with good facilities such as Ara, and are treated with *Thakkaram* [an exceptional meal prepared specifically for the groom]. Khader (1974/2012, p. 27; translated from the original Malayalam work) details Ara as:

That room was absolutely magnificent; no other groom in the village has ever received such a beautiful bridal chamber. It was an air-conditioned room, featuring Kashmir carpets, satin curtains on the window, matching bedspreads and pillows, sofa sets, and Sunmica [laminated] furniture full of countless modern comforts.

Linguistic diversity around the *Puyapla* system establishes male dominance, with men receiving fewer privileges than those explicitly stated in words such as *Puyapla Thakkaram*. Here, both the bride and the groom attend the party, but the event is known as *Puyapla Thakkaram*; thus, women are still excluded from the terminology.

Aboobakker Haaji, Jamal's father, appears in the same novel, *Khuraishikkootam*, and is very proud of his *Tharavadu* and its status. Aboobakker employs a tone of male dominance and references *Tharavadu*'s status in his conversations. He dominates over his distant relative Aaminumma, as she is a helpless woman and is facing a lot of problems, especially in arranging a marriage

for her daughter, Safiya. Aboobakker Haaji used this opportunity to acquire her properties by exploiting Aaminumma's weakness. Once he shared these details with Kunnabdulla, Jamal's father-in-law, to hint at his intention to build a house for Jamal on Aaminumma's property. When Kunnabdulla asked: "*Puyaplana kanda karyom aalochicha kaaryom pengalodu paranna? Olik athu ishtapetta.*" [Did you discuss the matter of seeing the groom with your sister? She liked him] (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 71; author's translation). Aboobakker Haaji replied: "What relevance is her approval? I will inform her now. I will inform her that we have found a suitable groom, and I will proceed to finalise the match. Once I announce it, Aaminumma will not oppose it. No one will have the power to object" (Khader, 1974/2012, p. 71; author's translation). The dominant power of Aboobakker Haaji is derived from his social status, as he was a member of the Aroottikkattu *Tharavadu*. He believes he is dominant compared with an ordinary man within the *Tharavadu*. Furthermore, Aaminumma is helpless, and Aboobakker ensures that Aaminumma will obey him. This is how the dominance of the male voice is perpetuated in society, and those around it support it.

The 'Difference' approach is the third perspective on the relationship between gender and language. According to Jennifer Coates,

The different approach emphasises the idea that women and men belong to different subcultures. The invisibility of women in the past arose from the conflation of 'culture' with 'male culture'... But women began to assert that they had 'a different voice, a different psychology, and a different experience of love, work, and the family from men'. The advantage of the difference

model is that it allows women's talk to be examined outside a framework of oppression or powerlessness. Instead, researchers have been able to show the strengths of linguistic strategies characteristic of women and to celebrate women's ways of talking (Coates, 2007, p. 65).

The difference method is crucial in analysing women's writings on women in North Malabar. Rajasree has introduced strong female characters who are empowered and create their own space in the social structure. Kalyani, Dhakshayani, Cheyikkutti, Nalini, Kunhippenpu, etc., could be analysed using this difference method to explore the nuances of women's activities and the power dynamics surrounding women's space.

The relationship between mother and daughter can be analysed using this framework of difference. Kalyani's mother was a typical woman who was institutionalised in a patriarchal society. The family's social position and surrounding poverty compel her to arrange Kalyani's marriage as early as possible. At the same time, they did not regard Koppukaran's second marriage as an impediment to this marriage. When Kalyani leaves Koppukaran's house and returns to her own home due to marital conflict, her mother becomes very upset, quarrels with her, and curses her for this action. She says: "*Nee ante molalla, ninte kunnelu mamannmaru parannathu sheriyanu. Nee assalu thullachiyayippoyi. Ingane onnine nan pettittilla*" [Yuh are NOT my daughter! Amma had declared. Wha'yer uncles saidabbou' yuh whe' yuh were small ha' come true. Yuh've becoe a sham'less hussy! I hab not giben birth to somethin' lik' thi'] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p.150).

Once Cheyikkutti came to Kalyani's house to take her back to Koppukaran's house,

Kalyani was reluctant to go. Then Kalyani's mother responded, "*Begam keenu poykko polayadichi...poyittillengil kolluvane naninna*" [Better get out and leave soon, you dirty swine. If you don't, I'll kill you] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 154). The relationship developed between Kalyani and her mother is an impact of patriarchal social life; however, it also conveys the idea that women are the ultimate victims of poverty in all aspects, where Kalyani's mother compels her to escape from the poverty of their house. This implies that women's conditions can be understood only by another woman, as men cannot fully comprehend them.

Cheyikkutti and her daughters, Nalini and Vanaja, depict a different kind of relationship from that of Kalyani and her mother. Nalini is an egoistic character characterised by jealousy and an inferiority complex, as evidenced by her actions. The author described her through the words of Cheyikkutti while scolding Nalini, "*Andham illathatha kalikalikkaruketta*" [Stop the silly game] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 38). Vanaja was upset about not getting an opportunity to accompany the advance party (a Group of people who make up the bride in marriage). She believes they neglected her because her husband was not wealthy. They did not consider her opinion while arranging the marriage, so she chose not to participate. Additionally, her husband attended the wedding. As a result, Cheyikkutti replied to her as

Uh! I'll knock your tooth down, you pestilence! So *thath's* your problem? You banted to be pushing and shoving both the forty pimple in that Jeep? Tell me your problem's both Narayanan, can't you be with him for his big day? Ever heard a sister not going to her brother's wedding? *Stopp*

rightthhere! I'll gibe ith to yuh in good'ttime! I'm not slappin'yyer face onnll' becos they're comin'nnow. (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 38).

Cheyikkutti scolds Nalini for her cheap, egoistic attitude and warns that she will be treated poorly for this later. In another scene, Nalini shows her jealousy towards Kalyani, then Cheyikkutti replies as "*Koranna nayippalla oldethu, nodiyandu poykkolnam*" [Her toilin isn't sumething ordinary! Yuh justh finish tha bisness yuh came for an' clear out, alrighth?] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 49). Nalini's thoughts and actions offer a new perspective on women's space, one that has not taken patriarchal ideology into account. Further, the world of women with jealousy, ego, and possessiveness comes into play in the surroundings of women; this could be considered a subculture of women, which is observed from a woman's perspective. In contrast, we find that Dhakshayani's relationship with her mother is strongly influenced by patriarchal consciousness. Dhakshayani's mother has been typically institutionalised by patriarchy, where she perpetuates the system in her own way. Once, Dhakshayani had an issue with Aanikkaran; her mother supported Aanikkaran and agreed with whatever he said about Dhakshayani's behaviour. In short, women's lives and experiences in the North Malabar social context can be analysed exclusively within the confines of their subcultural space. However, influences of patriarchal notions could be found in women's lives as they are institutionalised in the social structures.

The social constructionist approach is a recent development in sociolinguistics, in which gender is constructed through language use and, in turn, perpetuated by it. According to Coates (2007, p. 66), "Gender identity is seen as a

social construct rather than as a 'given' social category. Furthermore, as West and Zimmerman (1987) eloquently put it, "Speakers should be seen as 'doing gender' rather than statically 'being' a particular gender" (as cited in Coates 2007, p. 66). This approach will indicate the manifestation of gender in society, as genders use different words and pronunciations, thereby helping to identify how gender is constructed. Therefore, the social construction of politeness through language among women in the North Malabar social context can be analysed to understand gender expressions in language use.

Expressions of Politeness in the use of words and pronunciations are influenced by gender norms, where societal expectations shape how men and women communicate in various contexts. According to Swann (2000, p. 230), "Some researchers have drawn on politeness theory to interpret women's and men's language use." Whereas Lakoff (1977, p. 52) argued that "part of women's social role was that of 'arbiter of morality, judge of manners, and this encouraged them to be linguistically polite.'" In addition, Swann draws on the analysis from the study of Penelope Brown in Tenejapa, a Mayan community in Mexico. Swann says:

Brown uses the model of politeness developed with Stephen Levinson, in which politeness is described as showing concern for people's 'face', and two types of politeness are distinguished: positive politeness, which has to do with the expression of warmth or friendliness towards others; and negative politeness, which has to do with not imposing on others, or threatening their face. (Swann 2000, p. 230)

This positive politeness is the key feature of women's linguistic uses found in the study. Therefore, politeness expressed through language is more prominent among females than among males. Furthermore, North Malabar society, with the *Puyapla* system, will leave traces of politeness in women's language, which requires an even more detailed analysis.

Rajasree introduced a symbolic woman character, Kamala, the wife of Lakshmanan, who was polite in her actions. The author compares Kamala to Kalyani and emphasises that society requires women to be disciplined and courteous in their conduct, as Kalyani does not meet this standard. Rajasree describe that,

The whole desham had agreed in theory that Kamala suited Lakshmanan really well. Most members of her family were pretty well-off, but her father was the best-endowed koppu-owner of the whole lot. From her babyhood, her father had been at Kamala's beck and call. There were no other heirs to the ragi-porridge that her mother made for her. She had many uncles, but they weren't in Congress. These uncles never had to tie her to a pillar to give her a hiding. (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 179).

Rajasree described Kamala as an ideal woman and raised her in a highly disciplined manner, so that no one held unfavourable opinions of her behaviour. She embodies the qualities society expects of a wife and employs polite language to describe Kamala's behaviour. Kamala says: “‘Will he wasthe away?’ She thought to herself. What could she do to keep his strength” (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 185). After a while, the kitchen in Cheyikkutti's house became active, and Kamala began to work there. Rajasree reported that Kamala inquired about each kitchen item to prepare a

better dish for her husband. She asked: “Bhere is the garlic? Crush a littlde garlic between yer fingers and put ith in tha fish curry, it tasthes real good.” (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 185). These descriptions reveal the gender roles constructed in the North Malabar society and employ these terms to convey the politeness expressed by Kamala. At the same time, Kamala communicated the same with Kalyani, who was sitting near the kitchen, and then Cheyikkutti immediately responded, “*Aarodannu nee koottu kareede karyam pareennu? Parambeennu kerathollu endu kari? Endu choru?*” [Who ar’ yuh askin’ abouth tha koothu-curry? Wha’ curry fer those who won’t come inside’ tha ‘ouse eber? Who’s forber sthayin’ outsid’? Wha’ terakki rice?] (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 186). Here, Cheyikkutti believes that a good woman should also be a good homemaker, capable of handling kitchen tasks and cooking well, whereas Kalyani is not perfect in this regard.

Beeder Thitheebeyumma, a character in *Oru Padakali Penninte Charitham*, written by U.A. Kahder, serves as a symbolic representation of a typical housewife. She was highly conscious of meeting her husband, Alavikkutti Haji's, needs. Beeder believes she is doing the best for her husband, and he is happy with what is given. After Beeder and her son went on the Hajj to Mecca, a new servant, Mariyam, joined the *Tharavadu*. She was brilliant and adept at addressing the needs of Alavikkutti Haji. Therefore, it was an insight for Haji, as whatever he had so far was not the best thing he could have. As a result, Haaji enjoyed the days of Mariyam’s presence in the *Tharavadu*, and he wished for her presence in *Tharavadu* always. When Beeder returned from Hajj, she noticed a new presence of mind and freshness in Alavikkutti Haji's demeanour. Although she had expected him to be weary and

perhaps neglectful in her absence, she discovered that his emotional engagement with her had diminished. When Beeder identified the role of Mariyam in *Tharavadu* and the life of Haaji, she decided to compromise her ego for her husband and said to Mariyam, “Mariyam, I need you to handle everything for the family. Just make sure it's all supervised by you” (Khader, 2007/2013, p. 52; author’s translation).

Therefore, Beeder Thithiyumma demonstrates politeness in her actions to ensure that Alavikkuti Haji experiences maximum happiness. Furthermore, we can connect these points to Swann's (2000) analysis, which builds on Holmes's idea that women show more positive politeness than men and greater concern for listeners. Politeness attached to women's talk functions as a social construct through which society demands female softness and obedience, enabling male perpetuation of dominance. Thus, men could perpetuate their dominance in the social order. Furthermore, when women are polite, it often benefits men. Therefore, it cannot be quantified as a weakness; rather, it reflects their care and love for those around them.

This chapter examines the syncretic elements of language in the context of linguistic diversity and the uniqueness of North Malabar's local dialects. The natives adopted foreign words into their daily conversations, resulting in multilingualism in North Malabar society. The presence of words from Arabic, Persian, Kannada, Tulu, Urdu, and Tamil demonstrates the North Malabar community's openness to accommodating visitors. Writers from North Malabar depict linguistic diversity in their novels. These literary works expose the multiculturalism of North Malabar through the migrations of natives to Burma, Malaysia, the Middle East, Rangoon, Kolkata, and northern India, and their subsequent returns to North Malabar.

Religious harmony and cultural synthesis in North Malabar may be among the significant outcomes of this multicultural and multilingual social experience, as linguistic boundaries among people are very narrow, with diverse combinations of words used. In short, there is a speech community in North Malabar that shares common interests, values, and interpretations, as reflected in the region's local dialects.

The oral functions of the North Malabar dialects are another essential feature that distinguishes them. Researchers justify this argument by analysing offensive words in regional dialects and their contextual differences in meaning. It was found that people use profanity not primarily to insult others, but rather to provide context and maintain the conversational flow. In some cases, people use these words habitually or as a style of speaking, as in Arakkal Pookkoya Thangal. Furthermore, foreign obscene words are also used as they become part of daily conversations among natives. Words such as *Ibleese*, *Hamuk*, and *Belal* convey contextual meaning and emotional nuance.

The concept of regional dialectology highlights the unique features of the local dialects of North Malabar, which exhibit linguistic diversity. Many word combinations in North Malabar are meaningful in this social context, as they convey region-specific messages. A critical sociolinguistic approach provides a detailed analysis of language and power dynamics in North Malabar, elucidating how linguistic practices perpetuate inequalities rooted in class, occupation, and *Tharavadu* status. Detailed observations using the methods of deficit, dominance, difference, and the constructionist approach provided a comprehensive

understanding of how gender manifests through language and is perpetuated in society. Women's space functions as a subculture enabling analysis of how women negotiate identity within patriarchal constraints. In addition, politeness is expressed and practised through local dialects of North Malabar, which further highlights women's broad-mindedness. Gender hierarchies are exercised through language, in combination with caste, class, and occupational hierarchies, as documented throughout this chapter. Kunhippennu's linguistic deficit results not solely from gender but from compound subordination: she is a South Keralalite (geographic/cultural marker), poor and dependent (class), and female (gender). Similarly, Aaminumma's voicelessness stems from multiple intersecting constraints: her status as a widow (occupational change), her economic dependence (class), her gender, and her lower *Tharavadu* standing, relative to Aboobakker Haaji's elite family. Conversely, Cheyikkutti's linguistic authority derives from multiple sources: her status as an elder (age), her presumed economic security (class), and her maternal/domestic authority (gender role within patriarchy). These examples demonstrate that language operates as the primary mechanism through which intersecting hierarchies are simultaneously expressed, reproduced, and naturalised. North Malabar dialects thus function not as simple tools for communication but as sophisticated vehicles through which caste, class, gender, occupational status, religious identity, and regional origin are marked, negotiated, and institutionalised within the composite culture.

In conclusion, the North Malabar language has played a crucial role in fostering a synthesis of social life across communities. People extensively use local

dialects to express their feelings and emotions; thus, language functions in both cooperative and conflictual contexts. In short, this chapter identifies the diverse functions of North Malabar local dialects, in which language functions as a tool for power, exercising inequality among people, and dominance over subordinates. In addition, subordinates are institutionalised within this system and perpetuate it. Language serves as the primary mechanism through which patriarchal, caste, and class hierarchies are reproduced, institutionalised, and naturalised within North Malabar society.

CHAPTER IV

MULTIPLE MODERNITIES IN NORTH MALABAR

This chapter analyses the multiple forms of resistance to the hierarchies and modes of dominance within the syncretic social structure of North Malabar.

Patriarchy, the caste system, and class divisions based on wealth, status, and power, as well as the *Tharavadu*, are identified as central forces in North Malabar society. Furthermore, language is recognised as a tool for explicitly enforcing these hierarchies.

Oppressed communities challenge these forms of dominance and their mechanisms of enforcement. This resistance is fuelled by religious beliefs, education, and employment, as well as a quest for material resources, land, dignity, and freedom. A study of these literary depictions reveals multiple modernities that mirror the social changes that occurred during twentieth-century North Malabar.

The chapter decodes the patriarchal dominance that existed within this matrilineal society and its impact on the lives of women in different social contexts. It examines how wealth, status, and power, together with the *Tharavadu*, functioned to dehumanise oppressed communities. Additionally, this analysis examines the caste system and its interactions with patriarchy and the *Tharavadu*. The unique forms of modernity found in North Malabar illustrate how modernity varies across multiple factors, producing diverse outcomes. In sum, this chapter decodes the multiple hierarchies operating in North Malabar and the resistance against these

dominant forces, which ultimately highlights the social transformations of the region.

Patriarchy is a significant mechanism of power within the hierarchical structure of North Malabar. It operates within the region's multiple social structures, manifesting in distinct ways. A male-dominated society influences females to create a situation that supports male dominance and its continuations. If they resist the structure, multiple actions are used to ensure the institutionalisation of a patriarchal system. It is assumed that the matrilineal system in North Malabar afforded women greater social equality. Furthermore, matrilineal social culture is evident and dominant in the social landscape of North Malabar, particularly among the Nayar, Thiyya, and Mappila Muslim communities. However, scholarly evidence demonstrates that the matrilineal system of North Malabar perpetuated patriarchal authority, as evidenced by the Karanavar's role in the family, which was held by the eldest men (Devika, J. 2007, p. 56).

The "matrilineal system" is a term derived from the Latin roots "mater," meaning "mother," and the suffix "-lineal," relating to line or lineage. Goettner-Abendroth (2012, p. 15) points out that the matrilineal system specifically refers to kinship and descent systems in which lineage, inheritance, and social affiliation are traced exclusively or predominantly through the female line, the mother and her descendants. The structural definitions of matriarchal societies given by Goettner-Abendroth elaborate that:

At the economic level, it is societies of economic mutuality, based on the circulation of gifts. At the social level, it is a non-hierarchical, horizontal

society organised around matrilineal kinship. At the political level, it is an egalitarian society of consensus. At the spiritual and cultural level, it is the sacred societies and cultures of the Feminine Divine. (Goettner-Abendroth, 2012, p. 15)

In other words, the matrilineal system is a kinship and social organisation in which descent, inheritance, and membership are traced exclusively or primarily through the female line (Goettner-Abendroth 2012). In this system, individuals belong to their mother's lineage, and property, titles, and social status are inherited by children, particularly daughters, from their mothers. This system emphasises the importance of maternal kinship ties over paternal ones and often features practices such as matrilineal residence, where families live with or near the mother's relatives (Goettner-Abendroth 2012). This ideal definition of the matrilineal system may not be implemented perfectly in every society. Given multiple influencing factors, these elements may be practised across societies in varying forms, with North Malabar exhibiting diversity in its matrilineal practices. The matrilineal system in North Malabar, known as *Marumakkathayam* (succession through nephews), represents a distinctive form of kinship organisation where descent and inheritance are traced through the maternal line rather than the paternal line. This system was particularly practised among the Nayars and other communities in the Malabar region of Kerala (Gopal Panikar, 1900, p. 19). The unique importance of the matrilineal system of inheritance in Kerala faded around the first half of the twentieth century. Until then, the Nair community of Kerala, as a whole, regardless of the North-South divide, and other prominent caste-religious communities such as the Thiyya, Namboodiri, and

Mappila communities of North Malabar, followed a matrilineal system of inheritance (Menon, 1994, pp. 140-142). However, what stands out among these is the Mappila Matrilineal system, which persists throughout much of North Malabar (Sirajudheen, 2019, p. 341). According to Sirajudheen (2019, p. 343, translated from the original Malayalam article),

The North Malabar Mappila's embrace of the in-law should be seen as a reflection of the vibrancy and practical outlook of Islam, as a culture and a way of life, not a deviation from Islam. As a result of Islam's long-standing direct cultural and trade ties with Malabar society, Muslims acculturated into the local culture and daily life customs of the natives. Therefore, the matrilineal system developed among the Mappila Muslims of North Malabar. Still, they were highly concerned about avoiding potential conflicts with the fundamental principles of Islam in such a lifestyle. Although the matrilineal system accorded priority to the Karanavar, it preserved the father's authority as the guardian of the daughter's marriage. It sought to clearly distinguish hereditary from acquired property in cases of inheritance. All these ensured their concern to avoid conflicts with Islamic rules and regulations and to maintain their commitment to local cultural life.

The findings from the study of Sirajudheen highlight the composite cultural aspects of the matrilineal system. The matrilineal system and its matrilocal elements found among the Mappila Muslims in North Malabar are an excellent example of compositeness. The integration strategy in acculturation is evident in this context, where the Mappila Muslim community maintained Islamic values while

incorporating local cultural elements of North Malabar. In addition, the matrilineal system found among other communities in North Malabar is diverse and multifunctional.

The matrilineal system of North Malabar varies across communities. According to P Munniyoor (2019, p. 313; translated from the original Malayalam article)

The matrilineal system is generally interpreted as reflecting both female and male dominance. In this system, there are clans in which women are granted full authority, and systems that confer power on the eldest son of the family's female member. In the Arakkal dynasty of Kannur, women retain full authority. Adiraja Zainaba Aisha Beewi rules the current Arakkal dynasty. At the same time, in the Chirakkal dynasties of Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, and Kozhikode, the eldest son of the family's female member would rule. The governance of these families aims to fulfil the needs of all members and manage the expenses required by all. The matrilineal system is partially practised by some *Tharavadu* today, who do not follow inheritance and property control as per the matrilineal structure.

This shows that the matrilineal system across communities in North Malabar does not exhibit a familiar pattern, in which descent, inheritance, and membership are not exclusively or primarily traced through the female line. Furthermore, P Munniyoor presents his findings on the impact of matrilineal systems across communities. He (2019, p. 312; translated from the original Malayalam article) points out that:

The matrilineal system is found among multiple communities, like Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. The *Puyapla* system, the Ara system, and shifting locations are found primarily among the Mappila Muslims of North Malabar. This shift in area by the groom of the Mappila community renders the Mappila community politically weaker than other communities in Kannur. Furthermore, the matrilineal system supports the development of the Party *Gramam*¹ of the Communist Party of Kerala in Kannur, North Malabar. Mappila Muslims and the Hindu communities equally support this party. However, the matrilineal system of the Hindu community contributed more to this Party *Gramam*, as they did not follow shifts in location and remained together as a single family. The women were granted inheritance rights, and the eldest son served as Karanavar; thus, the Karanavar's political affiliations were extended to all members of the family. Pinarayi and Thillankeri are examples of such a *Gramam*.

The North Malabar community employed matrilineal systems at multiple levels. Therefore, it cannot be argued that this society is following an idealised form of the matrilineal system as articulated by Goettner-Abendroth (2012). Furthermore, patriarchal dominance and authoritarianism are evident across multiple structures in this analysis of the selected novels. Therefore, the matrilineal system does not ensure an egalitarian society; men still hold positions of power, and their authority is transmitted through the maternal line and the matrilineal lineage. To understand the nuances of patriarchy and its practices within the matrilineal system, Walby's theory

¹ A village fully under control of one single party and they become ultimate authority in most of the local affairs.

of patriarchy is examined in detail. Walby's six-structure model of patriarchy serves to decode the theory of "patriarchy," the multiple patriarchal elements, and how it works to dominate over women.

The theoretical framework of "patriarchy" is taken from the writings of Sylvia Walby (1989, pp. 213-234). She opined that patriarchy should be analysed beyond the base-super structural model, thus providing lateral thinking, which serves to facilitate the complexities and nuances of the relationships. She introduced six structures of patriarchy which accommodate multiple aspects of patriarchy. They are: the patriarchal mode of production; patriarchal relations in paid work; patriarchal relations in the state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions, such as religion, the media, and education (Walby, 1989, p. 214). The patriarchal mode of production introduced by Walby operates at the economic level, where the financial self-sufficiency of women declines, creating a dependency on men for their daily needs, thus leading to subjugation and deprivation. Walby explains that:

Women's labour is expropriated by their husbands within the marriage and household relationship. The defining feature is the relations of production under which the work is performed, rather than the tasks which constitute the work. The work performed by the woman may range from cooking and cleaning for the husband to caring for their children. Women, as housewives, perform this work for husbands (and, in certain circumstances, as daughters for fathers)... She is not rewarded with money for this labour, merely her

maintenance (sometimes). Rather, it is part of the marriage relations between a husband and wife. (Walby, 1989, p. 221)

The society created the notion that women are responsible for caring for men and their children, ensuring that all their needs are met. This narrative is the creation of a male-dominated society; they expropriated women's labour and gave them no credit or awards. In addition, Walby opined that:

Thus far, the structure of housework has been specified theoretically. There are three stages to my claim: firstly, that the domestic division of labour is a major form of differentiation of men and women; secondly, that this has significant effects on other aspects of social relations; thirdly, that this in itself is a form of significant inequality. (Walby, 1989, p. 222)

Once the domestic division of labour creates inequality between partners, the woman is burdened with more work; time poverty compels her to compromise her personal growth. Therefore, it affects their performance in the workplace; lack of skills and qualifications, as well as poor performance, undermines their prospects for their desired job.

Patriarchal relations in paid work form the second patriarchal structure at the economic level. According to Walby,

The key feature of patriarchal relations in paid work is the closure of access by men against women. This involves the exclusion of women from paid work or the segregation of women within it. This leads to the devaluation of women's work and low wages for women, which itself becomes a social fact

with determinate effects, not only on women's paid work, but in other areas, including the domestic sphere and other aspects of gender relations. The social relations are between the excluder and devaluer, men, on the one hand, and the excluded and devalued, women, on the other. (Walby, 1989, p. 223)

The pink-collar jobs are a good example of this structure, where teachers, nurses, and air hostesses are explicitly preferred by women. These jobs require a more polite demeanour, an attractive appearance, and less masculine body types, and offer lower pay than their male counterparts. All these norms are manifestations of a male-dominated society, which objectifies women's bodies and devalues their skills, as it denotes that they are doing something similar to what they did back home.

Therefore, the patriarchal relations of paid work will economically weaken and subjugate women's quality of time and skills.

Patriarchal relations in the state are the third point that Walby highlights in her analysis. She points out that:

The state is another patriarchal structure. Its impact on gender relations is not a consequence of it also being a capitalist state, but of the patriarchal nature of the state. Women are excluded from access to state resources and power as part of a patriarchal system. This is only partly due to women being relatively excluded from a direct presence in the state, but also, more significantly, as a result of their lack of power within the gendered political forces brought to bear on the state. Patriarchal closure against women in the key decision-making arenas of the state can be found in a variety of constituent practices. (Walby, 1989, p. 224)

Most states represent the voice of male dominance and subjugate the female voices. Women's concerns are often ignored when rules and regulations are created, as women are underrepresented in their development. For example, a gender-neutral budget is proposed by a parliament with less than 20 per cent female participation. The representation and the power to use it are necessary to ensure a more egalitarian society and to reduce patriarchal relations within the state.

Men's violence is the fourth type of patriarchal structure identified by Walby. She states that:

Men use violence as a form of power over women. Not all men actively need to use this potential power for it to have an impact on most women. It has a regular social form and, as a result of women's well-founded expectations of its routine nature, has consequences for women's actions. It is constituted as a set of various practices, including rape, wife beating, father/daughter incest, flashing, sexual harassment at work, and sexual assault. (Walby, 1989, p. 225).

Male dominance is sometimes practised through the masculine power of men, where they spread violence against women to suppress and create fear of pain if they act against the wishes of their male counterparts. This diminishes their right to live with dignity and to exercise freedom of expression, further compromising their peaceful lives.

Patriarchal relations in sexuality are the fifth structure introduced by Walby and are closely related to the previous one. Walby analysed the existing viewpoints

of Millett (1977) in the early period of second-wave feminism, and more recent radical feminist theorists such as MacKinnon (1982), thus concluding that their views are narrow, as they focus on sexuality as the primary cause of women's subjugation. Therefore, Walby opined that:

Sexuality needs to be identified separately, not conflated with gender itself. Its historically variable significance for women's subordination means that it needs to be specified as a separate structure. Hence, I am arguing that sexuality is a separate structure and should not be conflated with other aspects of women's subordination. (Walby, 1989, p. 226).

She also tries to give a holistic approach towards narrow definitions of Patriarchy and its relations with sexuality. Thus, she prioritises the elements of patriarchy activated through sexuality as a separate structure.

Patriarchal culture is the final structure that Walby identifies in her analysis. This structure comprises a relatively diverse set of patriarchal practices. They are essential for shaping gendered subjectivity and for distinguishing genders at an experiential level. Patriarchal culture is best analysed as a set of discourses that are institutionally rooted, rather than as an ideology that is either free-floating or economically determined (Walby, 1989). Walby opined that:

There is more than one discourse on femininity and masculinity. They vary by age, class, and ethnicity in particular. Religions have historically been very important patriarchal discourses, laying down correct forms of conduct for men and women. The educational system has been important in both

differentiating men and women and providing men with more credentials.

The forms of closure against women are usually more subtle because of the explicit discourse of 'meritorious achievement' (Walby, 1989, p. 227).

However, it is found that the discourses on femininity and masculinity are institutionalised in all sites of social life, not only in those institutions such as religions, media, and education, which have cultural production as a central goal. Therefore, the aim of introducing this six-structure is to provide an ideal framework for the future evolution of multiple forms of patriarchal structures. In this regard, Walby points out that:

Patriarchy can take different forms; it is not a universalistic notion, despite the arguments of critics. The different forms are dependent upon the interaction of patriarchal structures set out earlier. In different times and places, some of the structures are more important than others. The elimination of any one patriarchal structure does not lead to the demise of the system as a whole (Walby, 1989, p. 228).

Therefore, identifying patriarchal attitudes across multiple structures is challenging, as there is no universal framework. Within sociocultural and historical contexts, different forms of patriarchal structures emerge across societies. Similarly, Walby points out that:

Logically, there could be many forms, since I have identified six structures of patriarchy, and two other major systems with which it has been in articulation. The two main types are those of public and private patriarchy.

Private patriarchy is based upon the relative exclusion of women from arenas of social life apart from the household, with a patriarch appropriating women's service individually and directly in the private sphere of the home. Public patriarchy does not exclude women from certain sites, but rather subordinates women in all of them. In this form, the appropriation of women takes place more collectively than individually (Walby, 1989, p. 228).

In short, the multiple aspects of patriarchal practices are not limited to a few structures, but the changing social scenario is creating new opportunities for patriarchy. The various elements are joined to construct a back support and narratives of such patriarchal actions, which can be identified across multiple societies. Therefore, patriarchal elements within matrilineal North Malabar society warrant detailed analysis. The numerous nuances of patriarchy within the matrilineal system of North Malabar can be examined using Walby's framework; however, regional perspectives on patriarchy within this system require accommodation.

Patriarchal power relations in North Malabar are prevalent in most of the primary texts used in this study. According to J. Devika, "The figure of the fear-inspiring *karanavan*, the head of the joint family demanding total obedience from younger members, is also commonly to be found in autobiographies of individuals who lived in these times." (Devika, J. 2007, p. 56). Male members controlling matrilineal families create spaces for domination over other household members, even when eldest females participate in decision-making. While women held property through the female line in matrilineal inheritance, their economic survival depended on the *karanavan's* decision to provide maintenance. Young members had

no independent claim to resources; all resources were controlled by the male household head (Devika, J. 2007, pp. 56-58). In medieval Kerala, political power and control of economic resources were not always male preserves. However, the authority of female rulers and the very possibility of their succeeding to full political power waned steadily throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Devika, J. 2007, pp. 57-59). In addition, even as women retained formal property rights, ideology restructured their authority into the "private" domestic sphere only, while men monopolised all "public" authority over resources, politics, and knowledge. Patriarchal attitudes combined with the power of *Adhikari*, *Tharavadu*, wealth, and status create different kinds of dominance over lower-class or caste people, women, and other weaker sections. Therefore, these dominant tendencies and their forms vary over time, as resistance and voices against suppression also evolve in this context. Hence, patriarchal authoritativeness, dominant power relations, and practices require an analysis to understand social relations in North Malabar during the twentieth century. The selected primary texts address the historical context of twentieth-century North Malabar society, as reflected in the works published between 1966 and 2023.

Although North Malabar has historically been a matrilineal society, patriarchal structures remain evident. This study demonstrates how subordinate groups often consent to patriarchal ideologies, thereby facilitating their own marginalisation by dominant forces. Rather than identifying a single, uniform patriarchal system, the research reveals multiple, coexisting forms of dominance across the selected novels. Ultimately, these patriarchal attitudes within a matrilineal

framework are distinctive, necessitating a nuanced understanding of how power operates in this specific regional context.

The novel *Changala* depicts the lives of the Muslim community from the 1920s to the 1950s. This effectively portrays society's socio-political conditions, with the Indian independence struggle and the world wars set as the background. The novel depicts the lives, rituals, practices, festivals, customs, and norms of the Muslim community in North Malabar. Kunnamu *Adhikari* is one of the prominent characters in this novel. Kunnamu, ruler of the Kolathu *Tharavadu*, had long held the power of *Adhikari*. Kunnaishumma, mother of Kunnamu, was surrounded by the wealth, status, and pride of *Tharavadu*. She appreciated the power of women within the matrilineal system practised in that society. Andrumankutti, the uncle of Kunnamu, was not chosen as *Adhikari* by his ancestors because he is kind and empathetic. Beevi is the only daughter of Andrumankutti, who lives under the control of Kunnamu *Adhikari* and Kunnaishumma. The patriarchal authoritarianism of Kunnamu and the combination of wealth, status, and power of *Adhikari* manifest a dominating tendency in Kunnamu. Thus, the cultural and historical context of Kunnamu *Adhikari*'s dominant power functions like a dictator and ensures that actions are carried out according to his wishes. Hence, he uses this power to humiliate Andrumankutti, Beevi, and many others.

Kunnamu and his ancestors were very rude toward the people and the society under their rule. According to Rahman (1966/2013, p. 19; translated from the original Malayalam article),

Changala is centred on the power of a local ruler during the pre-independence period. Such Muslim rulers were numerous in North Malabar. They felt proud of torturing people, harassing women, and killing people to satisfy their vengefulness. They are positioned at the top in managing the Masjid and its needs. Subsequently, religion became a tool to consolidate their power and wealth. Here, Kunnamu *Adhikari* ruled the religious affairs, the Masjid, and the land. All the rights connected with religion and the power of the priesthood were vested in him. This authority oversaw the communal ceremonies of daily life, including prayers, feasts, fasting, and marriage.

This observation elaborates on what Kunnamu *Adhikari* could have done. The patriarchal authoritarianism of Kunnamu *Adhikari* highlights his attitude of subjugating and dehumanising women around him. The structure of the patriarchal mode of production is prevalent in the novel *Changala*, where women are treated as subordinate to men and their needs are fulfilled at the cost of women's lives. Kunnamu's father used women from the family to enhance the family's status by arranging marriages with wealthy families. They will go to any extent to make sure their wishes are fulfilled. Aleema and Subaida were twin sisters who lived in Kolothu *Tharavadu* during Kunnamu's father's time. Kunnamu's father decided to arrange a marriage for them to expand their wealth and status. Meanwhile, Aleema was attracted to one of the Kolkali performers who came to their house for Kolkali. When she conveys the same to the *Karanavar*, the young man is found to be killed on the beachside (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 23). This caused mental trauma to Aleema; she died during her treatment. Subaida also suffered due to the trauma faced by her

sister; she lived in the *Tharavadu* without marriage until she died. Despite living in a matrilineal society, Subaida and Aleema faced a lot of hardship due to the patriarchal authoritarianism of the *Adhikari*. This suggests that the matrilineal system may not meet the definition of an egalitarian society articulated by Goettner-Abendroth. The patriarchal mode of production is found in this social structure, whereby women's lives are compromised to expand the wealth and status of the *Tharavadu*. Kunnamu's father believes their wishes are valued above the lives of women members in the family, and needs to fulfil them. The social system that prioritises patriarchal relations within cultural institutions made this character a dominant personality, further empowered by the *Tharavadu* status and the pride of being an *Adhikari*.

Kadheeja, daughter of Assan Ravuther, came from Palakkad and settled here as a weaver. Kunnamu *Adhikari* arranges her marriage to his worker, Eyyunni. Eyyunni accompanied Kunnamu like a slave and did whatever he needed; he massaged Kunnamu's leg whenever Kunnamu sat. Here, Kunnamu wants Khadeeja as a helper for his mother. Thus, he arranges this marriage to reduce her to slavery within the *Tharavadu*. Therefore, Kunnamu forbids her from becoming pregnant, as it would have affected her service to the family. Whenever she becomes pregnant, Kunnamu gives her some medicine to kill the infant beforehand. Once she found this out, she kept her pregnancy very secret and decided to deliver the baby. Later, she left the *Tharavadu* because it was not possible to give birth there. However, Kunnamu *Adhikari* compels her husband, Eyyunni, to kill the child, but Khadeeja fights back. One day, her dead body is found in the pond of the Masjid (Khader,

1966/2014, p. 37). The patriarchal authority of Kunnamu *Adhikari* made him very adamant about fulfilling his wishes. Khadeeja is a victim of patriarchal violence in a male-dominated society. Khadeeja's independence and agency to become a mother were questioned by the Patriarchal society; the nexus between power and patriarchy worked to subjugate Khadeeja to a life of a lifelong servant without the right to become a mother (Walby, 1989, p. 224). The male is powerful, supported by the state and the cultural reproduction of patriarchal narratives. Thus, women's labour is devalued, and their motherhood is compromised.

Beevi, the daughter of Andrumankutti (uncle of Kunnamu), is another victim of Kunnamu's patriarchal behaviours. Beevi's marriage was arranged without her father's consent, and Kunnamu Adhikari insulted and disregarded Andrumankutti's rights and needs. He wishes to conduct the marriage in the absence of Andrumankutti, but this is not acceptable within the religious framework. Her marriage is fixed with Mammooty, a man with a paralysed hand. Kunnamu prioritises Mammooty's status and wealth, as Mammooty is from the famous Meleppadathu *Tharavadu*. Beevi wished to marry Hyder, a man who maintains the horses at Kolothu *Tharavadu*. However, she did not express her wish because she was aware of Aleema's history. The married life of Mammooty and Beevi was not satisfactory due to the undue influence of social customs within the family. Furthermore, the patriarchal dominant behaviours associated with the *Tharavadu* status caused multiple egos among the family and worsened the condition. The working of patriarchal relations within cultural institutions is highlighted in this context. In North Malabar, many *mamool* practices played important roles in

marriage and beyond; the groom and his family held an upper hand over the bride's family. Once Kolothu *Tharavadu* missed some mamool, Meleppadathu Andu Haji did not allow Mammooty to visit his wife's house. Further, Andu Haji did not even enable Mammooty to care for his wife during her pregnancy and delivery (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 67). The humiliations faced by Beevi during these days ended with her death during the delivery. Beevi's death represents the structural patriarchal violence embedded in the intersection of *mamool* customs, *Tharavadu* hierarchy, and the patriarchal control of women's reproductive labour. The author reflects the patriarchal social structure within a matrilineal society, where women are degraded into a tool to support the family system. Therefore, the matrilineal system is not a symbol of women's empowerment with a dignified life.

Kunnamu *Adhikari* and his ancestors humiliated several people encountered; wealth, status, *Tharavadu* affiliation, and patriarchal authoritarianism enabled dominance over those poor and dependent people. The wealth of the Kolothu *Tharavadu* is known to have been illegally seized from the Namboodiri. The *Adhikari* promised to assist the Namboodiri in partitioning his property between the two wives' families, but he registered it in his own name. Later, he threatened the Namboodiri and killed him. Thithayi Baduvan is a helper and caretaker for Kunnamu's dog, Tiger. Once, Thithayi was severely beaten for an inappropriate action that displeased Kunnamu *Adhikari*. He was beaten with a horse chain. Hyder, a person who cleans the horse, responds to this action by throwing a stick at Kunnamu and says, "*Hamuke ninak thallan vere aarum illeda*" [Why are you beating him? Don't you have anyone else?] (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 49; author's

translation). The resistance and insult from Hyder, and the frustration at being unable to punish him, were reflected in Thithayi Baduvan's body. U.A. Khader described it as follows: Adhikari beats Thithayi until his anger subsides. He set his dog on Thithayi. Thithayi cried loudly when *Adhikari* applied chilly spaces on Thithayi's wound, which gave pleasure to *Adhikari* (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 49, translated from the original Malayalam work). He treated all his servants as slaves; they received neither value nor dignity as human beings. This arrogance came out of his dominating attitude, making him a sadist who finds pleasure in humiliating poor people. These recurring patterns are new articulations of dominance embedded within the selected literary corpus. Furthermore, patriarchal authority alongside *Adhikari's* power, Tharavadu's wealth, and status may have influenced these actions.

Mammooty experienced considerable humiliation at the hands of Kunnamu *Adhikari*. The ego arising from the conflict between the two Tharavadus led Kunnamu to disrupt Mammooty's peaceful life. The issues between the Kunnummal Masjid and the Juma Masjid committee extended to the lives of Mammooty and Beevi. The two families were not on the same committee, and Mammooty's father was a key figure at the Kunnummal Masjid. Mammooty was fully paralysed after his marriage; when Beevi gave birth to his child, he was bedridden. Andru Haaji, Mammooty's father, also died in between due to a heart attack. Although Mammooty experienced many tragedies in his life, the *Adhikari's* vengeance continued to follow him. Kunnamu exploits *Adhikari's* power and position to mislead the police and harass Mammooty. Thus, the police force visits Mammooty's house, destroys the property, and threatens them (Khader, 1966/2014, p.101).

Kunnamu kept Abdulla, Mammooty's son, out of Mammooty's visibility; he neither invited Mammooty nor his family to Abdulla's *Sunnath Kalyanam* (Circumcision). North Malabar culture encompasses numerous customs and practices associated with these functions, and the role of the father is also significant. However, Kunnamu's actions completely neglect Mammooty from these occasions. Thus, all of these are inflicted on Mammooty. The patriarchal authority with cultural institutions manifested a dominant role for *Puyapla* and his family. However, *Adhikari's* power, combined with the Karanavar's role in the matrilineal *Tharavadu*, dehumanised *Puyapla* and his family. Nevertheless, the fact is that male dominance and their power work in both of these occasions, where women's concerns are given minimal attention in this matrilineal society.

In the analysis of the novels, it is found that women enjoy the power to serve as decision-makers in the matrilineal system; however, this pattern is not observed in all cases in North Malabar. Kunnaishumma, the mother of Kunnamu, is a key character in the novel *Changala*, who exercises power within the matrilineal system of her feudal *Tharavadu*. Kunnaishumma lives in the luxurious Kolathu *Tharavadu*, where she is very proud of her family's status, as they excel at multiple social practices compared with other *Tharavadus*. The wealth and status of Kolothu *Tharavadu* make her rude and egotistic, and she believes that everyone around should act according to her wishes. She never steps out of this house, as everything comes under her control. During the marriage of Beevi, she says, "I never visit anyone to invite for marriage. Khadeeja will do that; I will stay here. If they wish to join, let them. Let's see who is not accepting our invitation" (Khader, 1966/2014, p.

59; author's translation). Kunnaishumma keenly observes Kunnamu's actions and, at times, instructs him when they are not suitable for the family's status. When Kunnamu himself decides to invite people for marriage, she says, "People will join on their own once they hear about the marriage function in *Kolothu Tharavadu*. Are you going to invite them instead? This never happened before in this family" (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 60; author's translation). Kunnaishumma's actions demonstrate those of an empowered woman in a matrilineal society. In summary, Kunnaishumma is a powerful figure whose agency was derived from her upbringing in the feudal *Kolothu Tharavadu*. However, her influence was simultaneously constrained: she operated within a patriarchal framework in which Kunnamu Adhikari remained the ultimate authority. Kunnamu's decisions are followed mainly by Kunnaishumma, except on a few occasions, even Kunnamu Adhikari does not follow all the instructions given by Kunnaishumma. When she instructs him not to invite people in person to Beevi's marriage, he decides to do so because the social context has changed. Thus, patriarchal institutionalisation is evident in this analysis of Kunnaishumm's life. North Malabar history demonstrates how the matrilineal system of the Arakkal Royal family from North Malabar (Kannur) empowered women, and they performed the role of *Aadiraja* (ruler). At the same time, few similar examples exist from ordinary matrilineal families of North Malabar. Therefore, it can be concluded that the matrilineal system afforded women particular power and space within families in North Malabar, as reflected in U.A. Khader's writings. However, it does not claim that the matrilineal system empowers every woman in North Malabar, nor that women in matrilineal families enjoy limited

power. In short, patriarchy works in most of the matrilineal North Malabar families, where multiple factors influence the same.

Abdulla grows up under the care of Kunnamu and Kunnaishumma, as Beevi dies early, and Mammooty, his father, has never seen him. The repressive parenting of these two people never gave Abdulla proper parenting with moral values, which affects his holistic growth. They believe that everyone born in Kolathu *Tharavadu* is destined to rule the land and its people, so they learn on their own (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 45). This approach evolved from the patriarchal authoritarianism and dominant attitude of Kunnamu and Kunnaishumma, as they are powerful enough in all aspects, which cannot be questioned by anyone. U.A. Khader (1966/2014, p. 101; translation from the original Malayalam work) described Abdulla's life as

Abdulla visited various places with Kannamu Adhikari and observed him speaking and shouting at people. He used to spend time with Thithayi Baduvan and Chellan Moosa, both of whom were workers under Kunnamu. Kunnamu promotes Abdulla's bad habits; no one dares to inform Kunnamu of Abdulla's immoral actions... As Abdulla grew up, Kunnaishumma also pampered him excessively. She hesitates to send him to the school mosque or Madrasa.

The toxic parenting of Kunnamu and Kunnaishumma makes Abdulla physically fit but mentally unfit to make mature decisions. Therefore, the patriarchal beliefs of Kunnamu and the dominant attitude of Kunnaishumma affect Abdulla's future: they believed a man should be able to handle matters by learning from others, but they failed to specify what should be understood. Despite belonging to a matrilineal

household, Abdulla received poor parenting, which led to the destruction of the Kolothu *Tharavadu*. Abdulla's upbringing exemplifies how patriarchal ideology, transmitted through cultural institutions, the *Tharavadu* family, social customs, and religious leadership, reproduces itself across generations, perpetuating violence and dominance.

Andru Haji, Mammooty's father, is another character who practices patriarchal authoritarianism. He is from a well-known Meleppadathu *Tharavadu*, and his marriage to Beevi makes him the father of a *Puyapla* in the North Malabar social context. The extraordinary power given to *Puyapla*'s father is usually found in North Malabar. This patriarchal culture is institutionalised gradually in North Malabar due to the overemphasis on the *Puyapla* system. Andru Haji practised patriarchal authoritarianism and dominance in different ways; after marriage, Andru Haaji followed all kinds of mamool in their relationship with Kolothu *Tharavadu*. However, Kolothu *Tharavadu* missed the mamool during Vishamvekkal (a custom in which the groom collects money from his relatives and friends and gives it to the bride's house), which caused a significant issue within the family. Andru Haji said, "You should not visit the Kolothu until I instruct. There are a lot of brides in this land, let them learn the custom and mamool" (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 110; author's translation). Mammooty did not visit Beevi for two weeks; subsequently, senior members of the Masjid committee resolved the issues. When a conflict broke out between the Kunnummal and Juma Masjids over Eid celebrations, the tension spread to the family because members belonged to rival mosques. Mammooty and Beevi were celebrating their first Eid together as husband and wife, which should have

been a significant milestone. However, the celebration was rendered futile by the bitter dispute between the two mosques. Therefore, the patriarchal authoritarianism practised in a matrilocal society creates a lot of dominance and subjugation in the family relationships of the bride and groom. Mammooty and Beevi are the victims in the novel *Changala*.

There are two Masjids in the area: the Juma Masjid and the Kunnummal Masjid. The Juma Masjid is large, and *Kuthuba* (Friday prayers) is held here. On alternate Fridays, the Kuthuba is performed by Ammotti Musliyar and Aravan Musliyar. At the end of Ramzan, the holy month of fasting, the community awaits the sighting of the crescent moon to mark Eid. Upon confirmation of the moon sighting, the announcement is made by Qazi or recognised religious authorities. So, important members of the Juma Masjid committee stood there on the beach to check the moon's visibility. However, the crescent moon was not sighted. Then Avaran Qazi moved to Kolothu *Tharavadu* as usual and informed everyone that Eid would be the day after tomorrow. In the meantime, a person from the next town came to Juma Masjid and told them that the moon had appeared in their place. Thus, the members of the Masjid committee decided to finalise Eid in Avaran Kasi's absence and to send a letter to Avaran Qazi. Avaran Qazi did not listen to the messenger because it hurt his ego; he felt that someone had usurped his authority to announce Eid in his absence. Thus, he decides not to accept this, and Kunnamu *Adhikari* supports the same. This incident led to social division, as the Kunnummal Masjid and the Juma Masjid chose to celebrate two separate Eids. Furthermore, Eid at Kunnummal Masjid is celebrated on Thursday, and the conflict extends into the next

day's Kuthuba. Unfortunately, Soomi Mammad, a member of the committee, died during this conflict, and several people were arrested. This vengeance grows day by day, destroying the peaceful lives of families under the mosque committee.

Mammootty says, "What do they earn out of these? Isn't Soomi Mammad's family alone, orphaned? They impair my family's lives too" (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 140; author's translation). Therefore, the dominant egoistic attitude among people, along with the wealth and status of the *Tharavadu*, disrupted the peaceful family life of several people, including Mammotty and Beevi.

Punathil Kunnabdulla's *Smaraka Shilakal* examines the socio-cultural history of North Malabar in the 1960s and the significance of the *Tharavadu* in this society. Arakkal Pookkoya Thangal exercises patriarchal power in conjunction with the wealth and status of the *Tharavadu*, where such consent is given. Pookkoya Thangal dominated over Bhundan Andruman, Eramullan, Kutti Hydros, Buhari, Kuraishi Pathu, and Bappu Kanaran, and they all followed his instructions and fulfilled his needs. Although he dominates over the people, the society recognises him for his service to fellow beings as well. Thus, consent-based subordination is evident in the novel. Support for Neeli and proactive actions during the diarrhoea outbreak in Karakkadu are among his activities. When Bhuddhan Andruman falls ill with horse sickness, Thangal calls Komappan Vaidhyar to treat the horse and later decides to purchase a new horse for Andruman. This demonstrates how Thangal treated his workers; he ensured their needs were met at all times. His killing by Perachuttti therefore generates collective grief and disappointment, revealing the social value attached to his leadership. It is described as:

The women, screaming in groups, ran (fled) eastward; shops were closed, and the beach became deserted/desolate. There were sounds of wailing violently, crying with a hand over the mouth, restrained sobbing, blowing the nose (loudly/desperately), gossiping in the ear, and many more kinds of noises. People were crowded and overflowing inside the ancestral home (Tharavad), within its compound, and beyond the stone walls. In reality, everyone was sad. The death of a figure who provided shade and support (a pillar) for everyone, happening unexpectedly, plunged them all into sorrow. All faces had darkened (with grief/sadness). All heads were bowed (in grief). (Kunnabdulla, 1976/2000, p. 215; translation from the original Malayalam work).

Punathil Kunnabdulla describes the people's reactions upon hearing of Thangal's death. They all gathered at Arakkal Tharavadu and cried, having lost a helping hand. These descriptions by the author illuminate that Thangal's dominance was not coercive but consent-based subordination. This analysis identifies how patriarchal authority operated in Pookkoya Thangal.

Thangal was a womaniser; he had sexual relationships with different women. Among them were Doctor Amalelu and Madavi Chettichi. Therefore, patriarchal relations in sexuality are found in Thangal's life; he believes that sexual pleasure should be met without any compromise. Hence, women are objectified in the patriarchal spaces of Pookkoya Thangal. The patriarchal parenting attitude is also found in Pookkoya Thangal, where he instructs every woman in Karakkadu to wear a blouse or upper cloth. Once, he punished Pokki, the wife of Bappuu Kanaran,

Thangal's manager, when she was reluctant to wear upper clothes. He proclaimed that, "I do not like women moving around without upper cloth" (Kunnabdulla, 1976/2000, p. 29; author's translation). The patriarchal hypocrisy is also evident in Thangal, where he discovered the illicit relationship between Kuraishipathu, the chief cook, and Andruman, the horseman. Then declared that: "I will not allow prostitution, tomorrow both of you will get married" (Kunnabdulla, 1976/2000, p. 49; author's translation). However, the same person used the Arakkal Tharavad to pursue his illicit relationships. This reflects how Pookkoya Thaganal maintained patriarchal authority. His dominations towards Aattabee make her silent and obey the orders, thus patriarchal violence could be identified in these relationships.

Aattabee emerges as one of the worst victims of Thangal's patriarchal authority. She is compelled to breastfeed Kunnali, an orphan, before her own baby. This questions the dignity of a woman and humiliates her badly. Thangal uses the word *Onnu Adhyam Kodukku* [give him first] (Kunnabdulla, 1976/2000, p. 67; author's translation), which is not for the care of an orphan, but the patriarchal attitude of men first. The same pattern repeated when Pookkoya went to school to admit Kunnali and Pookkunnibee. The suppression of Aattabee is described by the author as "When Thangal's body was kept in the veranda of Arakkal *Tharavadu*, Aattabee cried out, everyone heard her voice the first time in the veranda. The voice never comes out of the house" (Kunnabdulla, 1976/2000, p. 215; translation from the original Malayalam work). Apart from this, Aattabee and the other women are ill-treated in this house. Kuraishipathu, the chief cook and kitchen administrator, and her colleagues receive sufficient food if anything remains after the family members have eaten. In short, the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal violence, and

patriarchal relations in sexuality are intensely practised in the novel *Smaraka Shilakal*. Where women were also treated as facilitators of men's convenience, and women's labour was exploited to make family life easier. This patriarchal behaviour mirrors Punathil Kunnabdulla's stated personal philosophy. Punathil Kunnabdulla treats women as subjects for pleasure. He declares that he spends time with many women and believes that it is not necessary to remain with any one woman. However, he provided all the basic needs to his wife and family (Kunnabdulla, 2017).

The demise of Pookkoya Thangal creates a dominant attitude in Aattabee. All the suppression she faced during Thangal's period made her too arrogant to wield power against those close to Thangal. Aattabee may have taken revenge against the various patriarchal bonds imposed by Thangal. She degrades individuals protected by Thangal, such as Kunnali. Aattabee always hates Kunnali and his presence with Pookkuni. She called him "*Harath*" [illegal child] (Kunnabdulla, 1976/2000, p. 68; author's translation). Furthermore, she ensures that nothing is provided to him equal to Pookkunnibee. This equal treatment of Thangal between an orphan boy and his child heart's Aattabee thus degraded Kunnali's privileges, given Thangal's patriarchal attitude. After Thangal's demise, Pattalam Ibrahim gradually rose to prominence in the Arakkal Tharavad by ousting Kunnali from the Thangal chair, an act that impressed Aattabee. She needed someone to handle the matters related to *Tharavadu*, and Ibrahim was waiting for such an opportunity. Later, Kunnali is expelled from the house and assigned a space in the outhouse with the security guard, Buhari. Kunnali received no support for completing his education

either. In short, Kunnali suffered greatly as a result of Aattabee and Ibrahim's actions. Pattalam Ibrahim also exercises patriarchal authoritarianism once he becomes close to Aattabee and controls all the properties of *Tharavadu*. In addition, Aattabee was institutionalised in patriarchy, where she surrendered to Ibrahim's patriarchal authority. As a result, Kunnali and Pookkunnibee suffered greatly. When Kunnali dropped out of school and became a slave of the *Tharavadu*, Pookkunnibee married a TB (Tuberculosis) patient. Ibrahim began to exercise his patriarchal authority and finalised the marriage of Pookkunnibee, thereby increasing the wealth and status of the Arakkal *Tharavadu*. Therefore, patriarchal authoritarianism is not fixed in North Malabar society, where people who live in the wealth and status of *Tharavadu* will come forward to dominate over the rest. Thus, Aattabee came under the authority of another patriarch. Aattabee's transformation from victim to oppressor exemplifies 'patriarchal bargaining,' where subordinate women adopt patriarchal norms with the power of wealth and status in *Tharavadu* to gain limited power within the system.

The *Thrikkottur Peruma* novel examines the socio-cultural life of the Thrikkottur people and their coexistence within a patriarchal, dominant system. U.A. Khader illustrates the social life of North Malabar, particularly in localities near Koyilandi and Vadakara. Kunnikkela Kuruppu is one of the key figures who wield dominant power within the *Tharavadu*, based on wealth and social status. He was a social influencer, thereby intervening in most social issues in Thrikkottur. The presence of Kurup gives some kind of confidence to the natives; they believe that Kurup will bring solutions to all the problems. “Manikyam Viyungiya Kanaran” is a

chapter in the novel *Thrikkottur Peruma* that exemplifies Kurup's dominant power. Chettyangadi Kanaran owns a tea shop, famous for *Puttu, Cherupayar Kari* [food combination], and Beef fry. Day by day, the demand for food increased, and people from nearby areas began visiting the shop. Once the shop was crowded with customers, Kanaran considered expanding it, as they operated in a small space. Kanaran approached Kunniraman Vaidhyar, who owns the adjacent property. Still, Vaidhyar refused and threatened that the current tea shop would be donated to Kanaran's father, thereby evicting him soon. Kanaran approached Kurup and Rairu Nambiar, *Adhikari* of Thrikkottur, to request an extension of the shop space. Here, Kanaran effectively leveraged these individuals' influence to acquire the property. Consequently, Kurup and his manager, Hyder Mappila, came to the shop the next day. They claimed the property with poly documents, which Kunniraman Vaidhyar cannot deny, as he is aware of Kurup's power. Kurup's power relations and dominance are examined in the same chapter in which Kanaran died in an accident. Kurup sorted the issues of cremations as no one from his family takes responsibility for the body. North Malabar's socio-cultural life places significant priority on the *Tharavadu* and family status, thereby conferring dominance, and people use this power to secure their own interests. The *Karavanar* of the family wields specific authority and is actively involved in social engagements. The matrilineal system appears to have catalysed the power of *Tharavadu* and the importance of *Karanavar* in North Malabar social life.

The dominant power practised by *Adhikari* and the patriarchal authority imbued in these people are reflected in the works of U.A. Khader. "Chandayil

Choodi Vilkkunna Pennu” is one of the chapters in the novel *Thrikkottur Peruma*. Janaki, the wife of Kunnummal Kanaran, earns a living by making *Choodi* [coir product] and selling it in Vadakara market on weekends. Janaki is a beautiful lady, as U.A. Khader said, “Even if they are a little dark (in complexion), once you see them, you won't be able to take your eyes off (them)” (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 107; author’s translation). Her intelligence attracted many customers and led to the *Choodi* selling out very quickly. Once Paithal Nair, the Iringal Aamsham *Adhikari*, visited the Vadakara Market and was attracted towards Janaki, he tried to harass her. Without knowing the person's identity, Janaki slaps him on his face. Since then, no one has interacted with her in the market, as they all feared something would happen to her. The following week, Janaki again went to the market to sell her *Choodi*, where she was informed of her husband's death. She found Kanaran’s body hanging on the mango tree near Vadakara railway station; her own *Choodi* was used for this. Janaki realises *Adhikari*'s agents murdered her husband as retribution for her defiance. She learned that many feudal lords supported this act, as *Adhikari* is a powerful and influential figure. Thus, she became helpless and waited a moment before taking revenge. Janaki faces multiple instances of dominance from Chandukkurup. Chandukkurup demeaned Janaki on the basis of caste, positioning her as a lower caste woman, as someone who is supposed to serve the upper caste community. Furthermore, Chandukkurup seeks women's cooperation in his interactions with them. Above all, *Adhikari*'s power proved effective, as he took revenge without hesitation. In short, caste, class, and gender dominance are evident in Chandukkurup *Adhikari*'s actions. Therefore, Chandukkurup wishes to make Janaki an orphan and compel her to depend on the male-dominated society.

While *Smaraka Shilakal* and *Thrikkottur Peruma* explore traditional feudal dominance, *Marakkappile Theyyangal* examines how these hierarchies persist and transform within modern developmentalist contexts. The novel contextualises the area of Marakkappu and Kamballor Kotta, near Nileshwar, Kasargod. This novel's narrative centres on the struggles of an orphan named Umbichi, alias Thamara. The third person, Krishnan Kutti, narrates the story as an inquiry into the death of his friend Lawrence. Still, the narrative unfolds through the life of Umbichi and uncovers the mystery behind Lawrence's murder. Marakkappu is a small beachside town inhabited by a fishing community that adheres to the rules and norms of *Kakkodathi* (the community's dispute-resolution body). They interlinked their beliefs, cultural practices, rituals, and standards with day-to-day happiness and life events. Therefore, find solutions in these cultural practices. Once the corporate-level tourism developments occupied the land, the community was alienated from all aspects of cultural and social life and shifted to another place. Ambikasuthan Mangad sought to examine the effects of power relations, in the context of globalisation, on a culturally rich community. Patriarchal authority and dominance function behind these development projects.

Lawrence is the victim of the power group's action, where the tourism department, local politicians, and bureaucrats kill Lawrence. Lawrence finds it notable that the tourism projects are intended to attract foreigners and that corporations profit by selling alcohol and engaging in other illegal activities behind the scenes. Therefore, he decided to educate the natives through some associations to protect their livelihood. However, the dominance of the influential group killed

him without affecting the tourism project. Umbichi is another victim of patriarchal authority. She lives on the beach side in a small plot owned by Angichi Muthyamma, but they do not have any documents for this property. Therefore, she runs to the village office to arrange it. Lohithakshan, a clerk at the village office, deceives Umbichi by providing false information and misleading her, as the higher official will provide the documents from the nearby hotel and accompany her. Although she gets the documents, she loses her virginity. Later, the power group acquired the entire beach, including Umbichi's plot. The government and corporate power groups dominate in Marakkappu, and they destroy the livelihood of the community there. The patriarchal authority imbibed in this group uses the illiterate Umbichi's ignorance for their sexual gratification. They view women as objects to gratify men's needs. Thus, their tourism project provides several facilities for foreign visitors by showcasing the bodies of indigenous women. Lawrence's education enabled him to identify this trap, and he took action against them by collecting the opinions of natives. However, local politicians co-opted the efforts to divert illiterate citizens and provide them with financial benefits. Patriarchy permeates most social structures as it is imbibed in the mindset of a culturally institutionalised society.

The novel *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha* depicts rural life in North Malabar in the 1970s; its narrative structure creates opportunities to connect the novel to the contemporary social context. Multiple factors control the lives of the women characters in this novel, as the author depicts patriarchal authoritarianism among various societal stakeholders. Rajasree draws a comparison of the social perspectives of different generations. Then, she reflects on

the capacity of older generations to accommodate and overcome the challenges they faced, compared with the current generation. Thus, the novel examines the shifting perspectives on the patriarchal social structure and women's capacity to overcome it across different contexts.

The novel opens with a conversation between Kalyani and the narrator, who discusses her struggles and approaches to overcoming them. The narrator described her difficulty adjusting to her family, noting that a patriarchal society does not afford her the agency to find a solution on her own. In addition, the novel exposes how people view social processes through their life experiences, such that the narrator's concern may not be a serious concern for Kalyani. The narrator was disappointed, and Kalyani sought to resolve her confusion. Kalyani asked: "If yuh can't 'gree bith yer man, why'd yuh packupp anddgo to his place firsofall, for wha' loaddof bullshith?" "Helplessness," the author replied. "Elplessn'ss? Whatttha 'ell is thath? *Bhere* is thath? In tha womin's bum?" Kalyani continued (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 4). As the conversation progresses, it becomes clear that the narrator seeks a divorce, but the family context precludes such a decision. Thus, she consulted several psychologists, but none offered her solutions; finally, she planned to meet one more person. To understand the narrator's concern, the psychologist asks her to speak her thoughts. When the story (*Katha*) begins, the narrator, the psychologist, seeks to gain insight into the patient's thought process and to establish rapport. The narrator attempts to overcome multiple patriarchal authoritarianisms, where her parents and husband represent different patriarchal power structures. Therefore, *Kalyaniyennum*

Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha reflects different patriarchal structures and how patriarchal power relations work in women's lives.

Patriarchal power relations largely disadvantage women in society. Kalyani and her friend Dhakshayani are victims of such actions in this novel. Apart from them, Cheyikkutti, Kunhippennu, and Kamala face different forms of patriarchy in multiple contexts. Dhakshayani hails from an ordinary family, with a mother and an elder brother, Damu. The patriarchal structure limited her freedom, including that imposed by society and its cultural norms, by her family, and her husband (Aanikkaran). She dropped out of school once the teacher opened her skirt and pitched up on her thigh. She scolded the teacher, saying, "*Puythupovudaa Nayinte mone*" [Rot in 'ell, yuh sonofabitch] (Rajasree, 2019/2020, p. 20). Here, resistance to any form of domination and exploitation begins in the lives of Dhakshayani and Kalyani, and Kalyani also leaves the school with her friend. The novel examines how patriarchal authority controls these people's lives and their efforts to survive, rather than compromising them in the face of helplessness. In the initial conversations, Kalyani and the narrator (author) discussed:

Kalyanecchi said: 'No. A womin needs more-a womin needs t'bbe spunky an' sthrong. She needs to keep tha hair on her head from fallin'. An' yuh musth be such thath no matter how old yuh mebbe, men musth sneak a lookit yuh.' Narrator replied: 'I don't think all that's going to work anymore.'... 'Kalyaniyechi, you know nothing of gender politics and body politics, *linga-rashtreeyam*,' Kalyaniyechi replied: '*Linga*...thath means tha dick! Tha

raasthreeyam of tha DICK???' [shivering hard] pha! Ah-I'll scalp yuh prope', yuh li'l bulb of pus, *Kurippe!*' (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 5).

Here, Kalyani does not know gender politics and body shaming, but she manages to stream through life's struggles created by the patriarchal structures. Thus, Kalyani scolded her, but this did not reflect the situation in the use of such words. However, comparisons between older and younger generations and between patriarchal power relations differ; although they appear similar in theory, sociocultural elements produce substantial differences. Thus, Kalyani cannot understand the author's conditions.

Dhakshayani faces patriarchal power from her husband, Aanikkaran. He physically and mentally abused her. He visited Dhakshayani's house once a month on his way to Madras. Then he collected the hard-earned money of Dhakshayani, which she earned through coolie work. The physical abuse continued in her bedroom, and the mental abuse was found in his attitude towards Dhakshayani, where he kept this relationship as a temporary hub to help with his business trip. Apart from her husband, the family members are compelled to support Aanikkaran once there is an issue between them. The sociocultural system of patriarchy institutionalised them to act in such a way, clubbed with the influence of the *Puyapla* system found among Mappila Muslims. It is evident that the sociocultural system is the narrative of the patriarchal community; it constructs a narrative that consistently supports men in case of compromise talks between the husband and the wife's family. When Aanikkaran creates dramatic moments and persuades everyone to take Dhakshayani to his home, he seeks to advance her to the next stage. Once

they relocated to Kollam, Aanikkaran continued to dominate Dhakshayani. Aanikkarna degrades Dhakshayani's dignity, portraying her as worthless, while highlighting the quality of his behaviour. Once in their room, Aanikkaran dominates over Dhakshayani and said, “Whe-yer iss youwer caashu, y-edi? Whe-yer iss youwer cowwu, y-edi? Whe-yer iss youwer Kalayani? Kalyani!” (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 109). These words humiliate Dhakshayani, as she lives in her home with considerable freedom and agency to make her own decisions, yet all of these are taken away from her. He treats women as objects to gratify his pleasure, and does not give them agency and decision-making power over their money; thus, he grabs all the money earned by Dhakshayani in every visit. He understood that financial stability makes Dhakshayani confident and courageous; therefore, she bought the cow without his permission. Hence, Aanikkaran decides to restrict her freedom by taking her to his home. These are challenges women face across different patriarchal structures, which must be understood in context.

Patriarchal social norms and their dominance within the Aanikkaran household are more pronounced than in North Malabar. When Dhakshayani enters the Aanikkaran house, the family does not welcome her warmly, and the entire family does not meet her even after marriage. Once Aanikkaran's family learned that he planned to marry in Malabar, they would support his business and his trip to Madras. The family supported Aanikkaran without hesitation; his mother believed it was not advisable to stop him, as if he moved away from the family, they would lose a helping hand; thus, they ensured his financial support. The analysis reveals how people prioritise things in life and give consent to the patriarchal culture of the male-

oriented society. While Aanikkaran's mother ensures that he remains part of the family, she believes that women are unimportant because they do not create anything in life; they merely facilitate the men's world. She is institutionalised in the patriarchal society and gave consent to its dominance. Aanikkaran's family restricted Dhakshayani's movements to the house compound, where women rarely go out. This made Dhakshayani's life quite uneasy, as she explored herself back home and took several jobs there, all of which were not possible in this context. Aanikkaran's mother initially provides details on the family's norms and customs, including household boundaries.

Over the-yer is Villaasan's yaardu. He bo-ught that laandu aand hung himself! Why, nobody knowwsu. On the otheru sideu they aare *tandanmar*, coconut tree climb-ersu, low caste-u. On tha weste-rn side is ye pastor-he yis ye tenant, from sumwheyer! On the *kizhakkethu*-eastu-sideu ees the sister of ouwr *aachan*, my husband. True she yis my sister-in-laa. But she yis a *phayangara* sorceressuu! Ye sneaky *Koodothrakkari*! Simbly phayangara! Fee-yarsommm-u! Youw shuddu nottu behaive like you did baack home! Don't knochu yeround these houses-u? Youw hear-u (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 101).

All these restrictions are the result of the consent-based patriarchy created in this society; thus, the upcoming generations are compelled to follow the same and feel inferior to the dominating male community.

The life of Kalyani is burdened with the social customs and the consent-based patriarchy practised by this society. Her husband, Koppukaran, cannot fulfil

his marital duties, yet she is compelled to remain in his house without adequate care; he is preoccupied with money and is searching for a new business. As a result, one day, she left the Koppukaran's house. Cheyikkutti, Koppukaran's mother, tried to stop her, but she did not listen. Cheyikkutti said, "Don' yuh walk a stepp more! Yuh try to go, I'll chop an' mince yer leg! Wha's got inta yuh, damn'd floozie! Tak' bekk thath leg of yers, goin' to yer death! Fuckin' whor'!" (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 90). Here, Cheyikkutti represents patriarchal social authority, and she felt that if a woman left her husband's house, it would affect men's pride and status. The other major patriarchal pressure came after she left the house. Kalyani's mother quarrels with her and compels her to return to her husband's house. Her mother believes that women cannot live by themselves without the support of men. However, Kalyani is stubborn about her decisions and remains in her home. Once she came to know she was pregnant, that made her surrender to patriarchal authoritarianism. Cheyikkutti came to her house and convinced her to adapt to this patriarchal world, and she compared her life and struggles with Kalyani's. Thus, Kalyani decides to move to Koppukaran's house. Although Kalyani and Dhakshayani raise their voices against the patriarchal dominant power around them, they occasionally surrender to maintain the family structure. Where a consonant-based patriarchy worked in their life, and they followed the patriarchal power relations.

As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that patriarchal authoritarianism marginalises the lives of several other characters beyond Kalyani and Dhakshayani. Characters such as Cheyikkutti and Kunhippennu surrendered to patriarchal social norms, believing that questioning the system could undermine the family's strength.

Cheyikkutti faces dominant power relations from her *Ballyechi* (elder sister). She died after she had a mental disorder immediately after the delivery of Narayan (Koppukaran). Thus, Cheyikkutti cared for Koppukaran and her children, Lakshman, Nalini, and Vanaja. However, she frequently meets the ghost of Ballyechi, and she scolds her for the illegal relationship Cheyikkutti tries to make with *Ballyechi's* husband. She also accepts Ballyechi's dominant actions to avoid conflict between them. Cheyikkutti is moulded under patriarchal cultural institutions, which creates a tendency of compromise with dominance in her life. She resolved the issues between Kalyani and Koppukaran, appreciated Kamala's kitchen skills, maintained the family, and protected the men's pride throughout her life. These actions by Cheyikkutti express her consent to patriarchal social structures.

A similar kind of scenario is found in the life of Kunhippennu, where she faces extreme versions of patriarchy as she lived in South Kerala, where people give consent to practice patriarchal dominance. Kunhippennu married two brothers (fraternal polyandry), a custom found in South Kerala. Kunhippennu married a military officer initially. The elder brother, Chitrasenan, remained unmarried after losing in youth politics. The presence of Kunhippennu brings about changes in Chitrasenan's life. The mother-in-law decides to remarry Kunhippennu with Chitrasenan, with the permission of the first husband. This social custom protects family property from being shared among multiple families. Thus, Kunhippennu is preparing to confront this faith; her family context is insufficient to challenge patriarchal authority. A similar context and genuine concern are evident in Kalyani's life. Kalyani did not receive sexual pleasure in her marriage, found sexual pleasure

from Lakshmanan, her husband's younger brother, and conceived. Later, Cheyikkutti obtains some clues about this, but she arranges another marriage for Lakshman and restricts their interactions. This reflects how patriarchy works in two different societies. In Southern Kerala, society prefers to protect the family property by sacrificing the life of Kunhipennu. In contrast, Cheyikkutti did not adopt this custom but instead arranged a separate marriage for Lashman. Thus, a woman's body is used as an object to protect the family property or relationships. Both Kunhipennu and Kalyani exemplify how patriarchy uses women's bodies to solve male family problems. Kunhipennu through mandated remarriage, and Kalyani through an informal sexual relationship, demonstrating patriarchal flexibility across regional contexts. Therefore, patriarchal authority operates within sociocultural contexts in which the executor need not always be male. Analysis suggests that the matriarchal (controlled by women) system may not promote fraternal polyandry, whereas matrilocal (husband lives with wife's family) systems practised in North Malabar may place greater importance on women. Furthermore, Cheyikkutti made this decision to protect the family system in response to societal demands, prioritising the common good over individual happiness. Cheyikkutti exemplifies how patriarchal systems operate through women as enforcers. Her decision to arrange Lakshman's separate marriage, while protecting family 'honour,' reproduces the patriarchal logic that prioritises family cohesion over women's autonomous choices, even as she attempts to solve a patriarchal problem created by male sexuality.

In this novel, Rajasree depicts women's survival within various patriarchal structures, reflecting their struggles with the constraints of patriarchal authority and

their lives in a male-dominated society. A few are compromised in this race and adapt to existing sociocultural conditions. Even if a matrilineal system exists, patriarchal authoritarianism works everywhere in this novel. However, the functions and forms of patriarchal actions vary across societies, depending on sociocultural and historical contexts. The North-South differences in patriarchal practices depicted in this novel visualise the intensity and impact of patriarchal cultural institutions among the novel's female characters. Coercion and consent-based patriarchy are found in the South, while more practical-oriented patriarchal practices are found in the North (Cheyikkutti's actions). Dominance and suppression are explicit in the South, whereas in North Malabar, they are indirect; thus, Kalyani and Dhakshayani occasionally compromise with circumstances. Both systems protect male interests and family property, but employ different mechanisms matched to regional socio-legal contexts. Therefore, patriarchal notions can be identified in most of the structures examined in this analysis. Thus, one cannot assume that a society is egalitarian or non-hierarchical solely on the basis of the matrilineal system that existed in North Malabar.

Perumalayan is a novel written by M.V. Janardhanan, which contextualises Eramam, a place near Payyannur, Kannur district, state of Kerala. The narrative explores the sociocultural life surrounding *Pottan Theyyam* and the lived experience of its performer, who lived approximately a century ago. The protagonist, Perumalayan, and his family attended a *Pottan Theyyam* performance. The novel centres on three generations of *Theyyam* performers, with the story narrated by *Pottan Theyyam*, who details the caste system and patriarchal authoritarianism in

this society. The caste hierarchy practised in this novel is based on consent and on power and dominance exercised by the upper caste. *Pottan Theyyam* turned to become a deity as he opposed the caste system and hierarchical power of *Thambran* (Feudal Lord/King/Chieftain) and was killed by them.

The story of hierarchy, suppression, and resistance can be read from the life of *Pottan Theyyam*. The tale of *Pottan Theyyam* and its performers is similar: they live under *Thambran's* control; if they obey, they live peacefully; if not, they face severe punishment. *Pottan Theyyam* was born to Koori Polayan and Kaari *Polichi* (Kaari was married to Polayan). They were workers in the *Thambran's* field, and all women and men born into the Pulaya community were committed to this custom (Janardhanan, 2023, p. 21). *Pottan* was born in the field while his mother worked for *Thambran*, who named him Alangaran, and he grew up playing there. Since childhood, he has been exposed to *Theenduka* (Untouchability), a system in which the Pulayar community avoided contact with other communities to avoid impurity. Alangaran faces these experiences of untouchability, thus tries to clarify the reason for this discrimination from everyone around.

Alangaran asked his parents in this field, we harness the buffalo and prepare the ground; we plant the tiny rice saplings and nurture them. When it has grown, stood tall and begun to ripen as grain, we protect the beautiful, ripening rice, guarding it without leaving it to waste or locking it up, until the heavy grain matures. Our legs, blackened and soiled with mud from standing in the water to thresh the paddy. Our hands are the ones that take that paddy, dry it, pound it, and turn it into rice grain. It is that very rice grain that the

Thambran (Lord/Master) takes. Is it not by eating that very grain that their 'untouchable' body grows...Then why do they practice untouchability against us? (Janardhanan, 2023, p. 27; translation from the original Malayalam work).

Alangaran raises this question after meeting a group of higher-caste individuals, including Shankaracharya. They ask him to move away from the path. He responds:

Thamprakkale! I cannot move aside from this path. My child is sleeping on my hip; a toddy pot is on my head; one side of the path is strewn with stones; the other is covered with thorns. Given all this, how can I move? My dogs and I cannot move. Please move if you want. I know these people (like you) who send their servants to our house at midnight to take young women to fulfil their lust. When they do that, they suddenly don't have any untouchability! (Janardhanan, 2023, p. 27; translated from the original Malayalam text).

Once, he was reluctant to move away from the path, and they started to throw stones at him, and he died. This Alanagan became *Pottan Theyyam* and performed in the *Tharavadu* of the same *Thambran*. The same upper caste community that killed *Pottan* celebrated the *Theyyam* at their house to avoid bad omen or threat in their life. The irony is that they hold the power over these celebrations and make them a common event under their control. The other side of the *Theyyam* performance symbolises a threat to the lower caste, where they may be killed by *Thambran* and become another *Theyyam*. Therefore, the *Theyyam* and related beliefs are rooted in the hierarchical dominance of the upper caste over the lower caste. Thus, they

humiliated lower caste people to ensure their lifetime servitude. However, belief in and the survival of Theyyam confer a particular kind of confidence and protection on the lower caste. They believe every moment they are under the protection of their deity.

This novel presents diverse characters who respond differently to the dominance of upper-caste patriarchal authority and the consent-based hierarchy; it also depicts resistance by the lower caste against suppression. Manilani, the wife of Perumalayan, is a typical lower-caste woman who struggled greatly and ultimately compromised with the caste hierarchy and patriarchal authority prevalent in society. Throughout her life, Malinani surrenders to upper-caste male dominance. The detailed analysis reveals her pain and the hardships she faces in securing the family's livelihood. The poverty and lack of financial support from Perumalayan led Malinani to surrender in front of upper caste dominance and patriarchal authority. She was guided by the patriarchal cultural institutions around her, where input from Perumalaya's mother influenced her to compromise with upper-caste dominance. Malinani is highly skilled in the care of pregnant women and provides midwifery services. In addition, she will seek employment at *Thambran's Illam* to obtain rice for preparing *Kanji* (cooked rice with water). These works help provide food for the household and reduce poverty, and she leads the family with limited financial support from Perumalayan. Perumalayan earns money from the *Theyyam* performance but spends it in a toddy shop. Some days, there would be nothing to eat at home, so Malinani improvised and managed. There are several occasions when

there is nothing to eat, and then she sends her children to the neighbours, Theeyan Chavunyan and his wife, who provide them with food.

Malinani faced numerous objections from Perumalayan, and he assaulted her for her decision to send Mathi and Maani to the *Illam*. Poverty compelled Malinani to send them for work; there, Mathi was sexually attacked in the *Pathayapura* (storage space for paddy/rice grain and other agricultural produce), and they returned from *Illam* with some rice. In addition, there is a custom among the Malaya caste that, if any marriage takes place, the first night of the bride in the village must be with a *Thambran*. Once Malinani married Perumalayan, Malinani was taken to the *Illam* by Perumalayan's mother, and she returned with bloodied bottom clothes. The *Thambran* repeatedly calls Malinani, and she becomes accustomed to this due to her social circumstances. She believes that the first experience will be painful, and later adjust to this as there are no other options in this caste-oriented patriarchal society. Malinani became pregnant twice in *Illam*, but her expertise in midwifery helped her abort them. However, one of her sons, Darootti, is from *Illam*, which she shared only with her neighbour Chirutha, Chavuniyan's Theeyathi. Furthermore, Mathi was pregnant when she married an outsider; she had previously served in the *Illam* as a midwife. Additionally, when Ambupanikker, Malinani's son, marries Chileri, Malinani takes her to *Illam*. But they escaped from the sexual harassment by giving some excuses about her bad health. Malinani's condition reflects not aspiration but survival necessity; to live, they need to eat, thus, Malinani always goes to *Illam* if they are not fed for more than three days. At the same time, Malinani does not depend on the neighbours or her well-wishers, who get support from Malinani as a

midwife. She believes that we cannot disturb people and that obtaining something without doing the work is not good either. Although Malinani gives consent to the caste hierarchy and patriarchal mode of production, she sacrifices for her family. She always fears the consequences of violating societal customs, having experienced several events in her life. Therefore, her advice to all male members of the family is to obey and live according to *Illam*'s customs, which are neglected by the male members. Caste and patriarchy affect women in their most severe form, as they are the first victims of violence or dominance. The woman's body is a symbol of oppression, where they are treated as a tool for male sexual gratification. Thus, the caste system with patriarchal authority of the *Thambran* affects the female members of the lower caste.

The caste hierarchical power relations, subjugation, and objectification of lower caste women mentally harassed the male Pulaya community, and they felt meaningless living in such conditions. They raised their voice against the *Thambran*, but were suppressed by the upper caste, where *Pottan Theyyam* is the first victim among them all. Once Perumalayan married, his mother took Malinani to the *Illam*, which irritated him, and the bloodied clothes of Malinani and her struggle to cope with situations depressed Perumalayan. Then he moved away from Malinani and did not give his face to her, which shows the depth of humiliation faced by lower caste men. The first night of a newly married Malaya woman should be spent with the *Thambran*, which is the cultural narrative created by this patriarchal caste-dominant group. Cultural institutions propagate these notions across generations, preventing individuals from escaping these suppressions.

Ambu Panikker is the son of Perumalayan, who endured several humiliations and suppressions at the hands of Thambaran. Once the *Thambran* gives Kannippoda (new cloth or garments, traditionally gifted to lower-caste women on their first visit to the *Illam*) to Ambupanikker's wife, Chileri, he throws it back to the *Illam*, which takes revenge on *Thambran*. Later, Ambupanikker and his family live in fear of *Thambran*'s revenge. However, nothing happens as such, but the *Thambran* has planned something else for Ambupanikker. Once, *Thambran* called Ambupanikker and his family to *Illam* to perform a Vishnumoorthi *Theyyam* by Ambupanikker, which did not follow the usual schedule; *Thambran* informed them that Kaniyan [astrologer] Kunnivarman had finalised the date. The Perumalan family experienced something unusual, but they could not deny the decisions, as they had *Cherumiavakahsam* (the right to perform certain *Theyyam* in specific locations). After the performance, they cheated Ambupanikker through his brother, Darootti. Darootti served coconut drinks during the performance that contained poison, which affected the performance, and Ambupanikker stopped the *Theyyam* in the middle. Darootti received money and property from *Thambran*, but he was expelled by the family upon learning that he had cheated. Thus, the Thambaran decided to deport Ambupanikker from the village as he failed to fulfil his duty. Apart from deportation, the inability to perform the duty of a *Theyyam* leads to great humiliation for the family. When Ambupanikker was deported from the family and village, his wife Chileri became pregnant. After a few days, Chileri is killed by the *Thambran* due to her refusal to cooperate with him; she dies during childbirth.

Kunnikkelu is the worst victim of the patriarchal dominance with caste hierarchy, where he lost his mother and father, and lives under the protection of his grandparents. When he grew up, Perumalayan taught him all the skills of the *Theyyam* performance and its rituals. Gradually, he learned all the stories regarding his parents and forefathers from the Perumalayan. As he grew up, he occasionally visited *Illam*, where Malinani ensured he acted according to *Thambran's* wishes; however, once he acted against *Thambran*, *Thambran* noticed him. Later, *Thambran* made a plan to trap Kunnikkelu. *Thambran* decided to conduct a Theechamundi *Theyyam* performance in the village, where the Perumalayan family was supposed to perform. However, Perumalayan's age did not cooperate with this performance and rejected the proposal. Thus, *Thambran* decided Kunnikkelu should do this; otherwise, the family would lose this *Cherumiavakahsam*. Everyone wondered about *Thambran's* decisions. Theechamundi *Theyyam* requires extensive skill and practice, whereas Kunnikkelu is not yet mature enough to perform. Furthermore, the body will be consumed by the fire after a few leaps into the firewood. Everyone knows that *Thambran* has set a trap to kill Kunnikkelu and fulfil *Thambran's* revenge against the family. Initially, Perumalayan declined the offer; later, Kunnikkelu itself accepted the challenge. The caste system and its practices profoundly humiliate the existence of a lower caste community. The caste system affects women and children more severely than men. This analysis shows that Malinani and Kunnikkelu faced greater humiliation than Ambu Panikkar or Perumalayan, as women are often the primary targets of dehumanising actions by dominant groups. Members of lower castes often felt their lives had no value, and the sense of inferiority caused by upper-caste

treatment was unbearable. These conditions are exacerbated by cultural narratives that perpetuate stereotypes and negative connotations.

The increase in cultural complexity and exposure to multiple cultures in North Malabar offers new insights into how inhabitants view freedom and self-sufficiency. Local literature reflects these changes, with writers highlighting elements of resistance and the quest for freedom in their novels. This analysis shows how people seek freedom by resisting different forms of dominance and the power relations that accompany them. The response to suppressive actions gave rise to multiple elements of modernity that are region-specific and more community-oriented. However, modernity as a concept originated in Europe, and the Western world has focused on individual change grounded in science and rationality. Therefore, the region-specific modernity of North Malabar requires a holistic framework to accommodate the full diversity present in the region.

European modernity primarily questioned traditional forms of authority, the Enlightenment, and the Protestant Reformation, which are widely regarded as key features of this social phenomenon. Individualism and rationality also gave rise to a new mode of thinking and a modern form of philosophical enquiry (Jameson, 2002, p. 11). Rational thought and the rise of scientific theory are the defining features of modernity. The self-conscious research and knowledge acquisition prioritised reason over tradition, thereby advancing various fields. Thus, modernity manifests in multiple aspects of people's day-to-day life (Jameson, 2002, p. 11). Elements of modernity are identified in the selected novels, which emerged from resistance to suppression. People who experience multiple oppressions and suppressions raise

their voices and act to become self-sufficient and achieve freedom from dominant control. The elements of modernity in North Malabar, as forms of resistance to authoritarianism and multiple forms of dominance, are not comparable to European modernity, in which regional differences and community involvement are prevalent. Although this resistance originated with an individual, it gradually spread to society, and the entire community responded accordingly. Therefore, the changes vary according to the social context. This analysis reveals that the form of modernity emerging in North Malabar is uniquely shaped by the resistance of subordinate groups to entrenched multiple forms of dominance. Thus, a one-size-fits-all approach is unsuitable in this context, where multiple modernities offer a more appropriate framework for understanding developments in the North Malabar social landscape.

Multiple modernities is a concept popularised by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt. The term “multiple modernities” recognises social change as shaped by the diversified sociocultural aspects of a society. Thus, modernity is not a uniform experience. Every society may have its version of modernity, which suits its unique historical and sociocultural contexts (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 2). Furthermore, multiple modernities challenge earlier versions of modernity, which promote universal and homogenising tendencies grounded in the European model of modern values. However, multiple modernities emphasise the diversities of societies and their reflections in modern values, so there is no blind imitation of the European model of modernity. Furthermore, the deeply rooted, unique, cultural, religious, and historical contexts are key determinants of a society's modernity. Consequently, the outcome

will be distinct, diverging from the Western model and even rejecting Westernisation. (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 6). The reinterpretations and reformulations of these multiple modernities will accommodate ongoing societal changes rather than creating an ideal type of modernity. This dynamic picture of modernity evolved by recognising the diversity and different social actors who actively participated in the process of social progress.

The multiple modernities found in North Malabar are the result of various forms of resistance to hierarchy and subjugation. The nuances of modernity can be identified by analysing the forms of hierarchy and resistance to it. Modernity in Kerala emerged not as a single, linear Western model but through community reform projects (Nair, Nambudiri, Ezhava, Christian) that selectively combined liberal notions of the individual with caste- and gender-hierarchical projects (Devika, J. 2007, pp. 118-122). Women's "freedom" in early 20th-century Kerala was produced through reform discourses that bound women to domestic modernity. At the same time, permitting controlled entry into education and limited public works again reflects a distinct regional modernity, differing from metropolitan European models (Devika, J. 2007, pp. 120-122). Religious modernity can be identified as the shift from rigid orthodoxy to progressive social thought, attributable to modern education and global cultural exposure. Twentieth-century modernity was majorly influenced by missions, literacy, and new notions of equality and interiority. Dalits have generated a subaltern modernity, articulated through religion, education, and social movements (Sanal Mohan, P. 2015, pp. 20-21). In short, modernity in

North Malabar in the twentieth century was influenced by education, employment, religious causes, and the quest for freedom, independence, and dignity.

The wholesale rejection of traditional values and norms is impossible in any society; as societies evolve, synthesising these values with modern practices enables them to maintain their cultural identity while adopting contemporary advancements. This synthesis challenges the notion that modernity requires the abandonment of tradition (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 7). Modernising societies undergo different structural changes in institutions, shaped by their cultural and historical experiences. Anti-Western movements are also adopting modern values; thus, modernity and westernisation are not synonymous. The Western model may be constructed from its sociocultural and historical context, which is not an authentic form, given the diversity across societies (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 6). In short, regional diversity will design the structural differentiation in various institutions. Historical narratives and cultural traditions highly influence multiple modernities. Modern democracy in countries such as India and Japan may be attributed to the encounter between Western modernity and cultural traditions. The emergence of globalisation brings a new face to modernity, as transnational identities reinterpret culture, creating new identities and lifestyles (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 7). Therefore, it can be concluded that the concept of “multiple modernities” offers a framework for accommodating multiple versions of modernity worldwide that may not fit within the Western model. North Malabar modernities can be understood within the framework of multiple modernities introduced by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, and the unique sociocultural and historical elements can be considered in this analysis. North

Malabar's multiple modernities exemplify Eisenstadt's framework: Religious modernity (progressive Islam via Andrumankutti); Subaltern modernity (lower-caste resistance via Eyyunni and Janaki); Gender modernity (Khadeeja's autonomy claim); Secular/democratic modernity (decline of the feudal system). Each emerges from specific sociocultural contexts rather than from a uniform Western template.

The novel *Changala* deals with multiple instances of patriarchal authoritarianism and dominance against lower-class people by the *Adhikari* as well as the upper-class people. These suppressed communities raise the quest for freedom and individual liberty. Multiple characters, such as Eyyunni (Khadeeja's husband), voice resistance. Eyyunni left the Kolathu *Tharavadu* after Kunnamu Adhikari killed Khadeeja. Eyyunni was a very obedient slave of Kunnamu *Adhikari*; he followed all the instructions of Kunnamu and even beat Khadeeja to abort his child. However, he lost his control once he found the body of Khadeeja in the mosque's pond. The vengeance and anger of Eyyunni cannot be expressed, as he is helpless and fearful about the power of Kunnamu. To protest the Kunnamu's hierarchy, Eyyunni joined the freedom fighters when they came to make salt at Payyanur Beach. Kunnamu *Adhikari* also reached the beach with the police force to suppress the protest, where Eyyunni called *Adhikari* "*Vellakarante changalayitta naaye*" [Bloody servant of British govt] (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 151; author's translation). This voice of Eyyunni is the lowest action possible from his end to resist Kunnamu and the quest for freedom from all kinds of suppressions. An element of modernity identified in Eyyunni is the courage to move away from the Kunnamu *Adhikari* and to question his dominance, as expressed in the slogan. Although Eyyunni was sure about the

power and suppression after the salt protest, he came forward and fought, and died in police violence. The resistance movements against hierarchical oppression constitute the foundational basis of modern North Malabar. Rather than viewing modernity as an externally imposed force, it must be understood as emerging directly from the struggles of subaltern groups for freedom, dignity, and self-determination. Therefore, the wisdom to resist the dominant power and the hope for the free world were elements of modernity in Eyyunni.

Similarly, Khadeeja demonstrates resistance; she left Kolothu *Tharavadu* without Kunnamu's permission and lived alone to protect her pregnancy. This threatens her survival, as Kunnamu is very adamant about executing his will. Here, Khadeeja demonstrates the confidence to challenge the dominant patriarchal authority in pursuit of her freedom and self-autonomy. Whenever Eyyunni came to compel her to abort as instructed by Kunnamu, she opposed and faced the violence from Eyyunni. However, the dominant power of Kunnamu *Adhikari* won here by killing Khadeeja. Although the Kunnamu *Adhikari* suppresses Khadeeja's voice, she overcomes the patriarchal notions of dependency of women on the male-dominated society. If they allowed her to live, she would live self-sufficiently and confidently. Therefore, the multiple modernities present here address the struggle for self-autonomy against patriarchal authority.

Thithayi Buduvan, an assistant to Kunnamu *Adhikari*, was an obedient servant. Thithayi resides in Kolathu *Tharavadu* and provides all necessary support to Kunnamu. Immediately after *Adhikari*'s death, Thithayi began looting the properties of Kolothu *Tharavadu*. He informed Kunnaishumma that *Adhikari* had promised

him a small portion of the *Tharavadu* plot in the corner for his family to build a small house. Nafeesa, Thithayi's wife, is very active in stealing groceries and other items from the kitchen. She is adept at pleasing Kunnaishumma, thereby entitling her to keep the storeroom key. Therefore, Thithayi and his family accumulated sufficient wealth through their authority in the kitchen; on the other hand, Kolothu *Tharavadu* lost all its wealth and power due to a lack of control over the *Tharavadu*'s business and property management. Later, Thithayi expressed his anger toward Kunnaishumma as a form of resistance to the various forms of suppression experienced in Kolothu *Tharavadu*. After the *Tharavadu* lost all its wealth, Kunnaishumma and Abdulla decided to leave the house, and Thithayi expressed his anger toward Kunnaishumma. He says, "Keep quiet about the past, you people are the ones who exploited us, the *Kolothukkaru* (aristocratic house) are the ones who grew fat by eating human beings, aren't you?" (Khader, 1966/2014, p. 219; author's translation). This reflects the freedom acquired by Thithayi and his family from all kinds of bonds of the Kolothu *Tharavadu*. Thus, the philosophy of modernity sprouted in this family. Furthermore, Thithayi was inspired by Hyder to become self-sufficient and free from Kolothu *Tharavadu*'s dominance. Hyder left his hometown, returned as a wealthy man, and took revenge against Kolothu *Tharavadu*. Inspiration to achieve modern values varies with a person's social context. Thus, multiple modernities can be identified in the social landscape of North Malabar.

This study identifies multiple modernities, as depicted by the author, as a means of advocating for societal transformation and progress. The author may wish

to observe progressive changes in society and reflect them in their novels. U.A. Khader intentionally discusses elements of modernity in his works, introducing characters who effect change in the social order. Some characters were introduced to constrain the feudal structure; thus, modern social values spread. Kunnabdulla was raised in Kolothu Tharavadu and is not suitable to hold the position of *Adhikari*. Due to a lack of mental growth and maturity, he spoils the wealth and property of the *Tharavadu*. Thus, feudal rule and suppression ended in his generation. When Kunnabdulla and Kunnaishumma left the *Tharavadu* and moved to a small house, U.A. Khader had them touch the soil and experience human needs and concerns. According to Rahman (1966/2013, p. 18), “Khader played a historical role by creating a mentally unfit lineage to a feudal family, thus the modern democratic characteristics get enough space to flourish.” The author is highly political in this novel, set in the 1920s to 1950s in North Malabar society. Therefore, in his works, U.A. Khader's quest for a democratic and egalitarian society creates a fighter who resists dominant power and promotes modern values of freedom and self-autonomy through his pen.

The elements of modernity in Punathil Kunnabdulla's *Smaraka Shilakal* are pretty different, as we find people achieving freedom and liberation from multiple sources. Aattabee symbolises the characteristics of modernity, as she is liberated from Pookkoya Thangal's patriarchal authority following his death. In the same novel, we can find different paths of modernity in Kunnali and Pookkunnibee. Kunnali and Pookkunnibee were raised together, and Pookkoya Thangal arranged their marriage; however, nothing proceeded smoothly after Thangal's death.

Although she wishes to marry Kunnali, he is not in a position to care for her. Later, Pookkunnibee marries a wealthy man suffering from tuberculosis, a union that ultimately subsumes her agency within patriarchal dominance. Pookkunnibee's death (or escape into fantasy) represents the failure of patriarchal modernity to accommodate women's desires. Trapped between real and imagined worlds, she retreats into a childhood fantasy rather than achieving autonomous modernity. Kunnali has been suppressed in several ways by both Aattabee and Ibrahim: his schooling was halted, he was compelled to work for Tharavadu, and he was forced to live in the outhouse. Kunnali remained committed to Tharavadu until Pookkunnibee's death. Then he moved to Onchiyan, where he dropped out of school, which he needed to complete, and sought to become an inspector as he wished. All three characters exhibit distinct aspects of modernity. Aattabee finds freedom and embraces modern values after the demise of Thangal, whose patriarchal authority had suppressed her liberty. Pokkiunnibee was liberated from her marriage with a TB patient. While societal norms dominated her freedom and autonomy, none of them considered her feelings. Kunnali found liberation and independence through education, and Onchiyam (the next town) symbolises modernity, as his school is located there. Therefore, the modernity identified in this novel has multiple causes and consequences for the development of modern values.

“Chandayil Choodi Vilkkana Pennu” is a chapter in the novel *Thrikkottur Peruma* by U.A. Khader, in which the element of modernity is particularly evident in the character of Janakai. Janaki lost her husband, Kanaran, due to the upper caste dominance and suppression when the Adhikari and his friends killed him. No one

supported her and spoke out against this injustice. The power of *Adhikari*, feudal lords' status, upper-caste dominance, and patriarchal authority were collectively exercised by Paithal Nair (Adhikari of Iringal), Kelappan Adiyodi (Adhikari of Thrikkottur), and Kunnithaji, who sought to suppress and diminish lower-caste women. However, she finds relief and justice in the belief of Kuttimani *Theyyam*, whereas the elements of modern values are inspired by the cultural practices and beliefs that existed in society. U.A. Khader represents Janaki's fight as a quest for freedom and justice, in which she compares herself to Kuttimani, a Chudala Bhadra Kali². U.A. Khader characterises Kuttimani as,

The unending lust (*kamakkothi*) of the feudal lords (*Naduvazhicharude*) of the seaside (*Kadalunggara*), and the deceit and fraud (*kallavum kapadavum*) used to satiate that lust. Their hawk-like eyes (*kazhukakkannu*) and unquenchable lust could not be controlled. They spotted their target: Kuttimani, the beautiful Pulaya woman, who worked in the fields (*nattukandathil*), forgetting her body and self (*keyyum meyyum marannu*). Kuttimani, who returned as Chudala Bhadrakali, burning everything to ashes (*sakalathum chambalakkuya*), to roast and consume (*chuttarikkan*) those who cheated and murdered her by cutting off her nose (*mookku*) and breasts (*mula*). (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 128; translated from the original Malayalam text).

Janaki is inspired by the mythical stories of Kuttimani and decides to fight against the injustice she has already faced. Consequently, she comes across Ramankutti, the

² Goddess who fight against the injustice faced by her

eldest son of Paithal Nair, and decides to take revenge through Ramankutti. Janaki starts an affair with Ramankutti, which gradually affects the peaceful life of the Paithal Nairs' family. Once, Janaki is threatened by Kelappan Adiyodi, the *Adhikari* of Thrikkottur, who seeks to protect the interests of the Paithal Nair by severing Janaki's relationship with Ramankutti. Janaki responds to the threat of Kelappan Adiyodi: "I did not hold anyone here, how can I stop a person from coming here even without my knowledge" (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 130; author's translation). Finally, one night, Kelappan Adiyodi set fire to Janaki's house in the middle of the night, unaware that Ramankutti was inside, thereby ending Janaki's revenge. Next week, Janaki goes to Vadakara for her usual *Choodi* sale. Her escape constitutes a unique expression of subaltern modernity: a strategy grounded in cunning and survival rather than in overt, direct resistance. Drawing inspiration from the mythical vengeance of Kuttimani, she operationalises modern values, such as autonomy and justice-seeking, not through external Western legal or democratic frameworks, but through culturally-rooted means. U.A. Khader incorporates cultural practices into his work and elucidates the functions of these cultural beliefs in the lives of the North Malabar people. The natives survived difficult times with the help of this belief system, which provided hope in their struggle against hegemonic power. Therefore, modern values were assimilated into North Malabar society through a process that selectively incorporated traditional cultural aspects, establishing a uniquely composite path to modernisation.

"Andrumankutti Kurikkal" is the final chapter of the novel *Thrikkottur Peruma*, in which U.A. Khader underscores the importance of change and the path

toward modernity within a rigid worldview. Andruman Kurikkal is a young man who lived in a society where the Muslim community was little exposed to the outside world and its practices. The increased dominance of the priesthood and the feudal upper class in this society made the town highly resistant to change and led it to follow many *mamool*. Andruman Kurikkal was exposed to the outside world and progressively approached religion. Once he styled his hair, it became controversial. U.A. Khader decorated this as “Among us, the Mappilas, Andruman Kurikkal was the first not to shave his head completely, but instead style it, comb it neatly, trim it, and go about.” (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 281; translation from the original Malayalam work). Therefore, others in the community oppose this change and believe that Moidu Haji, *Nattu Karanavar*³ will take action against these changes. However, Andruman Kurikkal ignores these discussions and continues visiting the market and the mosque daily. Furthermore, he met Moidu Haji at the Masjid and conveyed religious greetings. Consequently, Moidu Haji decided to punish Andruman for his actions. At the same time, Moidu Haji learned that he was part of a new Islamic movement popular beyond the town that rejected religious cults, certain traditional rituals, and many existing systems within Islam. Here, U.A. Khader introduces the idea of modernity into religion, questioning the priesthood’s dominance by arguing that a lay believer can pray directly to God without an intermediary. Khader (1982/2022, p. 130; translation from the original Malayalam work) illustrates that,

It is said that a group has emerged within the Muslim community who reject those revered souls who have passed away, such as the *Badris* (referring to

³ Senior people in villages who hold certain power.

the participants of the Battle of Badr) and Moidheen Sheikh (a major Sufi saint). These are individuals who assert that the revered souls have no power. After the obligatory prayers (*namaskaram*) are completed, they immediately rise and leave without participating in the communal prayer, as if to protest. They are like rebels who discard religious customs and practices as easily as discarding grass." (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 130; translation from the original Malayalam work)

Meanwhile, Andruman is attracted to a young woman, Pathumma, and informs her father, Imbichi Musliyar. However, Imbichi Musliyar is a traditional Muslim follower who practices *Ziyarath* and *Kutharatheeb* (rituals traditionally practised by a particular group). He agrees to the proposal and asks him to come with his family. Once Moidutti Haji heard this news, he decided to arrange another marriage for Pathumma under his control and informed Imbichi Musliyar, but had no clue about the groom. Imbichi Musalayar and his family are confused about his action. Still, they were helpless to reject Moidu Haji's proposal, as he could cause trouble for the family as *Nattu Karanavar*.

Andrumankutti Kurikkal learned of Moidu Haji's move and arranged a registered marriage for them with the consent of the Imbichi Musalayar. Once the Nikah and the registered marriage are over, Andrumankutti Kurikkal decides to stay at Imbichi Musliyar's house and confront Moidu Haji. According to the plan, Moidu Haji arrived at Imbichi Musliyar's home on the wedding day and announced that he was the groom; until then, no one knew who the groom was. Andruman Kurikkal came out of the house with a knife and asked, "Which old man is it who is marrying

my wife?" (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 307; author's translation). Once Moidu Haji and the team learned what had happened, they fled the scene. U.A. Khader drew the conditions of people who believe and follow Islam rigidly and narrowly due to a lack of exposure to a holistic view of the religion. They just follow what the priesthood shares, without a second thought. Through his writing, U.A. Khader introduces a modern approach to understanding the broader aspects of Islam. When Imbichi Musliyar visits the registrar's office, he is exposed to a more progressive version of his faith. He observes that the registrar's appearance mirrors that of Andruman Kurikkal, the son of the respected religious scholar Abdulla Musliyar. These encounters serve as significant 'eye-openers' for the Musliyar, who had never before encountered Muslims with such modern lifestyles. These progressive ideas are gradually spreading throughout the community. Andruman Kurikkal and his followers do not move away from Islam and its practices, but put efforts to uncover the narrow view on religious life. Therefore, within the religion, they explore modernity. Furthermore, U.A. Khader created such characters to make social changes without compromising the core values of religion and its beliefs.

Marakkappile Theyyanagal addresses elements of modernity for both educated and illiterate persons. Lawrence is a graduate who lives in Marakkappu, where he observed encroachments into the Beach and other natural landscapes in the name of tourism. This educated person becomes a fighter against environmental destruction and the erosion of the livelihoods of indigenous peoples. However, the powerful groups, including the corporate and the government, suppressed his voice and killed him. Although he created a community to expand his ideas and awareness

of environmental protection, a lack of commitment and illiteracy rendered the group ineffective. Lawrence fought for justice and the rights of the people. During the discussion with Giridharan, Managing Director of Tourism Development Corporations, Lawrence expressed his stand:

The developments do not benefit local people; they may initially receive some monetary benefits, but ultimately they lose their livelihoods. There are no criteria to protect the environment and its natural existence. The promises of eco-friendly development are not practical even the pioneers left these ideas long back...all those who visit the tourist place look forward to half naked women for their pleasure and enjoy their vocations here with drinks...the historians who visited our nations in past wrote about our culture and rituals and respect the same, where the current generations are focused on luxury visit only (Mangad, 2003/2021, p. 111; author's translation).

Lawrence is a symbol of modernity, as he is educated and acknowledges the rule of law, as well as the rights, liberty, and equality of persons within society. He pointed out things with a clarity that is lacking among others. He created a spark among the community, and people questioned the death of Lawrence, but the dominant group sidelined this issue using the support of local politicians. Therefore, a quest for freedom emerged in society, as Krishnankutty, his friend, uncovered in his investigation into Lawrence's death. Hence, the element of modernity in Lawrence and his fight against the corporate world derived from his education and his belief in the responsibilities of a citizen. Later, it influenced society, but did not take root due to opposition from the dominant power lobby.

Apart from Lawrence, the elements of modernity are found in Umbichi, an illiterate orphan who struggled to collect the original document for her four-and-a-half-cent property. In this journey, she encounters several obstacles imposed by patriarchal authority that serve hidden agendas. For example, Lohithakshan, the clerk at the village office, exploited Umbichi's illiteracy to make her a source of income, misleading her about the document verification process and repeatedly asking for money. Later, he used her for sexual harassment in the resort and presented her to his friends as well. In addition to these struggles, she lost the property due to the development plan implemented in Marakkappu. She even tried to stop the actions, but she failed. The author was involved in the narrative to bring freedom and justice to the novel's characters. Umbichi killed Lohithakshan in revenge at Kamballor Kotta. This incident is witnessed by all forty *Theyyams* of Marakkappu, and they give strength to Umbichi. This affords her freedom and justice against the various forms of suppression she has faced. The novel's engagement with cultural beliefs and practices is pervasive in its quest for modernity, and the author's portrayal of Umbichi's modernity is imaginative. This demonstrates how the writers engage with the characters' lives and how they interweave plots to promote modern values in the novels. Lawrence's environmentalism and Umbichi's revenge through culturally authenticated violence constitute subaltern modernity: resistance to corporate/patriarchal power expressed through the character's own cultural framework rather than external institutional channels.

Oru Padakalippenninte Charitham is a work by U.A. Khader that unfolds the story of a woman's survival and her fight against the odds in society. Kuthira

Mariyaam has no relatives and lives alone in Nochingakkattu Parambu. She is a beautiful woman who earns her living through the coir-making business and other part-time factory jobs under the Hydros Mappila. This makes her self-sufficient to live in her own way. She adheres to certain principles, serving in the houses for free on occasions of birth and death. She is skilled in caring for newborns and mothers and instructs individuals on the specialised care required during the postpartum period. If someone dies, Mariyam visits the house and performs various necessary tasks, thereby facilitating the funeral process and related ceremonies. However, she did not expect any payment from them and did not collect any. On the other hand, she would not visit any married house without an invitation. Even when she attended a marriage, she gradually moved to the kitchen and commented on various imperfections. Therefore, this caused trouble for the family. U.A. Khader has created a Muslim woman who differs from *Changala*, *Kuraishikkottam*, and *Agorashivam*: Kuthira Mariyam is self-sufficient, enjoys freedom, and expresses her opinions without fear. In short, the elements of modernity are evident in Kuthira Mariyam's actions.

U.A. Khader (2007/2013, p. 7, translated from the original Malayalam work) provides multiple descriptions of the courage and fearless actions of Mariyam, like

A long time ago, there lived in our land a warrior woman named Kuthira Mariyam, who was capable of doing anything. She was capable of handling ten men at a time, no matter how great, cunning, or valiant the warriors might be; she alone was sufficient to confront them directly.

Mariyam is impolite toward others and openly states her opinions; thus, very few men are courageous enough to speak to her.

If a woman can go out alone to work during the day, then what's wrong with a woman walking alone westward along the Palanagattu path in the deep midnight, carrying a walking stick and lighting a lamp, after witnessing the second performance at the shrine of Palorappachan? Will someone catch and consume her? In some places, there are rumours that even the fearsome Karimkutty Chathan is afraid of a woman. (Khader, 2007/2013, p. 8; translation from the original Malayalam work)

Once Mariyam reached Alavikkutti Haji's home for cooking, where Thithibeeumma, Alavikkutti's wife, and her eldest son, Hamsa, had gone for Hajj. Thus, Mariyam has control over the kitchen and readily fulfils Alavikkutti Haji's taste preferences. She gradually exerts control over Alavikkutti Haaji's mind and becomes an integral part of Alavikkutti's daily life. When Beeder returned from Hajj, she noticed a new presence of mind and freshness in Alavikkutti Haji's demeanour. Although she had expected him to be weary and perhaps neglectful in her absence, she was surprised to find that his love and care for her had diminished. Thus, she gave up in the face of Mariyam's skill in handling her husband and requested that Mariyam stay and prepare better food for Alavikkutti. One day, Mariyam realised that Alavikkutti Haji had personal secrets hidden from her, prompting her to leave the house. Mariyam's absence created trouble for Alavikkutti, and he left the home in search of Mariyam. However, Alavikkutti could not find her, and he was lost in her memories. Thus, Kuthira Mariyam is a strong character who resists potential dominant forces in her

surroundings and dominates the power structures around her, making them dependent on her. It is observed that Kuthira Mariyaam's path to modernity is paved by economic independence and active non-conformity to gendered expectations. She establishes autonomy through financial power, thereby resisting the traditional reliance, a characteristic of patriarchal structures. This independence enables her to assert her agency, specifically by strategically choosing to withhold domestic labour or care, a resource denied to women who remain economically dependent.

This short novel offers new perspectives on U.A. Khader's writings, in which some of his female characters are admirable. Still, none of them exhibit the strong sense of fearlessness and confidence in their actions that Mariyam does. U.A. Khader argues that women are not always under men's control; they can even control men by providing them with a comfortable life and then withdraw it unexpectedly. In this novel, Alavikkutti Haji and his entire family depend on Mariyam for different reasons. In addition, Mariyam tolerates people until she feels comfortable with them; she leaves the house once that comfort level breaks. Mariyam has developed the courage and confidence to live independently, as she is self-sufficient and financially autonomous. Furthermore, she performs her work with passion and earns enough income to meet her needs, indicating the influence of modernity on her life. In short, U.A. Khader's writings from the later stages of life reflected societal changes, with elements of modernity that are more explicit and emphasised than in previous works.

The novel *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha* deals with the lives of two women and their struggle for survival in a

patriarchal society. Compared to the previous primary novels, this one is closer to the contemporary social scenario of North Malabar. The novel prioritises the multiple elements of modernity as reflected in the lives of Kalyani and Dhakshayani. They both face numerous patriarchal dominant actions, but still strive to come out of them. Traditional social norms and customs, rooted in patriarchal notions, restrict their lives; thus, they create their own space to explore.

Dhakshayani married Aanikkaran of Kollam and relocated from her hometown for Aanikkaran's convenience. When she stays back in her home, she enjoys the freedom, except on the day Aanikkaran visits. However, she faced considerable suppression from him and from society. Dhakshayani can manage this suppression through her linguistic proficiency in local dialects. Once, she insulted Aanikkaran about his bedroom performance and questioned his capacity to have sex with her. This humiliated Aanikkaran as he never expected such questions from Dhakshayani. Rajasree did not create hardcore feminist characters because, at times, these characters are trying to cope with the patriarchal social setting. At the same time, they react to avoid further suppression. Once Aanikkaran humiliated Dhakshayani by asking about her freedom and financial stability, she promptly responded that, “Ah, hab bee’ bantin’ to ask fer long- Do yuh hab sum weaknes’ in yer thingie? Oth’rwis’ why yuh thrashin’ aboutt’ so muc’? Wha’s thi’ playin’ aroun’?” (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 109). These words are sharp in their critique of Aanikkaran's patriarchal authority. Thus, Dhakshayani maintained a similar tone, as she found that this relationship would not proceed.

Once Dhakshayani gets an opportunity to visit the temple for a festival, she returns with a certain extra magical power that she acquired through her interactions with a pregnant ghost. Since then, she suffered a lot in her husband's house, and they alienated her using their language, too. After she visits the temple, she speaks in her native language, using curse words to the entire family. As Aanikkaran's family believed in Bhada Koodal (the control of a person's body or mind by a supernatural entity) and related beliefs, they treated her accordingly. However, occasionally, Dhakshayani experienced a mood swing; then she sat in Aanikkaran's father's chair. Then she starts speaking,

‘Wha’ THA FUCK are yuh fibbin’ an foolin’ bith THA SONOFABITCH?
 Barked Dhakshayani, seeing Nailsvendor's mother whisper something to his father, hurling at her the shamefully disrespectful ‘nee’ for ‘you’. They merely cringed and started. Wasn’ ith yuh who strangl’d Billaasaan’s daughthe’ and threw her in tha well? Wasn’ ith yuh who hack’d down Billaasaan bith a knof? Yuh devil of pesthilenc’! MAY YUH BURN! MAY YUH BURN! She cursed, flinging again and again the deadly insulting ‘nee’.
 (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 130).

Dhakshayani used to counter her husband's patriarchal dominance once she sat in the chair. Whereas Dhakshayani skillfully used language to oppose Aanikkaran's patriarchal authority. Therefore, the author brings an element of modernity through social beliefs about ghosts and their influences. Later, the same power makes her decide to move from Kollam to her hometown. Dhakshayani's 'possession' by a supernatural entity provides a culturally sanctioned space for her to voice patriarchal

critique without full personal accountability. This demonstrates how North Malabar modernity uses cultural beliefs as vehicles for expressing a modern consciousness (gender critique, refusal of patriarchal norms) that patriarchy would otherwise suppress. This reveals how the character's modernity is constructed through rational decisions to overcome social stigma and to move into her individualistic world of freedom.

Kalyani demonstrated a modern sensibility in her decision to leave her husband's house. She receives no care or protection from her husband, Koppukaran, who is preoccupied with his business and making money. In addition, she learned that Koppukaran was impotent, which led them to leave their home, where they had been trying to adjust, but it did not work out. The social stigmas and patriarchal narratives of being a wife and treating the husband are broken here. Kalyani attains freedom by breaking away from the bonds imposed by her mother, husband, and mother-in-law. Thus, the element of modernity is evident in both characters, as they felt self-sufficient and capable of managing their affairs without external support. Furthermore, they question the patriarchal social norms and beliefs that subjugate women. In addition, Kalyani and Dhakshayani articulate modern values in two ways. Both Kalyani and Dhakshayani find their freedom in money and in earning it. Dhakshayani approached Kunjipennu for some money, and just before leaving the village of Aanikkaran, Kunjipennu asked: "Why do youw needu caashu, koche?" Then Dhakshayani replied as "I a'ways hab money. Ith fee's rea' bbad if I don' 'hab sum money. Cannyuh pleas' gibe me sum money justh to hol'" (Rajasree, 2019/2022, p. 144). Similarly, Kalyani requests money for Cheyikkutti and obtains

it from her. The second indicator of freedom is their village, where they lived with agency and made decisions. The towns of Kalyani and Dhakshayani give them confidence and a sense of fulfilment, as they feel safe in these spaces. This may be influenced by the matrilocal system in North Malabar, which provides women in that region with comfort and convenience. Furthermore, the narrative of a woman expected to move in with her husband is patriarchal, and this novel challenges it through the lives of Kalyani and Dhakshayani.

Perumalayan is a novel written by M.V. Janardhanan, where he depicts the story of *Pottan Theyyam* and Perumalayan, where generations of Perumalayan's family performed the *Theyyam*. The caste system and its inferiority beliefs and actions are prevalent in this novel, where the lower caste community is poorly humiliated in the social structures. The hierarchical power of the dominant caste is questioned by members of lower castes, with *Pottan Theyyam* as a prominent example. Most of the men in the Malaya caste raised their voice against the upper caste's suppression when they felt humiliated as they were unable to protect their women from *Thambran*'s trap. Ambu Panikker, son of Peumalayan, raised the voice of freedom and justice from all the subjugations of *Thambran*. Thus, he was deported from the village for cheating during the *Theyyam* performance, and was later killed once he broke the rule and returned to the town. Similarly, Kunnikkelu, the son of Ambu Panikker, was trapped in *Thambran*'s plan, as *Thambran* perceived him as a potential threat. However, the beliefs and practices of Perumalayan and his family save the community and the society from the threats of *Thambran*, where Kunnikkelu killed *Thambran* during the performance of a Vishnu Moorthi *Theyyam*.

In addition, most of *Thambran's* assistants died of multiple diseases during this period. Religious and cultural beliefs shape the lives of natives and inform solutions to their problems. Most of these *Theyyams* have a mythic origin, in which they transformed into *Theyyams* to avenge the dominance and suppression of those in power. *Pottan Theyyam* took revenge against the upper caste people, who killed him by throwing stones. Thus, the novel *Perumalayan* depicts the emergence of modernity in North Malabar, where *Theyyam* and its practices illuminate the darkness of caste systems. Therefore, the modernities in these texts are not uniform or similar to the European or Western model of modernity; they are achieved in the framework of traditional values, as *Theyyam* and its beliefs bring freedom from caste hierarchy.

This chapter analyses multiple patriarchal dominances within the North Malabar social context through selected novels. The voice in opposition to patriarchal authority becomes a quest for freedom, liberty, and individual rights, ultimately leading to modernity. The theory of patriarchy, introduced by Sylvia Walby (1989, pp. 213-234), encompasses a wider range of patriarchal structures and provides a more comprehensive account of its multiple dimensions. Multiple forms of patriarchy and their functions within the North Malabar social context are examined and compared with those in South Kerala culture in the novel *Kalyaniyennum Dhakshayaniyennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalude Katha*. The matrilineal system practices of North Malabar were never a foolproof method for developing an egalitarian social life. Matrilineal and matrilocal practices of North Malabar society promote patriarchy in different forms and depths; these patriarchal

versions are identified using Walby's six plus structures. Patriarchy, combined with the wealth and status of Tharavad, played an essential role in dominating and subjugating the lower class/caste and women. This analysis utilises Sylvia Walby's comprehensive framework of six patriarchal structures (sexuality, production, norms, violence, paid work, and state) to map the multiple, intersecting mechanisms of oppression active in North Malabar. The combined effects of caste hierarchy, *Tharavadu* wealth/status, and patriarchal authority generate compounded oppression within the region. Crucially, the resistance arises from multiple internally generated sources, including environmental consciousness (Lawrence), supernatural belief systems (Dhakshayani), economic autonomy (Kuthira Mariyaam), lower-caste mythologies (*Theyyam*), and collective community action, thereby producing diverse, region-specific modernities rather than a uniform Western model. Therefore, the subjugated community drew inspiration from multiple sources to express their resistance, thereby shaping modernities specific to the regional diversities of North Malabar. Hence, numerous forces deprived the lower class/caste and women of North Malabar, and different sources were used to overcome this dominance and subjugation by these people. The social transformations of North Malabar's composite culture need to be identified within the context of its sociocultural life, as presented in the analysis of selected novels.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores the rich tapestry of cultural syncretism in North Malabar through a critical analysis of Malayalam novels published between 1966 and 2023. It examines the complex transition of authoritative social structures into modernity across various communities of North Malabar, with particular attention to the significant role of local dialects in shaping the region's cultural identity. Delving into the rich tapestry of composite culture and the syncretic ethos of the twentieth century, this study aims to provide a comprehensive insight into the dynamic evolution shaping North Malabar's cultural landscape. The composite cultural elements of North Malabar are scrutinised in the light of selected novels set in that sociocultural context. U.A. Khader, Punathil Kunnabdulla, Rajasree, Ambikasuthan Mangad, and M.V. Janardhanan are the writers chosen for this study. They created novels set in Marakkappu, Eramam, Thrikkottur, Pandalayani, Algara, Sadooka, and Karakkad. These fictional places are modelled on places in North Malabar, and the novel's characters re-create the syncretic culture of North Malabar society. The detailed analysis of the selected novels utilises the theoretical frameworks of acculturation, multiple modernities, and patriarchy, alongside a sociolinguistic approach. Therefore, the study uncovered the significance of syncretic culture in North Malabar and its transformations into multiple modernities.

This thesis comprises three core chapters that examine the developments and transformations of the composite culture of North Malabar in the twentieth century. This study examines the elements of syncretism and their impact on North Malabar

society, utilising twentieth-century sociocultural and historical sources as a foundational context. The first chapter outlines a broad framework for the evolution of composite culture in North Malabar by analysing the syncretic elements in primary sources. Acculturation theory elucidates the development of multiculturalism in North Malabar and the evolution of syncretic elements in this society's social practices. Therefore, a discernible track of North Malabar's composite culture and its elements is deciphered. The second chapter examines the impact of composite culture on local dialects, exploring the impressions of multilingualism and diversity. The sociolinguistics approach corroborates the analysis of North Malabar's regional dialects and their functions in the second chapter. The third chapter examines how patriarchal authority operated within the matrilineal system of North Malabar. At the same time, multiple structures in society express patriarchal authority and dominate over women. Therefore, this chapter juxtaposes the transformations of North Malabar society from a patriarchal authoritarianism to multiple modernities, highlighting regional diversity and uniqueness. Each chapter provides a logical connection in examining the developments and transformations of the composite cultural aspects of North Malabar society.

The first chapter describes the evolution of North Malabar and identifies the historical milestones that congregate the composite cultural elements in North Malabar society. The North Malabar landscape facilitated the evolution of a composite culture and syncretic ethos in this society. For a long time, North Malabar's geography has facilitated access to multicultural communities, with

maritime routes playing a significant role. These communications extended to discernible changes in trade and the land's economy. Furthermore, settlements and the exchange of languages and cultures reinforced multiculturalism and multilingualism in this landscape. The first chapter highlighted the composite cultural elements found in twentieth-century North Malabar and identified multiple aspects and functions of this composite using the theory of acculturation.

The study of primary texts in the context of the twentieth-century North Malabar social landscape has helped identify the authors' influence on the sociocultural life of North Malabar and how this influence is reflected in their novels. Consequently, the diversified elements of composite culture were derived from the primary texts using the theory of acculturation. Acculturation strategies (integration, marginalisation, separation) shaped North Malabar's syncretic culture through cross-cultural interactions, where elite-managed hierarchies shaped the outcome. Berry's acculturation model reveals three coexisting strategies: integration dominates public cultural accommodation, whilst marginalisation and separation maintain class-caste hierarchies (Berry 2006). This analysis examines the selected novels to identify composite cultural elements and their institutional mechanisms, which help elucidate the depth and nature of acculturation at work in North Malabar. Integration emerges as the dominant acculturation strategy; religious accommodation and cross-community interactions characterise North Malabar's public syncretism. While integration dominates public cultural life, marginalisation and separation operate simultaneously within class-caste structures, revealing acculturation as non-linear and contextually variable. Therefore, North Malabar's

composite culture emerges from multiple coexisting acculturation strategies: integration creates horizontal religious/cultural accommodation, whilst marginalisation/separation reproduces vertical class-caste hierarchies.

Syncretic culture is the identity of North Malabar society, as depicted in the selected novels, which in turn represent the region's sociocultural complexities. Multiple features of syncretic culture emerge across the chosen works. The intercultural interactions among individuals and communities in these novels create the space for a multicultural society, in which characters such as Yakob Muthassan, Kabara Muthassi, Dhali, Narayani, and Vettila Swami exemplify cultural hybridity. These characters embody key mechanisms: cultural hybridity (selective adaptation), conflict, and resilience (community persistence despite hierarchies). Cultural practices and representations in these works highlight the diversity of compositeness and its tenacity in North Malabar society. Furthermore, marriage rituals serve as primary sites of syncretism; the Puyapla and Ara systems, along with their attendant rituals, exemplify the region's composite cultural identity. Contemporary marriage rituals demonstrate the evolution of syncretism; traditional practices persist alongside newer adaptations, revealing acculturation as ongoing, rather than static. Traditional practices persist whilst simultaneously transforming; nomenclature changes reflect shifts in community identity without the complete abandonment of ancestral traditions. Food culture exemplifies syncretism: culinary practices blend regional traditions, revealing how communities negotiate cultural differences through daily consumption rituals. Authors characterise the ritualistic significance of food, demonstrating how culinary practices institutionalise community identity and

facilitate cross-cultural accommodation. Hospitality rituals, the serving of specific foods, and the welcoming of guests reveal how communities express status differentiation and cultural values through daily practices.

Cultural disposition is another key element in syncretic culture, which is used to analyse the primary text. Within syncretic societies, *Tharavadu* systems institutionalise class-caste stratification, categorising people through inherited status markers despite horizontal religious accommodation. Elite *Tharavadu* exercise paternalistic control through strategic welfare provision, generating community deference that legitimises hierarchical authority. The theory of acculturation helps explain how North Malabar syncretism developed, with an integration strategy dominant over other methods. However, syncretism is fluid; assimilation and marginalisation strategies operate contextually alongside integration. North Malabar's syncretism simultaneously accommodates religious difference (horizontal integration) whilst maintaining class-caste stratification (vertical marginalisation), revealing composite culture as structurally dualistic.

The second chapter extends the analysis of syncretic culture into the local dialects of North Malabar. The chapter examines the multilingualism of North Malabar, shaped by multiple exposures to composite cultural elements. It reveals the influence of foreign languages on the local dialects of North Malabar, where traces of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu are found. Multiple language communities visited North Malabar for trade and interacted with the natives. This intercultural interaction resulted in multilingualism. Several characters use multilingual words in the primary texts, which denote how the sociocultural history of North Malabar influenced the

writers. Sociolinguistics theory analysed how language use varies across social contexts and groups, and detailed the relationships between language and society.

Speech communities are sociolinguistic terms referring to the shared use of language among groups that share values and interpretations. Speech communities in North Malabar are analysed using primary texts. The oral functions of the North Malabar dialects are explicit in this study. Oral functions are reflected in the use of short words in the community, where local dialects provide a bunch of short words that convey contextual meanings. Additionally, offensive or curse words are frequently used in the North Malabar social context to convey nonliteral meanings. The complexity of the speech community demonstrates how regional dialects evolved within the North Malabar social context.

A detailed analysis of language and power dynamics in North Malabar elucidates how linguistic practices perpetuate inequalities rooted in the intersecting hierarchies of class, occupation, gender, and Tharavadu status. By employing theoretical frameworks of deficit, dominance, difference, and social constructionism, this chapter demonstrates that North Malabar dialects function not merely as communicative tools but as sophisticated vehicles through which social stratification is expressed, reproduced, and naturalised. Specific case studies illustrate this compound subordination: Kunhippennu's linguistic deficit arises from her status as a poor, female outsider from South Kerala; Aaminumma's voicelessness stems from her widowhood, economic dependence, and lower Tharavadu standing; while Cheyikkutti's linguistic authority is derived from her seniority and financial security within the patriarchal structure. These examples reveal that language operates as a

primary mechanism for exercising power, institutionalising subordinates into the system, and negotiating identity within a composite culture. Ultimately, while local dialects facilitate the synthesis of social life and the expression of emotion, they simultaneously serve as instruments of cooperation and conflict that reinforce the dominance of elite groups over women and lower-caste individuals.

The third chapter examines the multiple hierarchies and dominations that existed in North Malabar, and how diversified resistance to these hierarchies created various modernities. These social transformations were identified in this study. This chapter highlights the elements of patriarchal authority found in the matrilineal North Malabar. In addition, hierarchy based on caste, class, wealth, and status within the *Tharavadu* operated in this society, and the oppressed people's resistance, shaped by the social context, helped create a modernity distinct from the Western model.

Despite being a matrilineal society, patriarchy is present in multiple structures of North Malabar. Common sense dictates that a matrilineal system will provide an egalitarian society with a non-hierarchical structure. However, the analysis of the selected novels reveals that multiple structures of North Malabar society were characterised by patriarchal authority. The matrilineal system with matrilocal practices provides greater convenience for women, but it has never ensured an egalitarianism free of patriarchal practices. The *Puyapla* system, part of matrilocal practices, provides opportunities that differ from those afforded to men in other societies. The *Puyapla* system in the novel *Changala* and *Kuraishikkottam* facilitates consent-based dominance over women, as exemplified by Jamal and Yusuf. The power accorded to Puyapla's father also reflects certain patriarchal

practices within this system; Andu Haji, the Father of Mammooty, in the novel *Changala*, is an example. The practices of the *Puyapla* system and its patriarchal authority create problems for Beevi and Mammooty. The combinations of wealth, the status of *Tharavadu*, and the power of *Adhikari* in a patriarchal society dominated over women and subjugated their lives with too much hardship. Khadeeja, Aleema, and Subaida in the novel *Changala* are examples. Apart from coercion, consent-based patriarchy was found in this combination of power structure, where women were gradually institutionalised and transformed through generations. Characters such as Cheyikkutti, Kamala, Kunhippennu, Beeder Thithibeeumma, and Aanikkaran's mother also represent a community characterised by consonant-based patriarchal dominance. The people who live around the *Tharavadu* and depend on the *Karanavar* have been subjected to consent-based dominance for generations. Characters such as Eramullan, Andruman, and Buhari grant consent to Arakkal Pookkoya Thangal. Whereas, Kunmmu *Adhikari*, Chandhukkurup *Adhikari*, Arakkal Pookkoya Thangal, Kunnikkela Kuruppu, and Krishna Kurup have enjoyed these consent-based dominance and power relations. However, increasing hardship produces resistance and a quest for modernity, thereby fostering resistance and a quest for modern values among the suppressed community. At the same time, the regional diversity and cultural differences of North Malabar create multiple modernities in the fight against the patriarchal dominant culture.

North Malabar's modernities differ from Western models. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt introduced the term, arguing that multiple modernities recognise that

modernity is not a uniform experience but varies across cultures and societies (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 9). Each society can develop its version of modernity that reflects its unique historical and cultural context. Furthermore, the researcher found that modern elements in North Malabar are exceptional, with multiple modernities coexisting. The quest for freedom, liberty, and individual choice is a modern value reflected in various ways across North Malabar. They are: participating in the Indian independence movement; using linguistic skills to assert themselves against male suppression; relying on cultural practices to resist caste dominance; seeking enlightenment through education; and adopting modern ways of life to oppose traditional beliefs, as observed in the North Malabar social context. These regional models of influence give rise to multiple modernities within this landscape.

Furthermore, the study reveals the authors' intentional efforts to curb the growth of dominant power practices in North Malabar. Therefore, the authors created such characters, or the author himself or herself, who appeared in the novel, to effect these changes. In conclusion, this thesis provides a detailed account of the syncretic culture of North Malabar and its functions across multiple domains. Thematic coherence is maintained across all chapters by integrating the evolution of syncretism and its multifaceted nuances. The first chapter deals with acculturation strategies that create public syncretism while maintaining hidden hierarchies (integration + marginalisation); the second chapter explores the diversity and uniqueness of North Malabar dialects and how they reinforce these hierarchies through linguistic stratification; the final chapter examines the multiple hierarchies and how they act in combinations to suppress the downtrodden that produce diverse resistance and region-specific modernities. These mechanisms are not separate but

deeply interconnected, showing how cultural synthesis masks systemic inequality. Furthermore, the syncretism of North Malabar could be analysed in the background of contemporary globalisation. The region's unique culture and diversity are moving toward greater syncretism, with multiple forms of acculturation occurring. The mode of hierarchy changed, and resistance to it did as well. There are instances of globalisation and the deterioration of cultural values evident in the analysis of North Malabar society.

Syncretism is fluid and constantly subject to change. North Malabar syncretism is influenced by globalisation, with multiple changes affecting the region's composite culture. The materialisations of composite culture and practices are identified in this study, and primary texts provide enough input in this way. “Dubai *Theyyam*” is a chapter from the novel *Thrikkottur Peruma*, written by U.A. Khader. U.A. Khader examines *Theyyam*, its cultural practices, and how these practices have changed in response to mobility and wealth accumulation. Perachutti, a *Theyyam* performer from the Thiyya community, performed Narasimhamoorthi and Ittiyembi *Theyyam*. Earlier, due to the family’s poverty, Perachutti performed *Theyyam* with his father. Additionally, he took a job as a *Koyyakkaran* [coconut plucker] (Khader, 1982/2022). Once he obtained some money with the help of Katheesumma, a feudal lord's wife, he left his job and began to give money in exchange for coconut land as collateral, a practice known as *Unduthiram*. Until the debtor refunded the cash, Perachutti collected the coconut and its product. Whenever Mappila Muslims from abroad bring more money due to the seasonal profit,

Perachutti will lose property. Therefore, Gulf migration and the accumulation of wealth among Mappila Muslims affected Perachutti's business.

The Gulf migration of the early 1970s brought substantial prosperity to Mappila Muslim families in North Malabar. These social and cultural changes are represented in *Thrikkottur Peruma*. Perachutti started to lose his profit as remittance from the Gulf flowed to the native people, and they repaid debt and reclaimed collateral from Perachutti. The real estate boom occurred in Thrikkottur, where the barren lands surrounding the town are attracting substantial market interest, and residents have built new mansions. Consequently, Perachutti decides to send two of his children abroad for work rather than having them perform the *Theyyam*. U.A. Khader depicts the decline of cultural and religious practices and rituals due to changes in the social landscape. Rituals such as *Theyyam* are not performed by the relevant community, and people are moving away from these practices for various reasons. Poverty and low income resulting from this performance affect the lower-caste community. The multiple new income resources tempt the community to leave the performance and dilute the rituals (Kommath, 2013, p. 23; author's translation). In addition, the traditional performers move away from the field or perform the *Theyyam* outside its ritual space and earn better. U.A. Khader elaborates on a similar incident in his novel, in which Perachutti moves behind the money and ignores the value of the *Theyyam* performance. The performance role left by Perachutti is filled by an expatriate Muslim, who performs the *Theyyam* called Dubai *Theyyam*. Perachutti found this Dubai *Theyyam* at Perumalpuram Kalarikkavu. The eldest son of Mammadu Mappila, recently returned from Dubai, performed this *Theyyam*.

Perachutti was concerned about the significance of the ritual associated with *Theyyam* and about how a Muslim could perform it without the accompanying practices. When Perachutti wondered at looking at the *Theyyam*, the *Theyyam* said, “Do not stare at me, just contribute what you have in your hand, Dubai *Theyyam* is going to Kalaraiikkavu, hope you know this. If *Theyyam* curses you, the remaining life will be hell” (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 243; author’s translation). At the end of the story, Perachutti’s dead body was found on the beach. He was guilty as he ignored the values and beliefs associated with a pure form of *Theyyam* and the presence of God in *Theyyam*. U.A. Khader illustrates Perachutti’s death as:

Perachutti's eyes filled with the setting sun. Narasimha *Theyyam* leapt forward with a fierce desire to drink the '*Kuruthikkinnam*' (sacrificial blood offering) in front of it. The crown on its head swayed and shook. The drumbeats from behind pierced through all directions, and the blood-soaked waves, with their tongues extended, climbed ashore towards the light. The blood-soaked, roaring waves that climbed ashore offered the '*Kuruthikkinnam*' to quench the thirst of the *Theyyam*. Narasimha *Theyyam* quenched its thirst. (Khader, 1982/2022, p. 244; translation from the original Malayalam work)

U.A. Khader specifies the relevance and purity of cultural practices that existed in North Malabar. Whereas social change dilutes and materialises these performances for multiple reasons. The guilt in Perachutti reflects the disappointment of the *Theyyam* performer, who performed these rituals with utmost care and belief, only to see them broken in the material world. Thus, Perachutti’s desire to recreate the

pure form of *Theyyam* is underscored by the author through the character's death during a Narasimhamoorthi performance. This perspective is supported by the research of Rajesh Kommath, a *Theyyam* performer and scholar, who observes that,

When the ritual becomes an art performance or is performed outside its context, the performer may experience guilt or disappointment, as it does not do justice to the ritual. However, specific communities agree to extend the performance outside their territory. (Kommath, 2013, p. 82; translated from the original Malayalam work)

Similarly, Ambikasuthan Mangad observed changes in the performance of *Theyyam*, in which participants perform it to display status and wealth rather than to adhere to the rituals, norms, and beliefs associated with the art form. They conduct *Theyyam* at their convenience and are not tied to the scheduled times of the *Theyyam* seasons (Mangad, 2014, 15:11). Changes in social contexts affect the *Theyyam* performers, as people move away from these rituals because they do not provide sufficient income to live on. Therefore, people sought additional jobs alongside their primary employment or in sectors distinct from it, and moved to the Middle East for employment. The transformations of rituals are found from traditional performances to an art form. They represent the community's culture, performed in public spaces to demonstrate its rich, diverse traditions. In this context, they find more financial support than earlier. However, the natural performance space is replaced by artificial stages that cannot recreate the original form of *Theyyam* (Kommath, 2013, p. 82; author's translation). The current transformation of *Theyyam* into a competitive item in school festivals is another extension of the cultural industry found in a globalised

world. Materialisations of cultural practices are discernible in the twenty-first century, in which performing *Theyyam* at tourist sites, specifically for foreigners, symbolises its commercial aspect.

Marakkapile Theyyanagal reflects the impact of globalisation on a culturally rich society, Marakkappu. A tourism project undermines community life and commercialises the cultural practices found in Marakkapu. The novel progresses through the third-person narratives of Krishanankutti, who investigates the death of his friend Lawrence. During the investigation, Krishanankutti encountered a vital figure in Marakkapu, Ambootti Vaidhyar. Ambootti Vaidhyar is a selfless servant who treats patients without expecting monetary compensation, and, as a learned practitioner, he has cured many illnesses with his medicines. Once Krishanankutti met Kanakaraj, the grandson of Ambootti Vaidhyar, a millionaire who earned substantial income from GCC countries and who hated the charity Ambootti Vaidhyar gave to society, as he did not save anything for the family. By the novel's conclusion, Krishanankutti encounters Kanakaraj by chance and observes how globalisation has reshaped the latter's approach to his grandfather's heritage. Rather than dismissing tradition, Kanakaraj exploits it by purchasing 100 acres from the tourism department to develop an extensive medical tourism resort. He establishes a sophisticated massage complex for a foreign clientele, utilising Ayurvedic herbs cultivated directly within the resort's grounds. By converting traditional Malabar heritage buildings, such as the Keerikkattu Mana in Ponnani, into luxury facilities, he utilises their aesthetic and archaeological value as commodities for the global market. Ultimately, this reintroduces the region's rich culture to the globalised

world, albeit as a commercialised product designed to attract international tourists (Mangad, 2003/2021, p. 155). Kanakaraj brings the *Kallara* [cemetery] of Ambutti Vaidhyar into this property. Furthermore, the bronze statue of Lawrence, installed by the Panchayath, is located in the centre of the property and is encased in glass to prevent deterioration. In addition, Umbichi became the brand ambassador for this resort, and her images appear on logos and brochures; even partially nude photos are used to attract customers. The author consciously illustrates the materialist form of culture once it moves from space to space. Kanakaraj monetised the tradition and values of Ambutti Vydhyar in this globalised world. Kanakaraj marketed the Lawrence statue to foreign tourists; he was the local leader and now celebrated him as a symbol of prosperity for the resort. These reflect how North Malabar's unique culture and diversity have deteriorated amid a changing world order, in which people profit from cultural practices while remaining unconcerned with their values and preciousness.

Finally, Krishnankutti listened to the performance of Kuttichathan *Theyyam*, in which he felt a sense of guilt and disappointment in the face of Perumalayan.

Krishnankutti narrates the scene as

The old man makes the sound with the Chenda and begins the entry song of Kuttichathan *Theyyam* silently. One of the organisers brings Mike to Perumalayan. Then, a loud sound from *Koothambalam* [Temple Play House] announces the entry of *Theyyam*, where Perumalayan continues the Thottam. Later, Perumalayan's voice did not come out, so he stopped the Thottam and

cried like a child without looking around. (Mangad, 2003/2021, p. 180, translated from the original Malayalam work)

The author visualised the conditions under which a community was compelled to perform its ritual outside its sacred space. When beliefs are broken, the community may not be interested in performing their hereditary duties in impure forms. Apart from beliefs, the technical aspects of performance also matter, where Kommath (2013, p. 85, translated from the original Malayalam work) pointed out his personal experience in performing *Theyyam* on stage, “He was concerned that the natural light and ambience of Kaavu cannot be recreated in any stage. Where the *Theyyam* performer will get a kind of flow and easiness while performing in natural settings that are lacking in stages.” In short, *Marakkappile Theyyangal* reflect narratives of the interconnections between people and cultural beliefs, and their transformations in the globalised world. The novel questions the relevance of reconstructed cultural heritage and its values, and whether it can be compared with the original forms of artistic practices.

The research also noted changes in the local dialects of North Malabar, with most current generations no longer using traditional word combinations.

Globalisation and people’s mobility create more interactions with diversified linguistic groups, which further synthesise in linguistic use. The movement for education and employment beyond North Malabar has created a mixed culture among people. As the research progresses, it is noted that many words in local dialects are no longer used by younger generations. In contrast, senior members of society still use them in their personal contexts. Furthermore, some people have

attempted to document or reconstruct this vocabulary to help preserve these traditional dialects in the current context. *Cittikkothoru Vamozhikal* is a book by Shamseer Parambathukadi that records the words used in the old market of Kannur City. *Ponnaru* is a dictionary edited by Ambika Suthan Managad at Kanhangad Nehru Arts and Science College, and the novel *Perumalayan* by M.V. Janardhanan is written purely in the local dialects of North Malabar. This gives a collection of words used in North Malabar into mainstream academia. Although there are efforts to revive the traditional culture and language of North Malabar, their practical applications remain uncertain. At the same time, the current generation is heavily influenced by the globalised world order and its practices.

This thesis and its findings are relevant to the current context, as they highlight the regional diversity and uniqueness of North Malabar. This study uncovered the sociocultural history of North Malabar through select Malayalam novels (1966-2023), providing a broad overview of its cultural practices, beliefs, customs, and norms. Furthermore, this investigation reveals the multiculturalism and multilingualism that characterise this society, as reflected in its composite cultural elements. In addition, the research progresses through analysing the transformations of composite cultural life in North Malabar during the twentieth century. The transformations of composite culture and influences of modern and globalised values resulted in changes in cultural practices and the materialisation of culture. Therefore, multiple social phenomena and people's mobility brought gradual changes to the cultural practices of North Malabar society, thereby transforming or diluting the original forms of sociocultural practices. In short, this study on the

evolution of composite cultural elements in North Malabar will lead to new academic discussions, in which the compositeness of North Malabar fosters integrations of multiple cultures. At the same time, the hidden hierarchy operates in several ways. The pluralistic values and hospitality of this society should be considered in further academic discussions to identify the diverse, composite cultural elements that have developed within it. In conclusion, this study of North Malabar's composite cultural elements opens new avenues for academic exploration to understand the histories and sociocultural lives of different regions and to celebrate their unique cultures.

The major problem encountered in this research was the absence of a literature review. There is little literature on the composite cultural elements of North Malabar. The available literature provides little insight into the region's compositeness. There is extensive literature on the historical and sociocultural life of North Malabar, which makes up the background for the novels. The research was constrained by the fact that the oral history of North Malabar's composite culture remains insufficiently archived. This lack of primary oral data necessitated that the researcher rely more heavily on literary texts as the principal repositories of regional memory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The major limitation of this study is that the selected works are novels; however, the approach could be extended to other genres. There are poems, short stories, and biographies related to North Malabar's sociocultural life that can be used to understand its composite culture. The study is limited to five authors and their writings: five texts by U.A. Khader, two books by Punathil Kunnabdulla, and one book each by the others. Thus, U.A. Khader's writings predominate in this study; future research could address this imbalance by selecting multiple books. Except for Rajasree, all the other writers are male; the diversity of views could be enhanced by including more female writers and their works in future research. *Theyyam* was the only art form prioritised in this study; other art forms were excluded for multiple reasons. The research methodology is limited to textual analysis and very few personal interviews; there is a greater scope for field visits and for collecting data from senior citizens, which may be lost if not properly documented.

The upcoming research could consider some of these recommendations: New researchers could conduct a study on each of the authors from North Malabar and their reflections on the composite culture. There are multiple works by the same author, who presents diverse ideas about composite culture. U.A. Khader, Punathil Kunnabdulla, and Ambikasuthan Mangad have published several works on North Malabar. Additionally, the works of Rajasree, Soman Kadaloor, and M.V. Janardhanan could be considered, as they offer new perspectives on the social context of North Malabar. Rather than novels alone, other genres contribute

substantially to the North Malabar composite culture, which should be taken into account in future studies. The researcher has brought minute references to movies and songs released in the North Malabar context. However, new-generation movies feature more regionally specific themes and languages, which could be explored in future research. Rajasree is the only female writer considered in this study; future research could include more female writers, thereby providing a more diverse view of North Malabar. Rather than highlighting mainstream writers, local or regional writers can offer more input to such studies. Art forms found in North Malabar express the cultural diversity and synthesis of this landscape. Thus, a detailed analysis of the art forms could be done in future studies. The researcher examines the compositeness of Mappila *Theyyam* in this study and provides a few analyses of other forms of *Theyyam*. This analysis could be extended to the technical aspects of *Theyyam* and its compositeness in future studies. Apart from *Theyyam*, Oppana, Kolkkali, Alamikkali, and Mappilappattu can provide a comprehensive understanding of the diversity of North Malabar. Linguistic diversity and composite cultural elements of local dialects are scrutinised in this study. However, the influence of Arabi-Malayalam and its composite cultural features warrants further study. The researcher has described the historical background of multilingual influences on foreign words in North Malabar local dialects, and future research could examine these influences through a linguistic study. Therefore, this research will provide a foundation for future studies and discussions on North Malabar and its sociocultural aspects.

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APPENDIX

Personal Interviews

Interview with Dr Mohamed Saleem. P, Assistant Professor, Department of Urdu, Farook College (Autonomous), Kozhikode

The researcher interviewed Dr Mohamed Saleem. P on September 25, 2023. The researcher received valuable input on the use of Urdu, particularly Dakini Urdu, among the current generation of the North Malabar community. Dakini Urdu is spoken in South India and is influenced by the dialects of Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. Dr Saleem describes how multiple events contributed to the development of Urdu in North Malabar and other parts of Kerala. The Mughal capital's transformation under Muhammad ibn Tughluq initiated the development of Urdu literature in South India. Later, Tipu's invasion and that of his supporters brought Dakini Urdu to North Malabar, where Mysore dialects were dominant. The role of Bollywood films and Hindustani songs in fostering interest in learning the language and its vocabulary is well documented. The love for Hindustani music found in the Travancore kingdom led the king to perform these songs on special occasions, thereby popularising the language. The influence of Katchu Meman Settu and their trade relations with North Malabar provide greater scope for exploring this language. Beyond language, the culture and customs of these people are evident in North Malabar, where Mandap Pakadna was a familiar custom observed in the marriages of these communities in earlier days. Dr Saleem observed recent changes in the use of Urdu within his family, in which his wife is from a Dakini family that may have migrated from Mysore. Today, Malayalam words predominate in everyday usage, with verbs borrowed from Urdu and the rest of the sentence filled with Malayalam words. Occasionally, they speak pure Urdu to make sure they express their emotions in their mother tongue. In addition, he noted the emergence of North Indian cultural and customary practices in South India, particularly in marriage ceremonies. Previously, very few people adhered to specific cultural practices, but most marriage customs are now found in South Indian culture. The

importance of Sufism and its culture in Kannur City is noted by Dr Saleem, who witnessed such incidents in his childhood, and elements such as *Udo Bhaba*¹¹, *Hujada*¹² and *Ratheeb*¹³ were mentioned. In addition, he found that the Byari language is very close to Malayalam, which he experienced during his college days with his colleague. He further opined that the *Jasiri* languages of Lakshadweep are close to the dialects of Kannur City. In earlier periods, the Kannur City language differed from contemporary Kannur City; it was similar to the Jasari dialects.

Interview with V. K. Kuttu, Author and Local Historian.

The researcher interviewed V.K. Kuttu on 19th February 2022 at his residence, Ramlas, Punnad, Kannur. V. K. Kuttu was born and brought up in a feudal Muslim *Tharavadu* of Thalassery. His childhood, education at Madras Veterinary College, and later work experience at the animal protection department at Mangalore, Kayamgam (Tamil Nadu), Kasargod, Koothuparambu, Manadavadi, Thalassery, Baddiyadukka, and Mattannur have helped him understand the culture and social changes of North Malabar society. The interview uncovers the local history of North Malabar, Kuttu's personal experiences, and his analysis of social change in North Malabar. He pointed out the composite culture and cosmopolitan cultural habitus found in North Malabar. The presence of foreign communities was evident at Thalassery Dharmadam Beaches during his childhood, where he met Arabs and Persians alongside the enormous ships that came for trade. His work experiences across different parts of North Malabar document the myriad linguistic presence in these spaces, where prominent use of Kannada, Konkani, Urdu, Arabic, Tulu, Persian, and Parsi is found. Kuttu highlighted the importance of Thalassery Pepper and its demand among foreigners, emphasising the trade relations between natives and foreigners. Kuttu views the history of North Malabar from a different perspective, where he does not follow the mythical stories about North Malabar, but he observes the factual elements about this land and analyses the historical stories

¹¹ A group of people help others to walk up during Ramzan for the Suhoor (Morning food).

¹² Small room used for meditations of Sufism followers.

¹³ Muslim religious rituals with songs and prayers

about North Malabar; thus, he found new perspectives in his findings, which are documented in the recent books published by him.

Interview with C. V. Salam, Author, speaker, and local historian.

The interview with C V Salam was conducted on 4th February 2022 at his residence, Najma Villa, Kannadipparambu, Kannur. The interview helped elucidate the composite cultural elements in the sociocultural life of North Malabar. He noted the language used across communities and the specific words used by women in their domestic spaces. He also alluded to the fact that women use certain words in their domestic spaces that are not frequently used by others in social contexts. He also observed that the language of North Malabar today is a blend of Arabic and Persian vocabulary. Therefore, local dialects of North Malabar are multilingual, and several words from other languages are very common in the daily life of natives.

GLOSSARY

- Aahiram: The world after death.
- Aalthara: A platform constructed around a banyan tree.
- Aleesa: A traditional preparation consisting of meat, grain, and spices.
- Alli: A rural area.
- Arayil Koodal: A practice performed once the groom reaches the bride's house.
- Ayalimmelidal: The groom's family's gift of clothing and valuables to the bride and her household.
- Ayendittu: Why?
- Ayyo: An expression of surprise or excitement.
- Baadha Koodal: An additional or supplementary spiritual power.
- Battam: A circle.
- Bayalu: A religious speech.
- Beedu: House.
- Betta: Hunting.
- Chelavinu Kodukkal: Monthly expenditure paid by the groom to the bride's parents.
- Cherumiavakhasam: The specific right to perform certain *Theyyam* in designated locations.
- Dammu Kettuka: To stifle or seal, specifically exemplified in the preparation of Biryani.
- Dasbia: A chain of beads used for counting prayers.
- Eada: Where?
- Eathanolee: Which is that?
- Eeda: Here.
- Hairu: Better.
- Harath: An illegitimate son.
- Jarath: shrine
- Kabarsthani: Cemetery.
- Kaavu: A sacred grove dedicated to local deities.
- Kalaripayattu: Traditional martial arts.
- Kaliyattam: The play/dance of Goddess Kali.
- Kaniyan: An astrologer.

- Kosi: Happy.
- Mamool: Established practices or customs.
- Manara: The modern term for a tea party (historically part of the marriage customs).
- Maniyara Chamyikkal: The act of decorating the groom's room at the bride's house.
- Marumakkathayam: A matrilineal system of inheritance.
- Maruputhukkam: One of the occasions on which a bride dresses up.
- Meedu: Face.
- Meenchor Adiyanthiram: The ritual marking the first day the groom begins eating fish after marriage.
- Meegari: Fish curry.
- Mudakuthal Adiyandaram: The Pounding Rite.
- Murad: Wishes.
- Musaappu: The Quran.
- Muttamala: A traditional sweet dish.
- Muthwa: A temporary form of marriage.
- Naaloori: A date-fixing ceremony.
- Naattukaranavar: A village senior or elder.
- Naduvazhi: A local ruler or chieftain.
- Naneeda: I am here.
- Nangade: Ours.
- Ningade: Yours.
- Olde: Her own.
- Ool: She.
- Oon: He.
- Orikka: Once.
- Padippura: An entrance or gateway.
- Panayapandam: A collateral or stake used in gambling.
- Payyi: cow.
- Pennu: Woman.
- Petti Thuni: The modern term for *Ayalimmedidal* (clothing/gift exchange).
- Poorada: A special dish prepared during the Pooram festival.
- Puthukkam: Occasions where a bride dresses up.
- Puyapla system: A North Malabar culture where the groom enjoys specific privileges post-marriage.

- Puyapla Thakkaram: A period of forty-day groom care.
- Puyapla thedal: A ritual where a group visits the groom's house to invite him to the bride's house.
- Seeru: A sugar solution.
- Sirkka: Vinegar.
- Swalih: Someone of good character.
- Swaroopam: A ruling family.
- Tharavadu: An ancestral home.
- Thottam: A ballad sung prior to the performance of *Theyyam*.
- Ulu: The act of cleaning the body in preparation for prayers.
- Urudi: A religious speech.
- Uyy: An expression of surprise or excitement.
- Vila: Crops.
- Vilakku: A lamp festival.
- Visham Vekkal: A specific ritual or practice.