

**Women on the Move: Self-Encounters in Select Travel  
Narratives by Malayali Women**

*Thesis submitted to  
the University of Calicut  
for the award of the Degree of*

**Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
English Language and Literature**

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University of Calicut**

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## **Declaration**

I, Sangeetha Damodaran, hereby declare that the thesis entitled **Women on the Move: Self-Encounters in Select Travel Narratives by Malayali Women** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature, is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by me under the guidance of Dr. Janaky Sreedharan, Professor, Department of English, University of Calicut, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar titles. The contents of the thesis have undergone plagiarism check using **iThenticate** software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI-generated content.

University of Calicut  
20. 12. 2023

**Sangeetha Damodaran**

**Dr. Janaky Sreedharan**  
Professor  
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## **Certificate**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Women on the Move: Self-Encounters in Select Travel Narratives by Malayali Women** submitted to the University of Calicut for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature is an original bona fide work of research carried out by **Sangeetha Damodaran** under my supervision and guidance. It has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree, diploma or similar titles.

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20. 12. 2023

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## **Abstract**

Travel has always been part of the developmental process of human history. When human beings began to settle down in particular geographical spaces, the nature and purpose of travels started to shift from a survival strategy to those based on other requirements. While both men and women of primitive ages undertook on long journeys together, at some point of time in history it became a male venture and the travel experiences recorded were mostly from the male perspective. While this study delves deep into the socio- cultural and theoretical aspects of travels and travel writings, it also enquires into the reasons behind the dearth of women's travel and travel narratives. In addition, this study seeks to establish that women too possess a travel history of their own. Considering the fact that travel writing in one way or the other defines the self of the travelling person, the self- encounters that Malayali women make in their narratives of travel actually become a redefinition of their selves as well.

This study focuses on the travel narratives that have been published from 1930s to 2022 by a select group of Malayali women. With the help of travel theories and various other sociocultural and literary theories this study attempts to find answers to questions regarding how certain factors like gender, caste, religion, sociocultural and political affiliations by and large formulate Malayali women's travels and the subsequent narratives. This research is done mainly through the method of textual analysis.

This thesis is divided into six chapters and focusses on select themes like ecology, religion, marginality, caste, narration, gender and sexuality. First chapter is the "Introduction" of the thesis. This chapter tries to ground the idea of travel and travel writing within the larger context of mobility with the help of relevant sociocultural, literary and travel theories. Focusing on select travel narratives the second chapter titled "Travel and Ecology: Questions on Gender and Narration" analyses how Malayali women make meaningful critical interventions in systems which are blind towards ecological degradation. The third chapter is titled as

“Pilgrim Travels: Rendezvous with Gods, Spaces and Memories”. Problematising activities like worship and pilgrimage the chapter critically analyses travels which are based on one’s religious and ideological beliefs. This chapter also analyses travels and the subsequent narratives which reflect upon the gratification of one’s innate desires connected with one’s interests, fears and fascinations. The fourth chapter titled as “Marginal Travels: Perspectives on Caste, Gender and Narration” examines marginality with regard to caste, religion and gender experienced by Malayali women in their travels. The Concluding chapter sums up the findings of the previous chapters. The final chapter “Recommendations” throws light into future studies which are to be done on the topic.

**Key words:** Travel Narratives, Gender, Pilgrimage, Marginality, Self.

## സംഗ്രഹം

മനുഷ്യചരിത്രത്തിന്റെ തുടക്കം മുതൽ തന്നെ യാത്രകളുമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ അതിജീവനത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി നടത്തിയ ചലനങ്ങൾ മാത്രമായിരുന്നു അവയൊക്കെയും. പിന്നീട് മനുഷ്യപുരോഗതിക്കനുസരിച്ച് യാത്രയുടെ ഉദ്ദേശവും ലക്ഷ്യവും മാറിവന്നു. ആദ്യകാലത്ത് അതിജീവനം മാത്രമായിരുന്നു ലക്ഷ്യമെങ്കിൽ പിന്നീട് വ്യക്തി /സാമൂഹ്യ താല്പര്യങ്ങൾക്കനുസരിച്ച യാത്ര ഉദ്ദേശങ്ങൾക്ക് മാറ്റം വന്നു. തൊഴിലിനും, താല്പര്യങ്ങൾക്കും, വിശ്വാസങ്ങൾക്കും, ആരാധനയ്ക്കും, വിനോദങ്ങൾക്കും, വാണിജ്യത്തിനും എന്ന് വേണ്ട ഒട്ടനവധി ആവശ്യങ്ങൾക്കായി യാത്രകൾ പരിണമിക്കുകയാണുണ്ടായത്. സ്ത്രീകളും പുരുഷന്മാരും ഒരുപോലെ ഭാഗഭാക്കായ യാത്രകൾപോലും രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയപ്പോൾ പക്ഷെ എന്തുകൊണ്ടോ അത് പുരുഷന്റെ മാത്രം യാത്രകളോ പുരുഷാനുഭവങ്ങൾക്ക് മാത്രം പ്രാധാന്യം കൊടുത്ത പുരുഷവിക്ഷണത്തിലുള്ള വിവരണങ്ങളോ ആയി മാറുകയാണുണ്ടായത്.

യാത്ര സാമൂഹികവും സാംസ്കാരികവും ജൈവികവുമായ അനേകം അടരുകളുള്ള ഒരു പരികല്പനയാണ് എന്നിരിക്കെ യാത്രാചരിത്രവഴിയിൽ സാന്നിധ്യമറിയിച്ചിരുന്ന സ്ത്രീകളുടെ യാത്രാനുഭവങ്ങൾക്കും വിക്ഷണങ്ങൾക്കും വേണ്ടത്ര പ്രാധാന്യം എന്ത് കൊണ്ട് ലഭിക്കാതെ പോയി എന്നത് ഈ പഠനത്തിന്റെ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട അന്വേഷണവിഷയങ്ങളിലൊന്നാണ്. അതോടൊപ്പം, സ്ത്രീയാത്രകൾക്ക് ഒട്ടും അപ്രധാനമല്ലാത്ത വിധം ഒരു യാത്രാചരിത്രമുണ്ടെന്നും അത് എന്തുകൊണ്ടും വിപുലവും പ്രസക്തവുമാണെന്നും ഈ പഠനം സ്ഥാപിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു.

യാത്രാവിവരണം എന്ന സാഹിത്യശ്രേണിയിൽ സ്ത്രീയാത്രകളെയും അവരുടെ യാത്രാനുഭവങ്ങളെയും പഠന വിധേയമാക്കുമ്പോൾ ഒട്ടനവധി കണ്ടെത്തലുകളാണ് സാധ്യമാകുന്നത്. മലയാളിസ്ത്രീകളുടെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത യാത്രാവിവരണങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള പഠനമെന്നനിലയിൽ കേരളത്തിന്റെ ഭൂമിശാസ്ത്രം, സാമൂഹിക, സാംസ്കാരിക, രാഷ്ട്രീയഭൂമികയിൽ, വംശാവലി കൊണ്ടും ഭാഷകൊണ്ടും ജീവിതശൈലി കൊണ്ടും മലയാളികൾ എന്ന് സ്വയം അടയാളപ്പെടുത്താൻ താൽപര്യപ്പെടുന്ന സ്ത്രീകളുടെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത യാത്രാവിവരണങ്ങളെ ഈ പഠനം വിമർശനാത്മകമായി വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. പരിസ്ഥിതി, ടൂറിസം, അരികവൽക്കരണം, ജാതി, മതം, പ്രത്യയശാസ്ത്രം, ലിംഗപദവി ,ആഖ്യാനം, ശരീരം എന്നിങ്ങനെയുള്ള പ്രമേയങ്ങളെ അടിസ്ഥാനപ്പെടുത്തി ആറ് അധ്യായങ്ങളായിട്ടാണ് ഈ പ്രബന്ധം തിരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. “ആമുഖം” എന്ന ഒന്നാമധ്യായത്തിൽ യാത്രാചരിത്രം, യാത്രാവിവരണങ്ങൾ/ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങൾ, സ്ത്രീയാത്ര, സ്ത്രീയാത്രാഖ്യാനങ്ങൾ മലയാളിസ്ത്രീയാത്ര, യാത്രാഖ്യാനങ്ങൾ എന്നീ വിഷയങ്ങളുടെ സൈദ്ധാന്തികവും തത്വശാസ്ത്രപരവുമായ പഠനമാണ് ഉൾക്കൊള്ളിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. സാമൂഹികവും സാംസ്കാരികവുമായ കാലാനുസൃതമാറ്റങ്ങളെ എങ്ങനെയൊക്കെയാണ് യാത്രാവിവരണങ്ങൾ പ്രതിഫലിപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത് എന്നതും ഒന്നാമധ്യായത്തിൽ അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നു. “സഞ്ചാരവും പരിസ്ഥിതിയും: ലിംഗപദവിയും ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളും സംബന്ധിച്ച ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ” എന്ന പരിസ്ഥിതി പ്രമേയമാക്കിയുള്ള രണ്ടാമധ്യായത്തിൽ, പ്രസ്തുത വിഷയത്തേ സംബന്ധിച്ച കമ്പുകളും അർത്ഥവത്തുമായ നിരീക്ഷണങ്ങളും വിമർശനങ്ങളും നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങളുമായി മലയാളിസ്ത്രീകൾ നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന വ്യവസ്ഥകളിൽ എപ്രകാരമാക്കെ ഇടപെടലുകൾ നടത്തുന്നു എന്നത് വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. “തീർത്ഥാടക യാത്രകൾ: ദൈവങ്ങളും ഇടങ്ങളും ഓർമ്മകളുമായുള്ള കൂടിക്കാഴ്ചകൾ” എന്ന മൂന്നാമധ്യായത്തിൽ വൈയക്തികമായ തീവ്രവാങ്ങുകളുടെ സാക്ഷാത്ക്കരണം എന്ന നിലയ്ക്ക് നടത്തിയ യാത്രകളേയും അതിനോടനുബന്ധിച്ച ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളേയും വിമർശനാത്മകമായി

വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. അതിലേക്കായി മലയാളിസ്ത്രീകളുടെ മതാത്മക തീർത്ഥയാത്രകളേയും പ്രത്യയശാസ്ത്ര വിശ്വാസങ്ങളിലൂന്നി നടത്തിയ യാത്രകളേയും പഠനവിധേയമാക്കുന്നു. ആരാധന, തീർത്ഥാടനം എന്നീ പ്രമേയങ്ങളെ ഈ അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ പ്രശ്നവൽക്കരിക്കുന്നതോടൊപ്പം ആഗ്രഹം, ആരാധന, കൗതുകം, ഭയം, മൃത്യു എന്നീ തീവ്ര വൈയക്തികാനുഭവങ്ങളിലൂന്നിയ പ്രമേയങ്ങളെ മലയാളിസ്ത്രീ എപ്രകാരമാണ് യാത്രാവിവരണങ്ങളിൽ ഉൾക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നത് എന്നും ഈ പഠനം വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. “അരികവൽകൃത യാത്രകൾ: ജാതി, ലിംഗഭേദം, ആഖ്യാനം എന്നിവയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകൾ” എന്ന നാലാമദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ അരികവൽക്കരണം എന്ന പ്രമേയത്തെ മുൻനിർത്തി ജാതി, മതം, ലിംഗപദവി, ആഖ്യാനം എന്നീ വിഷയങ്ങൾ വിമർശനാത്മകമായി വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. തുടർന്ന്, പൂർവ്വ അദ്ധ്യായങ്ങളിലെ കണ്ടെത്തലുകളെ “ഉപസംഹാരം” എന്ന അഞ്ചാമദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ ക്രോഡീകരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. കൂടാതെ, “ഭാവിപഠനത്തിലേക്കായുള്ള ശുപാർശകൾ” എന്ന ആറാമദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീയാത്രകൾ എന്ന വിഷയത്തോടനുബന്ധിച്ച ഭാവിപഠനങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ മുന്നോട്ടുവയ്ക്കുന്നു. ഈ പ്രബന്ധ രചനയ്ക്ക് സഹായകമായിത്തീർന്ന എല്ലാ ലേഖനങ്ങളെയും പുസ്തകങ്ങളെയും, പൂർവ്വപഠനങ്ങളെയും ഗ്രന്ഥസൂചിയിൽ ചേർത്തിരിക്കുന്നു.

വാചക വിശകലന രീതിയാണ് പഠനരീതിയായി ഈ ഗവേഷണം സ്വീകരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. സാമൂഹികവും സാംസ്കാരികവും സാമ്പത്തികവും രാഷ്ട്രീയവും ജൈവികവുമായി അനേകം അടങ്കലുള്ള സ്ത്രീ സ്വത്വം എപ്രകാരമൊക്കെയാണ് മലയാളിസ്ത്രീകൾ തങ്ങളുടെ യാത്രാഖ്യാനങ്ങളിൽ അടയാളപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നത് എന്ന അന്വേഷണത്തിന്റെ സൈദ്ധാന്തിക സമീപനമാണ് ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിന്റെ പഠനലക്ഷ്യം.

**പദ സൂചി :** യാത്രാവിവരണം, ലിംഗപദവി, തീർത്ഥാടനം, അരികവൽക്കരണം, സ്വത്വം.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Travels happen for various reasons. Human beings in the primitive age travelled to meet their basic survival needs, i.e., to look for food and water, to seek protection from natural calamities and climatic changes and to escape from predators. Travel was a crucial part of the survival mechanism of the hunter gatherers. Agriculture however, transformed the lifestyle of the hunter gatherers. As humans began to settle in their respective geographical places, the nature and purpose of travel changed from that of a survival strategy to that of an experience catering to one's curiosity, pleasure and the need for adventure. The overall socio-economic development that happened in human communities has expanded the purposes of travel. People now travel for trade and pleasure, for spiritual reasons and for seeking higher education and jobs among other reasons. Travels and displacements have affected human life to such an extent that the various experiences acquired from travels undertaken by the earlier generations have inspired the succeeding generations. Human history is full of survival stories which happened in different ages with travel playing a crucial role in deciding how those stories unravelled and determined the course of the development of human life as civilizations and cultures. Travel writing scholar Eric J. Leed in his book *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (1991) writes that "Recorded history- the history of civilization- is a story of mobilities, migrations, settlements, of the adaptation of human groups to place and their integration into topography, the creation of "homes" (4).

However, the desire to travel was never a reason for those early expeditions. That is, in the early migratory groups, travel was carried out solely driven by the survival instinct. In due course of time when human beings began to settle down in their respective geographical spaces, the nature and purpose of travels have started to change from mere survival strategy to a number of other purposes. Hence, those travels that have thrilled them, fascinated them, frightened them, or transformed them, and above all, something that lingers in their memories to be worthy enough, take shape and form as a narrative on travel.

This study is on the travels and travel narratives by a few Malayali women from the late twentieth century to the early twenty first century. Travel narratives that have been published from 1930s to 2022 by a selected group of Malayali women are included in this study based on certain specific themes. The chapters are divided accordingly focusing on themes like ecology, caste, religion, narration, gender and sexuality. This study attempts to find answers to questions regarding how certain factors like gender, caste, religion, sociocultural and political affiliations by and large formulate Malayali women's travels and the subsequent narratives.

Before moving into the realm of travel writings, it will be worthwhile to look into matters that constitute travel writing as a literary genre of relevance. It is vital to examine what exactly can be considered as travel and who exactly is a traveller. Apart from these two major components that make up travel writings, the socio-cultural issues that constitute one's attitude towards travels also need to be analysed.

When people began to settle down in certain geographical regions of their convenience, they developed a psychological affiliation to those particular spaces;

and all their deeds and undertakings were influenced by the respective geography. This sense of belonging later develops into a kind of rootedness in their psyche which shapes their attitude to unfamiliar regions and cultures.

It should be noted that the human psyche which has evolved through interactions with geographies and cultures adds to the formation of a collective consciousness which thereby turns into a community that has its own specific character. Dean MacCannell in his book *Empty Meeting Grounds: the Tourist Papers* (1992) notes that “Every human community once had a specific character, identity, a manner of existence in which its residents also partook, accepting as their own its problems and virtues” (87). That is, according to the sociological and anthropological records, “each type of community - primitive, rural agricultural, urban industrial, suburban- was a crucible in which formed a human type and a distinctive social conscience” (ibid 85). This hints at the fact that people as groups and communities get identified with the peculiarities of the particular region to which they belong. The socio-cultural practices they are into, certainly help to form a spatial consciousness in those who are residing within the geographical limits. The geographical locations can thus be considered as socio-cultural spaces with their own specific power structures which indeed have tremendous influence on the human psyche. Feminist geographer Doreen Massey in her book *Space, Place and Gender* (1994) observes on the situations which lead to a place being considered a socio-cultural location. She writes:

A ‘place’ is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location. And the singularity of any individual place is formed

in part out of the specificity of the interactions which occur at that location (nowhere else does this precise mixture occur) and in part out of the fact that the meeting of those social relations at that location (their partly happenstance juxtaposition) will in turn produce new social effects. (168)

Therefore, when people from specific geographical locations and specific socio-cultural habits set forth to explore and experience geographical locations other than theirs, they stand every chance of getting their own identities as people of specific groups and localities. In other words the consciousness of one's own subjective self is being created through these socio-cultural and geographic confrontations. In his book *The Cultural Psychology of the Self: Place, Morality, and Art in Human Worlds* (2001) Ciarán Benson stresses that the self of a person which is a "locative system" is largely bounded to a location (3). Therefore, it is quite difficult for one to imagine oneself without any specific location to claim for. Benson says that "We cannot imagine being nowhere. We can visualise ourselves being lost, but that is to be somewhere unfamiliar to us, possibly without the means of getting back to a place we know. Where and when, place and time, are the conditions of existence" (3- 4). From all these observations it follows that the influence of place fixity and the associated socio-cultural behaviours will have a tremendous effect over human psyche as one's self is largely constituted by these factors. Such characteristic fixities indeed matter when they move towards locations unfamiliar to them.

Here, what more could be noted is that, along with such rootedness that happens within one's psyche, the curiosity towards the unknown is also something that emerges in parallel. Though it cannot be generalised, along with this curiosity,

the longing to return back to one's socio-cultural and geographic location or specifically to one's home is also experienced by those who engage in such geographical expeditions. When affiliations to one's locality and home constitute one's personhood, something more has to be added along with such fixations that accelerate one's urge to be mobile. It must also be noted that too much of familiarity with one's surroundings can often lead to boredom which triggers the instinctual desires in one to move on. These desires in fact prompt people to set out on travels which are different from the routine travels undertaken to meet basic life necessities.

Hence, the transformation and development that has happened within the realm of travels can also be identified as something that was created out of people's boredom. Travel writing scholar Rune Graulund opines that,

One needs to *move away from home*, presumably, or *towards home*, in order to engage in travel. For home is the place that defines us, home is often where we feel safe and it is the place we long to return to once we have left home behind. Yet home is also where we feel most bored and constricted. ... Accordingly, home is often the reason we set out to travel in the first place.  
*(Keywords 117)*

The narratives that are produced out of travels also reflect this idea of home as something that keeps people connected to locations which are of importance in their life. However, all these are cases of those who have homes or similar spaces that can be considered as home. To this, Rune Graulund notes that "the meaning of home can change drastically depending on your gender, sexuality, nationality, the colour of

your skin or the nature of your work” (*Keywords* 118). So, to those who do not have a home, the feel of ‘returning’ will not hold the same allure.

Debbie Lisle in her book *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (2006) points out that the content of travel writings does have a narrative frame like that of fiction, where, either by its absence or presence, home appears to be a necessary factor. To this Lisle further reiterates that “travelogues assume that ‘living happily ever after’ means reaching a destination, or more commonly, returning home after a successful journey. Therefore, the narrative structure of travel writing is contained in the journey and vice versa: beginning- middle- end is inseparable from home-away- home” (37). At this point, it should also be noted that the importance given to ‘home’ as a place to be returned therefore constructs the ‘other’ against the traveller’s native. In the Introduction to her book *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (1996) Inderpal Grewal notes that the “home” or “England” is considered as the “domestic space of English nation” (5). She also notes that this “home” is a crucial category within European travel because it is the space of return and of consolidation of the Self enabled by the encounter with the “Other” (6).

In her article “Narratives of Travel: Desire and the Movement of Feminine Subjectivity” Simone Fullager points out that whatever be the situations one would like to be connected to one’s home for reasons that are difficult to be comprehended by others. She says “Home situates our self in the world and mediates our subject position through class, gender, culture and hence our ability to move away and return” (69). How one’s affinity towards home as a fixity affects one’s deed is clear

from this statement. Fullager further states that “The ability to return to a sense of home (an imagined and material place) is what turns a journey into travel rather than exile” (ibid 69). In other words home can be metaphorically viewed as the expression of one’s own self. Such connections towards home indeed give journeys an accomplished tone. Kristy Siegel notes that “For many travellers, a sense of identity and place can be achieved only by finding connections between their new surroundings and their memory of home” (*Gender* 8). All the above observations clearly point to the influences that spaces which are either native or alien have on one’s self, which in turn define the traveller’s self or the other. The essence of travel is deeply connected with memories which are intertwined with one’s native place and one’s home.

The American author and travel writer Michael Mewshaw in his paper “Travel, Travel Writing, and the Literature of Travel”, which was presented as the plenary address at the 2004 SCMLA Conference in New Orleans on October 28, 2004, brings in the various aspects that underlies in the act of travel. Mewshaw brings in the opinions made by Sigmund Freud on travel. Mewshaw says Freud has opined that “a great part of the pleasure of travel lies in the fulfilment of these early wishes to escape the family and especially the father” (2). Supportive of the observations put forward by Freud, Mewshaw brings in his opinions on the existential identity one achieves through travels. He says “In that sense, travel may be viewed as a rebellious, even a subversive act, part of the process of self-actualization. I travel to define and assert my existential identity. I travel. Therefore

I am” (2-3). All these arguments hint towards the kind of self determination and freedom the act of travel can provide to persons.

It is important to look into factors that prompt one to take up travels and the constraints which decide one’s mobility. In the same paper Michael Mewshaw writes, “Immobility reminds us of that ultimate fact of life - i.e., Death - we remain eager to prove we’re still alive by moving around and rubbing up against our fellow traveller” (2). He argues that people need to pick up such gestures to remind the world that they are alive and not immobile. The statement put forward by Michael Mewshaw is enough to ensure that the ability to move easily and independently from one place to another is what is understood by a lived body’s natural urge towards mobility. In a general sense while the natural instincts/impulses decide and determine the lives of all beings that are alive, the instinctual desire to be mobile is part of human nature. However, unlike animals and birds, the more intellectually and creatively developed human beings as separate entities are expected to be in control of their natural instincts for the sake of the socio-cultural system to which they may belong. In his article “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” Althusser defines this phenomenon using the concept of interpellation. Using this theory of interpellation he explains that all are into systems from the day they are born. The subject is thus trained by the external forces including those already in the system and also by the repressive and ideological state apparatuses.

I shall then suggest that ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by the very

precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!' ... That an individual is always - already a subject, even before he is born, is nevertheless the plain reality, accessible to everyone and not a paradox at all. (Althusser 1504-1505)

The physiology of human body is suggestive of the fact that human beings are built for a mobile life style than a sedentary one. Unless tied up/shackled or forced to remain in captivity or in confinements, majority of human beings do possess an instinct to move on or in other words the physiology of human bodies demands and desires their body to be moving. Nevertheless, as members of respective socio-cultural systems, human beings are expected to be in control of their natural instincts including the instinctual desire to move on or roam around. This indeed is controlled or regulated to fit into the system one may belong. The phenomenon can be further explained using the psychoanalytic theory propounded by Sigmund Freud. As per the theory, human mind is composed of three divisions, i.e. the id, ego and super ego. The super ego which is the ethical principle set in each person takes charge of the instinctual desires, which is the id. Nick Rennison explains this in his book on Freud, *Freud & Psychoanalysis* (2001) as, "the super-ego provides us all with our conscience, our sense of what is right and what is wrong, and demands that we often behave in ways acceptable to society at large rather than to our own individual urges" (40). It should also be noted that while majority of people find travel refreshing and rejuvenating there are people who do not like to come out of their living spaces or move around in search of other worlds, due to their own reasons. In

that case, the push and pull factor is always relative in accordance with people's attitude towards life and mobility.

While a person's self is largely constituted and influenced by his/her life situations and circumstances, travels undertaken during his or her life time can also be influential in building up the person's selfhood. In other words confrontations with the strange and unknown can transform a person subjectively, to a certain extent. According to the seventeenth century philosopher and thinker John Locke, other than the improvement in wisdom and prudence, travel enables a kind of self development which is only possible through the interaction with otherness. In Locke's own words, "seeing Men, and conversing with People of Tempers, Customs, and Ways of living, different from one another, and especially from those of his Parish and Neighbourhood" (qtd. in Lipski 2).

When all these are predominantly directed towards men, it is important to look into the historical matters that constituted the early travels of specifically young English men. How narratives produced out of such travels constituted perspectives and worlds have to be examined while dealing with the genre of travel writing. The prevailing customs allowed only men to take up travels to enhance their personality to face the world. Young men were often recommended to get out of their comfort zones to learn about the world outside. The education system prevalent in England during the sixteenth century insisted on the sons of English nobility to take up travels as a part of their education. This practice which was called the 'Grand Tours' continued till the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It should also be noted that the system never insisted on young girls to participate in the venture. The narratives the

young English men created from their travel experiences resulted in the composition of the East and other worlds presented through the Western eyes. The historical depictions and the identification of the colonial other by the imperial forces could be traced back to these writings.

Mary Louise Pratt in her seminal work *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) observes that the travel books created out of the travels conducted by European men gave them a sense of pride. She says, “Travel books, I argue, gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized” (3). She also states that it is through these texts created out of White men’s explorations the Europeans strategically created “the rest of the world” (4).

The phenomenon of global travel has been a feature of imperial writing for several centuries. These writings have in fact worked upon to construct a notion of the colonized others. Edward Said’s ground breaking study *Orientalism* published in 1978 was a response against what has been constructed of the East by the Western writers. In fact the European ‘self’ was defined through these strategically constructed ‘others.’ In order to get it specified enough to write against what has been constructed by the imperial hierarchy, Said states that Michel Foucault’s concept of ‘discourse’ aided as a magic key to define the Western imperial domination over ‘the East’. He states:

My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which

European culture was able to manage - even to produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. (3)

The colonial traveller and their writings played a crucial part in propagating such representations. In the book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989), Bill Ashcroft et al. duly notes that “one of the most important vehicles of colonial representation has been the feverish travel and plethora of travel writing by colonial travelers” (207). As narratives of travel have played a significant role in the creation of ‘others’ against the Eurocentric view, it is necessary to look into the situations and trajectories that constituted the present day travels.

It has to be noted that in the times when travel began to get popularized as an accessible activity it turned out to be a blessing for people who were stuck within their life situations. When looking into the history of travels, 19<sup>th</sup> century appears as an important era in the quest to be marked for major scientific discoveries and industrialisation. The invention of locomotives in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a major leap in the history of travel. Industrial revolution which took place between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in England made giant strides in the field of work and production. Discovery of new machineries opened up work opportunities for people who struggled to make a living in their native villages. Scarcity of products and lesser income forced people to leave the country side. People who found work in factories and industries began to settle down in cities which later resulted in the overcrowding of cities. Pollution and shortage of resources were the problems faced

during the initial stages by the newly emergent working class in England's industrial areas. Therefore, escaping the tiresome living conditions was a common desire among the working class which made them take up travels to premises outside their dwelling locations. This soon developed into a working class travelling culture. The invention of locomotives and steam engines during the time also added fuel to the escapist spirit of the common working class. The people who are put into tiresome working hours had no clue about leisure or free time from work. Al Gini in his book *The Importance of Being Lazy: In Praise of Play, Leisure, and Vacations* (2003) points out that "paid downtime, vacations, leisure are, for the vast majority of working folks, perks of the post industrial age" (1).

The popularization of locomotives, steamboats and other automobiles during the time enabled people to take up travels at lesser cost and that these travels indeed happened to be one of their leisurely activities during their off time. These short travels later on paved way for the beginning of a new industry called tourism, which is predominantly designed for pleasure purpose. In his article "A Theory of Tourism", Hans Magnus Enzensberger points out that the "Railroad mania betray the ardent desire to escape from the working civilization" (126). Capitalism flourished as part of the industrial revolution in England. As people from various sectors of the society gathered in search of better life opportunities, a new urban culture had emerged as the byproduct of the developing cities. Everybody including the well to do employees and professionals who themselves were incarcerated by their professional and personal situations urged for leisure which later ended up in

developing a tourist culture which began to enhance tourism as a developing force.

Enzensberger states:

The victory of the bourgeois revolution implanted in each individual a sensation of freedom that had to clash with the very society that produced it. Every revolutionary opening up of a society will be followed by a closure, but it leaves behind a memory that will no longer tolerate restoration - a scar remains in the mind, never to heal completely. Corresponding to the political revolution was a revolution in the mode of production. The new ruling class, the bourgeoisie, organized industrial labor and its world market. The new order created, if not a social, then at least a spatial homogeneity.

Technological progress, especially the invention of the steam engine and the steam boat, allowed capitalism to expand the network of traffic necessary for this homogenization of space. (124)

The medium and the method used for travel have a tremendous impact as that can affect the mode and mood of any travel. In the introduction to their book *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (2019) Nandini Das and Tim Youngs observe that “How one travels affects the pace and even the route of the journey, thus influencing, too, the travellers’ perception of the landscape and of themselves in relation to it. The pace not only of travel but of the narrative itself can be determined or modified accordingly” (13). The dictionary meanings given to the word ‘travel’ denotes that the act of travelling is associated with movements of any kind. The *Merriam- Webster’s dictionary* (2004) gives the meaning of verb form ‘travel’ as “to move as if by travelling”, “to move from point to point”, “to go on or as if on a trip

or tour”, etc. which are all associated with movement (762). As per the Online Etymology Dictionary, the word ‘travel (v)’ which is of the late fourteenth century takes its meaning from old French ‘travail (n)’ which is meant as ‘work, labor, toil, suffering or painful effort, trouble; arduous journey’ etc. The origins of the word meaning ‘travel’ hints on the difficulty people encountered while moving from one point to another.

Therefore, it could be understood that without basic facilities or a developed mode of transport system reaching targeted destinations was indeed a tiresome task. This situation began to change with the invention of locomotives and other technically and mechanically developed transporting facilities. The developments happened in the transport system completely changed people’s perception of travel and speed that places which were once considered inaccessible and distant have become easier and less time consuming to reach. Travels have thus become more about speed too as Nandini Das and Tim Youngs observe: “What Wyndham Lewis called ‘the Petrol Age’ has changed people’s sense of speed, their engagement with the landscape and their relationship with one another” (13).

However, travels were always part of human history that people took up travels to satisfy their instinctual desires and their curiosity for the other. This curiosity often took people to unknown regions which later paved way to various stories and sub stories which are framed out of their travels. When the nature and purpose of travels have changed from mere survival strategy to larger geographical expeditions, discoveries and conquests, it should be noted that men alone went as expeditors and the histories so created hailed only men as champions. Moreover, the

various literary works which have come out during the days were often filled with stories of such heroic expeditions with male leaders. Almost every literature in the world has included travel as an important segment in defining the theme of the story to be depicted. In the Introduction given to book *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (2002) Peter Hulmes and Tim Young notes that,

Writing and travel have always been intimately connected. The traveller's tale is as old as fiction itself: one of the very earliest extant stories, composed in Egypt during the Twelfth Dynasty, a thousand years before the *Odyssey*, tells of a shipwrecked sailor alone on a marvellous island. The biblical and classical traditions are both rich in examples of travel writing, literal and symbolic - Exodus, the punishment of Cain, the Argonauts, the *Aeneid* - which provide a corpus of reference and intertext for modern writers. (2)

We get to know about a number of such journeys in celebrated literary works. John Bunyan's allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) stresses that life itself is a journey. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is based on the travels of the 29 pilgrims who go to visit the shrine of St. Thomas Beckett. The travels of the hero form the story of *Don Quixote*. A major share of the incidents indicated in these works is executed through the travels undertaken by the characters. In the introduction to their book *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (2019) Nandini Das and Tim Youngs notice that the plots of the eighteenth century fiction, like Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749), and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759- 67) and *A Sentimental Journey*

(1768) are structured around the travels of their heroes and that draw on the conventions of the picaresque. (6)

The epics and other celebrated literatures that have derived from the Indian scenario also contain stories of travels that act as important aspects in defining the plots. The Indian scholar of travel writings Shobhana Bhattacharji notes that the Indian epics *Mahabharatha* and *Ramayana* contain stories which are based on the travels of divine and non- divine characters. She also notes that the,

Elements of travel writing also exist in fictional accounts of the *digvijayas* (conquests) in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, in devotional accounts of the saints, religious heads and poets, and in lyrical reminiscences of homesick lovers like the Yaksha in Kalidasa's *Meghadutam* that later inspired several *sandeshakavyas* (message poems) with verbal maps and descriptions of seasons, places, people, and patterns of life. (123)

Looking into the epics and classic literatures that are of Indian origin, it is understood that many of the stories mentioned in these ancient scriptures are themed up by travels undertaken by worldly as well as celestial characters. However writing specifically on travel was not a common act seen within the Indian scenario.

When a lot more is said on the trajectories that have lead to the present status of travels, it is important to find answers to certain confusing questions regarding the nature and criterion with which a movement can be considered as travel. To this Carl Thompson in his book *Travel Writing* (2011) opines that encounters and negotiations with the otherness, what one may experience anywhere can provide the

experience of travel. He says: “All journeys are in this way a confrontation with, or more optimistically a negotiation of, what is sometimes termed alterity. ... One definition that we can give of travel, accordingly, is that it is the negotiation between self and other that is brought about by movement in space” (9). The places and the people that are confronted by the travellers during their travels are also as complex as the travellers themselves. Many places were known to the world only after eminent men declared their ‘discovery’.

In her seminal work, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), Mary Louise Pratt calls the meeting point of two different cultures as the ‘contact zone’. According to Pratt, travel itself is defined by these contact zones. She says “... the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (8). This meeting point which actually defines a travel is going to be a space of cultural exchange for both the ethos. Pratt states, “It invokes the space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect” (8). The travel experience through regional spaces which carry layers and layers of history and memory is going to experiment with the traveller’s psyche as well.

In his article “Travel and Body: Corporeality, Speed and Technology” Charles Forsdick observes that “The act of travel entails the body passing through places and spaces of varying degrees of familiarity, with the various forms of friction created between the travelling body and these places and spaces generating

the raw material of what will eventually become the travel narrative” (68). True that a person’s psyche is influenced and largely defined by the geographical regions the person engages with, but besides the influence of geography/location over one’s psyche; one’s race, religion, class, caste, sexual orientation, economical, sociological, political situations and various other sub factors too constitute a person’s identity and self. Consciously or unconsciously every deed a person undertakes is manifested by the influence of all these factors. Therefore, when people confront regions and cultures different from theirs, they make opinions standing from their socio-cultural platforms. Narratives of travel definitely have this imprint of culture and self hood imbibed in it. In the introduction to the edited book *Not So Innocent Abroad: The Politics of Travel and Travel Writing* (2009), Ulrike Brisson states that travellers can get inspired by the newly found locations and so are also a product of the strange contact zones they confront. She states, “... as soon as travelers set out, they become embedded in political structures. At the contact zone or in the bewildering territory of otherness, travellers are as much a product of their new locations as they are agents projecting their own values unto the environment” (5).

While almost all the travellers are influenced by their native culture, travelling through spaces other than such settings make them conscious of their own cultural situations. In the preface to his book *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction* (2010) Michael Ryan observes that culture is “the unstated rules by which we live, rules that regulate our everyday practices and activities without our thinking about them or noticing them. Culture becomes visible when we travel

between “cultures” and when we look back in time to other “cultures” than our own” (viii). Confronting differences thus makes one aware of one’s own culture. At this point it is important to think who exactly can be considered a traveller.

Travel writing as a literary genre can be viewed as a celebration of the corporeal which is being made possible through the engagement of one’s senses. Experiences which are absorbed and assimilated through one’s senses become the material for a narrative on travel. Through travel narratives, the traveller/writer lets the reader experience different terrains as what was experienced by the traveller with his/her corporeal senses. While the activity of travel is generally perceived as something which is made possible with able bodies, there are of course travels and travel narratives which are perceived through bodies which stand outside the criteria of normalcy.

In that case, travels may further be classified as travels of the able and those of the differently abled bodies. The ability to perform in a way different from other lived bodies which are within the limits of normalcy is what makes it to be considered as something that is not normal. Other than the disabled feeling one gets on the physical level, there are some other kinds of shortcomings which places the traveller in a marginal position. That is, very little or no knowledge about a newly confronted culture and language can make a person insecure and hence feel disabled in a different terrain. Despite his blindness, James Holman (1786-1857), who is known as the ‘blind traveller’, has embarked on many journeys around the world. He has in fact problematised the notion of able-bodied travel. He made his point clear by answering the question “what is the use of travelling to one who cannot

see?” He answered: “Does every traveller see all that he describes? - and is not every traveller obliged to depend upon others for a great proportion of the information he collects” (qtd. in Bar-Yosef 138-139).

However, when it comes to deciding upon who exactly can be considered as a traveller, we reach junctures that are difficult to sort out. Literary historian and critic, Paul Fussell in his *Abroad: British Literary Travel the Between Wars* (1980), a theoretical study on travels and travel writings distinguishes the ‘genuine traveller’ from explorer, tourist and traveller. He explains that “All the three make journeys, but the explorer seeks the undiscovered, the traveller that which has been discovered by the mind working in history, the tourist that which has been discovered by entrepreneurship and prepared for him by the arts of mass publicity” (39). He further defines that,

The genuine traveller is or used to be, in the middle between these two extremes. If the explorer moves towards the risk of the formless and the unknown, the tourist moves towards the security of pure cliché. It is between these two poles that the traveller mediates, retaining all he can of the excitement of the unpredictable attaching to exploration, and fusing that with the pleasure of “knowing where one is” belonging to tourism. (39)

At this stage it has to be acknowledged that the purpose and attitude with which the traveller approaches the travels, determines the category of travel as well as the traveller. In the Introduction given to the book *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (2019), Nandini Das and Tim Youngs throws light on the various dimensions associated with people’s mobility. People usually take up travel to seek

fulfilment of some purpose. Das observes that even when a person's travel does not have a specific purpose, in the actual sense, it is impossible to do a purposeless travel as every travel invariably serves some purpose. From Das's own words:

People travel (and write about their travel) as pilgrims, missionaries, traders, scientists, doctors, soldiers, politicians, health workers, tourists, economic migrants, refugees, professional authors, and so on. Broadly speaking, people travel towards or away from something, or with elements of both flight and attraction, of escape and quest. Even to wander aimlessly is to have a purpose. Sometimes the motivation may be obscure, even perhaps to the traveller. That obscurity itself becomes an important trope: one of discovering a sense of meaning to the world or of self-revelation, which may overlap with the figure of transformation. (13)

Here, one more point needs special mention. In a general sense, travels voluntarily undertaken are always viewed as expressions of freedom. In that case, the idea of travel can be taken for freedom, metaphorically. In this context, Paul Fussell observes that, an experience of getting stuck somewhere is also counted as an implicit expression of freedom. Fussell writes: "The speaker in any travel book exhibits himself as physically more free than the reader, and thus every such book, even when it depicts its speaker trapped in Boa Vista, is an implicit celebration of freedom" (*Abroad* 203). The opinion made by Mark Cocker can also be read along with this. Cocker opines that "travel is one of the greatest doors to human freedom, and the travel book is a medium through which humans celebrate this freedom" (qtd. in Thompson 6). When all these opinions are about the experience of freedom,

travels can provide to the travelling souls, history of travel does not always contain happiness and freedom. In the introduction to their book *Mobility and Corporeality in Nineteenth- to Twenty - First- Century: Bodies in Motion* (2021) Jaine Chemmachery and Bhawana Jain opine that travel is also about “traumatized and mutilated bodies” that are in motion (11). In that case it can be about sorrows, worries, disruptions, displacements and damages too. While narratives of travel generally depict the freedom people enjoy at the moment, there is always another side which is neither bright nor exciting. Travels can be tiresome and haunting for a coloured person in a racist circumstance. People who are beyond the standards of heteronormativity can also have unique experiences. The narratives written by Africans who were forcibly put into slavery contain the haunting memories of the enforced Middle Passage across the Atlantic. The world read about such experiences through letters, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies etc. This also stresses the fact that almost all life writings contain segments on travel experiences which indeed had great impact in their lives.

While the concept of travel itself is a complex term to define, the meanings associated with the concept of ‘traveller’ are even more complex. Most of the studies that come around travel focus on the travels of the privileged, upper class white men, and also about those who are privileged to move around unconstrained. In that case, the mobility of people who are forced to leave their home and home land are not considered or valued like the travels of privileged groups. Moreover, such forced travels of the less privileged are not much discussed within the realm of travel writing. In his book, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth*

*Century* (1997), James Clifford observes that the coloured people who had accompanied as servants to the Victorian bourgeois travellers never were considered as travellers. Clifford observes that their labour or the experiences or knowledge created was never counted. He says,

Their experiences, the cross- cultural links they made, their different access to the societies visited - such encounters seldom find serious representation in the literature of travel. Racism certainly has a great deal to do with this. ... A host of servants, helpers, companions, guides, and bearers have been excluded from the role of proper travelers because of their race and class, and because theirs seemed to be a dependent status in relation to the supposed independence of the individualist, bourgeois voyager. (33)

From the array of people who are voluntarily or involuntary put into the trope of travels, it is understood that complex knowledge, stories, political and intercultural understandings are derived out of such travels, without producing “travel writing” (Clifford 34).

Shobhana Bhattacharji, in her essay “Amitav Ghosh’s Travel Writing: *In an Antique Land, Dancing in Cambodia and The Imam and the Indian*” observes that the travel experiences of the under privileged are not usually documented like that of the privileged travellers. She writes: “the vast number of refugee travellers in India like - migrant labour, the economic and political refugees from one region to another usually do not write about their experience. At most they write brief letters, or a line on a money order, or get someone else to write it for them, and if they do, it is not

likely to in English” (199). Thus we only get to know about their travel experiences through newspaper reports or stories written by journalists or other writers.

Analysing the criteria by which a movement can be treated as travel, Inderpal Grewal in the Introduction of her book *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (1996) notes that the Eurocentric hegemony over the trope of travel had in fact erased mobilities concerning migration, immigration, deportation and indenture labour from being treated as travels as defined within the parameters of Eurocentric aesthetic notions. However, Grewal believes that an awareness of the dark side of travel is necessary to know what colonization has done to worlds. She writes: “analysis of travel requires an awareness of the dark side of travel itself, that is, those movements and uprootings that colonization’s violence demanded and within which racial formations are constructed” (2). From the observations put forward by Grewal, it is evident that the Eurocentric attitudes acknowledged only the upper class white heteronormative man as the traveller and whose travels produced the ‘other’ worlds. The studies that have come out regarding travel reveal a lot more on the formations of worlds which are culturally and racially imbalanced.

In short, travels and travel writing has to be about understanding and tolerance too. As travel writing is about diversities, studies in travel writing should address the multifaceted nature of travel. As observed by Mary Ben Campbell in her article “Travel Writing and its Theory” the space which is created out of travels cannot be simply about the space between destination and arrival. She observes that as the world has changed into various segmentary worlds which are produced out of

“globalisation, diaspora, ‘nomadism’, and cyberspace” (262) etc. travel writing studies need to traverse its borders to contain and analyse these diverse dimensions. Campbell further notes that “The old motifs of the journey - home, departure, destination, the liminal space between - have lost their reference in the lived experience of most people who are not tourists” (ibid 263).

Whatever are the situations associated with one’s mobility, unlike the autobiographies and biographies which describe a person’s life, travel writing tells about a sequence from the life of the person. In his article “Inner Journeys: Travel Writing as Life Writing”, Simon Cooke defines the experience of travel as: “like an excursion out of the life, or an episode in a life that is distinct yet resonant in terms of the life-story as a whole” (19). The autobiographical element present in the narration makes the reader get access to the inner worlds which the author knowingly or unknowingly reveals. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan have remarked in their book *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (2000) that “Travel narratives articulate a poetics of wandering subject. In most cases this roving subject remains the focus of inquiry”. (14)

A travel can actually provide various benefits to the traveller both materially and internally. A kind of rejuvenation is what awaits the person who takes up routes that not everyone will opt for. Robyn Davidson in her travel book *Tracks* (1980) proves this point. The off-road journey she took up through the Australian deserts brought in innumerable benefits for her as a woman. Her lines from the book just reveal what she as a person has gone through mentally. Davidson explains:

Strange things do happen when you trudge twenty miles a day, day after day, month after month. ... It was a giant cleansing of all the garbage and muck that had accumulated in my brain, a gentle catharsis. And because of that, I suppose, I could now see much more clearly into my present relationships with people and with myself. And I was happy, there is simply no other word for it. (*Tracks* 188)

However, discussions on travel often lead to discussions on immobilities too. Observing the social situations which existed during the period between World Wars I and II, Paul Fussell reaches the conclusion that immobile situations may lead to “a loss of amplitude, a decay of imaginative and intellectual possibility corresponding to the literal loss of physical freedom” (*Abroad* 12). This observation can be applicable to situations when people experience stagnancies of any kind. People’s mobilities can be affected by a pandemic situation while people are asked to stay quarantined or in other words their physical bodies are under state surveillance. The state of being immobile can be experienced differently depending on the class of the person. Even during the lockdown days of Covid -19 situation when people were asked to stay indoors, there were many who had to go out for work to make the society function. Taking the situation of India as a country in the process of developing, Arundhati Roy writes in her article “The Pandemic is a Portal” that “as an appalled world watched, India revealed herself in all her shame - her brutal, social and economic inequality her callous indifference to suffering” (*Financial Times*). It is certain that such situations make people’s mobility, complex.

As stated by Nicolas Bouvier in his travel book *The Way of World* (1963) (originally written in French with title *L'Usage du monde*), acts of travel and its confrontations with unfamiliarity can transform people. He states: “You think you are making a trip, but soon it is making you - or unmaking you” (qtd. in Forsdick 69). This argument can be read along with what Kristi Siegel points out regarding the identity formation of the traveller. She observes that travel necessarily brings changes to the persona of the traveller that his/her “sense of self gets sharpened by the journey” (*Gender* 7). The experiences acquired through travels prepare one to tackle the challenges life offers. The traveller gets a better understanding of his/her own potential and shortcomings. What Eric J. Leed has stated in his book *The Mind of the Traveler* can be read along with this. He states that “the flows of passage not only provide information about the world; they provide information about the self of the passenger” (72).

While travelling, the traveller should have an eye to catch the differences that constitute cultures that are different from the traveller's. In which case, writing about one's experiences of travel requires more effort and energy than setting forth on a travel. The travelled person has to remember each and everything he/she has encountered in a different terrain. In fact all such differences and similarities they have encountered in regions different from their own, helps one to form a narrative on travel. In his article “Travel and Body: Corporeality, Speed and Technology”, Charles Forsdick writes that “The act of travel entails the body passing through places and spaces of varying degrees of familiarity, with the various forms of friction created between the travelling body and these places and spaces generating

the raw material of what will eventually become the travel narrative” (68). It means that the narrative that is written out of one’s travel in fact is a reflection of the traveller’s own self.

Moreover, when a person writes a narrative on travel he or she will be describing the place in comparison with the traveller/ narrator’s native surroundings. Descriptions of the socio-cultural and geographical differences and similarities constitute the narrative part of travel writing. Therefore, traveller/writer by keeping the unfamiliar geographical area as the ‘other’, knowingly or unknowingly reveals his/her own inner self. That is, the personal preferences and perspectives, the traveller depicts in the narrative become all the more revelatory about the narrator’s own self. In that case, travel is always a negotiation between the traveller’s self and the unfamiliar other which is being confronted indifferent spaces at different time periods. On the whole, travel writing is all about differences and similarities, a traveller encounters in unfamiliar terrains. Carl Thompson opines that “If all travel involves an encounter between self and other that is brought about by movement through space, all travel writing is at some level a record or product of this encounter, and of the negotiation between similarity and difference that it entailed”. (*Travel* 10)

The observations stated above lead to further findings regarding travel writings. Paul Fussell’s observation on the reader who gets in touch with the travel book underlines this. Fussell notes that by reading a travel book the reader can take three tours simultaneously that is to “abroad, into the author’s brain, and into his own” (*Abroad* 204). When the travel writer compiles all that he/she has confronted

in the different terrain, knowingly or unknowingly reveals his/her own cultural situations. In other words the narrator himself /herself becomes revelatory. The observation made by Norman Douglas too goes along with what Paul Fussell has stated regarding the reader of a travel book. Douglas states that reader of the travel book can experience two journeys at a time. That is, besides the exterior travel experienced through the descriptions of landscapes in the narrative, the reader can also travel to the inner self of the narrator through the narrative. As per Douglas “the reader of a good travel-book is entitled not only to an exterior voyage, to descriptions of scenery and so forth, but to an interior, a sentimental or temperamental voyage, which takes place side by side with the outer one” (qtd. in Fussell 203).

When travels are all about both inner and outer journeys which traveller consciously or unconsciously reveals through the narratives of travel, it will be worthwhile to look into aspects that transform a travel into a travel narrative. While arguments and opinions regarding travel writing largely concentrate on travel or mobility as such, in the most basic form, it is a first person narrative about a place that the traveller had travelled. Nevertheless, more than the travel which is undertaken, it is the place that is travelled to matters in the narrative. In his article “Deep Maps Travelling on the Spot” Peter Hulme observes that,

Travel writing is hardly possible without the description of movement of some sort, but travel writing almost always wants to say something about the places the travel writer visits. Movement and place are therefore constantly

in tension. To stay and to get to know - to travel on the spot - is not to move; to move is to risk that impressions be superficial. (132)

Travel narrative can be considered as a kind of adaptation of a place which is done by the traveller/ writer. That is, the peculiarity of a geographical region or socio-cultural space is captured to be transformed into another form, particularly to a written form, the narrative. What the traveller has comprehended in the terrain is adapted into another form through words and phrases. In other words, a geographical region's life, topography and culture when considered as a text is adapted into another form of text. By doing this, the everyday of the unfamiliar territory is captured and made into a travel text which consequently is a historical text too. Just like how the components of light get sorted out when passed through a prism, the travel book reflects the travel's cognizance. In the introduction of the book *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century* (2006) Tim Youngs opines that,

Travel writing is not a literal and objective record of journeys undertaken. It carries preconceptions that, even if challenged, provide a reference point. It is influenced, if not determined, by its authors' gender, class, age, nationality, cultural background and education. It is ideological. And it is a literary form that draws on the conventions of other literary genres.

Narrators, characters, plots and dialogue are all shaped accordingly. (2-3)

The opinion made by Tim Youngs can also be read along with what John Urry has opinionated on the formation of perceptions in the book *The Tourist Gaze* (2002).

Urry states:

Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze. (3)

From these opinions it is quite evident that travel as an activity is largely constituted by the thought structure of the traveller and for that reason, writing about travel never happens to be an innocent act. In her article “Translation and Travel Writing”, Susan Bassnet notes that “travel writing is a genre that exposes both explicit and implicit structures of power and knowledge” (556). Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan in their article “Postcolonial Scholarship” notes that Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), the iconic study which revealed the modes of construction of East as Europe’s ‘other’ later on has influenced post colonial theoreticians like Gayathri Chakravarthi Spivak to challenge colonialism’s missionary projects to ‘civilize’ and ‘rescue’ women in non- Western countries (54). Spivak’s reading of Julia Kristeva’s *About Chinese Women* (1977) - a travel book which is written out of Kristeva’s China trip - reveals the Orientalist attitude which is so eager to construct the ‘other’ against the West. Spivak criticizes Kristeva for proposing “new forms of universality and difference through which the “classical” East was revered but contemporary China was treated with contempt” (Grewal and Kaplan 54).

While travel writing is all about the socio-cultural differences a traveller confronts in a foreign terrain, the narrative indeed becomes a translation of what

he/she has confronted in the unfamiliar. In the Introduction given to the book *Travel Narratives in Translation, 1750-1830: Nationalism, Ideology, Gender* (2012) Alison E. Martin and Susan Pickford opines that travel writing is the recasting of cultures textually and visually into a language and culture as per the expectation of the reader (1-2). In that case, travel writing can also be considered as a kind of translation that is done between cultures. Susan Bassnett defines the connection between travel writing and translation as:

Translation can be seen as a kind of journey, from one point in time and space to another, a textual journey that a traveller may undertake in reality. Moreover, both translation and travel writing are hermeneutic activities, which involve different kinds of cross-cultural contact. Travel necessarily involves some form of translation, and many early travel accounts detail attempts to render in the language of the explorers, the undiscovered, the unknown, the new and the unfamiliar. (qtd. in Martin and Pickford 1)

The traveller in a way is translating a different culture for the sake of his/her readers. In fact anyone who is coming in contact with a culture different from theirs will be evaluating it within the parameters of their knowledge. This in fact is reflected upon in their writing. Therefore, considering the involvement of the translator's and travel writer's role in the texts produced, Susan Bassnett in her article "Translation and Travel Writing" opines that:

Both travel writing and translation involve a conscious manipulation of material, whether that material exists as a written text in another language or whether it consists of an account of an individual's journey. Translation, as

research demonstrates, is never an innocent activity; similarly, travel writing is a genre that exposes both explicit and implicit structures of power and knowledge. (556)

Travel literature helps one to read, understand and learn about the unknown geographies and cultures. The instinctual curiosity to know what is happening on the other side compels people to take up travels or read a good piece of travel literature. Without physically travelling to those unknown places, travel writing enables the reader to get the experience and feel of the unknown place and its culture. Reading a narrative on travel means the reader is going to rely on the experiences narrated by the traveller. The reader has the freedom to agree and disagree with what the traveller has seen, experienced and written about the newly confronted terrain. When the same place is being narrated by different people at different ages different opinions are created accordingly. The same person travelling to the same place at different time periods can also create varied experiences. That is, the various sociocultural, economic and political situations the traveller engages with are reflected in the consequent narratives he/she produces. Moreover, the psychological and physiological situations of the traveller while on travel also decide the nature of the subsequent narrative. William Dalrymple in the interview given to the post colonial theoretician Tabish Khair, opines that the “Narrator-led travel writing, like any form of autobiographical writing, reflects the views, prejudices and outlook of the writer at the time he writes them. Each traveller comes from a particular culture, and goes to others: the act of travelling may or may not change his views about his own or other cultures” (177).

When a large number of travel narratives are being produced by lot of travel writers, it is important to find an answer to the question to whom are these books addressed. As an answer to this question Paul Fussell observes that unlike the travel guide books which are addressed to those who wish to follow the traveller, a travel book addresses those who have no plans to follow the traveller. Fussell says that it addresses those “who require the exotic or comic anomalies, wonders, and scandals of the literary form *romance* which their own place or time cannot entirely supply” (*Abroad* 203). In addition to these observations regarding the readership of travel literature it should also be noted that the readers are also constructed by the market in accordance with the need and requirement of the time.

Apart from the general interest that people across ages have towards travel writing, as a literary genre travel writing was not well received within the literary circles that narratives of the kind lacked critical attention. Carl Thompson notes that the genre was treated like a “somewhat middle-brow form” (2). He also notes that the appearance of a new generation of critically acclaimed travel writers such as Paul Theroux, Bruce Chatwin, Ryszard Kapuscinski and Robyn Davidson has totally changed the genre’s reputation (2). In the introduction to the book *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* (2015) travel writing scholars Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst note that travel writing studies as a discipline emerged during the 1980s. They also note that the emergence of various literary theories that have emerged in the 1980s have helped in the revival of travel writing as a literary genre of significance.

The impetus for travel writing studies as a discipline itself came in the 1980s when a counter-traditional wave swept through the humanities. In literary studies, interest began to turn from the canon to ‘minor texts’, alternative voices and *petits recits* in a war against grand narratives. . . . Travel writing then emerged from the margins as a significant resource. When the ‘theory’ revolution took hold in the late 1980s, travel writing proved especially adaptable and responsive to the application of cross-cultural, post-colonial, gender and globalization studies. Cultural historians, geographers and those working in literary studies found in travel writing an endless supply of texts reaching back into antiquity, and across all cultures. (Kuehn and Smethurst 1)

Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst also note that the socio-cultural changes that happened globally had added increase in interest in travel writing as a genre. They write: “What makes this study especially timely is the present preponderance of transnational and global forms of cultural exchange. There is a widespread sense of displacement because of the erosion of traditional spatial divisions, such as home - work, native - foreign, local - global and East - West” (ibid 3).

Tales of travel have always thrilled and encouraged people from time immemorial. Experiences of such ancient journeys have been passed down from generations to generations in the form of songs or stories. Such tales which took shape and form through writing are now considered as travel writing. However, it is important to look into the sequences that lead into considering the literary piece as a separate genre. When asked on his opinion on travel writing being considered as a

separate genre, writer Pankaj Mishra in the interview given to the post colonial theoretician Tabish Khair, says that the genre might have acquired its present status simply because it had its emergence in the West at a time when the act of travel was very rare and provided the “occasional intrepid traveller” “a unique intellectual authority” (181). Mishra furthermore adds that “Travel writing could be a genre because it was specifically defined by the then rare act of travel, which brought to readers almost the only kind of knowledge they could acquire about other countries” (181).

Even though the books of travel seem to be popular among readers, travel writing as literary genre was not considered as a serious topic worthy of discussion in the academic circles till recently. Since the genre is a medley of various sub genres like biography, ethnography and autobiography it requires several theoretical analyses to define the narratives that have come out with travel as a theme of focus. In their book *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (2000) Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan point at the “hybrid nature” of the genre that travel narratives “straddle categories and disciplines” that it may contain “picaresque adventure to philosophical treatise, political commentary, ecological parable, and spiritual quest” (8). This can be further read along with what the British travel writer and critic Jonathan Raban has opined about the overlapping of other genres in travel writing. Carl Thompson in his book *Travel Writing* (2011) quotes Jonathan Raban’s words that, “travel writing is a notoriously raffish open house where different genres are likely to end up in the same bed. It accommodates

the private diary, the essay, the short story, the prose poem, the rough note and polished table talk with indiscriminate hospitality” (11).

While scholars of travel writing themselves have different opinions regarding the trope of travel writing, they agree on the hybrid nature of the genre that as a literary genre travel writing contains the elements of autobiography, ethnography, memoir, history etc. Moreover, the literary trope takes on wide range of terms to denote a written version of a travel experience. In his article “Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology” Jan Borm brings in a variety of terms which have been in use by critics over the years to label factual narratives of travel experiences. The terms Borm points out are: ‘travel book’, ‘travel narrative’, ‘journeywork’, ‘travel memoir’, ‘travel story’, ‘travelogue’, ‘metatravelogue’, ‘traveller’s tale’, ‘travel journal’, ‘simply travels’ (*The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*), ‘travel writing’, ‘travel literature’, ‘the literature of travel’ and ‘the travel genre’” etc (13).

For the convenience of this study, I will be using ‘travel narrative’, ‘travel writing’, ‘travel book’ and ‘travelogue’ depending on the nature and form of the travel experience narrated.

The technological developments that have already happened, and are waiting to happen necessitate a better look at the ways in which travel writing can be approached. Hence it is important to consider the future of travel writing. Scholars of travel writing see travel writing as a creative work which explores the particularities of a socio-cultural and geographical space which will never fall out of relevance. Gone are the days when people have to depend wholly on travel writings

to get idea/information on territories unknown to them. At a time when technology has advanced and people travel a lot people may not get interested to read travel stories like the earlier generations. In the Introduction to their book *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (2019) Nandini Das and Tim Youngs express their hope regarding the future of travel writing. They write that as long as there is life there will be travel and travel writing. To quote Das and Youngs:

Rather like the places and people it visits, travel writing is open to multiple interpretations, each of which will reflect something of the beholder's position. ... History will go some way towards showing the variety and multifacetedness of travel writing. It is designed to offer perspectives on the evolution of the genre as well as to give snapshots of it at particular moments in specific places. ... Like its object, travel writing studies are not fixed, and those in the field are akin to travellers regarding the terrain. (16)

While the relevance of travel writing in the present world is always a doubtful matter, scholars of travel writing are very sure of the genre's 'serious' business in this multifarious world of affairs which can be about borders and states, about cultures and conflicts, and about security, order and the like. Debbie Lisle in her book *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (2006) stresses on travelogues' 'serious' business of world affairs. She states that "the quasi-fictional genre of travel writing is at least as useful for understanding issues of international importance as the policy documents, government press releases, parliamentary debates and media stories that are usually privileged in this context" (1). The opinion made by William Dalrymple, the India based Scottish travel writer about the

relevance of travel writing, is in tune with what Debbie Lisle has stated. In the interview given to Tabish Khair, Dalrymple says that when at a time even the so called liberal newspapers are keen to publish cooked up stories targeting some specific group, one needs to think of the masters in travel writing. In Dalrymple's own words:

Even left-leaning and liberal papers like *The Guardian* and *The Observer* regularly ran a slew of pieces about the Islamic world by writers like Martin Amis who appears never to have visited an Islamic country or talked seriously to any Muslim, but instead produced a compilation of second-hand views lifted from the usual Islamophobic Neocon primers - the works of Bernard Lewis and Paul Berman. As insular, ignorant article piled on article, one longed to bring back the dead masters of travel writing: where was Wilfred Thesiger or Bruce Chatwin when you really needed them? (182)

The scholars and travel writers are confident that the genre of travel writing is here to stay and seem assured that nothing can replace a good piece of travel writing as "these are books written to amuse, entertain and possibly to educate" (Lisle 18).

### **Contextualising Women's Travels and Travel Writings**

When considerable number of studies related to travel writing circulate in the academia, it should be noted that majority of such studies focus around the travels of white, male, middle- class, heterosexual men. All the other sections which include women and those belong to the weaker sections, who directly or indirectly, are participants in travel ventures have been brutally marginalized or ignored. When

looking into such deliberately omitted segments, the invisibility of women is quite noticeable.

While the history of travel is all about migrations, pilgrimages, explorations and various other displacements which happened in history, it should be understood that women too were participants in such ventures. Hence it follows that women must also have a travel history of their own. James Clifford observes that “Women have their own histories of labor migration, pilgrimage, emigration, exploration, tourism, and even military travel-histories linked with and distinct from those of men” (*Routes* 5- 6). Here, what should be noted is, across cultures, women conceive mobility within the parameters of their gender. The physiology and socio-cultural factors go hand- in- hand in the framing up of female mobility. In their article “Gendered Mobilities: Towards an Holistic Understanding” Tim Cresswell and Tanu Priya Uteng observes that “Understanding the ways in which *mobilities* and *gender* intersect is undoubtedly complex given that both concepts are infused with meaning, power and contested understandings” (1). In that case, women’s mobility needs to be defined in the light of power relations they are into, because, history of women’s mobility is all about women’s immobility too.

Though human beings for generations, as a part of their survival needs kept on moving as per the demand of situations, both men and women were equal participants in those ancient wanderings. While both men and women of the primitive ages jointly took part in the venture for various reasons, at some point of time in history, travel became a male prerogative and women were expected to withdraw and remain in the confinements of the domestic spaces. In her article

“Travel and Gender”, Susan points out that though the renaissance epics like *Orlando furioso* (1516) and *Gerusalemme liberate* (1581) contained figures of adventurous warrior- princesses, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, journeys became explicitly gendered and the adventure quest outside Europe in search of wealth and better worlds established the idea of man as the heroic risk-taking traveller (225).

The sociological, cultural and biological reasons might have prevented women from taking up travels along with their male counterparts. Their life became entangled in familial constraints as they were expected to stay back and look after the children and family. The custom that women should stay within the domestic premises and men should go out to provide for the family became the norm and has been internalized through generations. The fundamental reason as to why the presence of women even today, has been largely restricted from accessing public spaces could be traced to the beginning stages of communal lives which limited women’s mobility. While certain clan/race /caste/community’s purity vested primarily on the community’s women alone, those women who belonged to particular communities were forced to stay in their domestic confinements.

In accordance with the societal developments that happened throughout history, certain women thus became increasingly confined to the private spaces. These constraints later on turned out as socio-cultural discourses that have acceptance in the societies that functioned on the ideologies of patriarchy. When societies began to develop into feudal and then into industrial capitalist societies the constraints over women’s lives became even more intense. Linda McDowell in her

*Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (1999) writes that “In the feudal period and in the development of industrial capitalism, traditional views of sexual mores involving purity and faithfulness for women were crucial because of the role of inheritance for the transmission of wealth and private property” (37). McDowell observes that women’s domestic labour was also utilized for the proper functioning of capitalism, i.e., “Women kept men clean, clothed and fed and so ready to go out to work each day, as well as bearing and caring for children who would be the labour force of the future” (ibid 81). This unpaid labour reduced women’s status as well as her access to mobility. This general socio-cultural and historical situation took toll on women’s mobility during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in England.

When patriarchy and the social and economic conditions that prevailed decided the lives of women, it will be worthwhile to look into certain other groups of people who were deprived of their right to live freely. The unfortunate lives of the Africans who were forcibly taken to other worlds remain a depressing memory in this context. By extension, the lives of the Black women who were captured and taken as slaves from Africa will forever remain an injury in the history of women travel. The trope of travel has in fact captured the lives of those unfortunate people who have been cut off from their roots, snatched from their homeland, their country and their culture forever. The life narratives which later came out in the form of slave narratives or as autobiographies describe the brutality faced by a group of people on account of the colour of their skin and ethnicity. Even though such narratives are not categorised as travel narratives almost all such writings inherently

contain the element of travel as a memory of a dreadful journey they were forced to undertake. Hence, travels can be about brutalities too when it comes to the lives of migrants, nomads, slaves, war victims and the likes who were forced to leave their native lands behind producing diasporas elsewhere.

Travels always have another side, opposite to the pleasant and thrilling one which usually captures people's attention. People's curiosity towards the unknown, compels them to read the thrilling tales of travels which literally take them to strange arenas and unknown places. The events that happened during travels were the main themes that gave rise to a number of thrilling stories which quintessentially depicted the heroic expeditions of men, specifically of the White male. While the socio-cultural situation restricted women's mobility, the concept of a female traveller /explorer was quite unimaginable and unacceptable for the socio-cultural situation of the time.

Homer's *Odyssey* is about the wanderings of the Greek hero Odysseus and his son Telemachus. While Odysseus struggles to return home after the Trojan War, his son also sets forth on a journey to find his missing father Odysseus. Here it is notable that while both the duo wander with their own aims, Odysseus' wife Penelope never ventures out as she remains home resisting all the suitors who come to persuade her. The popularity of the epic has ensured that the tale has a long lasting effect on different cultures. In his book *Travel Writing* (2011) Carl Thompson notes that the wanderings of Odysseus and Telemachus and the staying back of Penelope still reverberates that "in many societies, in many periods,

restlessness, freedom of movement and a taste for adventure have been attributes and activities conventionally associated with men rather than women” (168-169).

Though the Eastern epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* contain travels of divine and non- divine female characters, we get to know and discuss more of the journeys of Sita, Draupadi and so on for the prominence of their character in the respective mythologies. In Valmiki *Ramayana*, Sita follows her husband Shri Rama during his fourteen year exile, *Vanvaas* (stay in the forest), which later on leads to incidents that abruptly ends Sita’s life on earth. In *Mahabharata*, the thirteen year exile of the *Pandavas* however turns into an exile for their wife Draupadi as well. Draupadi accompanies her husbands wherever they went. Though the non- Western mythological texts quite often contain accounts of travels of women, a woman’s travels were never counted as her own; she was only marked as somebody who was allowed to follow her male counter parts.

The strategical arrangements to make man a traveller and woman a fixed entity can be seen all over history and literature. Women were only allowed to follow or accompany their male counterparts and none of the stories produced at the time dared to contain any narrative which depicted a woman as the leader. In his book *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (1991) Eric J. Leed writes like this: “In a vast portion of human history, men have been the travelers; and travel literature is - with a few significant, and often modern, exceptions - a male literature reflecting a masculine point of view. ... The masculinization of motion and the feminization of sessility are clearly products of cultural patterning” (220).

About this aspect, Sidonie Smith in her *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing* (2001) writes that “Leed contrasts the masculine logic of mobility with women’s attributed “sessility”. To be “sessile”, in botanical terms, is to be permanently planted, tenaciously fixed, utterly immobile. It is, in a sense, to remain always “at home”, which has been the traditional locale assigned to women (Smith X).

Barthes’s *A Lover’s Discourse* too hints at women’s position within societies that she is expected to perform her role of a faithful wife waiting for her husband.

Historically, the discourse of absence is carried on by the woman: Woman is sedentary, Man hunts, journeys; Woman is faithful (she waits), man is fickle (he sails away, he cruises). It is the woman who gives shape to his absence, elaborates his fiction, for she has time to do so: she weaves and sings; the Spinning Songs express both immobility (by the hum of the Wheel) and absence (far away rhythms of travel, sea surges, cavalcades). (qtd. in Lawrence IX)

All these arguments emphasise that a woman’s space is “first and foremost, at home” (Lawrence X). The domesticated image of women has been internalized by societies across ages to design the roles, society expects them to perform. Being immobile and located within the domestic confinements, Lawrence notes that “Not only is her place at home, but she in effect is home itself, for the female body is traditionally associated with earth, shelter, enclosure” (*Penelope* 1).

Simone de Beauvoir in her *Second Sex* observes that feminine dramas only tell stories of women who stay at home and make the father figure hallowed with glory. Girls from a very young age internalize that the whole world works through the agency of men.

In novels of adventure it is the boys who take a trip around the world, who travel as sailors on ships, who live in the jungle on breadfruit. All important events take place through the agency of men. Reality confirms what these novels and legends say. If the young girl reads the papers, if she listens to the conversation of grownups, she learns that today, as always, men run the world. The political leaders, generals, explorers, musicians, and painters whom she admires are men; certainly it is men who arouse enthusiasm in her heart. (293)

What Judith Butler describes as “the domain of socially instituted norms” (*Bodies* 182), through which gender identity and gendered relationships get reiterated in everyday occasions, fixates the domestication of woman through protocols of proper femininity that tether her to home and thus to a sessile status.

Feminist theoreticians championed the cause and the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed several critical methods to analyse culture, gender and power. Simone de Beauvoir’s argument in her *Second Sex* that “One is not born but becomes woman” (273) is further defined by performativity theory propounded by Judith Butler. Butler argues that there are certain levels of classification fixed in each system to be recognized as a system. If one needs to be accepted and identified as someone who belongs to a system then one’s performativity needs to be regulated enough to fit into the system.

That is, the roles allotted define the performativity of the individual within the system. In other words one's performativity is constituted through performances which define the person's predesigned gender roles.

Judith Butler in her theory of performativity explores how gender is socially constructed as well as performed in spaces both public and private. She argues that society has created certain norms by which each gendered role has to be performed accordingly. Right from one's birth each one is moulded according to their biological gender to fit into the predesigned slots. The spaces are also constructed and defined in accordance with the accepted gender norms. Thus society as a whole is constructed according to the performances which are demanded and expected. Butler makes this idea clear in her *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993) a book which discusses the regularized gendered acts. In her words:

The forming, crafting, bearing, circulation, signification of that sexed body will not be a set of actions performed in compliance with the law; on the contrary, they will be a set of actions mobilized by the law, the citational accumulation and dissimulation of the law that produces material effects, the lived necessity of those effects as well as the lived contestation of that necessity. Performativity is thus not a singular "act," for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition. (12)

Socially accepted gender norms have been established through an array of repeated acts so as not to view women as travellers and to limit their space within the

confinements of domesticity. The common discourses are formed out of such expected codes of conduct. When, as part of man's developmental process, the invention of locomotives and steam engines opened up opportunities to travel, the situations with regard to women's mobility were not very hopeful. However, amidst all the restrictions that were imposed upon women's lives they were able to come out and were able to traverse horizons unknown to them. Sidonie Smith in her book *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing* (2001) marks the presence of women in the realm of American travel writing. She observes that "Even though travel has generally been associated with men and masculine prerogatives, even though it has functioned as a domain of constitutive masculinity, women have always been and continue to be on the move. They climb aboard sailing vessels, or pull themselves onto horses, or grab a walking stick and set out along rutted paths, or rush to make a train" (Smith X). Smith further reiterates that when women, who were viewed as subjects who belong to the confinements of domesticity took up train travels they were in a way contributing to the history of train journeys and thereby to the general history of women's travels as well. She observes:

When they climb onto the train, women travellers climb into the cultural history of train travel with its politics of gender. On that train they experience mobility through the transformed semiotics of railway perception. When they write about their travels and locate themselves as subjects of locomotion, they contribute to the long history of cultural representations of the railroad. (*Moving* 131)

As time passed, women who forayed into public spaces were no longer sights of wonder. However, putting down their experiences on paper and getting it printed and published was not everyone's cup of tea. The processes were equally challenging as well. That is, besides venturing into the public space for travel once again they will have to deal with harsh criticism waiting for them. Regarding the hardships taken by the eighteenth and nineteenth century Western women travel writers, Carl Thompson observes that,

If the female traveller contravenes the patriarchal ideology of separate spheres by quitting her home and venturing out into the world, the female travel writer, or at least, the woman who publishes a travel account, contravenes that ideology twice over. Not only does she travel, she then positions herself a second time in the public sphere, as an author; and a reluctance to take up the latter role is a further reason why there are so few published travelogues by women prior to 1800. (*Travel* 180)

However, it has to be noted that when they started to write, their writings were not meant for a wider public. Many women of the time took to the epistolary or diary form to narrate their experiences of travel. This was indeed a wise decision taken up by women to create an impression that their observations and experiences of travel were never intended for publishing. By doing so they could forestall all the criticisms that might have come up for trespassing into the "masculine domain" (Thompson 180). Therefore, to avoid hostile criticism, women made it a point to present their writings in a way that will satisfy the societal and cultural criteria put forward by patriarchy.

Women through their travel writings tried to view world in a different manner, differing from the binaries constituted by phallogocentricism. Evaluating British women's travels to India during the colonial era, Indira Ghose observes that "the very act of travel constituted a form of gender power for women. By entering the public world of travel, women transgressed gender norms that relegated them to the home" (12). In her article "Relocating Domesticity: Letters from India by Lady Harriot Dufferin", Éadaoin Agnew too agrees with the argument constituted by Ghose. She observes that "women who travelled were generally considered as women who have transgressed the nineteenth-century social codes that constructed the feminine ideal as 'the angel in the house' which confined them to the domestic sphere" (97). When women subvert the spatial notions which are created by patriarchy, the very act is taken as a threat to the existing social order. Daphne Spain in her book *Gendered Spaces* (1992) observes that "spatial segregation is one of the mechanisms by which a group with greater power can maintain its advantage over a group with less power. By controlling access to knowledge and resources through the control of space, the dominant group's ability to retain and reinforce its position is enhanced" (15-16). When such "spatial boundaries contribute to the unequal status of women" (ibid 16), it is not surprising to learn that spaces that are considered as domestic were solely allotted to women by patriarchy.

While travel is all about the traveller's subjective position, the observed object too is important. In that case, the traveller's gaze as well as the object observed has to be equally considered and analysed. In her article "The Poetics and Politics of Travel Writing" Jayati Gupta writes that:

Travel writing involves an observing subject, who is the narrator and active 'I' and the observed object which is absorbed and assimilated through the senses (most prominently the eye or even touch, smell and taste) and sense data. This subject makes sense of the surrounding data through the act of writing travel. The subjective 'I' and the sensual eye become mutually dependent and constitute the gaze or perspective in a travel narrative. The equation between the observing subject and observed object is influenced by the discourses prevalent at a particular time and the predominating discourses that have shaped travel narratives all over the world have been that of imperialism, colonialism, class, race and gender. (28-29)

From the observation made by Jayati Gupta, it is clear that the observer and the observed in one way or the other are complementary. However it should be noted that through the act of gazing, the person holds a certain amount of power over the object of the gaze. The act of gazing becomes an indication of subject hood or an assertion of self. Therefore, through the act of gazing, women get to engage in a gesture which is authoritative and subjective and can redefine the identity that has been attributed to them by the dominant ideologies. Through their narratives of travel, women often endorse a selfhood that is autonomous enough to transgress the norms of gender identity.

While public spaces are generally considered as spaces which are specially designed for men, even the presence of women within such spaces is considered to be against the socially accepted norms. When this is the case with women's visibility within public spaces, it is pertinent to look into the concept behind

strolling, an activity which is first and foremost considered as a male activity. The French noun '*Flaneur*' which is derived from '*Flanerie*' is understood as a person who is engaged in the act of strolling. Keith Tester gives his explanation of *flaneur* as somebody "who has been allowed, or made, to take a number of walks away from the streets and arcades of nineteenth-century Paris" (*The Flaneur* 1). It should be noted that the concept *flaneur* and the person associated with it received eulogy through the prose and poetry writings of Charles Baudelaire. *Paris Spleen*, his collection of prose poems (published posthumously in 1869) and his essay "The Painter of Modern Life" conjures the concept of the visual powers exercised by a stroller who is free to look into everything without being watched or looked in return (ibid 1-2).

On this conception of Baudelaire's flaneur, Keith Tester observes that "The *flaneur* is the man of the public who knows himself to be of the public. The *flaneur* is the individual sovereign of the order of things who, as the poet or as the artist, is able to transform faces and things so that for him they have only that meaning which he attributes to them" (ibid 6). He also observes that for Baudelaire, the poet or painter who is preoccupied with the figure of flaneur is a man and not in any case a woman. Tester further states that "Baudelaire is quite explicit about the gender identity of the poet; much if not indeed all, of Baudelaire's work presupposes a masculine narrator or observer" (ibid 2).

When western city spaces of the nineteenth century became gendered spaces the activity of strolling, the symbol associated with urban modernity was a male prerogative along with the advantages of gender. As the activity of strolling is

associated only with men and the concept of a female stroller is unthinkable for the general conscience of the time, Doreen Massey observes that “The public city which is celebrated in the enthusiastic descriptions of the dawn of modernism was a city for men. The boulevards and cafes, and still more the bars and brothels, were for men - the women who did go there were for male consumption” (*Space* 234).

In her essay “The Invisible *Flaneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity”, art historian and writer Janet Wolff considering the modernized city space’s hostility towards women’s presence observes there will never be a female stroller, or more precisely a *flaneuse*, the feminine version of *flaneur*. She observes that “there is no question of inventing flaneuse: the essential point is that such a character was rendered impossible by the sexual divisions of the nineteenth century” (47). When the concept of *flaneur* negotiates around gender and mobility, Doreen Massey reaches the conclusion that “the notion of a *flaneuse* is impossible precisely because of the one-way-ness and the directionality of the gaze *Flaneurs* observed others; they were not observed themselves” (*Space* 234). Flaneur freely walks through the urban space of cities to watch the everyday life of cities where all the masculine things are brought out together. Patriarchy’s notions of gender approve only the purposeless loiterings of men not of women.

When such is the attitude towards women’s presence within spaces which are considered as public it is not surprising to learn that travel writing as a literary activity which develops from engagements within public spaces has long been considered a male bastion. Though women have made significant advancement in this literary genre their contributions were not at all acknowledged by the literary

world. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that the number of travel narratives produced by women are relatively less when compared with the enormous number of travel narratives produced by men. Carl Thompson notes that even though women were part of the travel process the written narratives that depict their travel experiences were limited in number. He notes that this was due to the “limited educational opportunities” leading to female illiteracy which indeed affected their performance as writers (*Travel* 170).

The recent studies that have come out on travel writings reveal that women have travelled, but most of their travels were not documented due to the socio-cultural situations present at the time of their travels. Many of them contained the spirit of travel within them that whenever the chance to travel came up they never hesitated to give it a try. Very few women have travelled just to experience travel. Colonialism indeed has in one way or the other served the European women’s travel fantasies. Many have travelled to the colonized countries either along with their husbands who were assigned with duties in the colonized country or as philanthropists or with assigned duties. Many have written down their experiences on travel. Indira Ghose in her book *Women Travelers in Colonial India: The Power of Female Gaze* (1998) observes that even though the texts produced by Western women during the 19<sup>th</sup> century have different aspects focused as compared to male travellers, they were constrained in the conditions of production and reception. Ghose notes that while the “access to male preserves like the Great Game of imperial politics” (10) were denied to women, they were “confined to aesthetic appropriation of the country through the strategy of picturesque” (10). Ghose then

writes that the Western women travellers were interested in producing “eye witness accounts of the harem or zenena, a no- entry zone for male travelers that met with keen interest on the part of publishers and readers” (10). Ghose further notes that in the accounts of Isabella Bird who stayed in the zenenas she describes the women who live in there as “intellect dwarfed” (qtd. in Ghose 63). Ghose here notes that such accounts in fact served the British colonial policy. That is, by creating the impression that only Westerners could help in civilizing the oppressed Indian women whose lives are caught up in zenenas and harems, as well as rescuing them from the male oppressors and that such accounts helped in justifying the colonial rule. Ghose further clarifies her argument that “The accounts of the Englishwomen from the zenana served an ideological function, of course, namely that of supporting British colonial policy with regard to social reform” (ibid 63).

Here, what is notable is, unlike the Western men, Western women have not completely tried to fantasize or romanticise on what they have witnessed in the East. Sara Mills in her book *Discourse of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (1991) writes that though women were actively involved in colonialism and wrote about colonial situation, their work “has been largely ignored” (58). Mills while acknowledging the significance of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) in exposing the role of western narratives in creating perceptions and notions on the Orient, criticises that Said's arguments were formulated without addressing the women writers who wrote about the colonial situation. Mills writes that Said “ignores the fact that many women were actively involved in colonialism: they wrote about the colonial situation and their works were very widely read” (58).

Such negligence in fact had distorted the understanding of the exotic. Knowledge thus produced by the imperial West however are gendered and hence monolithic.

Studies on Western women's travel writings during the colonial period highlight the fact that while the writings served the colonial policy they seem to have different perceptions regarding cultures different from theirs. Susan Bassnett in her article "Travel Writing and Gender" observes that the travel writings of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu make a case that not every Western woman wrote in the same manner. In Montagu's *The Turkish Embassy Letters* published after her death in 1762, she gives a different picture of Turkey; especially of the Turkish women who were portrayed as 'lazy' and 'lascivious' by the earlier male travellers (Bassnett 229). Montagu reveals that she and her children were vaccinated against small pox in Turkey. The tendency of many European travellers to exoticise the Orient was not quite evident in Montagu's narratives as her writings about her stay in Turkey however "challenge the tendency of many European travellers to exoticise the Orient" (Bassnett 229).

Susan Bassnett observes that the travel book, *Letters from Egypt* (1865) by Lucy Duff Gordon, written a century after Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* also busts the notions that are created about Egyptian women by the male travel writers of the time. Considering the writings of Montagu and Gordon, Bassnett reaches the conclusion that "both these aristocratic women travellers wrote about the experiences of the women they encountered, and in so doing refuted the growing tendency towards eroticisation of the unfamiliar that characterises so many texts by male travelers" (Bassnett 229).

While the concept of a woman traveller was something against domesticity, travelling solo provided a self developed individualism to the travelling woman. When travel became much more accessible than the earlier days, women too began to travel for various purposes. They too began to experience the thrills and turns of journeys which indeed turned into travel writings. Jane Robinson in her book *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers* (1990) has compiled basic information about four hundred women travellers who wrote in English. The sheer number of women travellers proves women's interest in travels and travel writings. Jane Robinson, who has collected and compiled the travel narratives of about four hundred women ranging around sixteen centuries claim that while men's travel accounts are to do with what and where, women's narratives often make it a point to write on "how and why" (qtd. in Thompson 172).

Varied topics too managed to find space in the travel narratives written by women. Gertrude Bell, Stella Benson, Freya Stark, Rose Macaulay, and Rosita Forbes. Dervla Murphy were some of the noteworthy women travellers. Susan L. Roberson in her article "American Women and Travel Writing" observes that while women of the West too have "traveled, migrated, moved, often for the same reasons as their husbands, brothers, and fathers" (214), and have shared travel experiences, studies that have come out on travel writing always focused only on male travellers and the male paradigm of travel. She notes that studies like *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* by Eric Leed, *Return Passages: Great American Travel Writing 1780-1910* by Larzer Ziff, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* by William Stowe etc. focus only

on the male perspective of travel (ibid 214-215). This situation which ignored women in American travel writing was corrected by studies made by scholars like Sidonie Smith, Annette Kolodny, Cheryl Fish etc.

Susan Bassnett in her article "Travel Writing and Gender" observes that many twentieth-century women travellers like Rosita Forbes, Freya Stark, Gertrude Bell, and Rebecca West who also had strong following were later on forgotten and their works also went out of print. Hence their achievements went unnoticed. Much acclaimed studies on travel writing seem to completely avoid these women travellers and their achievements. From the lack of comments on women travellers, Paul Fussell's *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (1980) which is a study on travel writing gives the impression that women are non-existent in this literary genre (Bassnett 226). This situation began to change by the interventions of feminist scholars who took up the venture in bringing out the forgotten or out of print travel writings of women. The UK feminist publishing house, Virago, reprinted classic travel books by women such as Isabella Bird and Mary Kingsley. (Bassnett 226)

Susan Bassnet analyses the reasons behind the dearth of women's travel writing and observes that "the essence of adventure lies in taking risks and exploring the unknown, so it is hardly surprising to find that early travel accounts tended for the most part to be written by men, who moved freely in the public sphere" (225). However, when they began to travel, women often bring in their personal elements to their travel narratives, like where they are grounded as socio-cultural subjects,

which help them maintain the coherent sense of self in their travels could be read out from the travel narratives written by women.

Simone Fullagar in her article “Narratives of Travel: Desire and the Movement of Feminine Subjectivity” opines that “travel is a movement in- between home and away, familiarity and uncertainty, travel is a liminal space inhabited by *multiple* desires that can produce different ways of knowing self and other” (57). She also notes that regardless of the medium “travel is a way of moving into something different, an intense temporality which carries the self. To be moved is to be affected, to be open to the reverberations of affect through the body” (67). Quoting Michel de Certeau’s words that “every story is a travel story”, Susan L. Roberson in her article “American Women and Travel Writing” observes that as experiences of travel could be traced in other mediums of writing like autobiography and fiction, they can also be considered travel stories. She says “they relate spatial practices of mapping the self and making sense of experience, and they provide a way for us to examine how women thought of their mobility and position in the world” (215).

When women narrate their travels on different cultures they transcribe or translate the culture from the perspective of their gendered positioning. All the other entities like class, creed and nationality etc. are to be followed along with their gender. To this, Kristi Siegel notes that “each journey bears the unmistakable imprint of gender” (9). It should also be noted that for women it is comparatively easier than men to get access to the domestic premises, the space where the nuances of culture and tradition largely concentrate. This accessibility is quite often reflected

in the narratives by women. In other words, the detailing on the newly confronted culture gives their narratives an ethnographic dimension. Considering this peculiarity with women's travel narratives, Mary Louise Pratt observes that women are much more inclined towards including domestic matters in their travel texts.

... domestic settings have a much more prominent presence in the women's travel accounts than in the men's (where one is hard pressed indeed to find even an interior description of a house) is a matter not just of differing spheres of interest or expertise, then, but of modes of constituting knowledge and subjectivity. If the men's job was to collect and possess everything else, these women travellers sought first and foremost to collect and possess themselves. (*Imperial* 156)

This can be the reason why women's travel writings contain significant 'feminine' material. Just like women, men also need to produce literatures which keep up the 'standard' associated with men's writing. They also may have their own pressures regarding the making of a travel text. Carl Thompson notes, "Those norms and expectations have worked greatly to the advantage of men, yet they have also in some regards constituted a form of constraint, delimiting how a male travel writer may or may not present himself; and as we shall see, this applies especially to the issue of sexuality" (173).

While discussing the travel writings of western women who came to India during the colonial period Indira Ghose reaches the conclusion that apart from their gendered positioning there is no uniformity detected in their writings. Ghose notices that each one's perspective is different with regard to the class and power positions

they may belong to. Evaluating the travel writings of Fanny Parks, Emily Eden, and philanthropist Mary Carpenter in her book *The Power of the Female Gaze: Women Travellers in Colonial India* (1998) Indira Ghose notes that gender happens to be just one aspect among the various other entities that constitute a person's selfhood. Travel writing scholars like Sara Mills, Marry Morris, Susan Bassnett have different opinions regarding the generalised argument regarding the common traits detected within women's travel writings. Susan Bassnett stresses this fact that "the sheer diversity of women's travel writing resists simple categorization" (239).

While looking into the pressures on production and reception of their travel books which female writers have to negotiate, Sara Mills opines that the differences which are found in women's travel narratives could be due to the sheer pressure from the socio-cultural space the woman travel writer is bound to. She writes:

I will certainly not be arguing that women's travel writing is generically distinct from men's. Rather I will be arguing that women's travel texts are produced and received within a context which shares similarities with the discursive construction and reception of male texts, whilst at the same time, because of the discursive frameworks which exert pressure on female writers, there may be negotiations in women's texts which result in differences which seem to be due to gender. (*Discourse of Difference* 6)

Besides this opinion Mills adds that "The most striking difference often lies not so much in the writing itself (although differences may be found there) but rather in the way that women's writing is judged and processed" (ibid 30).

While analysing the western women's travel texts of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Sara Mills observes that women are expected to include only seemingly trivial topics like plants and butterflies in their narratives of travel. Marianne North's and Margaret Fountain's travel narratives are examples to prove this. In Mills's own words: "A further constraint on women travel writers is that there are certain subjects which women are not supposed to know or write about - sex is the most obvious one. Within this stereotype, women are supposed to travel in order to paint butterflies and flowers, as Marianne North and Margaret Fountaine did" (*Discourse of Difference* 81). Though their travel writings may have the beauty and texture as per the general expectation, from the choice of topics it may be surmised that the travel writings of the nineteenth century women were expected to be amateurish and not scientific or authoritative.

In her book *A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* (2006) Susan Staves makes an exclusive study of women writers in Britain from the Restoration period to French revolution. While she tries to bring out the forgotten and neglected women writers it particularly hints on the exclusion of women from the schools that provided rigorous classical literary education. Staves observes that "certain important kinds of contemporary writing were predominantly masculine, whereas other kinds of writing were either imagined to be especially suitable to women or were being developed by women as female specialties" (243). She further observes that women were permitted to handle only the lighter kind; "Writing for children henceforth becomes one of the literary, or, rather, sub literary, arenas women are permitted to dominate. Because the canon of early modern English

literature that was fixed in the nineteenth century was almost exclusively male” (ibid 249). Though in their own way women have made significant contributions in the field of writing most of the time their presence within the scenario was neglected due to the male monopoly that existed elsewhere in the literary field.

The situation can be further defined in the light of the literary theory propounded by Elaine Showalter. She puts forward the term “gynocriticism” in her “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” (1981) to explain the status of women in the field of literature. Showalter observes that there hasn’t been any consolidated form of critical theory to analyse women’s writings because women were not acknowledged as writers and that their status remained that of readers, whose identities were framed from a male perspective.

When women attempt their hand in travel writing they write from the female perspective and not from the male perspective. The topics of concern and the experiences they went through might be different. This indeed gets reflected in their writing. Here, both travel and writing act simultaneously as a tool to rebuild what has been constructed so far under patriarchal norms. In that case, they are reinventing their subject hood. History has been written down only through man’s perspective; when women write from their perspective a re-articulation of history is happening.

While researching on the topic of women’s travel narratives from a feminist perspective, the area of Women’s Studies does need special mention. It is noted that before the intervention of Women’s Studies in the academics as a disciplinary subject, the studies related to women’s issues were carried out from the male

perspective. Hence the targeted results could not reach up to the expectation. The situation was changed due to the intervention of Women's Studies. Mary Maynard in her article "Women's Studies" notes that in contrast with what has been sought, Women's Studies propounded women as the centre in order to figure out the reasons underlying their unequal status in the society so that the disparities related to gender could be challenged. Since Women's Studies is linked to the educational wing of feminism, the academic discipline needs to question the ways in which knowledge was conventionally obtained. While teachings and research happened to be on important men and men's ideas and interests women tended to be "invisible in most academic research and teaching" (Maynard 29). By adding women into the existing academic agenda and curricula from which they were largely absent Women's Studies activists and scholars aimed to rectify this situation. Hence it became necessary to "develop new ways of thinking about doing research and constructing knowledge which would be sensitive to women's circumstances and perspectives" (Maynard 29). Things began to change and various topics on women, particularly from women's experiences and perspectives began to be emphasised both academically and socially.

The emergence of Women's Studies as an academic subject in India is closely linked to the women's movement of the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Rekha Pappu, in her article "Women's Studies in India: An Overview" (2008) states that the scholarly work of Women's Studies programmes had a tremendous impact on the publishing houses and that publishing house like 'Kali for Women' emerged exclusively in response to the uproar created by Women's Studies. She also notices

that established publishers are currently publishing books as part of their “newly developed Women’s Studies or Gender Studies series” (8).

Therefore, on the whole, women related topics have started to gain substantial importance due to interventions from various women’s movements both academically and socially. They insisted that the issues faced by women should not be viewed as separate entity, besides it should be viewed as problems faced by the society as a whole. In that case, not only the resurgence of women’s lives but also the revival of the existing societal order becomes the agenda of the discipline. The intervention of Women’s Studies as an academic discipline has literally helped in reviving such issues which need scrutiny. The scholars of the discipline took the initiative of bringing to light the neglected and unknown endeavours of women writers. Women’s travels and travel writings that have gone into obscurity were thus brought to light. In other words it has worked as a kind of resurgence for the doubly marginalized sector of women’s travel writing. This was indeed carried out by feminist publishing houses like Virago, Zuban and Kali for women who took to the venture. (Thompson 171)

Since this study solely focuses on the travel writings of Malayali women it is important to look into the general socio-cultural situation that curtailed women’s mobility in India. Various socio-cultural factors prevalent in the societies of Kerala and other Indian states have had their influence in curtailing women’s mobility on a whole. Caste and gender seemed to be the prime reason behind the socio-cultural situations that held back women from acquiring spaces which were considered as public. Women’s life in the confinements of domesticity and the burdens of everyday drudgery drained their lives. Glimpses of such situations could be read out

from ancient Buddhist nuns' poetry the *Therigathas* (Tharu and Lalita 65). Susie Tharu and K. Lalita in the anthology *Women's Writing in India 600 B.C. To the Present* (1993) examines the Buddhist collection - *Therigatha*, the earliest known anthology in women's literature. The songs which were composed by senior Buddhist nuns or *theris* in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. are known by the name *Therigatha*. The poems are their expressions of relief in finding a way out from the toils and turmoil of everyday life (ibid 65). This hints at the fact that regardless of ages and generations, women were subjected to servitude by the then dominant groups which took away the vitality from women's lives. Women who were subjected to such pitiful situations, regardless of age longed for an escape. The songs composed by *theris* who are known as 'Mutta', 'Sumangalatha', 'Mettika' contains expressions of relief they were able to attain. The lyrics by 'Mettika' translated by Uma Chakravarti and Kumkum Roy contain a woman's joy in attaining her long cherished desire for freedom.

Mettika

Though I am weak and tired now,

And my youthful step long gone, Leaning on this staff,

I climb the mountain peak.

My cloak cast off, my bowl overturned, I sit here on this rock.

And over my spirit blows

The breath Of liberty

I've won, I've won the triple gems.

The Buddha's way is mine. (Tharu and Lalita 69-70)

The *Therigadhas* in fact contains verses which proclaim the worth of liberation in lives that are clogged in life situations. Poems that contain such predicaments clearly underline the importance of liberation in human lives.

In her article “Mapping the Female Gaze: Women’s Travel Writing from Colonial Bengal” Somdatta Mandal notes that “In an age when few people travelled at all, the idea of a woman traveller was something of a novelty. Also their opportunities for travel were vastly different and they utilized travel in specific ways according to their class and caste status” (128). In the Indian situation the travels women mostly took up were chiefly for their work, study and religious purposes. Travels for their own sake were a rare perk. In her article Somdatta Mandal notes the joy expressed in the travel narratives written by the middle class Bengali women for being able to come out of their domestic confinements to travel abroad.

Travels for personal enjoyments were not common among Indian women. Since women were considered as the nucleus of the family system it remained as the responsibility of women to safeguard the dignity of the family. Even the spirit of nationalism which was sweeping across the country supported this formula to be followed to stand against their colonial masters. Partha Chatterjee in his article “Nationalist Resolution of the Women Question” explains on the ways in which men have resolved the women’s question. Nationalists believed that holding on to one’s culture and tradition was the only way to stand against the Western dominance. So they tried to make the people believe that “The world is the external, the domain of the material” (238) which is not very important where as “the home represents our inner spiritual self, our true identity” (238) is what matters. So, in order to contain

the spirit of nationalism one need to keep in mind that “the home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world - and woman is its representation” (238-239). So naturally the upholding of traditional values primarily belonged to women alone. This indirectly put into effect the notion that women belonged to the private space and not the public. This eventually resulted in the confinement of women to the private spheres. Chatterjee further points that the “*badramahila* (respectable woman)” (246) of colonial Bengal were allowed to accept modernity or education but her primary duty remained for her family alone and this indeed prevented her from accessing the public spaces without clear cut purposes.

Somdatta Mandal in her article “Mapping the Female Gaze: Women’s Travel Writing from Colonial Bengal” observes that the internalisation of these ideas have certainly been reflected in the travel narratives written by the women of colonial Bengal. Mandal notes that “being brought up in the feminized space of domesticity, women travellers assumably had a different gaze than their male counterparts. Unlike the menfolk, middle class Bengali women, living in an era that still primarily assigned them the role of the angel in the house, had to defend their travels” (144). From the article it is clear that the perceived notions of tradition and the need of the time insisted on women’s domesticity. But what is to be noted is that despite these restrictions Bengali women managed to create their own space in the literary genre of travel writing.

In the same article Mandal brings to light several travel narratives written by Bengali women during the colonial era. She comments of many women who have

travelled from colonial Bengal to England. This included women from both middle class and wealthy families. Bengali middle class women Krishnabhabini Das's travel narrative *England -e- Bongo Mohila* (1885) which describes her travel and eight year's stay in England (The book was published with the author's name as 'By a Bengali Lady' (Mandal 130)), the travelogue *Paschmyatriki* (1936) by Srimati Durgabati Ghose, a Bengali woman hailing from a wealthy background, Chitrita Devi's *Onek Sagar Periyē* (1957) (*Crossing Many Seas*) are few names which can be mentioned in this context. While the opportunity to travel provided them the courage to challenge the societal norms of the time, they took their travels and travel writing as a chance to look into the home of their colonial masters. Along with the excitement of having reached the huge metropolis of London with all its richness, few had narrated on the sheer reality of class difference they happened to experience in London as it was "almost like the caste-ridden society back home" (Mandal 142). After the initial excitement and wonder Krishnabhabini Das in her narrative *England -e- Bongo Mohila* (1885) brings out the sheer contrast of the metropolis where she thought that "the place is so full of rich people and costly things that it does not seem that even a single poor person lives in London" (qtd. in Mandal 143). Krishnabhabini Das's visit to the Eastern fringes of London completely transforms her conception of London that she was quite astonished to see the darker side of industrialization that lingered in every corner of the East End where no gentlemen or wealthy dared to walk over (Mandal 143).

Nevertheless, what should be noted is while Susie Tharu and K. Lalita in the *Women's Writing in India 600 B.C. to the Present* (1993), have made an outstanding

compilation of writings of known and unknown women of India, they haven't mentioned anything on women's travel writing. When women across India have had their fair share in the literary genre of travel writing such negligence serve as proof for the marginalization of women's travel writing. Women's travel writings are thus marked by their absences.

Indian women have travelled for various reasons. Their travels were mostly done for religious educational or job related reasons (especially for nursing jobs), and of course for family matters. Many had accompanied their husbands who undertook jobs or studied abroad. Only very few could make their mark in writing about their travel experiences. Besides all these journeys that are undertaken for clear cut reasons there are other journeys which are hardly ever acknowledged or remarked. The journeys of women from rural India who are appointed as indentured labourers in the plantations outside India during the colonial period is yet another phase of travel which demands in-depth analysis. The book *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (2014) by Gaiutra Bahadur contains the horrific account of a miserable, terrifying and tiring journey undertaken by a woman in 1903 from Bihar/India to British Guiana as a 'coolie' in a sugar plantation. In her book while unearthing her own great, grand mother's life and journey as a coolie in a colonial plantation Bahadur unravels the repressed and forgotten history of thousands of people who lost their roots and lives, forever falling into a system that never acknowledged their labour or their lives. Hence, it is pertinent to mention and acknowledge such forgotten journeys while looking into the different facets of travels, especially women's travels.

The travelogue written in Malayalam named *Indiayude Makal (India's Daughter)* (1974) by Bharathy Vidyarthi which describes the author/traveller's experiences spanning three years in Guiana contains the life situations of the present generation who are the descendants of those who were brought into the British Guiana from various regions of India as indentured labourers during the period of 1838 to 1917. She notices that through their hard work and endeavour the present generation has become an indomitable presence in Guiana's sociocultural, economic and political spheres.

At this juncture, the travels of Pandita Ramabhai need a special mention while considering Indian women's travel writing. Pandita Ramabhai (1858-1922), a key figure in the social reform movements in India, had conducted many travels to England and America. She was a Brahmin by birth, but due to ideological conflicts with the Brahminical patriarchy converted to Christianity and travelled to England and America for her study purposes. Her travelogue *The Peoples of the United States* (1889) was originally written in Marathi is the first of that kind to describe a western world from the perspective of a colonized person. Her travelogue was translated into English by Meera Kosambi titled as *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter: The Peoples of the United States (1889)* was published in 2003. In the travelogue Pandita Ramabai notices that the life of Western women is more advanced than the lives of women in India. From the studies conducted by Indian scholars like Somdatta Mandal, Shobhana Bhattacharjee and Jayati Gupta a clear picture of Indian women having set their mark in the genre is obtained. Most of them have written their travel experiences in their regional languages.

While gender is an important factor to look at, regional identity also becomes as important as gender while dealing with travel narratives. According to American philosopher Edward Casey, a person's bodily "being here" (qtd. in Benson 9) is associated with a "regional here" (qtd. in Benson 9) too. He observes that a person's being 'regional here' is constituted by a number of factors like "my house, my garden, my neighbourhood, my county, my nation" (qtd. in Benson 9) etc. To this Casey further clarifies that "A region, is a concatenation of places that, taken together, constitutes a common and continuous here for the person who lives in and traverses them" (qtd. in Benson 9).

While language, culture, food habits and climatic peculiarities define a geographical area, the people who inhabit the particular region would prefer to identify themselves as people of the area or would like to consider the geographical area as their own. Even if they are away from places which they consider as their native lands they would like to stick to their root culture. People usually stick to their root culture through shared memories of their past. The sense of belongingness is made possible through such shared memories. Benedict Anderson, in the Introduction given to his acclaimed work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983, 2006) observes that people imagine themselves to be of a particular group or a nationality. He states, "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). In other words people perform concepts associated with their supposed nationality, thereby making themselves and others consider or

imagine that they are people who belong to a particular geographical region or group. The concept of culture is furthermore explained by Michael Ryan in his book *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction* (2010):

Culture as a way of life tends to produce a commonality of thought and behavior, as well as conformity with reigning standards, norms, and rules. It is what allows us to live together in communities by giving us shared signs and signals whose meaning we know and recognize. We recognize fellow members of our culture by dress, speech, behavior, and look. In this sense of the word, *culture* means embedded norms all obey usually without thinking about it. (Preface ix)

Besides the genealogical associations one may have, the language one uses, the socio-cultural factors one is associated with largely determine a person's regional identity. The traveller carries these markers consciously or unconsciously with her wherever she goes. Therefore, by writing about what they have encountered in the unfamiliar, these women in a way are cherishing their own identities that are reflections of the particular regional space they are associated with. Here, those who are genealogically and regionally connected to the geographical region of Kerala prefer to identify themselves as Malayalis. In other words, the Malayaliness which is embedded in their psyche is performed through a series of actions that make them eligible to claim their identity as Malayali. In this study, I am looking into travel narratives written by Malayali women. By Malayali women, I refer to those women who in some way or the other belong to the geographical/sociocultural and regional

identity of Kerala through their genealogy and other cultural artefacts they prefer to follow or bond with in some manner.

In the introduction to her book *Gender, Identity and Place Understanding Feminist Geographies* (1999) Linda McDowell notices how the dwelling atmosphere/environment affects people's psyche. She states:

For most of the time, many of us live spatially restricted, geographically bounded lives, in a home, in a neighbourhood, in a city, in a workplace, all of which are within a nation-state. Of course, all these sites or places are constructed through sets of complex, intersecting social relationships that operate at a variety of levels and which are affected by beliefs and attitudes, images and symbols that are themselves increasingly variable and complex. (29-30)

In this study I am focusing on travel narratives written by women who in some way or the other belong to the socio-cultural and geographical region of Kerala and are treated as Malayalis. Before proceeding further it is important to look into the historical trajectories which have led Malayali women into the field of writing.

The dominance of men in travel literature is one thing common to the literary space of Kerala and those of other Indian languages. While men who belonged to the socio-cultural space of Kerala made significant contributions in literary fields, the participation of women was limited. Since the pre- modern phase of Kerala's socio-cultural history was largely determined by caste rules, the basic necessities to lead a life of dignity were denied to the people who belonged to the lower strata of

the society. As such only few could make it in the system of education. Education was limited to men who belonged to the upper castes and class of the society. Those who belonged to the lower strata of the caste hierarchy hardly had access to education. Education or any facility of that kind was denied to the lower castes. This in fact is reflected in the early scenario of literature that came out from the socio-cultural space of Kerala.

The social and cultural reformations taken up by social reformers in annihilating social evils like untouchability, slavery, child marriage and other communal issues etc. have however helped in correcting the existing social situation in Kerala. The renaissance movement that took place from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century transformed lives, especially with regard to the social status of women of Kerala. The advancements made in claiming the right to education, mobility, employment and widow re-marriage have enhanced the standard of living of women within the Kerala society. Chattampi Swamikal, Sree Narayana Guru, Dr. Palpu, Ayyankali, V. T. Bhattathirippad and Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi were some of the prominent social reformers who initiated Kerala's socio-cultural development. Kerala's social scenario also saw the rise of various women leaders from various sectors of society. A. V Kuttimalu Amma, Arya Pallom, Parvathy Nenminimangalam and Akkamma Cheriyan, were some of the women leaders who took up the cause of social reformation and development in Kerala. The reformatory steps taken up by these leaders have inspired women to transform their own life situations. Gradually, the presence of women began to be felt in various sectors where once they had no entry.

These changes were slow as the socio-cultural space of Kerala had not matured enough to acknowledge the endeavours and achievements made by women. The waves of feminism that started in the West swept across nations and did have an impact on Kerala's socio-cultural scenario as well. The writings of feminist thinkers and writers accelerated the process of socio-cultural development. Books which discussed feminism had tremendous impact in the socially imbalanced Kerala society. It should be noted that through their writings feminist thinkers accelerated the propagation of feminist thought not only in the Western world but all over the world had its repercussions. Such powerful ideas therefore laid the foundations for future agitations that were spearheaded by women for equal rights and justice. Feminism acted as a political movement that touched the lives of women all over the world. Women across the globe who realized their own potential was a major outcome of feminism.

The access to education was a stepping stone towards a progressive society. Renaissance that happened in Kerala promoted education of women and other marginalized groups. The access towards education however boosted women's self esteem. Women who belonged to different strata of society began to come forward to fight against the social practices that treated women as the other or the marginalised. This reflected in the socio-cultural and literary fields as well. Social activist and writer P. Geetha points out that even before the popularity of the Western feminism in Kerala's socio-cultural space, Malayali women have penned their stand on women's issues. Writers like J. Kunjulakshmi Amma, Lalithambika Antharjanam and K. Saraswathi Amma have spearheaded the thought processes that

uplifted women's self esteem in the Malayali society. Geetha notes that J. Kunjulakshmi Amma through her article "Keraleeya Sthreekalkkoru Upadesham" ("An Advice to the Women of Kerala") (1903) points to the importance of reading, entertainment and rest in the lives of women. She says that it will be beneficial if a woman could have a room of her own (*Ezhuthammamar* 44). Geetha notes that such thoughts were propounded by women who belonged to the pre- renaissance cultural scenario of Kerala and also a quarter century before Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" (1929). That is, even before the advent and popularity of feminism as an ideological thought process in modern Kerala, the socio-cultural activism carried out by the women in Kerala contained the vision of feminist thought. The writings of Malayali women like Kunjulakshmi Amma and K. Saraswathi Amma prove this point. P. Geetha notes that early women's magazines like 'Sudharma,' 'Sarada,' 'Lakshmibai,' 'Mahila,' 'Sreemathi,' 'Vanithakusumam,' 'Malayala Masika' which were in circulation even before the renaissance period discussed the importance of women's education and other socially relevant topics through powerful articles written by women (*Ezhuthammamar* 44-45).

K. Saraswathi Amma (1919- 1976) is another prominent figure to be mentioned while looking into the history women's writing in Malayalam. K. Saraswathi Amma through her writings and life rebelled against the prevailing patriarchal system. She lived her life on her own terms and challenged the orthodox society. She never compromised in any of her thoughts or deeds to enter into the good books of the dominant group. Her "Purushanmarillatha Lokam" (1958) ("World without Men") was a real blow to the attitude of the patriarchal orthodoxy.

J. Devika's book *Her-Self: Gender and Early Writings of Malayali Women, 1898-1938* (2005) which is a compilation of writings and speeches made by twenty nine Malayali women who belonged to different strata of society during the period from late 1890s to the first three decades of twentieth century is a valuable compendium of great thoughts and ideas shared by Malayali women. When patriarchy tried to confine women to assigned limited roles it was fiercely opposed by these spirited women through their writings and speeches. The ideas that are thus conveyed could debunk all the wrong conceptions that are created around womanhood. In fact the genealogy of early feminism could be traced to these writings and speeches.

J. Devika in her book *Kulastreeyum Chanthapennum Undayathengane?* (2015) observes that the way to gain space in the field of literature was never an easy job for women writers. They had to literally fight with all their near and dear ones to build a career in writing. Devika mentions the life of writer Rajalakshmi (1930 - 1965) who was forced to end her life unable to withstand the harsh criticisms that encircled her for her writing. Her life and death exposed the hostility that existed towards women who tried to carve out their space in the field of literature (*Kulasthreeyum* 177). This was indeed the reflection of the general attitude Malayali society held towards women's writing. This is not the case with literature alone. Venturing into any field that requires certain amount of creative input was not free from this hostility.

There was a time when women had to consider their caste, religion and gender before venturing into anything. Those who dared without considering these

factors suffered serious backlashes in their life. The life of P. K. Rosy, the Dalit Christian woman who acted in the Malayalam movie *Vigathakumaran* (1928) is another case in point regarding the caste fury that existed against lower castes. Rosy had to literally flee from her hometown to escape the fury of the casteist men who couldn't put up with the idea of a Dalit woman acting in a movie. The biography of Nilamboor Aisha (Malayali drama artiste who belongs to the Muslim community in Nilamboor, Kerala), *Jeevithathinum Aranginum Idayil (In between Life and Theatre)* (2017) prepared by Rajesh K. Erumeli and Rajesh Chirappad, also mentions similar experiences of fury she faced from the religious fanatics. Aisha explains the communal opposition she faced due to her acting career in the book. She says:

When I began to act in dramas there was a lot of opposition from the community. Some sects did not allow me even in their houses. They were not even ready to give food due to the fear of communal customs. They did not permit me to attend public functions of the community. Or if I go somewhere, everyone will stare at me like a criminal. Even those who like me will turn away. (my trans.; 33)

However, she fondly remembers the support rendered by the Communist party and its workers to safe guard the entire theatre troupe which they firmly believed will bring changes to the existing socio-cultural situations of the time.

In short the hostility women faced to remain in the respective creative fields has later on turned into stepping stones for the future generations to succeed. The paths which they have cleared are now taken by talented and spirited women who have created spaces of their own. It should thus be admitted that even in between all

these deprecating elements that constantly pull down women from fulfilling their wishes they were able to manoeuvre all the obstacles and reach their desired destinations.

As a society that strictly followed the caste rules, each one had to abide by the restriction according to their caste positions. In that case, the travel restrictions of the lower caste women are much more relaxed when compared to the upper caste women. However, the caste rules each one has to follow prevents lower caste people from leading a dignified life. They are not allowed to use public roads. Women of the lower castes are not allowed to cover their upper body and instead they are forced to wear chains of stones. The number of stones in the chain denoted their age. The struggle to discard such caste symbols is marked in the history of Kerala as *Kallumala* struggle. The *Channar* riot (1829) which lasted about three decades was a protest against the social custom that prohibited women of Channar community from wearing upper garments. All these riots that happened in the Kerala history are evidences of the subservient social position that were imposed on the lower castes by the ruling hierarchy. This doesn't mean that the life of upper caste women was very blissful. Other than the societal recognition they received for their caste position they too had their own burdens of caste and gender issues to carry. The *Mannappedi*, *Pulappedi*, and *Parappedi* which targeted the Nair women were some of the social injustices that curtailed the lives of upper caste women. The norm was that if the upper caste/ Nair woman was touched or even seen by the men who belonged to the Pulaya, Paraya or Mannan community at a particular time of the year, she had to leave her caste privileges and live the rest of her life with the lower

caste people who were responsible for this act. A. Sreedhara Menon's *A Survey of Kerala History* (2010) explains this situation:

According to this primitive custom the members of the lower castes like Pulayas, Mannans, etc., enjoyed the privilege of harassing women of higher castes, particularly the Nair caste, during certain months every year. The Pulayas etc., used to roam about freely in the night during these privileged months in order to abduct women belonging to the Nair caste. The custom was that those women of the Nair caste who were thus carried away by Pulayas and Mannans or at least "polluted by their touch" or even hit by a stone or stick thrown at by them, were treated as outcastes. (221)

So in short the mobility of upper caste women in general was not looked upon favourable in the pre-modern phase of Kerala.

Amidst all the socio-cultural hindrances that stood in their way Malayali women managed to have a travel history for themselves. While they have variant histories of travel experiences as migrants, survivors and labourers, the lack of such experiences in the written form makes the world unaware of such myriad travel stories.

A large number of Malayali women have traversed borders as nurses, plantation workers, labourers, teachers, artistes, domestic helps, circus artists, magicians, and in many other roles. The article "Malayaliyudethaanu Adyathe Sampoomna Penkudiyettam" ("Malayali's was the First Complete Female Migration") by Shiny Jacob Benjamin stresses that the migration of Malayali

Christian women, backed by the missionaries and the church to Germany during the 1960s to study nursing can be considered the first of its kind (*Mathrubhumi Weekly*). Except for a few, majority of such experiences came to light through the narration of a second person. Many such writings were indeed travel experiences too. But such experiences have however come under the title of life writings. Scholar and critic Janaky in her article “Penyathra” (2014) (“Female Travel”) observes that it is the publisher who decides upon the “boundaries and criteria” within which the narrative has to be included and get published (*Pachchakuthira* 33). What is observed by Shobhana Bhattacharji in her article “Amitav Ghosh’s Travel Writing: *In an Antique Land, Dancing in Cambodia and The Imam and the Indian*” also adds to the point. When the general judgment “But there isn’t much, is there” (199) comes on the way regarding Indian travel writings, she notes “there is actually a lot - general, specialized, amateur, bureaucratic, religious, secular, endless school and college essays on journeys by train and bus, letters home by travelers” (199).

The studies that have come out on travel writings in Malayalam proves the fact that regardless of gender a lot many people from the geographical space of Kerala in one way or the other actively took part in the various travel opportunities that came up their way. V. Ramesh Chandran’s book *Sanchara Sahithyam Malayalathil (Travelogues in Malayalam Literature - A Study)* (1989) is an outstanding study done on the travel writings that have come out in Malayalam language. The book which traces the history of travel writing in Malayalam has as well included travel narratives by women as well. All the narratives mentioned in

the book are by the travellers/writers who belong to the socio-cultural and geographical space of Kerala.

Chandran in his book notes that early Malayalam poetry during the 14<sup>th</sup> century which told stories of separation of lovers contained vivid descriptions of the sociocultural life of Kerala during the time (32). Such a literary genre which gave focus on describing lands and passages while on the way to deliver messages to estranged lovers were collectively called *Sandesakaavyam*. *Unnuneelisesandesam*, *Kokasandesam* written during the 14<sup>th</sup> century are examples for this particular literary genre. From such writings it can be assumed that descriptions of unknown territories have always been a topic of interest across ages.

Poetry which focuses solely on travel themes are categorised as *yathrakavyams*. “Dharma Raajavinte Rameswara Yathra” (published around 1784) which talks of Dharma Raja’s pilgrimage to Rameswaram, “Kasiyathravarnanam” (1854) by Vaikom Pachumoothath, “Sangamesa Yathra” (1891) by Venmani Mahan Namboothiri etc. are prominent examples in the genre.

Paremakkal Thoma Kathanar’s *Varthamaanapusthakam* which describes his Roma journey during 1778-1786 is considered as the first travel narrative in Malayalam written in prose. Kattayaatt Govinda Menon’s *Kasiyathrarappotta* (1872) is another travelogue in prose published after *Varthamanapusthakam*. Examining the descriptions in the book Ramesh Chandran notes that the book was solely meant for the devotees who wish to go on a pilgrimage to Kashi (Chandran 81). He also notes that there are about twenty five travel narratives published in the

period of seventy five years after the publication of *Kashiyathrarappotta* till India's Independence (83).

Majority of travel writings that have come out during the pre-independence phase were about journeys about pilgrimages conducted to Kashi, Rameswaram, Badri, Himalayas, Kailas etc. The post- Independence phase was also not very different from the pre- independence phase, however, the number and quality of travel writings in Malayalam began to increase considerably during the period (Chandran 103). The access to education and other facilities improved and this sociocultural change has surely reflected in people's mobility. In other words the post- independence era can be considered as a revival phase in Malayalam travel writing. *Ente Japan Yathra* (1941) by A.V Kuttikrishana Menon, *Kappirikalude Nattil* (1951) by S. K. Pottekkatt, *China Munnott* (1953) by Mundasserri, *Njan Kanda Indiyum Englandum Americayum* by Kadavil Paul Ramban, *Njan Oru Puthiya Lokam Kandu* (1954) by A. K. G, *London Diary* (1959) by K. Gouri Amma are some of the travelogues that embody the changes that have happened in the field of travel writing in Malayalam.

Among the many travel writings that have come out in Malayalam the travelogues of S. K. Pottekkatt stand a class apart for the author/ traveller's writing style and techniques he uses while narrating places and cultures. Chandran notes that Pottekkatt was praised as the 'Empire State Building of travel literature' for the contributions he has done to the genre (255). Pottekkatt's travelogues *Kashmir* (1948), *Nile Diary* (1954), *Pathira Suryante Nattil* (1956), *Soviet Diary* (1957), *London Note Book* (1970) are extraordinary pieces in the field of travel writing.

With special focus on the works of Pottekkatt, Chandran brings out almost all the travel writings that have published in Malayalam till 1985.

From the facts and details given in the book, *Sanchara Sahithyam Malayalathil* it is quite evident that men dominated travel writing in Malayalam. Nevertheless, it should be noted that even though the number is less when compared with the number of travel narratives by Malayali men, Malayali women have a fair share of travel narratives to claim for. Malayali women's travel narratives listed in the book *Sanchara Sahithyam Malayalathil* proves this point.

The travel narratives of Malayali women serve as proof of their movement across countries and continents. Many have travelled for different reasons such as religious, educational, domestic, migratory, occupational and for a number of other purposes. Therefore, regarding travel, the situation of the women who belong to the modern period is in a lot way different from their earlier generations. Amidst all the restrictions and limitations, women have travelled and still do travel a lot. The travels during the study periods, travels with the family, pleasure trips with friends or relatives, pilgrimages or travels for job purposes are the kinds of travels women in Kerala society generally experience in their lives. It should also be noted that these travels were not always recorded. Till recently travels and travelogues were considered a matter solely for the male populace.

When it comes to the written form of travel narratives Tharavath Ammalu Amma's *Oru Theertha Yathra* written in 1921 is the first of the kind to be considered as a travel narrative written by a Malayali woman. The narrative *Oru Theertha Yathra* (A Pilgrimage) is written out of the narrator's Kashi travel done to

cremate her brother's (Dr. T. M Nair) mortal remains in the holy river Ganga. Her travel describes a long journey which starts from Madirasi and passes through places like Jagannadhapuri, Calcutta, Gaya, Kashi, Allahabad, Ayodhya, Rameshwaram etc (Krishnan 30). Mrs. C. Kuttan Nair's *Njan Kanda Europe* (The Europe I Saw) (1936) which describes the author's travels in Europe is the first travelogue of the kind to be written by a Malayali woman which tells about a travel outside India. Kalyanikuttyamma's *Yatrasmaranakal* (1960), K. Gouri Amma's *London Diary* (1959), Annie Joseph's *Russiyil* (1956), were some of the noteworthy yet neglected (due to lack of critical attention) travel narratives written by Malayali Women.

From 1950s onwards the presence of Malayali women's travel writing began to be much more evident in the genre. This might be due to the socio-cultural changes that happened in Kerala. However, the relatively lesser number of travel narratives written by women hint at the fact that travels and travel writings are always a male bastion. The reason for the dearth of travel narratives by Malayali women is not that easy to detect. This might be due to the gendered disparities women face in the socio-cultural space. The socio-cultural factors of the respective ages have had their impact on people's, especially women's mobility. It is not that easy for women to take up travels like men do. Situations are not very favourable when it comes to women's travels. In fact they can travel only through the trajectories they are allowed to. However, it should be noted that what Malayali women as travellers and travel writers have achieved is not a thing that has happened overnight; it took years of endeavour, courage and passion to reach the place where they are now.

Though Malayali women have travelled and produced excellent travel narratives, most of the time their travel narratives were largely ignored by the readers and publishers for various reasons. The travel narratives I have collected for this research are not by women who are ardent travellers. Most of the travel narratives in this study are the recordings of travel experiences undertaken as a part of religious, familial or official purpose. Other than these categories, travels for their own sake are comparatively lesser in number. But what is to be noted here is though they may have not travelled for their own purposes, they have tried to find their own pleasures out of travels they were part of. Another aspect to be noted here is that, apart from the homogeneity they maintain as Malayali women, they reflect different views based on the socio-cultural and ideological backgrounds. Even though many of them have the spirit of travel and writing within them, only very few could make the venture possible to be remembered as a travel or something worth to be written about. Though Malayali women have travelled in increasing numbers and produced excellent travel narratives, till recently they were not taken seriously like that of the travelogues written by men.

Colonial modernity significantly impacted the existing sociocultural situations, reformations thereafter have significantly helped in reviving existing sociocultural situations. The access to education indeed is reflected in their social and personal lives. The changes that have happened over the years in the travel writings by Malayali women can also be divided into three different time periods. That is, the travel writings before 1950s, those from the 1950s to 1990s and then from the 1990s onwards to the present. Though there are travels recorded by

Malayali women before independence, it is after the 1950s that Malayali women began to make considerable contributions to the genre. The socio cultural, economic and political situations before 1950s were not that favourable to take up travels. Society was largely influenced by the existing caste and religious rules which certainly curtailed people's mobility. Moreover the travel facilities were also very less during the days as only very few people got the opportunity to travel. Mrs. Kuttan Nair's (Kochattil Kalyanikutty Amma 1908-1997) *Njan Kanda Europe* (1936) (*The Europe I saw*) which is about the author's journeys across Europe could be viewed as a milestone in the realm of Malayali women's travels and travel writings.

The sociocultural situations during the post-independence phase however were considerably better than the earlier eras. Colonial modernity in fact had a tremendous impact on the lives of people. The impact of English education opened up doors towards a new social system. Women were also beneficiaries of the newly formed system. However, class and caste situation continued to foreground the post-independence social scenario as leisure and travels remained an upper class prerogative. Kerala's sociological scenario by and large concluded this.

Annamma J. Vellappally's *Njangal Europpiloode* (1954), Annie Joseph's *Russiyil* (1956) K. Gouri Amma's *London Diary* (1959), Vilasini's *Oru Ulnaadan Penkidavinte London Yatra* (1959) Rugmini Raghavan Nair's *Njan Kanda Europe*, Mrs. K. M. Mathew's *Njangal Kanda Japan* (1960), Susie's *Kerala Makkal Europil* (1964), Jenny M. Issac's *Irelandil Naalu Varsham* (1973), Savithri Sekharan's *Njangalude American Yathra* (1977), Vimala Rajakrishna's *Socialisathinte Naattil*

(1985), etc. are some of the noteworthy travel narratives that have come out during the post-independence era till the 1990s. As economy was a major factor in one's mobility, the above mentioned narratives are by the upper class. Thus, through these narratives they have considerably gained a space within the otherwise male dominated realm.

After the 1990s saw yet another transition stage of Malayali women's travels and travel writings. They by and large are part of the socio cultural and economic changes that have happened during the era. This in fact has benefited their ventures outside their domestic premises. Mrs. Rachel Thomas's *Lokame Tharavad* (1991), Geetha Idamaruku Skarner's *Ottakku Oru Desadanam* (1991), Sujatha Devi's *Kaadukalude Thalam Thedi* (1998), Parvathi Pavanan's *Oru Veettammayude American Yathra* (1998), Sara Thomas's *Israelinte Maariloode* (2000), Bobby Aloysious *Swapnam Nilacha Russiyil* (2003), K. P. Sudheera's *Pyramidinte Naattil* (2009), Rajanandini's *Kailasa Yathra* (2015) etc are some travel narratives which are to be commented on this phase. The variety of topics included in their travel narratives point towards the fact that Malayali women's psyche over the ages have transformed enough to embrace the socio cultural and political changes of the time. They have largely started to travel for both official and unofficial purposes. The socio-cultural, economic and political changes that happened over the years have brought in tremendous changes to Malayali womanhood and such changes are reflected in their travel narratives as well. The travel writings which are examined in this study date from the 1930s to 2022.

The travel narratives I am able to locate and include in this study are by women who have travelled for their study and work purposes, or have travelled with their husbands or their family members, or as a member of a group they are part of. It should be noted that the nuances of the traveller's personal self becomes more revelatory in the narratives that describe solo trips than the travels she did with friends or family. By engaging with unfamiliar cultures and situations one gets to know of one's own potentials and shortcomings. Expressions of female self can be read out from such narratives. By getting into spaces which they have been denied from accessing they are in fact redefining their selves.

From the initial stages till around 1990s, Malayali women have tried to adhere to the accepted norms of the socio-cultural spaces to which they belong and such intents are reflected in their travel writings. It must also be noticed that in the initial stages of travel writings few Malayali women who wrote travel narratives were cautious not to mention their names as authors. In her article "Sthreekal Thaandiya Doorangal" ("Distances Covered by Women") Janaky gives her observation regarding this practice. She writes: "From the women travellers who wished to be known only as Mrs. in the travels they made along with their family, to the women travellers today who prefer to be known only by their first names, we get to know of the distances women have crossed" (*Madhyamam Weekly* 31). Women who are married used their husband's name with the abbreviation Mrs. as the author name for their travel books. Mrs. C. Kuttan Nair's *Njan Kanda Europe* (1936), Mrs. K. Joshua's *Loka Thalasthanangal* (1974), Mrs. K. M. Mathew's *Njangal Kanda Puthiya Lokam* (1971), Mrs. M. P. Paul *Americayil Oru Muthassi (A Grandmother*

*in America*) (1982) are some of the travel books with ‘Mrs.’ abbreviated author names to mention in this context. It doesn’t mean that these women are in any way disempowered, voiceless or lacked self respect. Instead they belonged to the creamy sections of the society and wielded significant power. When Kochattil Kalyanikutty Amma (1908-1997) the first generation feminist and a prominent figure in the sociocultural scenario of Kerala published her travelogue *Njan Kanda Europe* (1936) (*The Europe I saw*), she chose to keep her name as Mrs. C. Kuttan Nair as author name (C. Kuttan Nair is her husband’s name). Though few have used their photos along with their Mrs. abbreviated husband’s names as author names in their travel books, it is evident that these writers preferred to be known by their husband’s name.

In her *Seeing Like a Feminist* (2012) Nivedita Menon comments on the colonial phenomenon with the usage of surnames that “Along with the emergence of the surname one sees the emergence of *Mrs X*, X being the surname of the husband” (33). For the women of the generation it might be a proud and socially valued gesture to use their husband’s name instead of their own. Nevertheless, the erasure of one’s name especially a woman’s name from the author name is not in any way justifiable for it rejects the female self which the feminist movements of all time tried to uphold.

Besides author names, the titles of travelogues written by Malayali women also are something which needs to be commented. Since titles create an impression about the subsequent narrative and traveller/writer, the titles given are noticeable for their domesticated identity acceptable in the social space. Example: Vilasini’s *Oru*

*Ulnaadanpenkidavinte London Yathra (The London Travel of a Village Girl)* (1959), V.S. Kamala's *Indian Penkidavu Moscoyil (Indian Girl in Moscow)* (1975), Mrs. M. P. Paul's *Americayil Oru Muthassi (A Grandmother in America)* (1982) etc. are examples of such titles. Though they have ventured into great travels and have taken pains to write about their experiences with authority and expertise, by choosing domesticated, disciplined and innocent sounding titles it can be assumed that they have deliberately tried to go along with the society's accepted norms. Projecting themselves as naive and vulnerable might be a strategy to ward off criticism.

Considering the changes that have happened to Malayali women's travels and travel writings over the years, the time from the 1990s to the present ongoing phase corresponds to the momentum gained in Malayali women's travel writings compared to the previous phases. Malayali women have become more expressive and bold against systems that have kept their mobility and their writing limited and controlled. Therefore, in this phase, except for a very few travelogues like, Parvathi Pavanan's *Oru Veettammayude American Yathra (The American Travel of a Home Maker)* (1998), A. Nabeesathu Beevi's, *Boston Tea Party* (2015) with an added subtitle *Oru Veettammayude American-Canadian Sandarshanam (The American-Canadian Visit of a Homemaker)* it is hard to find titles that depict a domesticated feminine self.

The incorporation of photographs or selfies (without much botheration on the 'decency' expected) which are taken during travels, in their travel narratives could be viewed as visible signs of change that have happened to the Malayali women's persona over the years. This in fact is like finding agency to their corporeal selves

which have been previously unwelcomed in public spaces. Women's visibility in spaces which are considered as male centric or public can be considered as a great achievement that is made possible through the backing of feminist ideologies that always upheld female pride. A person's subjectivity and self are largely constituted through the experiences one gains with one's body; for this reason, the inclusions of corporeal experiences give the narrative an accomplished status. This transition phase has witnessed instances where women have found the confidence to narrate what their body experiences as a part of who they are. In other words, elements of self-assertion by and large are getting occupied within women's travel narratives.

Malayali women's attitude and approach towards travels have significantly met transformations over the years. More and more women have started to prioritize the idea of going on travels when it comes to the wish list of entertaining oneself. Various sociological and economical factors have contributed to this change. The pre-travel planning narrated by Aparna Sivakami in her travelogue *Thazhvarakal Pookkunnidam* (2022) sheds light on the changes that have happened to Malayali women's travels over the years. In her own words:

Why do women only trips look so cute to me? Travel should be about more than sightseeing. As soon as we begin planning the journey, we have actually started to journey through the journey. It might even seem like planning for the journey is what is really exciting. Since planning and implementation have been handled by men for ages, we had a suspicion that if one among our group is a man then responsibilities are likely to be his. But when we allowed men to join our caravan for the first time in 2021, we made sure that

there was no chance for outsiders as planners on our future trips. (my trans.; 12)

The internet revolution that happened in the late 1990s has revolutionized the conventional methods associated with writing and publishing. People, especially women and the marginalized sections get more opportunity to express their thoughts and experiences in the digital space. The same is applicable in the case with narrating experiences of travel. The explosion in the number of travel blogs and vlogs is a clear indication of this change. Carl Thompson notes that,

The spread of the internet, for example, has arguably produced a wholly new mode of travel writing in the form of the travel 'blog', or weblog. Bypassing the traditional need for publication in print culture, travel blogs represent a subtle re-negotiation of the boundary between public and private communication. They have also greatly escalated the volume of travel writing being yearly produced, although of course the quality of this on-line material varies enormously. And so travel writing continues to flourish and to reinvent itself, both in new media and in more traditional forms, so as to reflect new patterns of global travel, and new global concerns. (*Travel* 61)

As travels of the twenty first century are aided by the digital world, travellers of the era need not have to look much further to share their travel experiences and wishes. Travel has become less tiresome as information and experiences are available at our finger tips. Travel experiences can be easily be shared through a plethora of online platforms. Online platforms have thus broken the monopoly of offline publishers. Publishing of travel narratives has become much easier, so that the monopoly of

offline publishers is challenged through these online platforms where people need not have to worry about publication hassles. Not only have travel vlogs opened up new horizons of sharing travel experiences, but have also grown into promising sources of income for the creator.

### **Objectives**

Focusing on select themes like self, narration, gender, marginality, sexuality and body the study analyses select travel narratives written by Malayali women. How narratives of travel by Malayali women have evolved through ages into the present modern phase, are also part of the study. The narratives which are produced out of one's travel experiences can be considered as documentary evidence of a particular socio-cultural system of a certain period. In other words, narratives of travel act as bridges that connect to the bygone past of different socio-cultural systems with their present stages. The study also explores how Malayali women of particular time frames have perceived spaces different from their familiar ones and how they have documented them.

All the above mentioned aspects are brought into this study to critically examine the inherent quest around which each travel has taken place. Every individual has to perform multiple roles as subjects in various systems of power and is expected to perform as an apparatus that functions without challenging the codes that run the system. In that sense, women's travels and the resultant narratives are performative acts which amply subvert the conventional gendered roles patriarchy has attributed to women. Hence, through their travels and travel writings they render a kind of resistance towards the forces which are always keen to keep women's lives

and their subjectivities in control. Their travels and the subsequent travel narratives can thus be considered as testimonies of fulfillment of their desires and dreams which they have constantly deferred to fulfill the socio-cultural obligations.

Moreover, it should be noted that travel writing in one way or the other defines the self of the travelling person. Travel narratives which are rendered in the first person always bring out the traveller's own perspectives, experiences and opinions which turn out to be a conscious reshaping of their selves. In that case, a redefinition of selves can be read from the travel narratives which depict personal experiences. The study tries to bring into focus Malayali women's attitude towards various issues regarding gender, ecology and socio-cultural situations from a perspective which is not familiar to the mainstream consciousness. By writing their everyday experiences in different terrains they are in a way mapping their own selves.

This study investigates the existing general discourses on gender and how Malayali women standing within the propounded gender roles respond to the socio-cultural, religious and political power structures they are into. In addition, this study examines what the selected travel writings have to offer in terms of perspectives, experiences and insights.

### **Review of Literature**

The critical studies that have come up on travel writing have significantly transformed the otherwise low profile of travel writing into a genre of literary significance. Since travel and travel writing were considered as a male bastion till

recently, the books written by women on travel were not very popular like the ones written by men. Most of the critical works and studies that discuss travel focus on the male narrative realm. Susan Bassnett criticizes the negligence of travel writing scholars like Paul Fussell. Bassnett accuses Fussell for not considering the female dimension of the genre. Women's travels and travel writings were largely ignored by the mainstream studies that only a few scholars have done justice to the female dimension of travel writing. Travel writing scholars like Carl Thompson, Sara Mills, Susan Sontag, Mary Louise Pratt, Sidonie Smith etc. were the most prominent among the theoreticians who attempted to include and analyse the gendered side of the genre. Among them Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) helped to bringing out the post colonial dimension of the genre. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan opine in their *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (2000) that "countertraveler" is the need of the time, to resist and disrupt the "cultural myths of Eurocentrism" in the genre that constructed the otherness (198). Diverse voices need to be heard to break the conventions related to the genre.

The emergence of Women's Studies as an academic discipline has helped in reviving topics by bringing to light the forgotten literary works by women. Carl Thompson writes that "Since the 1970s, feminist scholars have been much concerned to recover and re-evaluate the various forms of travel writing that women have produced historically, and this has been one of the main stimuli to the growth of travel writing studies in recent decades" (*Travel* 171). The women travellers and

travel writers now have become an important presence in this branch of literature which was for a significant time considered a male prerogative.

Therefore by focusing on the common and connecting links between travel and gender I am attempting to explore the socio-cultural, economic and political situations with which Malayali women attempt their travels and travel writings. I have tried to read and analyse Malayali women's travels and travel narratives with the help of select theories by travel writing scholars and theoreticians like Carl Thompson, Sara Mills, Peter Hulmes, Tim Youngs, Paul Smethurst, Julia Kuehn, Patrick Holland, Graham Huggan, Justin D. Edwards, Susan Bassnett, Paul Fussell, James Clifford, Mary Louise Pratt, Sidonie Smith, Doreen Massey, Linda McDowell, Kristi Siegel and so on. Apart from the works of Western theoreticians, the studies of the Indian scholars like Indira Ghose, Shobhana Bhattacharjee, Jayati Gupta, Somdatta Mandal and Nandini Das have also been helpful in framing my arguments and observations. Shobhana Bhattacharjee's studies mostly focus on the mobility and travel of Bengali women. The book *Indian Travel Narratives* (2010) edited by Shobhana Bhattacharjee is a compilation of articles which discuss travel writing by travellers of Indian origin. The book is exemplary as it unveils the multifaceted nature of the Indian culture through studies on travel narratives from different regions of the country. "Mapping the Female Gaze: Women's Travel Writing from Colonial Bengal" by Somdatta Mandal is an outstanding article on Bengali women's travel and travel writing during the colonial days.

About the studies that have happened around travel writings in Malayalam certain books, articles and theses need to be mentioned. The article "Sthreeyum

Pothumandalavum: Korappuzha Vilakkinte Thudarchakal” (2013) written by Soumya Thomas is a brilliant article that traces the history of public and private divisions that happened in the sociocultural and geographical space of Kerala. The article keenly looks into the geographical boundaries set forth in the pre- modern Kerala regarding people’s mobility. The articles “Penyathra” (2014) and “Sthreekal Thaandunna Doorangal” (2014) written by Janaky are two brief yet significant writings that have come out on Malayali women’s travels and travel writings. While the article “Penyathra” talks about the particularities of women’s travels and travel writings in a general context, “Sthreekal Thaandunna Doorangal” (2014) briefly analyses the travel experiences included in the anthology *Penyathra* (2013) edited by K. V. Sumangala, the first of its kind that has come out solely on Malayali women’s travels. The article “Sthreekal Thaandunna Doorangal” precisely talks of the changes that have happened to Malayali women’s travels and travel writings over the years.

The article “Recording the Centrifugal Impulses of Women- *Penyatra*, an Anthology of Women’s Travelogue” (2016) by Neema Susan Mathews also discusses the travels included in the anthology *Penyathra*. Besides the various articles that have come out discussing the hardships women face during their travels these articles discuss the various aspects like space, gaze, body and narration in relation to Malayali women’s travel experiences.

The theses of C. Lincy and Suchetha Sankar also need to be mentioned at this point. C. Lincy’s PhD thesis titled “Women’s Travel Literature: A Study based on Women’s Travelogues in Malayalam” (2017) and Sucheta Sankar’s PhD thesis

titled “Women’s Travel Writings in Kerala: Discourses in Conflict” (2018) are two research works that have come out solely on Malayali women’s travel writings.

While Lincy’s thesis is probably the first of its kind in Malayalam, Sucheta Sankar’s thesis focuses on the various trajectories that have helped in framing Malayali women’s travels and travel writing. Both the studies engage with Kerala’s literary and historical background that led to the formation of travels and travel writings in the sociocultural space of Kerala.

V. Ramesh Chandran’s *Sanchara Sahithyam Malayalathil (Travelogues in Malayalam Literature - A Study)* (1989) and Geethanjali Krishnan’s book *Pen Yathrakal* (2017) are two books that have focused on travel writing in Malayalam. Since Geethanjali’s Krishnan’s *Pen Yathrakal* is exclusively on Malayali women’s travel writings, ample information regarding the travels and travel writings of Malayali women are included in the book.

### **Research Gap**

While the studies done by Ramesh Chandran and Geethanjali Krishnan are two outstanding works on travel writings, it is quite necessary to examine what these studies have left unaddressed. Considering the time period and sociocultural situation during the publication of Chandran’s book *Sanchara Sahithyam Malayalathil (Travelogues in Malayalam Literature - A Study)* (1989) it is not surprising to learn that the study didn’t focus much on the contributions of Malayali women to this literary genre. However, in his book, the author has made it a point to include short descriptions about the twenty five travel narratives written by Malayali women till 1985. At a time when there were hardly any studies on Malayali

women's travel writings the inclusion is commendable. It is in this scenario, the book *Penyathrakal* (2017) by Geethanjali Krishnan becomes relevant. The book that solely focuses on Malayali women's travels and travel writings answers questions that are left unattended regarding Malayali women's travels and travel writings.

The PhD thesis "Women's Travel Literature: A Study based on Women's Travelogues in Malayalam" (2017) by C. Lincy and PhD thesis titled "Women's Travel Writings in Kerala: Discourses in Conflict" (2018) by Sucheta Sankar have attempted to look into matters that assert travel and travel writing as a method and medium which bring in certain dimensions of Malayali womanhood. While both the theses look into how Malayaliness as a factor gets asserted in Malayali women's writings on travel, their studies have not largely included the different facets of power structures that constitute Malayali women's subject hood. That is, the assertion of Malayali women's subject hood with regard to their caste, creed, gender, religious and political affiliations have not been analytically studied.

As these are areas which have not been examined by the earlier studies and writings in this genre, particularly on Malayali women's travel writings, there is a need to address them. I would be analyzing select travel narratives by Malayali women from the perspective of what the previous studies had not attempted to venture into. My study looks at how Malayali women approach travel experiences based on their gender, caste, religious and political ideological stand points and how such attitude gets reflected in their travel narratives. Apart from these issues I am looking into how the changes that have happened over the years in the sociocultural, economic and political scenario reflect in women's travels and travel narratives.

Problematising certain factors like worship, pilgrimage, marginality, gender, body, and sexuality in the excerpts from select travel texts I have tried to illuminate different perspectives on the particular travel as well as the subsequent narrative. I have also tried to extend my study to the unexplored area in Malayali women's travel writing, that is, dark tourism/travels, wherein I attempt to analyse select travel narratives in the light of theories associated with dark travel/tourism.

Despite all the differences they may have as individuals, the common identity they share as women gives these travellers a unique perspective to observe and record other gendered lives across the globe. How women assert/ narrate experiences of their gendered bodies while on travel is a key factor to engage with while studying women's travels and travel writing.

### **Methodology**

This research is done mainly through the method of textual analysis, which focuses on the select texts and select themes. The intersectionality of select themes of each chapter are analysed in the light of literary theories which are associated with travel, travel writing, ecology, self, gender and body. Dalit studies and ecological consciousness help me to frame my understanding of the texts in a more nuanced manner. I have applied the theories of scholars and literary theorists such as Sara Mills, Carl Thompson, Judith Butler, Susan Bassnett, Paul Fussel etc. to shed light on the negotiations associated with Malayali women travel writing. I have also used the feminist history written by J. Devika and P. Geetha to contextualize the travel writings in a more productive manner.

## Chapters

This study entitled “**Women on the Move: Self- Encounters in Select Travel Narratives by Malayali Women**” consists of six chapters. **Chapter I** is the Introduction to the thesis. This chapter tries to ground the idea of travel and travel writing within the larger context of mobility with the help of relevant sociocultural and literary theories. This chapter also examines the sociocultural, economic, political and literary spectrums that helped in framing women’s mobility within gendered frameworks. The chapter attempts to trace the trajectories Malayali women traversed to reach a position they endorse now. The chapters which follow act as proofs to the arguments I put forward in the context of Malayali women’s travels and travel writings.

Since narratives on travel touch upon various topics along with it, I have narrowed down the study to certain select themes, for the convenience of analysis. Hence, I examine how themes like ecology, pilgrimage, caste, gender and narration are engaged in the travel narratives written by Malayali women. Since this work is a theme based study I have not attempted a detailed analysis of each one of the texts used for the study. Besides, I have compiled and analysed excerpts from travel texts that discuss the relevant theme of the respective chapter.

**Chapter II** titled **Travel and Ecology: Questions on Gender and Narration** focuses on how women’s travel narratives consider ecology as an entity to be examined within the dominant patriarchal and capitalist power relations. Ecology is the study of how living organisms including humans interact with their physical environment. It studies how the participants in such interactions exist as

ecosystems. While the interrelationship between every living and non living entity could be collectively brought under the term ecology, I try to focus my attention on how women as travellers view man's interaction with environment in the places they visit and how they have tried to locate situations and reasons under which such ecosystems are under threat. Here, I am looking into how Malayali women have utilized their travels and travel narratives to draw attention to issues which are kept at bay from the mainstream conscience. As ecology becomes the core theme of the chapter, topics like environmental destruction, tourism, exploitation of animals and acculturation feature prominently in this chapter.

Further, this chapter also analyses how women re-articulate their citizenship and how they have made meaningful interventions in systems which are blind towards ecological degradation. For this, what they have seen and experienced in geographical regions different from their native terrains are brought into light for analysis. The travel narratives that have been published after the 1990s are chosen for this purpose.

For this the study focuses on travel narratives like Sujatha Devi's *Kadukalude Thalam Thedi (In Search of Forest Rhythms)* (1998), K. A. Beena's *Nadi Thinnunna Dweepu (Island Eaten by River)* (2016), *Chuvadukal (Foot Steps)* (2015), Nalini's "Kadinakathekkum Purathekkum" ("Towards and Outside the Jungle") from the anthology *Penvazhi (Female Path)* (2015), Ponnara Saraswathi's *Switzerland: Vismayangalude Rangabhoomi (Switzerland: The World of Wonders)* (2008), Geetha Suraj's *Devabhoomiyile Orazhcha (A Week in the Celestial Land)* (2012), Anjaly Thomas's *Almost Intrepid* (2013), Maina Umaiban's

“Neelakurinjalude Nashtam” (“The Loss of Neela Kurinjies”) and Rosy Thampi’s “Marangal Daivathinte Prathichayakal” (“Trees, the Reflections of God”) taken from the anthology of women’s travel narratives *Penyathra (Female Travel)* (2013) edited by K. V. Sumangala are included in the study. P. G. Rema Devi’s *Americaye Aduthukandappol (When America was Seen up Close)* (2011), Valsala Mohan *Kashmir: Swargeeya Sundarabhoomi (Kashmir: The Beautiful and Heavenly Land)* (2014), “Meghavisphodanathil Alinjodungiya Thengalukal” (“The Cries that Subsumed in Cloudbursts”), Leelavathi’s *Bharathathinte Urdhvarekhyaloode (Through the Zenith of India)* (1983) and Sugatha Kumari’s *Californian Sketchukal (Californian Sketches)*, the travel narrative taken from her book *Kaavu Theendalle* (2006) are examined in this chapter.

**Chapter III** is titled **Pilgrim Travels: Rendezvous with Gods, Spaces and Memories**. While the concept pilgrimage is defined as a journey undertaken with a religious motive I would further explore the meanings associated with the terms pilgrimage and worship. Travels need not have to be towards a religious destination to be considered as a pilgrimage. The manner in which the traveller conceives the particular place is what makes the travel experience a pilgrimage or a non pilgrim travel. Therefore, I have chosen the title “**Pilgrim Travels: Rendezvous with Gods, Spaces and Memories**” for the chapter. In other words the worship, respect, admiration, faith and fear towards something or a place experienced by the traveller define the nature of the travels undertaken.

Political ideologies can be as appealing to an individual as religious ones. Sometimes people take up travels to places closely associated with the ideology to

which they believe and may like to follow. That is, for a believer of the Communist Leftist ideology, travelling to those countries which are considered as home grounds of the Communist Leftist ideology may have the mind - set of a person who undertakes a religious pilgrimage. For the same reason he/she may experience the travel as a pilgrimage. The same attitude could be seen in various other situations as well. That is, for an ardent admirer of the writer Tolstoy, visiting the celebrated writer's house will be like experiencing a pilgrim site/ a sacred space. For the convenience of analyzing I have divided the chapter into four sub-sections.

In the first section of the chapter I am looking into excerpts from narratives based on religious pilgrimages. *Kailasa Parikramanam (Journeying Through Kailas)* (2009) written by Valsala Mohan, "Hajj: Lokame Tharavad" ("Hajj: The World is My Home") (2014), by Sabitha Teacher, *Jerusalem: Daivaputrante Nattilekku* (2015) by Jolly Adimatra, and *Devabhoomiyile Orazhcha* (2012) by Geetha Suraj are the travel narratives I examine in this context.

The second section deals with narratives that came about from journeys propelled by the political ideology of the travellers. K. K. Shylaja's *China, Rashtram, Rashtreeyam, Kazhchakal: Puthiya Chinayiloodeyulla Yathra (China, State, Politics and Sights: Journey through New China)* (2015) is a travel narrative on her China travel. Politician Chintha Jerome's *Chankile China: Oru Chinnakkadakkariyude Cheena Yathra (Beloved China: A Trip to China Made by a Woman from Chinnakkada)* (2018) is also a travel narrative on China which is analysed in this section. This section thus deals with how women who are ardent

followers and supporters of the Communist Leftist ideology look upon the controversial political proceedings that happened in China.

The third section of this chapter deals with Anitha Nairs's travel narrative "Hans Christian Andersoninte Veetil" ("In the House of Hans Christian Anderson") which is taken from her travelogue *Kakke Kakke Koodevide* (2018), a compilation of the author's own travel experiences from various places.

The fourth section of the chapter focuses on travel narratives which are different from the previous three sections. Fear, as an instinctual emotion has great influence in the human psyche. Regardless of class, race, caste, creed and gender, people harbour certain fearfulness towards death. Travelling through places which have become death beds of many unfortunate souls offers a unique and horrific experience for the travellers. Although visiting graveyard of martyrs inspires feelings of respect in the traveller's mind, such travels are capable of creating a dominant eerie feeling. The haunting feeling triggered in the traveller's psyche reveals and justifies the darker side of travels. Vidhu Vincent's travelogue *Daivam Olivil Poya Nalukal: Oru German Yathranubhavam (The Days When God Went Hiding: A German Travel Experience)* (2019), Indu Menon's travel narrative "Mruthyuvinte Shayyagruhathil" ("In the Home Where Death Sleeps") (2012) and Kshema K. Thomas's "Andaman: Ekanthathaykumappuram" ("Andaman: Beyond the Solitude") (2012) are also part of this chapter.

**Chapter IV** titled **Marginal Travels: Questions on Caste, Gender and Narration** examines marginality with regard to women's travels and travel writings. When it comes to the gendered positioning within societies, women are generally

viewed as separate entities; women are not always given significance within the socio-cultural populace. While various factors constitute a woman's marginalized position, she is most often forced to put aside her personal interests. The desire to travel is one among her personal interests which she is often forced to keep aside.

This chapter on marginality is divided into three sub-sections focusing on the themes caste, gender and narration. The first section deals with how caste as a social iniquity has controlled people's especially women's mobility and thereby closing all their chances to lead a life of normalcy. This is examined in the light of travel narratives written by Malayali women who belong to different caste positions. The shift in attitude with regard to caste and creed is examined through travel narratives written by Malayali women who belong to different strata of society at different time spans.

To examine the impact of caste over Malayali women's mobility I am focusing on S. A. Leelavathi's travelogue *Bharathathinte Urdhwarekhyaloode* (1983) and Devaki Nilayangodu's travel narrative "Yatra Kaattilum Naattilum" ("Journey Through Lands and Forests"). As an extension of caste situations certain religious situations are also checked in this section. For this I am looking into the travels of the Malayali Muslim women. The number of travel narratives by Malayali women who belong to the Muslim community are very less when compared to the number of the travel narratives from the women of other religious communities. I am also looking into the socio-cultural reasons behind the lesser number of narratives written on travel experiences by the Muslim women of Kerala.

Next section deals with the impact of gender on women's mobility. To discuss this I have looked into excerpts from travel narratives written by Malayali women which discuss these issues. The excerpts I am looking into are from Geetha Idamarku Skarner's *Ottakku Oru Deshadanam (Migrating Alone)* (1991), K. A. Beena's *Nadi Thinnunna Dweep (Island Eaten by the River)* (2016), travel experiences taken from *Pennira (Female Prey)* (2011) edited by Tissy Mariyam Thomas, the book which is on Malayali women's mobility, Bobby Aloysius *Swapnam Nilacha Russiyil (In Russia Where Dreams are No More)* (2003), Tissy Mariyam Thomas's *Irangi Nadappu (To Walk Away)* (2008), Shalu's "Enne Thanne Kandupidikkanulla Yathra" ("Travels in Search of Myself") from the anthology *Penvazhi (Female Path)* (2015), Kalitha's "Yathrayude Pennanubhavangal" ("Female Experiences of Travel") (2013) K. A. Beena's *Chuvadukal (Foot Steps)* (2015), K. Gouri Amma's *London Diary* (1959), K. K. Shylaja's *China Rashtram Rashtreeyam Kazhchakal: Puthiya Chinayiloodeyulla Yathra (China, State, Politics and Sights: Journey Through New China)* (2015) and Chintha Jerome's *Chankile China: Oru Chinnakkadakkariyude Cheenayathra (Beloved China: A Trip to China Made by a Woman from Chinnakkada)* (2018).

The last section of the chapter focuses on the theme of narration. While discussing women's travels and travel writings, narration become an important segment to be analysed. When women narrate travel, certain matters which are crucial to women's body and sexuality are generally omitted from the narratives of travel. For this section I am looking into excerpts from travel narratives like Sujatha Devi's *Kaadukalute Thaalam Thedi (In Search of Forest Rhythms)* (1998), Anjali

Thomas's *Almost Intrepid* (2013), Anitha Nair's *Koo Koo Koo Koo Theevandi* (*Koo Koo Koo Koo The Train Whistles*) (2013) and K. R. Ragi's "Kutti Sancharikal" ("Little Travellers") which is taken from the anthology *Ranimar, Padminimar: Malayalishreekalute Kaivitta Sancharangal* (*The Ranies, The Padminies: The Carefree Travels of Malayali Women*) (2016) Raja Nandini's travel narrative *Kailasa Yathra* (*Kailas Travel*) (2015) and Padma Jayaraj's "Kadalilekk" ("Towards the Sea") from the anthology *Penyathra* (*Female Travel*) (2013) edited by K. V. Sumangala.

According to Judith Butler's theory on performativity, every deed a person undertakes is valued as expressions of gendered performances. Therefore, travels and their subsequent narratives become performances which are to be evaluated in association with one's gender. Hence, when women narrate experiences of their travels, the public's acceptance also becomes a matter of concern. Hence women need to be more vigilant while narrating their travel experiences. As women they are expected to stand with society's gender norms. All these aspects are analysed in the light of literary theories

**Chapter V** is the **Conclusion** of the thesis. The conclusion sums up the observations and arguments I attempt to put across in each chapter of the study. I share my insights on how Malayali women traverse the gender norms and how they were able to set their mark in a genre which hardly acknowledged their passion and dedication for a long period of time.

**Chapter VI** titled **Recommendations for Future Research** is the chapter which gives directions for the possibilities of future research, i.e., what is recommended for future research is indicated in this chapter.

**Disclaimer:** The translations of all excerpts taken from Malayalam books and articles which are included in the study have been done by the researcher.

### **Research Problem**

While attempting a study on travel writings by women it is important to look into the socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions which help to address the research problem related to the study.

In the introduction to her book *Gender, Genre, and Identity in Women's Travel Writing* (2004) Kristi Siegel observes that in their earlier travel writings women used to take great caution in maintaining the conventions of femininity. They were often seen as apologetic for the whole endeavour they have undertaken which includes writing in the first person to engaging in inappropriate activities and bothering the readers with their trivial matters. In addition, they assured the readers that they will not be competing with men (3).

The observation by Siegel speaks volumes about the accepted standards of femininity women are expected to follow. In a general sense travel provides relaxation from the monotonous life situations that take away the spirit of life. If the act of travel is taken as a metaphor for freedom, how far this freedom is achievable for women is a question worth pondering as it means removing the internalized restraints of the patriarchal systems their survival seemingly depends on.

For an average woman, chasing her desires and dreams is quite challenging when compared to a man. Travel is one among many such chases which dwell in their list of dreams and desires. For many women, travel without a purpose is quite unimaginable. When looking into the reasons behind the dearth in women's travels and travel writings, a number of reasons that are predominantly social and cultural pop up. This can vary according to the social and economic class of the woman who attempt the travels. However liberated and privileged a woman may be, she will have to or is expected to stick to certain criterion with regard to the class, caste, gender, socio-cultural and religious positions to which she belongs and which are inherently patriarchal in nature. So the strategy of power deployed by patriarchy on each person's psyche cannot be easily ignored. Moreover, the first and foremost priority of a woman who belongs to a patriarchal familial structure is expected to be her family. Hence the family ties remain as a huge responsibility for the woman who is in the system. If she is a woman with kids to take care of, she will have to cope with the demands expected from motherhood. In her article "Toward a Feminist Historiography of Geography" Mona Domosh notes that "It was usually only after they had fulfilled their family 'duties' that they were free to set out on their own" (97).

Different socio-cultural dimension need to be looked upon while dealing with women's travels and the respective experiences generated out of their travels. In the "Introduction: Women and Travel, Past and Present" Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore and Erica Wilson note that while a resurgence regarding women's travel and travel writing is happening all over the globe, the "stigma around - women's

solo travel in particular still remains the same” (2) and even in this twenty first century the concept of a woman solo traveller is not very acceptable for the various reasons that are mostly associated with gender. A universalized concept of womanhood is impractical on account of the myriad facets womanhood holds. Therefore, it is hard to contain or evaluate all the differences using one scale.

The problems faced by women from lesser developed countries aren't always a matter to be addressed by the mainstream feminism. For instance Betty Frieden's much acclaimed *Feminine Mystique* (1963) addresses only the problems of American middle class white women. For this reason the book was criticized by Black feminist bell hooks for its racial exclusion of Black womanhood. When Alice Walker coined 'womanism' it became a blow against the mainstream feminisms that failed to address Black or the other third world women. Postcolonial critics such as Gayatri Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty have also brought out such disparities that existed within mainstream feminism. While culture, race, class, caste, creed and a lot many entities constitute differences in life situations, this sure is reflected in the issues they face in their gender. Whatever are the differences regarding caste and creed, when it comes to issues faced by women on their gendered positioning within societies, they seem to share similar platforms. The problems they face as women, across the globe, have some commonalities.

Except for a few, most of the narratives I have taken for study are from women who are in one way or the other bound with their familial undertakings and responsibilities. Moreover, majority of the narratives included in this study talk about the travels which are done from one sheltered space to another sheltered

space. Almost all the narratives they have carved out from their travels adhere to the norms of the respective system to which they belong. That is, by being members of certain socio-cultural and political systems, they are answerable to the respective power structures which control the system. In other words, they will always be under the panoptic surveillance of the socio-cultural power structures and hence this imposition of power is quite often reflected in their narratives of travel.

Besides these constraints, which every woman traveller/writer is prone to, the concern over one's safety during travel becomes a crucial matter which needs to be addressed while looking into women's travels. Since travel is an activity which is primarily done with one's lived body, the risks and challenges are part of any travel. Of course, men too encounter obstacles. But discussion regarding personal safety is not an important aspect to be focused on while dealing with men's travels. Whatever advancement technology has achieved over the years, the socio-cultural situations pertaining to women's gendered positioning with the cultural milieu have not changed much. For women, their gender still stands as barrier which can directly or indirectly affect their degree of mobility. Women's accessibility to public spaces is not always welcomed by the advocates of the dominant doctrine. The female body which is out of the domestic confinements is prone to sexual assaults and outrages. The nature of the particular space and time which a woman gets engaged with decides the respective experiences.

Susan L. Roberson in her article "American Women and Travel Writing" notes that along with the "other risks and dangers of the road, women were subject to sexual risk, to themselves being the territory that is explored and conquered by

others” (223). Carl Thompson also notes that “It would be naïve to assume, however, that women travel writers today face no constraints, and that there are no gender expectations which they have to negotiate, either as they travel or as they write. The fear of violence, and especially of sexual violence, arguably remains a more pressing concern for female than for male travellers” (*Travel* 195). This observation is further addressed by Mary Morris where she says that “the fear of rape ... whether crossing the Sahara or just crossing a city street at night, most dramatically affects the ways women move through the world” (qtd. in Thomson 195-196). The act of rape is, however, more than a violation of the integrity of the body, is about the bruises, pain and trauma of getting attacked physically. All these observations clearly indicate that the potential risks women face either in travels or in spaces which are considered masculine, are not much dissimilar. The socio-cultural artefacts are still not developed adequately to accept or promote a woman’s wish to be mobile in every way.

While travels are mostly inspired by one’s curiosities about the ‘other’, they also facilitate a better understanding of one’s own self. In her article “Penyathrakal”, Janaky observes that “through their travels women compel themselves and others to cross the private and general understanding on gender. Every single step she places in the outer world not only opens new worlds inside her, but also opens the window which remains closed inside those who watch her” (34). Sharing the optimism of Janaky, I too hope that the time is not far when the socio-cultural spaces wholeheartedly accept a woman traveller.

## **Chapter II**

### **Travel and Ecology: Questions on Gender and Narration**

Limitless and bountiful is nature and unfathomable are its mysterious ways of working in which living and non-living entities exist in complex networks. Narratives on ecology attempt to account for man's interaction with this immense system of which she/he is part of. During travels, the traveller negotiates various spaces to complete a journey. In a sense, it opens up channels of communication between the individual and the grand system and also the doors of perception to one's inner self. Such interactions which are recorded /written down are the expressions of the physical, mental, socio-economic and political states of the traveller and are worth analyzing for unearthing valuable insights on travel and lived experiences.

This chapter titled "Travels and Ecology: Questions on Gender and Narration", is about how Malayali women describe their interaction with the environment in their narratives. Through their travels they come in direct contact with the worlds around them in all their rawness and splendour. Along with nature's undisputed splendour, many a time they get worried and concerned over the deterioration that happens to the environment in the name of development. When women, share their logical insights, mark the form of opinions and observations in their narratives of travel, they serve as excellent critiques of the existing situations. They use their narratives of travel as a medium to express their anxieties over matters that threaten the existence of the environment as a well balanced system. In other words they are utilizing travel writing as a platform to convey what they feel

about the world around them. Using the travel narratives written by Malayali women, this study examines how the essential nature of environment as a system is distorted through interventions of culture.

This study focuses on travel narratives like Sujatha Devi's *Kadukalude Thalam Thedi (In Search of Forest Rhythms)* (1998), K. A. Beena's *Nadi Thinnunna Dweepu (Island Eaten by River)* (2016), *Chuvadukal (Foot Prints)* (2015), "Kadinakathekkum Purathekkum" ("In and Out of the Forest") written by Maya M. from the anthology *Penvazhi (Female Path)* (2015), Ponnara Saraswathi's *Switzerland: Vismayangalude Rangabhoomi (Switzerland: The World of Wonders)* (2008), Geetha Suraj's *Devabhoomiyile Orazhcha (A Week in Celestial Land)* (2012), Anjaly Thomas's *Almost Intrepid* (2013), Maina Umaiban's "Neelakurinjalude Nashtam" ("The Loss of Neela Kurinjis") and Rosy Thampi's "Marangal Daivathinte Prathichayakal" ("Trees, the Reflections of God") taken from the anthology of women's travel narratives *Penyathra (Female Travel)* (2013), P. G. Rema Devi's *Americaye Aduthukandappol (When America was Seen up Close)* (2011), Valsala Mohan's *Kashmir: Swargeeya Sundarabhoomi (Kashmir: The Beautiful Heavenly Land)* (2014), "Meghavisphodanathil Alinjodungiya Thengalukal" ("The Cries that Subsumed in Cloudburst") (2015) taken from the anthology *Athens Muthal Haridwar Vare* (2015), Leelavathi's *Bharathathinte Urdhvarekhyaloode (Through the Zenith of India)* (1983) and Sugatha Kumari's "Californian Sketchukal" ("Californian Sketches"), the travel narrative taken from her book *Kaavu Theendalle: Essays on Environment* (2006) are included in the study.

Since ecology is a vast topic to be included in a study on travel writing, for the convenience of analysis, I am concentrating solely on topics like environmental exploitation, effect of tourism, animal exploitation, and acculturation as select areas for this chapter.

Considering the fact that heterogeneity and hybridity are the peculiarities associated with travel writing, a lot of subjects ranging from ethnography to politics find space within the genre's narrative structure. Carl Thompson observes that "The boundaries of the travel writing genre are in this way fuzzy, rather than firmly fixed: what we class as travel writing, and what we exclude from the genre, are perennially matters of debate" (12). The nature of a travel narrative is governed by the above mentioned factors in addition to the unforeseeable spontaneity with which life interacts with life. Moreover, what kind of experiences the author chooses to give importance in the narration determines the nature of a travel narrative. For instance, a traveller undertaking a religious journey may experience pleasure in the most non-religious of scenarios. Likewise, the narrative of a pleasure trip might contain moments of spiritual fulfilment. Narratives which focus on ecology may also contain religious and spiritual elements in it. Likewise, a narrative on travel may have the traits of various other genres. The travel narratives that I have included in the study are also not different from the general generic peculiarities of travel writing. Their observations and evaluations definitely contain the influence of the cultural norms they have imbibed.

Sujatha Devi's *Kadukalude Thalam Thedi (In Search of Forest Rhythms)* (1998) is a travel narrative which describes the author's travel expedition to the

Himalayan regions. Sujatha Devi, an English professor and was the younger sister of Sugatha Kumari, the well known environmental activist and poet in Kerala. Sujatha Devi has written poems under the pen name Devi. Besides writing, she was also fond of travel and had also travelled to the Himalayas several times.

In 1992, Sujatha Devi was able to obtain a fellowship granted by the Centre for Science and Technology (CSE) Delhi, which was meant for the study of the environmental conditions in the Himalayas. Her study was entitled as “The Existence of Wildlife Sanctuaries in Relation to the Socio Economic Conditions of the Community lives in the Himalayas”. For various reasons the work exceeded the allotted time period of 45 days. The CSE had granted her the fellowship on the condition that her accounts of study should be published in a local daily or magazine to help create awareness among the reading public on the importance of protecting nature. For that reason, the experiences of her study were published in the form of letters in the *Mathrubhumi Weekly*. Her research which became more of a study tour was mostly conducted in the forests of Kedarnath, Govind Pashu Vihar, Darlakhatt, Majathal, Chile, Kanavar, Shimla Catchment, Rajaji National Park and other protected forests of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. The raw and uncut nature and life of the hilly dense regions of the Himalayan ranges is elaborately described in her narrative.

Of all the other travel narratives included in this chapter, Sujatha Devi’s *Kadukalude Thalam* stands unique for it is the only narrative available in the book format that focuses solely on a region’s ecological issues. Before getting into the book, it is important to examine the memoir written on Sujatha Devi by her student

Priya A. S., who is a Malayalam writer. In the chapter titled “A Noon that won’t Wash Off” in her memoir *Thanmayam* (2019), Priya fondly remembers the many facets of the personality of her most loving and respected English professor. Priya writes that besides Sujatha Devi’s poetry her talents in painting and acting are not known to many. Priya fondly remembers that the “Nature Club” organised in the Maharaja’s College, Ernakulam, Kerala was the brain child of Sujatha Devi. In her memoir Priya adds that “more than the students of her English classes she was closer to her ‘Nature Club’ students” (14). Priya A. S paints a picture of Sujata Devi as an individual whose official and non official duties reflected a self which was sincere and genuine to the world around.

The travel book *Kadukalude Thalam* engages with ecology and travel simultaneously. However, the most striking aspect of this travelogue is that, it is written in an epistolary mode addressed to the author’s own sister Sugatha Kumari. This work can hence, be viewed as an ecological conversation between two women. The common concern they share about nature is quite apparent in this travel narrative. Though Sujatha Devi addresses her sister, she is also appealing to the mainstream conscience of the Kerala society. The fact that she did not bother to choose her husband or her children but her own sister as her addressee should be duly noted. Such a choice must have been made on the strong foundations of sisterhood and common social concerns and the comforts of intimacy associated with it. Her choice of the addressee at this point is also justified from a socio-cultural perspective as well, since her sister Sugatha Kumari is a prominent figure in the ecological scenario of Kerala.

Sujatha Devi's study tour in the Himalayan ranges becomes all the more crucial for various reasons which could be traced to the sociological and cultural situations she belongs to and later on confronts. To conduct her study she had to literally fight with the authorities to grant her permission to carry out her one and half month long study travel in the forests of Himalayas. From her narration it is evident that the climate and topography of the Himalayas was challenging and conducting the study would have been risky for the traveller. Strangely the traveller feels that the real challenge she faced was from the side of the authorities. Even though she was the recipient of the fellowship, she was very much discouraged and insulted by the governmental authorities of the forest department. She writes about it in her travel book. She says that the then conservator and chief wild life warden of Uttar Pradesh Mr. Baduria had literally insulted her when she asked for his permission to conduct her study travel:

Who gave you permission? ... There are scientists here to do the study. This is not the task of any non-governmental organization. The Government knows how to deal with the social and economic issues. We don't need your help. Press people like you create baseless problems. ... Your presence inside the forest will be harmful to wild life. You will not be permitted to do any kind of study in any sanctuary in U.P. You may better go back. (my trans.; 14-15)

The attitude of the authorities who were supposed to grant her permission was in fact discouraging, but little did they know that such discouragements had actually helped her realize her own potentials. Their objections had in fact triggered the

determined spirit within her that she vowed to herself that she will go further with her study. Her determination is quite clear in her words when she says, “If they think they can test my guts then I have to see its end. I will return only when I have seen all that is there to be seen” (my trans.; 17). It should be noted that she not only had completed her studies but also was able to write and publish the travel narrative *Kadukalude Thalam Thedi* (1998) which later won her the Kerala Sahithya Akademy award for the best travelogue.

The marginalization of women from places which are considered as male centric is a universal phenomenon. To achieve something they literally have to fight for it. It is at this point that the intervention of women as travellers and travel writers become relevant. Through such interventions they dared to express their thoughts, opinions, suggestions and criticisms on what they came across while on travel.

Since the idea of a woman expeditioner was a novel one, this kind of denial was not really surprising. Such instances could be traced to the beginning stages of the history of geographical learning. In her article “Toward a Feminist Historiography of Geography” Mona Domosh hints at the negligence, women face for attempting to be in a profession which was first and foremost considered a male prerogative. The article looks into how women’s contributions to geographic knowledge have been strategically removed from the discipline of geography. For this reason the names of the Victorian women travellers like Mary Kingsley, Mary Gaunt, Isabella Bird, and Marianne North who have discovered and surveyed lands on their own have been omitted from the official histories of geography (97). Susan Bassnett notes that in 1892, Isabella Bird however became the first woman to address

a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society and was later on selected for a fellowship (232).

Considering this history of exclusion and negligence faced by women as explorers, Sujatha Devi's explorations in the dense Himalayas becomes all the more crucial as well as political. The detailing on her stay and close contact with the geographical region as well as its subsequent culture gives this travel narrative a tint of ethnographic importance. Along with the beauty and bliss of the landscape she discusses the devastation and exploitation which prevails in the forest regions. She expresses her anxiety over the attitude of the people of the region who are quite unaware of the harm they themselves bestow on the source of their own livelihood.

Since the travelogue *Kadukalude Thalam* predominantly focuses on matters related to ecology a lot of content from the book has been included in this chapter. The book is a compilation of seventeen letters addressed to her sister Sugatha Kumari. Each letter is adorned with interesting titles as well. In each of the letters Sujatha Devi poses questions regarding ecological hazards and the oppression faced by the women of the region. Creating awareness among the reading public on the ecological degeneration is one noteworthy aim behind the writing of this travel narrative. The experiences mentioned in the third letter titled "The Aimless Chipko Movement" reveals the gruesome power politics fuelling the exploitation of natural resources in the area. Her revelations can be disturbing to many who are concerned with nature. After meeting Chandi Prasad Bhat, the leader of Chipko Movement, Sujatha Devi looks quite confused over the general attitude of the people of the region. Chipko was the forest conservation movement which started during the

1970s in the state of Uttar Pradesh which flourished with the participation of tribal and native women. By embracing trees as a gesture of protest they resisted the cutting of trees of the region. Witnessing the present devastated state of the once so live environmental movement, Sujatha Devi is concerned. She says, “Like a plant without water the movement is now worn out. The movement that once safe guarded the forests and villages of Himalayas now looks isolated from the people. Full time workers are very few in number” (my trans.; 24).

People including educated youth and professionals are no more interested in the Chipko Movement that they now have started to see the leaders of the movement as their enemies and as social threats that stand against development. Sujatha Devi quotes their words, “there are no such ecological issues in the Himalayas. We have trees in our forests. We have enough water in the river. Only to see their photos in the dailies they simply create fuss over nothing” (my trans.; 25). The middle class youth who chase their American dreams are the new apostles of the so called development. For them, Sunder Lal Bahuguna is the man who stands against all developments. He is the one who blocks the construction of dams which the middle class youth believe can do wonders for their region as well as their lives.

Sujatha Devi finds that the middle class of the region have turned into supporters of the ghastly capitalist consumer culture. She is quite shocked to hear them opine on Bahuguna as a social threat that “He should be shot dead” (my trans.; 25). They have started to believe that only a materialistic approach to development is going to do any good for them and their society. The activists and leaders of Chipko movement have failed to convince the people about the ill-effects of

exploiting the natural resources. Moreover, the government too fails to protect and provide for the forest and the poor. As for the capitalists and their supporters the natural habitat is yet another valuable piece of commodity. Through her travel narrative Sujatha Devi tries to put forward thoughts and concerns over the degeneration that has happened to environmental ethics.

Through the description of the ecological issues in the Himalayas the writer warns the readers against the danger of the ecological exploitation. The exploitation of women and nature is quite a common practice existing in the different areas in varying degrees in the Himalayas. All these disparities that exist in Himalayas could be read in parallel with what Vandana Siva has opined about development. As per her observation, “Gender subordination and patriarchy are the oldest oppressions, they have taken on new and more violent forms through the project of development. Patriarchal categories which understand destruction as ‘production’ and regeneration of life as passivity have generated a crisis of survival” (*Staying* 3).

The people of the region are not at all concerned about the harm they do to upon the geographical region they depend on for their livelihood. Sujatha Devi directs the reader’s attention towards certain matters that may appear trivial but in the real sense can cause ecological imbalance. The letter entitled “Goat Trodden Forests” contains one such warning. She points out the danger of over grazing that it can be an obvious reason for any region to get transformed into a desert.

Informed by her feminist insights, she tries to sort out many issues prevailing in the region during her travels. When she expresses her worries and indignation over the destruction of forests, exploitation of women, extinction of rare animal

species and the whole ecological imbalance she knowingly or unknowingly expresses her female self which is bound up with a history of exploitation and subjugation. That is, subconsciously her female self identifies with the ones who are exploited and subjugated.

Eco-feminists observe that women and nature are equally controlled and exploited through the patriarchal power strategies. This forceful subjugation leads to a kind of oppression which eventually takes away the zeal and zest from their lives. Those suppressed have no choice but to succumb to the system. That is why even if at the time of travel in a beautiful geographical terrain which is supposed to be a space of enjoyment, the sense of oppression and subjugation which is imbibed in the collective unconscious of female self blocks Sujatha Devi from enjoying a free spirited time. At times she seems disappointed with what she met around. The native people's 'taken for granted' attitude towards nature as well as the over exploitation of natural resources disturbs her throughout the expedition.

Like what Shulamith Firestone has observed in her *The Dialectics of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), women's "oppression goes back beyond recorded history to the animal kingdom itself" (2). When such kind of a collective unconscious is imbibed in the general feminine psyche, women find it easy to relate themselves with nature. Hence it is not surprising to learn that instances of ecological exploitation are recurring elements in narratives of travel written by women. The history of oppression and subjugation which is imbibed by the feminine psyche might be the reason why women can easily connect with the exploited and distorted.

## **Tourism**

While a lot of factors have to work hand in hand to make a journey possible, one cannot neglect the amount of ecological damage caused by travels. As such travel is something which is made possible utilising earth's resources. That is, from the extraction of bio- fuels to environmental pollution the act of travelling has its impact on the environment.

When tourism is hailed as the greatest development factor of economy of any country or place, the harm it can cause to ecosystems as a whole is quite often left unaddressed. Maina Umaiban's travel narrative, "Neelakurinjalude Nashtam" is taken from the anthology *Penyathra* (2013), a travel anthology which is a compilation of travel experiences by Malayali women. Maina Umaiban is a writer in Malayalam who is fond of travels and has penned a few travel narratives as well. In her "Neelakurinjalude Nashtam" she expresses her concern over the encroaching tourism which does considerable damage to the environment. The environmental damage leads to social damage. The travel narrative renders the pain of the vanished ecological specificity of a particular geographical region named Vattavada in Idukki district. The blooming phenomenon of the Kurinji plants which occurs every twelve or eight years is quite significant to the area. But when Maina reaches Vattavada during the blooming time of Kurinji plants, she could locate only one or two Kurinji plants as the leftover of a great environmental spectacle. From the local people she understands that those plants were the remnants of the injustice done to the entire geography in Vattavada. When the land was targeted for tourism and resort construction, the raw nature was left to suffer. The agonies of poor people whose

lives have been shattered due to the encroachment in the name of development have been captured in Maina's narrative. The poor people who came there as immigrants loved and worshipped nature and environment. They cultivated crops and vegetables in the land without creating ecological imbalance. But when these lands were purchased for resort construction and Grandis plantation, scarcity of water began to affect the area. The Kurinji plants which were part of the identity of the place too lost their occupancy due to these encroachments. The slopes where once Kurinji plants bloomed have now been turned barren due to encroachments by builders.

The significance of the plant in the ancient Tamil texts denotes the prominence it had in the lives of people who belong to a particular geographical region in ancient Tamilagam (Tamil lands). The Thinai concept in Sangam literature was constituted through geographical categorization which indeed was based on the topographical specificities of each region. That is, "The five thinais (ainthinai) correspond imaginatively to five landscapes that comprised the ancient Tamilagam (Tamil lands): *kuṛiñci* (mountainous land), *mullai* (forested land), *marutham* (agriculture land), *neythal* (coastal land), and *pālai* (dry land) (Sankaran and Pillai 68). The land thus categorised into five regions for its distinctive geographical features denotes the five Thinais and this indeed features the themes of the Sangam poetry. The thinai is "a holistic concept that goes beyond landscape, encompassing each region's distinctive culture and the conduct of its inhabitants" (Sankaran and Pillai 68).

This geographical concept has been adapted by generations of people who consider themselves as natives of specific regions having a strong affiliation to the traditional rituals that are being celebrated. The traditional rituals associated with the blooming of kurinji plants have a strong bond with the general psyche of a group of people who reside in the terrain. But when the land is completely transformed for other plantations and resort construction, the people who waited and worshiped the blooming of a flower are literally heartbroken. In fact a kind of cultural erasure is happening with the destruction of these plants.

In her travel narrative “Neelakurinjikalude Nashtam”, Maina expresses her grief over the bygone celebrations of the area which are connected with the blooming of the Kurinji plants. The ceremonial function of inviting the bees for the consumption of honey from the freshly bloomed Kurinji plants denotes the beginning of regional celebrations. The honey which is consumed is sacredly stored and kept till the next Kurinji season. All these indicate how the entire ecosystem was influenced and regulated by the small Kurinji plants in their own humble way. Maina writes that this balance has been destroyed as “the modern man had encroached into the routinely natural lives of an area thereby pushing them into an environmental disaster” (my trans.; 82).

When Maina captures the silent cry and trauma of the land in her travel narrative it becomes more than mere recordings of her experiences on travel. By writing about the hamlet Vattavada which itself is a land marked for kurinji plants in Idukki district in Kerala, Maina is expressing her grief and indignation over the ecological imbalances caused by ‘the much civilized’ humans.

“Marangal Daivathinte Prathichayakal” by Rosy Thampi is a travel narrative taken from the anthology of women’s travel narratives *Penyathra* (2013) edited by K. V. Sumangala. Rosy Thampi is a prominent writer in Malayalam. This travel narrative is about the author’s experience of a travel she conducted towards the mountain regions in Silent Valley. Rosy Thampi says that the expeditions into mountains and jungles remind her of the yearly pilgrimages she used to conduct to the Malayattoor hills, a hilly pilgrim spot in Kerala. In fact, trips towards jungles always gave her the impression of a pilgrimage. Besides the feeling of a pilgrim, she considers nature as a weaning mother who takes care of her children. In her words:

A river originates accordingly when the earth’s nipple starts to yield on its own. It generally happens on the top of hills, mouth of caves or on grass lands. The river *Kunthi* originates from one such fountain seen in a grassland. Water comes out just like from an excavated nipple set under the roots of a tree which stands alone in a grassland (my trans.; 89).

Here, the raw nature is compared to a lactating female body. By making such comparisons the author affirms the connection women have with nature.

The travel narrative *Devabhoomiyile Orazhcha (A Week in the Celestial Land)* (2012) by Geetha Suraj, was written on the experience of a pilgrimage to the Himalayas by the author. However, many a time, her narration traverses the borders of a pilgrim travel. As a keen observer and admirer of nature, Geetha’s narrative speaks of issues related with environmental disaster and exploitation. In the narrative Geetha Suraj very touchingly describes the plight of Tehri, a town in Utharakhand which submerged in the waters of the river Bhageerathi. This has

become the largest manmade lake in Asia and is now called the Tehri lake. She narrates:

In between the mountains like a beautiful portrait the river *Bhageerathi* in light green and blue lay motionless and imprisoned. The suppressed cry of the drowned city and its culture lay just beneath the river. This sight of the devastated Tehri is the proof of man's greed in the name of development which has led to the degeneration of earth's resources. (my trans.; 19-20)

Geetha then goes on to describe the depth of destruction that affected the village due to the newly built dam. It was a joint venture of Uttarakhand government and the central government to build a dam across river Bhageerathi as Tehri hydro development corporation for producing electricity and for irrigation purposes. The project caused the death of hundreds of villages. Geetha's indignation towards an unscientific and impractical project that completely destroyed the natural environment is quite visible in her words:

How long a water body so big like this could stay in such a weak area? Could have thought about it. It is said that the dam is situated in the earthquake prone area. Man is always helpless before the turbulence created by nature. The resistances from the part of tribals and nature activists remain as mere cries before the authorities who are ready to buy disasters in the name of development. (my trans.; 20-21)

Similar stories can be heard in the backdrop of such developmental projects in all parts of the world. The marginalized people who comprise mostly of tribals and the

whole environment including the animals are the routine sufferers behind all such constructions. Geetha asks, “If children start to think mother’s milk as their right but drink their mother’s blood it will result in the death of their mother. Human beings today drink the blood of earth. How long will it go like this?” (my trans.; 40).

While worrying over the plight of the mountain city Tehri, she happens to see a brochure of the Uttarakhand tourism on New Tehri. The brochure was titled as “New Tehri. The glory of the hills and hillocks. Uttarakhand ... Simply Heaven!” (my trans.; 80). Seeing this she immediately thinks of the green spread of water over Tehri. She could not dwell long over this marvel of technological development for she was quite disturbed by the destruction of the natural environment.

The anxiety Geeetha Suraj shares is seen in another travel narrative too. In her “Meghavisphodanathil Alinjodungiya Thengalukal” (“The Cries that Subsumed in Cloudburst”), Valsala Mohan too shares a similar anxiety over the same issue. The narrative is written after a thirty six day pilgrim tour package to Himalayas. Valsala Mohan also expresses her worries over the unscientific dam construction made across the river Bhageerathi. Like Geetha Suraj, she too is concerned about the huge ecological destruction happening in Tehri. She notices that the roads have been broadened by chiselling the edges of hills, making it prone to disasters. The tower for communication is kept over the top of the hill which makes communication easy. But Valsala Mohan notices that all these immediate makeovers are simply to promote a tourism culture in the Uttarakhand state which the authorities believe can uplift the whole economy of the state.

Having witnessed the 'natural' calamities happening over there the author /traveller reaches a conclusion that despite the developments, Uttarakhand has now become a disaster prone state. Around twenty three villages completely and around seventy two partly are submerged under the Tehri dam. Leaving all their belongings, about one lakh people have gone to live in other places. They still lament over the old Tehri which is now completely drowned by the dam. As a substitute for the old Tehri, the new Tehri has now emerged into a beautifully constructed village. The article "Forced Displacement: A Gendered Analysis of the Tehri Dam Project" by Vandana Asthana speaks of the hardships of a group of people who had to leave their land for the sake of the dam project. Though government had given them promises of compensation and resettlement, majority of them still live in the dilemma of getting forcefully trapped in a situation which of course was not by their choice. Asthana writes that movements like the Narmada Bachao Andolan against the Sardar Sarovar dam project, and the Tehri Bandh Virodhi Sangthan against the dam project in Tehri have exposed the violence and suppression perpetrated in the name of 'public purpose' and 'national interest' (46). The interviews conducted with the women who have lost their home and life in Tehri gives a clear cut analysis on the gendered aspects regarding forced displacements and resettlement programs. They say that the cultural and linguistic differences as well as hostility of host populations in the resettlement areas make them feel insecure in the newly allotted social space. The insensitivity of the governmental authorities towards the needs of women has resulted in their "impoverishment, income decline and destitution" (60). In short, the suffocating atmosphere to which they are put into suffer has completely drained their energy and ability to survive.

The domination of humans over nature is clearly explained in Carolyn Merchant's seminal work *The Death of Nature* (1983). She observes that modern sciences treat and consider nature as a female to be subjugated and controlled. "The new image of nature as a female to be controlled and dissected through experiment, legitimated the exploitation of natural resources" (189). Many eminent scholars and champions of modern science in history have considered and treated nature as something to be exploited for the benefit of mankind. In her article "Travel Writing and Gender", Susan Bassnett writes on the overt sexualisation of language which is used to describe newly confronted lands. She observes that during the colonial times, such territories were metaphorically feminised as something to be "penetrated, ploughed, and husbanded by male explorers" (231). Such was the attitude and norm during the days that every land was to be controlled for the benefit of the White man.

When these women travellers express their concern over eco- systems getting disturbed from their natural state, their words must be taken with caution. As the feminine psyche in the collective sense has a firsthand experience of being victimized by a dominant system, women can truly understand the pain of loss and destruction happening to the eco-system. Through their travels women gain a better understanding of the environment. In fact, they seem to foresee things that are about to happen. They make it a point to pass on their thoughts and knowledge they have gathered from their travels to the public through their travel narratives. Hence, their travel writings can be considered as a kind of activism propelled in their own way

towards the protection of ecosystems. Their concerns, worries, opinions and suggestions are thus conveyed to the reading public through their travel writings.

### **Environmental Pollution**

K. A. Beena's *Chuvadukal* is yet another commendable travel book which narrates a lengthy train journey in which the author takes part in the tour package "village on wheels" conducted by the IRCTC (Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation) which passes through various pilgrim sites in India. Ancy, Beena's friend was her companion during this travel. Though the tour package has included the Hindu holy sites in general, Ancy, a Christian herself, expresses her fear to go to the Hindu holy sites with her Christian name. To dispel Ancy's anxiety Beena sets out a plan to change her name to Anitha, a much more secular sounding name than Ancy, a common Christian name. Through this small yet interesting manoeuvre Beena tries to make her point that the religious symbols including one's name has nothing to do with one's faith. Beena narrates one more incident to prove this point. Ancy was able to pass the security check to enter the Puri Jagannath Temple with the help of a large *bindi* on her forehead, a symbol largely associated with Hindu identity. Gouri Bhattathiri, a Hindu herself could not enter the temple due to the lack of religious symbols in her attire or on her body. By narrating this incident, Beena points towards the meaninglessness of certain religious customs which fail to understand the meaning of humanity. About the sign board placed within the temple premises which states that non- Hindus are not permitted inside the temple, Beena expresses her indignation saying: "These people who are concerned only with caste and religion but do not understand the significance of

being human” (my trans.; 87). By discussing incidents which have sociological significance Beena’s travel narrative goes much beyond the conventions of travel writing. Hence, her travel narrative literally becomes a critique of the society.

What is to be noted here is those people who are vigilant to block the non-religious bodies from entering the temple premises are not at all concerned about the dirt heaped outside the temple. Beena explains a sight which she saw immediately after reaching Kashi: “The bus passes through very narrow lanes. Very old multiple storied buildings are on either side of the roads. Heaps of dirt, cows, buffaloes, filth and dirt everywhere” (my trans.; 37). This is the situation of Kashi which is regarded as one of the holiest places for the Hindus. Besides this, Beena finds that the condition of the holy River Ganges is even worse. Beena writes:

The devotees who come there for holy dips create a fuss on the shore. They create an all over different atmosphere there, some wash their clothes, take bath, spit in the river, the shores are filled with clatter of loud talks, and chantings. The river Ganga flows carrying all the dirt, plastic bottles, covers, decayed and non decayed remains of the sacred poojas ... Ganga action plan, central Ganga authority. Is everything only in paper? I have heard that the dead bodies that are half cremated are thrown off to the river Ganga. I searched all over. I have also heard that small children, monks, those who have died of rare diseases, and those who have no money for cremation will be given to Ganga by *Doms*, the caste group who are the keepers of the crematorium. Though no dead bodies came to accompany during my boat

journey I took great caution to not to touch Ganga even with my finger tip.

(my trans.; 41)

In between all these hindrances, she was able to perform the ritual of *balitharpan* which was meant for the dead ones. When it was Beena's turn to take the holy dip to perform the *balitharpan*, she wetted only her toes and hands. This is not because she didn't take the ritual seriously. She was conscious about the dirt around her. While performing *balitharpan*, she reverently remembered each and everyone who had left her and everybody who was directly or indirectly connected to her. That includes the domestic helps, the midwife, grandmothers, the cow that gave milk, the plants that gave rice, those plants who gave flowers, those trees that gave fruits, the passerby who helped when she fell down, the teachers and others in schools, those who learnt with her, the people who worked in the fields, the masons who built house, and the workers. All those directly and indirectly connected are included in Beena's list.

This is the most realistic *bali*. The *bali* for all the festival of memories of love and gratitude. ... All the sacred things used for the ceremony are mere symbols. Death is quite innate. *Bali* for those trees, animals, humans, and everyone who came to help in the long journey of life, those who came as friends, those who have loved and those who have hated. When I washed my hands after I set afloat the flower, sandal and the sacred things used for the *bali* in the Ganga my mind was peaceful and pure. (my trans.; 46)

It is hard to find such expressions of gratitude which encapsulates the whole essence of being ecological especially while rendering a holy ritual like *balitharpan*.

Geetha Suraj's *Devabhoomiyile Orazhcha* (2012) also contains descriptions of pollution in the holy Ganges. Geetha, an ardent believer of Goddess Ganga Devi, had for long wished to see and touch the holy river. But when she sees the sight of dirt and other pollutants she too hesitates to take a dip. In her words: "the same people who render tortures more than a river can withstand, adore it as a goddess and build temples and worship. I was wondering about these contradictions" (my trans.; 19). The confusion expressed by Geetha Suraj over the river's divine status and the attitude shown is reflected in the words of a Westerner like Julian Crandall Hollick. He asks "How can Indians pollute Ganga yet at the same time worship her as a goddess? How can so many millions take a "holy dip" every morning to wash away their sins in a river that is polluted by so much waste, both human and industrial?" (qtd. in Nandini 333).

Several such instances which describe environmental pollution could be read out in travel narratives written by Malayali women. Leelavathi's *Bharathathinte Urdharekhyaloode* (1983), is a travel narrative which is special for various reasons. This might be the first travelogue that has come up focusing on the caste position of the traveler. Leelavathi, a Hindi teacher from the Thrissur district in Kerala who belongs to the Dalit community narrates the experiences of her travels to the northern regions of India. During one such travel, she recollects an occurrence of ecological degeneration/pollution which she happens to experience even from inside the train. Leelavathi writes:

Saw Cauvery paper mills on the banks of the river Cauvery. For about two three seconds we had to experience the disgusting smell which came out

from the factory. The smell is quite unbearable even from inside the running train. Then what will be the condition of people who work there. What a pity! But how can we get paper if they quit the job complaining about the disgusting smell. Ten times the amount we get won't be sufficient for the labourers who work there. Who knows how many are spending their whole life there. A hundred such things came to my mind. What to do? What all has to be suffered just to fill half a belly. (my trans.; 10-11)

Here, the traveller invites our attention to two major issues. The waste from the paper mills is polluting the river Cauvery which is a major source of water consumption for many. The contact with such polluted water may lead to serious health issues. The second issue is about the health hazards, the labourers inside the factory are exposed to. Leelavathi says that even within the passing train she couldn't stand the smell. One can only imagine the condition of the workers toiling for minimum wages.

Ponnara Saraswathi's visit to Switzerland in 2005 to meet her son and family made her write and publish a travelogue on Switzerland titled *Switzerland: Vismayangalude Rangabhoomi (Switzerland: The Place of Wonders)* (2008). Her way of narration is so sincere and lively that readers will get mesmerized by the beauty of the landscape in Switzerland. Through her keen observation she captures the nuances of Swiss culture and lifestyle. She is all praise for the punctuality, hard working nature and cleanliness of the Swiss people that all these peculiarities are brought into her travel narrative.

Another commendable thing she brings into her travel narrative is about the waste management techniques implemented by the Swiss government. She observes that an average Swiss citizen uses lot of plastics for various purposes. Almost everything they buy is wrapped using plastic. But what needs to be appreciated is one cannot find plastic wastes anywhere. This makes Saraswathi think of the situation in her native place where waste management is a never ending issue. Of course plastic is a material that can cause environmental pollution. Nevertheless, the way it is being used in Switzerland can be taken as example to be followed by countries who struggle with their faulty waste management systems.

Likewise, Ponnara Saraswathi writes on a number of things that she happens to come across during her stay in Switzerland. She also notices that the constructions are done with utmost care that nobody or the natural surrounding is adversely affected by such constructions. She writes that the care undertaken by the authorities to safeguard the environment is something appreciable and commendable. For those who believe that development means destruction, the roads in Switzerland offer real surprise for the natural rise and falls. She explains,

It was a Sunday that we went to see the Geneva Lake for the first time. We were able to see and understand the geography of Switzerland. Mostly there are hills and mountains. Plain areas are comparatively lesser. All the construction work is done without damaging the genuine nature of the land. Though the roads are all broad and beautiful they are not always plain roads. Rise and falls, twists and turns are quite common even in national high ways.  
(my trans.; 39)

As a person who belongs to a country where this kind of an environmental sensibility is rare, Ponnara Saraswathi never tries to hide her wonders over such nature-friendly constructions in Switzerland. She writes:

If there is a rocky ledge they will drill it to make paths. Both buses and trains used to go through this tunnel. Even in the middle of the cities there are tunnels which are kilometres long. Even during mid-noon sunlight fails to enter. People travel fearlessly without bothering of power failures. They have even constructed railway stations inside the tunnels. (my trans.; 40)

She notices that buildings are constructed according to the specificities of the geographical terrain. That is, buildings are constructed according to the slopes and steeps of the land. The author is all praise for Switzerland that she guarantees that people can safely travel and stay there without any sort of fear. Crime rate is very low. She finds no difficulty even to travel at night. It is completely surprising for her to learn that this country with very low sunshine largely depends on solar energy for its power supply. Seeing their resources, the author wishes for one such project in our place. She says that if we have completely made use of all our natural resources we will never have to suffer the power failures. She says:

The decade old unfinished projects which have crossed hundred times greater than the estimated amount are the logos of development in our place. We have abundance of natural resources like sunlight, wind and sea waves. We will be able produce to power at comparatively lesser rates. But it is really unfortunate that the officials and planning experts do not think in this manner. (my trans.; 116)

Through such observations in her travel narrative, Saraswathi is pleading to the general public as well as the authorities to think of projects that are environment friendly. When she narrates the better way of construction practices she has witnessed in Switzerland, she indirectly hints at how environment should be treated in its natural form.

When travel narratives by women show concern over the degeneration and exploitation of nature, it highlights their attitude to not view nature as separate entities but as their own extensions. Female body's close association with nature might be reason why women often tend to possess such an attitude. The natural biological distinction which decides upon the worth and societal status of men and women as defined in anthropological terms is as follows:

Women are seen as closer to nature, as irrational, as polluters, as sacred but as inferior because they menstruate and because of their ability to bear children. Men, on the other hand, are seen as civilized, rational and superior, mind to women's body, even, indeed, unbodied or disembodied. So pervasive is the association of naturalness with 'Woman' that nature and/or the Earth has often been symbolically represented as female. (McDowell 44-45)

Vandana Shiva, the environmentalist, notes that one of the foremost exponents of modern science like Francis Bacon championed and propagated the idea that nature as a site should be conquered and occupied for the sake of human progress. Siva says, for Bacon, "Nature was no longer Mother Nature, but a female nature, to be conquered by an aggressive masculine mind" (*Staying* 16).

While in travel, the traveller is the assigned subject and everything he or she confronts is viewed as the 'other' or the object to be watched for. In the case of travel narratives written by women, it is observed that woman as a traveller hardly attempts to view nature as the 'other' or something to be controlled or dominated.

Travel narratives often reflect a power politics within the narrative framework and hence a subjective and objective position is created within narratives which speak on travel. When travel and travel writing largely remained as masculine enterprises for centuries, what was constructed so far completely focused on the male perspectives. At a time when women could not participate or engage in travels and travel writings they literally lacked agency to recreate what has been constructed through the domineering male gaze. When women started to travel and narrate on what they have confronted and viewed, an activity that directly engages with the world around, the authenticity of what has been constructed and propagated through the privileges of authority were challenged. In other words, through their travel writings a new perspective was formulated with the subjective female gaze. Carolyn Merchant in her *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980) observes that "To write history from a feminist perspective is to turn it upside down" (XX). Thus, the criticisms, solutions, warnings, suggestions, opinions, raised / given by women in their narratives of travel are in a way excellent social criticism which may help to redraw, restructure and refine the existing systems.

In her autobiographical book, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (2009), Black American writer bell hooks recalls on her grandfather's imminent knowledge and

insights on the powers of nature and how he had taught her to respect and cherish the land they live in. She tells that even when the land they lived in was owned by the white masters, they loved and respected it for it was the earth and its environment that protected the exploited lives of black people. She then quotes her grand father's insightful words. It goes like this: "I'll tell you a secret, little girl. No man can make the sun or the rains come - we can all testify. We can all see that ultimately we all bow down to the forces of nature. Big white boss may think he can outsmart nature but the small farmer know. Earth is our witness" (118).

Here, by revealing the ultimate secret of nature her grandfather had actually instilled in her the pride about her own race and about the power with which nature holds over lives. In other words, the intensity of their belief in the power of nature to an extent helps them traverse the blues and worries which have occupied the black lives. The lack of such an insight can be the main cause why nature is being subjected to lot of destruction and exploitation. The natural processes of ecosystems are destabilized by too much and continuous intervention of humans.

Though essay "Californian Sketchukal" (Californian Sketches) by Sugatha Kumari, the renowned environmental enthusiast and poet concentrates mostly on the author's concerns over the degeneration of nature, considering the title and nature of the narrative, it can be considered as a travel narrative. Hence, I have included this narrative in this chapter which focuses on travels and ecology. In June 1988, Sugatha Kumari travelled to San Francisco to take part in the world conference of nature lovers. Deforestation, death of rivers, pollution, degeneration of tribal cultures, problems caused by dams, city slums, extravaganza, life styles were some

of the matters addressed in the conference. Surprisingly, the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD), an organization of technicians and engineers on dam building was also conducting a conference as propaganda on dam making. The ICOLD was conducting an exhibition under the banner BIG DAMS as a propaganda for the large dams which were the symbols of what science and technology has achieved so far. In other words they were the best examples of man's achievements over the power of nature. Sugatha Kumari says, while the flamboyant and extravagant stalls captivated everybody's attention, the stall which says "NO DAMS" (91) set up by the nature lovers of California also stood in between these festivities. Sugatha Kumari remembers that when this stall and its banner was noticed by the ICOLD authorities they came and said that the world is developing and the nature lovers are pulling down the development in the name of protecting nature. That was the beginning of a verbal battle between the nature lovers group and the construction group. When the construction group told that they are ready to give compensation Sugatha Kumari furiously reacted against their impudence.

Compensation? What compensation for the destructed forests? What compensation for the animals that died in the flood? What compensation for the tribals who lost their home and habitat and got thrown to the city slums? Is it possible for the World Bank to heal just one such wound? The heritage that is lost, the forests that are cut down, wild animals that have lost their shelter. ... The whole money of the World Bank can not compensate for the loss of a single rain forest. (my trans.; 97)

Though she was not the assigned leader, the questions raised by her were sharp enough to uproot the impudence of the builder group. This kind of a reaction was enough to shake the roots of the ICOLD group. All the questions raised by Sugatha Kumari were later taken up by the members of the group. Sugatha Kumari recollects this incident with pride that she was able to lock horns with the members of World Bank for a cause.

Here, what is to be noted is that, representing a third world country, as an Indian, as a Malayali woman, Sugatha Kumari was able to stand against a heavy tide that might have easily washed over her. She fought with utmost courage and dignity against the imperialist capitalist forces. She didn't move a step back from any of her arguments. From her narrative, it can be understood that she never fancied any travel dreams. Her travel to America could be taken as the travel of a responsible human who is keen to do anything for the protection of environment.

The arguments raised by Sugatha Kumari could be read along with what Vandana Siva has opined on 'development.' Vandana Shiva notes that 'Development' could not but entail destruction for women, nature and subjugated cultures, which is why, throughout the Third World, women, peasants and tribals are struggling for liberation from 'development' just as they earlier struggled for liberation from colonization (*Staying 2*).

The life/travel narrative of Nalini, the tribal lady, who hails from the Malakkappara tribal colony in Thrissur district in Kerala, titled "Kadinakathekkum Purathekkum" ("In and Out of the Forest") (2015) which is included in *Penvazhi (Female Path)* (2015), a collection of travel memoirs could be read as an example

on what Sugatha Kumari was trying to convey in her travel narrative “Californian Sketchukal” (“Californian Sketches”) (2006). The inclusion of the life/travel narrative of a woman who belongs to a tribal community in a book which discusses travel memoirs of Malayali women itself is a matter which deserves appreciation. The narrative is written by Maya M. (Assistant Professor in Sociology, Christ University, Bangalore). Nalini has not authored the narrative. It is a life/travel experience narrated orally by Nalini to Maya M. The life/travel narrative “Kadinakathekkum Purathekkum” (“Into and Out of the Forest”) (2015) of the tribal lady Nalini who belongs to the Malakkappara tribal colony in Thrissur district in Kerala depicts the feeling of loss experienced by the tribal people who are thrown out of their natural habitats. Nalini belongs to the tribal community called *Kadar*, whose life is bound within the forests. Nalini and her family now live in the house built by the government. In Nalini’s own words: “My name is Nalini. We are *Kadars*. Our job is collecting and selling wild products. When we stay outside the forests for long, we become tired. It is a joy to go to the forest for a week or two with my husband and children. That is forest for us” (my trans.; 125).

Nalini’s former generations were inhabitants of the same forests. She says that now those forests which their people had stayed for are completely wiped off for teak, tea and coffee plantations. Only very few parts of the forest are left. The major valleys have all gone under dam construction. The places once they cohabited and worshiped were completely cleared off and they were forced to shift to different places and shores. Some of the tribals took on the forest clearing jobs. Many got killed during the construction of dams. But those stories never came to light. We

understand how one construction had turned to destruction for others. The forced displacements have shattered their lives and the serene ecological balance. Nalini says, “It is not because our properties are lost, it is the loss of our forests, rivers and homes where we have lived for ages” (my trans.; 131).

Nalini and her husband together used to go into the forest to collect the forest goods such as honey and fish. There is no custom of going alone and every time both wife and husband go together for their forest expedition. She then goes on to describe the wild beauty of the jungle. She says, “The jungle looks different at different times. If you ask me which the most beautiful one is, I can tell you that I like all of it” (my trans.; 128). She goes on with her fascinating descriptions on the forest: “the smell of the forest rain, the elephant calf which stands enjoying the rain, the new sprouts that come out in rain. The forest during the rainy season is both wild and fascinating” (my trans.; 128).

When Nalini narrates her travels to the forests, the bio-habitat which once was their home, the narration becomes something more of a travel memoir. It is not about the desire that pushes one to move towards the “strangely different other” (Fullagar 57). It is a travel to a most familiar terrain. A travel towards one’s own roots. The forests where her family has lived, her ancestors have once lived. The feeling of dismay and estrangement that clings to the psyche of those who were expelled from their terrain leads to a forever longing for the greeneries they have left behind.

The conditions of the tribal people who are made to suffer after such forced displacements are quite painful. Hari Mohan Mathur observes that “The

displacement of indigenous communities leads to more than economic losses for those affected. ... They lose a way of life that goes beyond what any resettlement initiative can compensate for” (qtd. in Walicki and Swain 14). For the people who consider forest as their life and livelihood, this kind of distortion takes away their ability to live. When such constructions in the name of developments are made, it directly affects the lives of those who live very close to or along with nature. The whole eco system had fallen prey to what could be called development or destruction in the name of development.

As being an environmental activist it is understood that Sugatha Kumari’s concern for the exploited and degenerated does not limit her within any borders. She gets worried over the Native Americans who were uprooted from their lands. She shares her concern with whoever was uprooted from their lands. That is why when most of the travellers to the United States of America are in awe of the developments the country has achieved, some people like Sugatha Kumari feel the pain of the Native Americans who were thrown out of their own lands. The selfless attitude of environmental activist like Sugatha Kumari and all the other women who have expressed their worries and concerns in their narratives over the deterioration of environment as a system contains the thought Virginia Woolf had written in her *Three Guineas* (1938). Woolf writes: “Our country ... throughout the greatest part of history has treated me as a slave; it has denied me education or any share of its possessions. ... in fact, as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world” (*Three* 99). The kind of concern which is evident in these words has not simply come out of some egalitarian

dream Woolf had cherished. But it has come out as an expression of indignation against a system which is responsible for the degradation of women as a group of people with very less relevance in the functioning of the state as a federal democratized system. Here, when women come up with their observations and opinions in their travel narratives they are in a way intervening in systems which function according to patriarchal dogmas which seldom has anything from a woman's perspective. As for them these writings are an agency to express their opinion and indignation over too many things which directly or indirectly are connected with the everyday lives.

### **Animals**

Ecological exploitation is one major issue they wish to raise in their writings. The concerns over the distortion of environment as a system are often detected in the travel writings by women. Thus, the plight of the fellow species is also a matter of concern in their travel writings. While instances of exploitation and torture of the fellow species are seemingly trivial matters to discuss in travel writings, women often discuss such matters in theirs.

In her travel book *Kadukalude Thalam Thedi* (1998) Sujatha Devi expresses one such worry over the extinction of the rare species of deers of the Himalayan ranges, i.e. the musk deers. The killing of musk deers for obtaining musk from its body will lead to the extinction of this rare species. She is very much disappointed to hear that this brutality is only to cater to the vanity of the wealthy Europeans so that the perfume they use is made from 'authentic' natural musk. She finds the killing of the animal quite absurd as the smell and substance can be easily produced

artificially. Though killing of the animal has been banned by the government, the illegal hunting reduces the number of musk deers drastically. She concludes: “Protection of nature is not at all possible until men are ready to leave their foolish vanities” (45). Furthermore evidence regarding the extinction of this rare species is found in Geetha Suraj’s travel narrative *Devabhoomiyile Orazhcha* (2012) which was written some fourteen years later after the publication of Sujatha Devi’s book. Geetha writes: “it is heard that there are lot of musk deers in this area. But we couldn’t find any” (my trans.; 43). It should be noted that if the animal was found in abundance then they could have seen at least one. It is not simply a matter of the non visibility of the “*quest- object*” (Leane 306), a particularity which is often seen in travel writings as it clearly points towards the critical condition of extinction the rare animal species faces.

The concern these women travellers show for these animals might appear silly when everything is viewed with an anthropocentric attitude. With humans at the centre everything and anything can be made use of for the benefit of the ruling human race. Therefore, sentiments over such matters might appear trivial for the general attitude that supports anthropocentricity. The travelogue *Kashmir: Swargeeya Sundarabhoomi (Kashmir: The Beautiful Heavenly Land)* (2014) written by Valsala Mohan also has such an expression of impracticality. Just like Sujatha Devi and Geetha Suraj, Valsala Mohan too expresses her worries over animal exploitation. During her trip to Kashmir, Valsala Mohan says she was disappointed and sad when her co-travellers went to purchase caps made out of sheep’s fur. The thought of the torture the animal might have gone through made her uneasy to

purchase the product. She writes: “I cannot agree with wearing caps made out of wool taken by torturing and killing lambs” (my trans.; 15). At a glance this expression of concern may sound a bit trivial and impractical, but it is only the tip of the iceberg. From prehistoric times animals have been undergoing tortures in various forms for their skin, horns, fur and everything that makes them special. Things made out of leather are always a matter of pride for the people who consume it. But nobody is bothered about the torture undergone by the animals. The peeling of skin is mostly done when the animal is alive. Snakes, crocodiles and many such seemingly unimportant creatures yet very crucial in maintaining the ecological imbalance are largely hunted for their skin and flesh.

The right of the animals is always a question when it comes to the slogans that support anthropocentrism. This could be read along with the opinions raised by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin in their book *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010). They note that “The absolute prioritisation of one’s own species’ interests over those of the silenced majority is still regarded as being ‘only natural.’ Ironically, it is precisely through such appeals to nature that other animals and the environment are often excluded from the privileged ranks of the human, rendering them available for exploitation” (5). When everything is targeted for the benefit of the ruling species the right of the seemingly unimportant lives is often left unaddressed. Huggan and Tiffin also note that by “a natural prioritisation of humans and human interests over those of other species on earth, we are both generating and repeating the racist ideologies of imperialism on a planetary scale” (6). When slogans of anthropocentrism are ever so popular, these women

travellers by expressing their opinions over ecological sustainability through their narratives of travel are actually appealing to the general conscience. Through their travel writings Malayali women are contributing to the ecological movements that are keen on preserving the natural environment in its fullness.

P. G. Rema Devi's travel book *Americaye Aduthukandappol (When America was Seen up Close)* (2011) too shares the unheard stories of animal exploitation in America. When products from nature are insufficient to provide for everybody's hunger, using scientific methods excess amount of poultry, milk and meat were produced. This eventually led to the enormous production and consumption of milk and meat. The growth hormones and various kinds of unnatural food given as fodder to these herbivorous animals to produce excess milk and meat have destroyed the natural traits of these animals. The people who consume this milk and meat products also suffer serious health issues. Obesity, pre- mature and unwanted hair growth are some of the problems faced by people who consume these dairy products (*Americaye* 81). Ecological feminist philosopher Lori Gruen discusses the exploitation of animals especially female animals which are put into to un- natural situations for excess production and consumption.

In order to keep dairy cows in a constant state of lactation, they must be impregnated annually. After her first infant is taken from her at birth, she is milked by machines twice, sometimes three times, a day for ten months. After the third month she will be impregnated again. She will give birth only six to eight weeks after drying out. This intense cycle of pregnancy and

hyper-lactation can last only about five years, and then the 'spent' cow is sent to slaughter. (qtd. in Cuomo 19)

Whatever are the practicalities surrounding excess production of poultry and meat, people who have a mind to worry over such cruel exploitations will get concerned and may express their indignation over such matters. The women travellers I have included in the study are also not different.

However, it is quite unfair to blame technology for the reason behind each and every disaster that has happened or is happening. The developments achieved through science and technology in fact have relieved not only women but also the groups who were targeted and exploited for their downtrodden sociocultural and economical situations. The observation put forward by Shulamith Firestone in her *The Dialectics of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), brings out the numerous benefits humans have earned for proves this fact. She points out that it is the contraceptive pill that helped women to relieve themselves from the clutches of their destined biology over which patriarchy took its toll, and which eventually helped in establishing ecological balance. But here, it is the case of too much production and consumption. Whatever be the reason, over exploitation and excess consumption is in any case cannot be justified.

While travels bring enjoyments and refreshments to many there are some others whose lives are affected and destroyed by travels. While one's leisure time can be money making time for others, likewise, one's leisurely travels can be torture time for others. The elephant rides in the travel brochures appear as major attractions in the tour packages. The torture to which the wild elephant is put to suffer in

captivity to get it transformed into a well tamed carrier elephant is unimaginable. The natural vitality of the animal is destroyed as it is transformed into a mere docile body that can be easily controlled.

Tasting Kopi Luwak, the world's most expensive coffee is one of the major attractions for travellers to visit Bali, Indonesia. Backpackers go just to enjoy this relishing beverage. The specialty with the drink is that it is made out of processed coffee beans which are collected from the faeces of civets, who are cat like creatures commonly seen in the regions of Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Kopi luwak was the end result of an accidental discovery made by the people who were denied access to coffee beans. When the secret of producing the coffee was widely used in Indonesia to improve the trade and tourism of the country, the animals began to be largely kept in captivity and were forcefully fed on coffee beans alone to collect the undigested beans. The article "The Disturbing Secret behind the World's Most Expensive Coffee" by Rachael Bale, states that civets play an important role in sustaining the naturalness of environment's food chain. She says: "it plays an important role in the food chain, eating insects and small reptiles in addition to fruits like coffee cherries and mangoes, and being eaten in turn by leopards, large snakes and crocodiles" (*National Geographic*). When the civets are kept in captivity in the tiny cages that are soaked in urine and droppings, fed on mere coffee beans alone and exposed to daytime noise from traffic and tourists these shy nocturnal animals hardly cover their normal life span. So while travelling to relish the taste of Kopi luwak one should think of the torture and hardships the poor animal undergoes in captivity.

In her travel narrative *Almost Intrepid* (2013) Anjaly Thomas narrates her experience of tasting Kopi luwak. Herself a traveller and travel writer Anjaly Thomas explains her experience of tasting the world renowned coffee and how she was wooed by the tourist guide in Bali to experience this special taste. She says that though this particular coffee has changed her perception on coffees forever, when the secret was revealed to her she couldn't cope up with the idea of using animal excreta for the procedure. Anjaly says, "Whatever coffee lovers called it, to me it was still cat poop ... I sulked all the way back to town" (105-106). Though she hasn't written anything on the torture the animal is put to suffer, it is understood that this particular coffee has a major role in the tourism sector of the country.

Therefore, by incorporating such firsthand experiences in their travel narratives these women travellers are unveiling a largely neglected topic, i.e. of animal torture. The tiny animals that play crucial role in balancing the ecological metabolism in their own humble way have been tortured and exploited for a lifespan just for the fancy and pleasure of the humans. When narratives of travel generally contain instances of enjoyment and descriptions of topography and culture, these unpleasant experiences are often left untouched.

In *Kadukalude Thalam* Sujatha Devi expresses a different fear she holds for the serene hilly regions of the Himalayas. She seems to be quite disturbed by the tourism culture that slowly encroaches into the regions. She fears that the foreign medicines that come through tourists are going to devastate the traditional healing methods of the Himalayan valley. Destruction of people's natural immunity will be the after effect of this intruding touristy culture. She observes that grownups and

kids shamelessly ask for English medicines which they believe have magical power in healing. Sujatha Devi says this should be taken as warning sign towards an unhealthy future. Sujatha Devi says that she hasn't come across any doctor or dispensary in the valley which of course is a sign of people's health. The negative aspect of tourism is revealed through these seemingly trivial incidents.

Sujatha Devi notes that the women in the Himalayan region work really hard to provide for their families while most of the men spend days absolutely doing nothing. They spend their time and money playing cards and consuming liquor. Hard work is something that their culture and tradition demands only from women. Women of the region too have internalized this tradition that they never complain of their situation. They blindly accept this hard life for they are conditioned in a way that they themselves are unaware of the exploitation they are subjected to. In a land where agriculture is considered as an unworthy vocation, it is quite natural that the men in the Himalayas of the 90s show no interest in agriculture. They earn money by carrying tourists who come as pilgrims to visit the temples in the hilly areas. Devi finds that this type of a tourist culture has actually destroyed the interest to cultivate the fertile soil. When someone can make enough money in a very short time they would not break their bones for the whole year. The result, the whole responsibility of the family falls on the shoulders of women.

To understand and feel for nature one should possess a certain level of sensibility. Here, these women travellers talk, think and write of nature with utmost care and passion that they themselves feel that they are not different or superior to nature. In that case, by including or mentioning instances of acquaintances with

animal, birds and other creatures in their narratives of travel, women travellers have tried to give these living beings a subjective status. In their travel narratives Sujatha Devi and P. R. Vijayalakshmi have fondly written about the horses that helped them cross the steep mountain paths. By mentioning the horses by their names, they are bestowing subjectivity to the animals which not everyone will bother to do. Sujatha Devi writes about the horse that helped her traverse the risky mountain paths of the Kanavar ranges. She says considering the amount of risk and adventure she happened to experience while holding tight on the horse's back, the simple plain names like 'Kallu' and 'Lallu' are not enough to call the horse. She says instead of calling by such plain names with no specific meanings they should be given meaningful names like "Sharon, Bhavathaarini etc" (81). P. R. Vijayalakshmi in her travelogue *Kashmir Enna Swapnabhoomi (The Dreamland called Kashmir)* (2016), too writes of her experience of a horse ride by mentioning the name of the horse. She says that even though the experience of riding the horse named "Raja" (65) was quite frightening for her it was the fulfilment of a long cherished wish.

From Sujatha Devi's and P. R. Vijayalakshmi's narration it is understood that they never thought of the horses as mere instruments of travel, besides they see them as companions of travel. Here, what is to be noted down is, more than the gender it is the sensibility of the traveller that matters when acknowledging matters that can otherwise be taken for granted.

Elizabeth Leane's article "Animals" which discusses the inclusion of experiences with animals in travels brings out the association humans have over the

non humans. She describes the connections humans maintain with other species while on travel.

In more mundane locations, animals have been and are ubiquitous, transporting, accompanying, assisting, intriguing, ignoring, pestering, threatening and occasionally eating human travelers, and themselves in turn being ridden, harnessed, transported, mistreated, befriended, photographed, pursued, classified, hunted, killed and frequently consumed. It is no surprise, then, that almost any travel narrative read with attentiveness to the presence of animals will yield incidents of some kind every few pages, some trivial, some highly revealing. (Leane 305)

In *Kadukalude Thalam* Sujatha Devi attributes character to each of the animal and bird species she comes across in the wild. The splendour of the raw and the wild is brilliantly and beautifully juxtaposed in her narrative. The chirpiness of the rare Australian cockatoos, the quick and marvellous paradise flycatchers, the cheery bushy tailed fox that seems to have directly come out from the Disney cartoon, the carefree spotted deer, the playful monkeys, etc. co-exist in the pages of her narrative. She never tries to objectify the rawness she confronts, besides, she writes as if she is also very much part of the pure and untamed world. The deep desire of the urbanized human to escape the chaotic world and to be within the pristine nature could be read out in her narration.

Woman and nature is a much discussed theme that many would love to incorporate in their respective creative areas. This might be due to women's larger connection with nature. Just like nature, women's body and self is viewed upon as

something which needs to be or ought to be controlled, conditioned and definitely owned. In other words women's performance within the system is expected to be in alignment with the accepted norms which are beneficial to the dominant power structures. In the Introduction of her book "*Staying Alive: Women Ecology and Survival in India*" (1988) Vandana Siva notes that,

The violence to nature, which seems intrinsic to the dominant development model, is also associated with violence to women who depend on nature for drawing sustenance for themselves, their families, their societies. This violence against nature and women is built into the very mode of perceiving both, and forms the basis of the current development paradigm. (xiv)

This attitude can be directly linked with the exploitation and commoditization of environment by the oppressors of freedom. The natural qualities of the environment are also distorted accordingly.

### **Acculturation**

Oppression, torture and exploitation are prevalent everywhere in the world, and are often accompanied by a famished environment. Man's developmental process which ultimately targets to gain power and dominance are usually constructed over the pangs and sighs of the weak. Such processes many a time have completely wiped off the weaker sections from their native lands. The travel narratives I am examining in this section contain concerns and anxieties of those marginalized and the most targeted. Such narratives which discuss matters on estrangements which happened in history and are still happening are brought into

this chapter for analysis. The travel writings I have selected contain insights of “ethical awareness” which Graham Huggan has mentioned in his book *Extreme Pursuits: Travel Writing in an Age of Globalisation* (2009). In the book Huggan opines that “one should have ethical awareness of living in a socially divided but ecologically interconnected world” (6).

K. A. Beena, the acclaimed traveller and writer who has many travel narratives to her credit always makes it a point to include matters which are of sociological and cultural relevance in her travel narratives. *Beena Kanda Russia (The Russia which Beena Saw)* (1981), *Brahmaputhrayile Veedu (The House in Brahmaputra)* (2007), *Nadi Thinnunna Dweep (Island Eaten by River)* (2016) *Chuvadukal (Footsteps)* (2015) etc. are some of the books which are written from her travel experiences throughout India and abroad.

Her travel narrative *Nadi Thinnunna Dweep* (2016) is a compilation of the official and unofficial travel experiences she gathered during her travel and stay in different regions of India. The book contains Beena’s experiences of travel through various regions of Assam, Rajasthan, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and so on. As a travel writer she makes it a point to incorporate the region’s sociological and cultural peculiarities in her travel narratives. The “hybrid nature” (8) as mentioned by Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan in their book *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (2000) regarding travel writing as a literary genre suits Beena’s travel writings considering the various matters she incorporates in her narration. Beena tries to narrate everything that strikes her mind

in her narratives of travel. That might be the reason why subjects ranging from ecology to politics occupy space in her travel narratives.

Beena's travel book *Nadi Thinnunna Dweep* can be taken as an example of a travel writing that crosses the conventional boundaries and purpose of travel writing. The book is divided into fifteen chapters. Each chapter narrates different travel experiences to different regions. The chapter entitled "Kaadum Veedum Kalavu Pokumpol" ("When Home and Forests are Stollen") is about the author's travel experience to *Kulamankuzhi* a tribal habitat in Idukki district in Kerala. Beena, as part of her official purpose was asked to prepare a report on the *Kerala Mahila Samakhya*, a Central Government program to empower women of the under developed community through education. She along with her friend travels to the interiors of *Kulamankuzhi* tribal habitat to evaluate the sociological progress within the dalit and tribal communities through the developmental program. Though the travels through the lush green fascinates her, when she hears the stories of the harsh life situations faced by the people in the village she becomes clueless searching for solutions to solve their problems. As a committed official she patiently hears all their issues. Beena at the beginning of the narrative tells that one should need a certain level of sensibility/ability to understand the lives of the tribals. She says, "The rhythm and life of forests are of its people's and animals' too. In order to learn this rhythm one need to reject one's crookedness and mask of modernity" (my trans.; 76). By giving the title "Kaadum Veedum Kalavu Pokumpol" ("When Home and Forests are Stollen") she has tried to capture the agony of the Adivasi people who are in a dilemma of losing their home and habitat.

Though the area had witnessed minor developments due to the interventions made by the governmental programs there were some serious issues which hardly had solutions. Beena brings to light one pertinent issue faced by the women of the tribal community in *Kulamankuzhi*. In her narrative Beena describes the shocking story of *Valaymapuras*. *Valaymapuras* are small one roomed and loosely thatched huts. During menstruation the women and small girls of the tribal community are supposed to stay away from their homes and stay in these *Valaymapuras*. Since these rooms are not sufficient enough to provide space and safety for these women and girls, most of the time they are exposed to rain and sun. Their trauma is unexplainable. Beena quotes the words of the panchayath member Suma. Suma says:

My greatest wish is to build a cement building to be used as *valaymapura* in my panchayath. It is really hard to stay alone in this palm thatched huts in rain and sun. The condition of small girls is even worse. It is really terrifying during nights. Wild animals come out. Just to sleep without fear they used to sleep in the *valaymapuras* of other houses (my trans.; 78).

As an outsider Beena is quite shocked to learn about this custom of staying in the *valayamapuras*, but she is even more shocked when she gets to know that the women ranging from young girls to middle age women regularly take contraceptive pills to avoid their menstrual cycles. Without much knowledge about the harm this pill is going to cause to their body they are continuing this habit. In the initial stages of the family planning programs the pills were distributed by the government to control population. In her article titled “Period Drama” Cithara Paul writes that “in

the 90s, the state government started distributing Mala D, a contraceptive pill, to control the tribal population. The women soon discovered that the pill could delay menstruation so they started taking it regularly and introduced their daughters to it” (*The Week*). The women who belong to the tribal belt in Idukki district consume this pill just to avoid their stay in the menstrual huts. This habit has now started to claim and the women who consume this pill face are facing serious health issues like infertility, paralysis, stroke etc. Beena notes that now through the intervention of the workers of the Mahila Samakhya Programme the Government has taken the initiative to construct buildings which could be used as *valaymapuras* so that the tribal people can stick to their traditions without much trouble (*Nadi* 80).

By including the socio- cultural peculiarities of the tribal habitat, Beena’s narrative becomes more than a travel narrative. The sincerity expected from a government official and the social commitment of the traveller/ writer is quite evident when she narrates matters which are unknown to the mainstream conscience.

In their book *Tourists with Type Writers* (2000) Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan opine that travel writing as literary genre can embrace everything. In their opinion: “Travel narratives run from picaresque adventure to philosophical treatise, political commentary, ecological parable, and spiritual quest’, ‘borrow[ing] freely from history, geography, anthropology and social science’. The result, they suggest, is a ‘hybrid genre that straddles categories and disciplines” (8 - 9). Considering the inclusion of a number of matters in her narration surrounding a travel, the observation made by Holland and Huggan about twentieth century travel goes well along with Beena’s travel writing.

In her narrative *Nadi Thinnunna* Beena shares the situation of traditional healers and curers in the tribal community in the forest regions in the Idukki district in Kerala. Saroja, a native of the *Kulamankuzhi* tribal habitat explains to Beena about the *Adivasi Vaidyam*. In Saroja's words,

For any disease we have got medicines in forests. There are many particularities with regard to the collection of medicinal herbs. Some need to be pulled out along with its roots ... some shouldn't be cut using knives.... But now Adivasis are not allowed to enter into their own forests. Not even a leaf is allowed to be taken. Marijuana is an essential ingredient in Adivasi vaidyam. It is crucial in the preparation of several types of medicines. Snake bites could be healed using Marijuana. But now where is Marijuana? In the early days in each Adivasi courtyard Marijuana was a must- have plant. Now if we utter the word 'Marijuana' police will catch us. All our traditional medicines are destroyed. We need to go to hospitals for everything. We take injections and tablets. Diseases haunt us one after another. (my trans.; 84)

By the incorporation of such uncut/censored dialogues Beena tries to discard the cultural stereotypes constructed by the mainstream conscience. Through this gesture, Beena actually makes use of the medium of travel writing to bring to the attention of the authorities as well as the reading public of the pain and agony of a group of people who lost their traditional living conditions and space. By placing the native tribal voices in her narrative she gives them a chance for representing themselves. Her narrative of travel in fact becomes a cultural dialogue which has the qualities of a literary reportage. Their plight is thus tossed into the conscience of the reading

public. These are sharp criticisms made against the inhuman attitude of the authorities and the mainstream society who are not concerned about the traditional life styles of a group of people who prefer to live life in their own humble way. As people who prefer to live along with nature, they hardly wish for a life detached from their familiar environment. Here by doing so, the encroaching culture is distorting the rights of the native people who prefer to live in their habitat.

Cut off from their natural surroundings they are forced to abandon their traditional healing methods. Since the governmental laws have banned the planting and usage of marijuana, an important herb in the traditional medicinal treatment of the tribal people, it is understood that the traditional herbal medicines of this vulnerable human community is under threat. The ethical quality of the tribal people is clear from the words of the tribal lady Saroja, that the specialty of the marijuana plant is never misused by the tribal people as for them it is yet another medicinal plant which is used to treat/ cure illness. Here, what is to be noted is the so called cultured modern sophisticated man's greed to exploit nature or to take more than what is required. That is the root cause behind every environmental degeneration that has happened so far. Even when the tribal people are aware of the specialty of the plant i.e. the ability to create intoxication- they do not want to cross the limit nor do they want to consume more than what is required. This is the kind of ethics and etiquette followed by the tribal people who know how much to be consumed from nature. When there are various plant species which can cause intoxication or even death itself the justification for banning of this particular plant appears quite illogical

in the context of the traditional tribal healing methods. Nevertheless, once when the law is implemented by the government one has to obey the law.

Beena opines that without understanding the nuances and particularities of the cultural situation of the tribal people it is quite unfair to stop them from living their life style. By implementing a life style completely unknown to them they are being subjected to a different form of colonialism. From the words of the native tribal people Beena understands that eucalyptus plantation is the root cause of the devastation of forests which the tribal people completely rely upon. Beena quotes the words of the natives in the tribal habitat:

Now we are not allowed to enter the forest. We cannot walk around fearlessly. We, the Adivasis are not allowed to collect firewood or even take a twig from forests. ...Adivasi doesn't have forest, and no place. We cannot cultivate using artificial manure and pesticides. Soil will get suffocated. ... What will we do besides having rice procured from ration shop? Rice is not suitable for our stomach. We are used to eating ragi and maize, aren't we? The Adivasi doesn't have life now. (my trans.; 83-84)

The lack of insight from the authorities causes destruction to natural habitat of the tribal people. Their food habits, healing methods, culture and traditions have been distorted and they are now leading a lifeless life. The kind of acculturation they experience due to the encroachment of a dominant culture in the name of development has destroyed the natural habitat and culture of a tribe. The foreword given by Jean S. Phinney for the book *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology* (2006) explains what it means by the cultural destruction:

Acculturation processes, which encompass the many changes that occur when people from differing cultures come into contact with each other, can be observed among a wide range of people in addition to immigrants, such as refugees forced to leave their home countries, people living abroad as foreign students or as employees of international companies, and aboriginal peoples dealing with the encroachment of other cultures. All such people face challenges, stresses and opportunities that lead to changes in their lives and wellbeing, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. (xx)

Hence, considering Beena's concern for a culture which is at the brim of extinction we find that her travel narrative also becomes a documentation of a "vanishing world" (Holland and Huggan 179).

By detailing the culture in her travel narrative Beena shows the possibilities, uses and responsibilities of travel writing as a literary genre. Without posing any cultural superiority, she has perceived the essence of a tribal culture in its fullness. Beena's earlier experiences as a traveller who had seen and understood worlds different from hers also might have helped her understand and present the situation with generosity and sensibility. Besides everything, her own gendered position within the patriarchal dogmas might be the reason why Beena could empathise with the anxieties and trauma of a community that is pushed to extinction. Beena concludes her travel narrative inviting the readers to think of possible solutions to the issues she had documented.

The sufferings of the tribal communities and other marginalized sections everywhere in the world will have similar stories to tell. Behind the flamboyance

and wonders might lurk stories of betrayal and loss. Mrs. Rachel Thomas's travelogue *Lokame Tharavad (The World be My Home)* (1991) which is written out of her experiences of travel and stay in America also contains a description of one such betrayal that still has its repercussions on those lives who are victimised.

Rachel Thomas who worked in America as an 'exchange teacher' in the early 1950s tells about her opportunity to teach the children who belong to the Native American community. Native Indians are an unfortunate community who lost their right over their own lands and hence are forced to live in the suburbs of America as a group who have lost their soul. Their tradition and culture have now lost the essence and they now have started to learn the language and lifestyle of the colonizers who came in search of better lands. The very people who cared for the lives and land have now been reduced to people who are addressed as savages by the colonizers.

Rachel quotes sentences written in front of a hut built as replica of the Native Indian's hut. It says "The trees, rivers, animals and birds do not belong to us, they are gifts of the great spirit; so hunt only to satisfy your hunger, also, before leaving make sure to put out the fire and bury the bones underneath, or else those innocent animals who come the way might get frightened" (166). Rachel says it is quite surprising for her to learn that people who lived thousands of years ago held such ecological insights. She adds that such wisdom cannot be found in the so called civilized people who boast themselves as superior and refined class. Rachel says it is quite ironical that those who have bombed continents and destroyed forests are treated as cultured and those who actually cared for lives and land are treated as savage.

The travel narrative *Americaye Aduthukandappol* (*When America was Seen up Close*) (2011) by P. G. Rema Devi also checks upon one such issue. The book describes her experience of six months of stay in America with her son's family. From the author description given in the travel book *Americaye Aduthukandappol* we understand that she has two poetry collections, *Niramala* and *Ganga Pravaham* written in Malayalam to her credit. In her official life, Rema Devi retired as a senior accountant from the Accounts General's office. Since her three sons are residing in America, she has visited the country many times. Though the book does not describe of the author's travel to America it gives a detailed account of the author's stay in America. What all Rema Devi has learned and experienced about the American culture in her six months of stay has been detailed in the book. In fact, her extended stay compelled her to write a travel book on America.

While travel is all about movements through spaces, Michael Cronin categorises travels for their linearity and progression into vertical and horizontal travels. Cronin's definition for such peculiarities regarding the mode of travel is explained accordingly:

Horizontal travel is the more conventional understanding of travel as a linear progression from place to place. Vertical travel is the temporary dwelling in a location for a period of time where the traveller begins to travel down into the particularities of place either in space (botany, studies of micro - climate, exhaustive exploration of local landscape) or in time (local history, archaeology, folklore). (qtd. in Forsdick 277)

Considering these factors, it is evident that the nature of travel narrative is dependent on how the travel narrator gets involved in the particular place. Here, Rema Devi with utmost sincerity describes what she felt as an outsider to American culture. Both the positive and negative side of the American life is meticulously described in this travelogue. Her life and experiences described in this narrative is not only a mere compilation of information gathered on this varied culture but also an excellent critique of both her native culture as well as the American culture. The difference in climate, education system, relationships, customs, the hard working attitude of people and social commitment become her focus in this travel narrative. While she is all praise for a lot of things in America, she criticizes the new American culture which is very much affiliated with the capitalist culture. Needs are being created for the benefit of the consumer culture. The shopaholic nature is revealed during the time of festivities in America. Rema Devi happened to participate in one such celebration day i.e., the Thanks Giving Day which is widely celebrated in America. But once when she learnt about the history behind this celebration she began to feel sorry for the wiped out heritage of the Native Americans who are the original inhabitants of America.

The story behind America's 'Thanks Giving Day' contains all the agonies of the native people who have lost their natural habitat, culture and lives forever. Those who came from England as settlers were treated well by the innocent native people. They gave them food and clothes to survive in the strange cold climate. The people who gave them shelter were remembered fondly with gratitude and the nation celebrates the occasion every year. It can also be viewed as a gesture of apology for

what the new settlers had done to the natives of the land. Rema Devi notices that not everyone in America is interested to celebrate this day, as for them it is the day of thanklessness. It is a day to be remembered for destroying the native culture through cheating and killing its inhabitants. The “Indian removal plan” has completely wiped out the traits of the tribal people from their native land that today there is nobody in America who can be considered as the original descendants of the native tribe.

Besides everything, the military operation which led to the capture and assassination of Bin Laden, the Al-Qaida leader who was the master brain behind the September 11 incident was named as ‘Operation Geronimo’. Since the name Geronimo is the name of the Native American leader who fought till his death for the right of his people and land. The Native Americans consider this as an insult and unethical affair from the authorities against their leader. By using the name the authorities have misappropriated what the leader stood for. By incorporating this episode in her travel narrative Rema Devi in a way expresses her support and repentance for the lost generation of the natives of America. She concludes the chapter saying that it is better to express gratitude for the “ultimate giver” (88) than going after such flamboyant appraisals to hide one’s guilt.

Incorporating such a history in her book Rema Devi showcases the dark side of American history when a group of people who are the real inhabitants lost their right over their lands. Though it is quite natural for travel writers to include historical details on matters they find worth narrating, here, the inclusion of this incident points to similar experiences of native populations throughout the world. The invaders get the upper hand over the inhabitants and destroy their culture,

natural settlements, food habits and everything including their lives. Be it America, Australia or elsewhere in the world the pain of getting uprooted from one's familiar premises is almost the same everywhere in the world. It is the history of torture, rape and killings to which the natives were subjected in addition to the stories of burnt houses, destroyed crops and looted property. Exploitation and destruction is the main purpose that drives any invading group to attack people who live as a community. The trauma experienced by the native population who are dispersed from their homelands is so severe that they are forced to give up their own culture and thereby immerse in the dominant culture. Getting uprooted from one's biological premises and culture is not an easy affair that it destroys the spirit of the individual.

In her book *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia* (1995) Bina Agarwal discusses the numerous issues regarding land /property rights of women within South Asia. Agarwal brings in various factors that demarcate women from their native lands. Agarwal quotes lines from folksongs sung by the Hindu women in northwest India during the young bride's departure from her parents' home in her book. Agarwal had heard this folksong during a personal communication with Veena Das, Department of Sociology, University of Delhi. The song goes like this:

Always you said

Your brother and you are the same

O Father. But today you betray me ...

My *doli* leaves your house, O father

My *doli* leaves your house.

These dowry jewels are not jewels

but wounds round my neck, O father.

My *doli* leaves ... (1)

The lines of the folksong speak of the agony of loss and despair faced by young brides during the time of their departure from their natal homes. In the same book Agarwal places another folksong which is sung by Hindu women in northwest India when the bride departs from her parent's home. It goes like this:

To my brother belong your green fields

O father, while I am banished afar ...

This year when the monsoon arrives, dear father,

send my brother to fetch me home.

When my childhood companions return O my father

send me a message, O. (Hindi folksong; translated by Bina Agarwal, 263 )

The folksong encapsulates the misery of women who are uprooted from their socio-cultural and biological premises just for the sake of their marriage. The agony of loss and estrangement from one's native land makes one literally feel homeless and rootless. As per the generally practiced social tradition women are often made to leave their native land and dear ones for the sake of their marriage and this indeed cuts off the thread that connects women to their home. Agarwal writes that "Rural women in northwest India, married among strangers miles away from their natal villages, use folksongs to decry their estrangement from the green pastures of their

childhood homes - homes to which their brothers, who customarily inherit the ancestral land, have automatic access” (ibid 1).

In a patrilineal society the custom enforces the girl to relocate her life after marriage. By entering into marriages, majority of women in India are subjected to a kind of acculturation process. In other words a kind of rootless feeling is experienced by women when they are forced to leave their familiar surroundings to an unfamiliar socio-cultural geography for the rest of their life. The pain of losing one’s bio- premises and habitat many a time creates mental trauma to the young women who are married off to faraway places. In the new surroundings they are forced to undergo a cultural shift. The dilemma due to these enforced estrangements and cultural shifts is imbibed in the collective memory of the feminine psyche; this indeed makes it easy for women to equate with the emotions of people who are prone to dislocations/cultural shifts or at the edge of losing their lives. Here, when travellers like K. A. Beena, Mrs. Rachel Thomas and Rema Devi through their travel writings empathetically describe the life of people who are subjected to violence due to invasions, they are in a way expressing their support and concern for the lives which are put into suffering. Women’s concerns over such lives are due to the sense of oppression they contain in their collective female psyche. This makes them feel for the plight of the communities that have lost their root and culture. In that case their own selves have been revealed through their writings on travel.

When travels can be viewed as the expression of someone’s freedom, even at the time of such a relaxing activity women find it hard to think above their subjugated subjective selves. The sense of oppression which is imbibed in the

collective unconscious remains as a haunting factor in the common psyche of women; this might be the reason why even during moments of relaxation they are not able to keep their eyes off certain sights which tell stories of oppression and dominance.

Besides the geographical peculiarities of a region what interests the women travellers is the cultural and social peculiarities of the region. This may include the customs, rituals, lifestyles, food habits etc. of the region. The inclusion of such ethnographic detailing makes their narratives appear more intimate and lively to the reading public. The travel writings of K. A. Beena, Sujatha Devi and Rema Devi can be taken as examples to prove this. They capture what others have left unnoticed. When they find that the ecological balance of a place they have visited is at risk they take accountability to prevent a catastrophe by offering solutions to regain the balance.

While analysing environment and ecological consciousness within women's travel narratives it is important to acknowledge the environmental movement Deep ecology, initiated by Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher, in 1972. Deep ecology "challenges anthropocentric or human-centred worldviews and confirms the inherent worth of life on earth" (Porselvi 14). Evaluating the environmental consciousness Malayali women exhibit in their narratives of travel it is evident that many of their views share the same consciousness embodied by Deep ecology. Through their opinions and suggestions they try to bring out the fault lines in the system. They in fact prefer to keep a well-balanced relationship with the world around. Their narratives predominantly speak for the world at large. They articulate suggestions

based on their own exploited and marginal positions. When women express their concerns over the degeneration of ecology it cannot in any way be viewed as a sign of dominance or exertion of power. Since the collective unconscious bears the pain of subjugation their sensibilities can only stand with the downtrodden.

The excerpts taken from the travel writings of Malayali women reveal that women's way of knowing and understanding of ecology can be considerably different from what is familiar to the general conscience. The thoughts they try to put forward are reflections which are derived through centuries of exploitation and oppression that they themselves are subjected to. The experiences they have gathered with a woman's sensibility cannot be found from a source with different sensibility. They try to bring into focus the different dimensions on issues which are of greater significance to the present day society. The responsibility shown by the women travellers towards things which are generally considered of lesser importance by the mainstream conscience constitute the core theme of this chapter. Through their travel writings women create a historiography which is considerably different from what has been produced so far. When women narrate their opinions on the world around them, they bring in things which most often reveal the covetousness of the domineering human being. The chauvinistic agenda of keeping women away from disciplines which are considered as the male bastion have in fact devalued the contributions made by women.

Though constrained within the limits set by patriarchy, women have attempted to re-discover worlds in their own way. The interventions and opinions which are put forth through their narratorial authority often reflect their attitude

towards an entity which they maintain deep connections in their psyche. Hence, these writings are in a way testimonies to how they have conceived the world around them. The study brings to light the opinions put forward by women travellers on matters which may appear unimportant to the mainstream conscience. Through their observations, these women travellers have in a way acted as mouth pieces for the voice- less and the most subjugated. By putting forth their concerns, worries and opinions in their narratives of travel these women are in fact representing themselves towards a universal citizenship. Their observations and opinions could thus be taken as warnings towards what is in hold for future generations. In an age of urbanization and materialism, such writings can function as a bridge strengthening the relationship between man and nature by reminding man that she/he is only a part of the ecosystem and not a separate superior entity.



## Chapter III

### **Pilgrim Travels: Rendezvous with Gods, Spaces and Memories**

Apart from the essential luggage, a traveller also carries a bigger yet invisible baggage of her beliefs, emotions, knowledge, interests, memories and superstitions. The diverse constituents of her personality tag along with her to each of her destinations. Each of these has an impact on the travels undertaken. For instance, if one is interested in spirituality, the spiritual search will take the person to destinations where he or she can attain spiritual bliss. Likewise, music, art, magic, or anything that triggers the interest, passion or admiration of the traveller can nudge people to destinations where they can find gratification. In this chapter, I am looking into the travel narratives written by Malayali women whose choices of destinations inform us about their quests and interests which consequently reveal the greater implications they have in constituting their selves.

The travel experiences that I am analyzing do have the common characteristic of each of them narrating the experience of a journey undertaken to gratify some desire or intense feeling which the traveller/ narrator had long wished to fulfil. For instance, when one's faith and worship towards something motivates the traveller to start the journey, she does so with the approach of a pilgrim. When people who are ardent followers of a particular ideology travel to places which have strong associations with their ideologies, the intensity of their desire to reach the said location is comparable to that of a devotee undertaking a spiritual journey to a holy place. Both travellers are pilgrims in their own way and hence they are undertaking pilgrimages of the kind. In his book *Pilgrimages* (1991) Richard Barber

describes pilgrimage as “journey to a distant sacred goal, is found in all the great religions of the world. It is a journey both outwards, to new, strange, dangerous places, and inwards, to spiritual improvement, whether through increased self-knowledge or through the braving of physical dangers” (1).

However, when the interpretation of the concept and meaning of the word pilgrim is broadened it takes an interesting turn as people need not have to visit sacred places alone to get the experience of a spiritually or religiously motivated travel which is known as pilgrimage. N. Collins- Kreiner in her article “Researching Pilgrimage: Continuity and Transformations” notes that the concept pilgrimage is defined differently that it can be as variant as “a traditional religious or modern secular journey” (440). She notes that “the word “pilgrimage” itself is increasingly being used in broader and secular contexts - for example, in order to refer to visits to war graves, celebrity graves and residences, and churchyards and funerary sites as sacred and secular pilgrimage” (445).

Likewise, each space/place converses with the traveller’s thoughts and memories initiating some kind of quest that only the traveller can explain. Therefore, besides the overtly religiously motivated travels I am analysing other kinds of travels which also contain the same feelings as that of a religiously motivated travel. In most cases, the attitude of those who undertake such travels are in tune with what a pilgrim might experience. Hence, travels that happen for the fulfilment of one’s admiration, worship, fear and fascination towards something or someone are included in this study. Before going into the details of the chapter it is important to explain how abstract concepts like belief, worship, passion, desire, fascination and

fear work as driving forces behind such travels and the respective travel narratives. How Malayali women who belong to various factions of the society constitute these emotions in their narratives of travel is explored in this study.

For the convenience of analysis I have divided this chapter into four sections. In the first section I am focusing on travel narratives based on the journeys undertaken as prescribed by the religious faith of the traveller. The second section deals with travel writings which narrate travels conducted on the basis of the political ideologies, which the traveller believe and follow. The third section of the chapter is about the travel writings which describe travels which are undertaken for the fulfilment of the traveller's personal interests. The fourth section deals with travel narratives that express the fear and fascination towards the ultimate truth of life, that is, death. The narratives mentioned in this section are about visiting terrains that in one or the other are connected with death.

For the first section on religious travel narratives, I am looking into excerpts taken from Sabitha Teacher's "Hajj: Lokame Tharavad" ("Hajj: The World is My Home") (2014), Jolly Adimatra's *Jarussalem: Daiva Putrante Nattilekk (Jerusalem: To the Land of God's Son)* (2015), Valsala Mohan's *Kailasa Parikramanam (Journeying Through Kailas)* (2009) and Geetha Suraj's *Devabhoomiyile Orazhcha (A Week in the Celestial Land)* (2012).

It is understood that the socio-cultural factors of the geographical region affects the living community and thereby the traveller from the community. They have a significant effect on the identity of the traveller. Ciarán Benson in his book

*The Cultural Psychology of the Self: Place, Morality, and Art in Human Worlds*

(2001) states that one's self is bound to one's locations,

Lives, selves, identities are threaded across times and places. Who you are is a function of where you are, of where you have been and of where you hope to arrive. There cannot be a 'here' without a 'you' or an 'I' or a 'now'. Self, acts of self-location and locations are inextricably linked and mutually constructive. 'Self' functions primarily as a locative system, a means of reference and orientation in worlds of space-time (perceptual worlds) and in worlds of meaning and place- time (cultural worlds). (4)

As per the argument stated above, it can be seen that the locations also play a role in constituting one's self. This self which has evolved and is bound with a location can be prone to changes when exposed to other regions with different sociocultural situations. In the introduction to their book *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (2002), Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs opine that "Travel broadens the mind, and knowledge of distant places and people often confers status, but travellers sometimes return as different people or do not come back at all" (2). Therefore, in a general sense, it can be inferred that travels can actually work as excellent agents of transformation. New experiences from travels add to the person's psyche/memory; even the most familiar experiences with colour, taste and smell can be experienced differently at different places. Likewise, various skills the traveller may possess can improve and develop with exposure to new methods and techniques. As the person's experimenting world develops, perspectives can change, haunting problems and memories will no longer be as haunting as they were before the travel or they may

take a turn for the worse. Habits can alter as per situations. Those which are believed and practiced as norms or taboos may shift their category in the person's psyche. Style of dressing can be affected. In short, additions and deletions on physical as well as psychological levels can happen by experiencing new worlds and cultures. Like chemical changes that happen when objects are exposed to different surfaces, travel transforms a person. While changes that are physiological and psychological can happen depending as per situations, the embedded religious belief of individuals which has a stronger influence on one's psyche is not likely to be prone to changes just like other entities that constitute the self of a person.

For ardent believers of any religious faith the laws advocated by the particular system remain as the supreme order that their life itself is designed to suit the code of belief. People are controlled and disciplined by the religious regimes to such an extent that every deed by believer may have the influence of the particular religious order. Religious dogmas have immense control over the believer's selves. This stands true for any coded system of belief. This was theorised by French theoretician Louis Althusser in his article "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" where he explained the strategy of control imposed by the state on individuals with the help of the ideological state apparatuses. He also explains how the educational institutions, religion, political parties and families which are categorised as private, strategically control and discipline the intellect so as to create repression among the masses. In the essay Althusser explains how the intellect of individuals is disciplined to become obedient subjects of the religious system.

(Leitch 1483-91)

The institutionalized nature of certain religious systems expects those believers who are officially in the system to completely abide by the rules of the belief system. As per the performativity theory propounded by Judith Butler, this can also be counted as “stylized repetition of acts” (*Gender Trouble* 191). In order to get recognized as members, certain religious faiths insist on the physical stampings of the bodies of its disciples. The choice of attire, food, colour etc. may henceforth have the imprints of their religious faith. Moreover, as per the requirement believers are expected to perform certain duties which ought to keep them within the faith. The mainstream religious systems expect the believer’s life to be organized routinely as per the codes of dogmas set out by the religious system.

Prayers, fasting and various other rituals which require the involvement of the believer’s physical body are to be undertaken accordingly. Visiting places that are considered sacred as per the religious belief becomes a mandatory duty for the believer. For such undertakings the believers do need to implement certain discipline in their lives. These travels which are taken up by the believers are generally called pilgrimages and the believer travellers who make the journey are the pilgrims. Utmost faith and worship remains the core of such undertakings.

Seeking salvation through pilgrimage is a practice associated with religious dogmas. Hence people who are followers of the particular religious faith make it a point to go for pilgrimages to sanctify their quest for salvation. Many travel narratives have come out describing such sacred journeys and the spiritual bliss they attained through such travels. The observation made by Mary Baine Campbell could

be read along with this. She says, “The most resonant intersection of travel and religion is pilgrimage” (187).

Almost all religions in the world have spots of worship which are considered utmost sacred by the believers of the respective religion. These religious spots are generally associated with divine happenings, miracles etc. mentioned in the respective religious texts as well in the stories connected with religious beliefs. For the believers of Abrahamic religions, Jerusalem and Israel are considered as the ultimate holy lands for its direct association with the incidents mentioned in the Bible. Rome in Italy is also major pilgrim spot for Christians all over the world.

For Muslims, Mecca in Saudi Arabia is of special significance and participating in the Hajj ceremony as well as performing the *Umrah* is considered the ultimate achievement a believer gains in his/her worldly life. So they are expected to take part in the holy ceremony at least once in their lifetime. As per the Islamic belief, “Hajj represents your return to Allah, the absolute, who has no limitations and none is like Him. To return to Him signifies a definite movement toward perfection, goodness, beauty, power knowledge, value, and facts” (Ali 16). Hence as per holy Quran “To Allah we belong and to Him is our return. All affairs tend toward Allah. *Quran* 2:156 & 42:53” (qtd. in Ali 12).

Hindus consider Kailas and many other pilgrim centres like Haridwar, Badarinath, Rishikesh, Varanasi etc. as sacred. A dip in the holy Ganges is believed to cleanse the believer for attaining *moksha*, the final release from material existence, i.e. “Liberation from the rounds of birth and rebirth” (Jones and Ryan 150). Taking part in the Kumbh Mela which is being conducted every twelve years

is also an important event for a devotee. About the pilgrimages in Hinduism, Rana P. B. Singh notes that “pilgrimage in the traditional sense is an inner journey manifest in exterior space in which the immanent and the transcendent together form a complex spiritual and travel phenomenon” (“Pilgrimage in Hinduism” 220). He describes the Hindu religious concept of pilgrimage as: “Hinduism, or more appropriately *Sanatana Dharma* (‘the eternal religion’), has a strong and ancient tradition of pilgrimage, known as *Tirtha-yatra* (‘tour of the sacred fords’), which formerly connoted pilgrimage involving holy baths in water bodies as a symbolic purification ritual” (ibid 220).

Considering such explanations, religiously motivated quest in search of spirituality are generally called pilgrimages. Nevertheless, how the person perceives the targeted destination is what matters in deciding upon the nature of the respective journey. Depending on the person’s perception anything can be considered as serene or sacred to be worshiped or admired. In his article “A Writer’s View: “Journey to a Sacred Place”” African American writer and literary activist E. Ethelbert Miller writes about the significance of libraries in his life. He says:

During the ’50s, when I was growing up in the South Bronx, I thought a trip to the library was a journey to a sacred place. I fell in love with books even before I enjoyed playing baseball. ... The public library was a place my parents considered to be just as important as the church. I guess my soul was saved by my introduction to good books (67-69).

How he perceived the particular space where the library functioned is what has made the difference. Likewise, any travel can amount to a pilgrimage provided it is

undertaken with sanctity, discipline and worship. Daniel H. Olsen and Dallen J. Timothy in their article “Tourism and Religious Journeys” notes that, “This search for truth, enlightenment, or an authentic experience with the divine or holy leads people to travel to sacrosanct sites that have been ritually separated from the profane space of everyday life” (3).

It is true that people’s fear, fascination and wonder towards something can lead them to worship it. This phenomenon could be traced back from the early stages of the history of mankind. For various reasons, the natural entities like fire, water, sun, moon etc. were worshipped by people at different stages in history. Every section of society has their own concrete or non- concrete idols for worship, with spots of worship and rituals associated with them.

The Hindu religious system is based on the doctrines of Vedas i.e. the four sacred texts- Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, Atharva Veda. The societal division of people based on their occupations takes its root in the Rig Veda. T. H. P. Chentharassery in his book *History of the Indigenous Indians* (1998) writes that, “In Rig Veda there is a hymn known by name Purusha Sukta in which it recognizes the caste system or Chaturvarnya. This Sukta is a theory of the origin of universe and explains how the four classes, - Brahmins (priests) Kshatriya or soldiers, Vaishyas or traders and Shudras or menials arose from the body of the creator” (53). Chentharassery notes that even though the explanation in the Sukta does not say anything on the creation of man, it clearly explains the origin of the societal classes in the Indo- Aryan society. It is explained in the Sukta that the “Brahmins have sprung up from God’s mouth, Kshatriyas from His arms, the Vaishyas from His

thighs and the Shudras from His feet (RV x-90)” (ibid 53). Therefore, the society thus divided functioned according to the doctrines of the *Chaturvarnya* system. The Hindu religious system functioned with Brahmins or the priests as the highest ranked and Shudras as the lowest class. Those outside this hierarchical division were considered as untouchables or out castes.

Most of the religious rituals, beliefs and places of worship work on the Brahminical doctrines and principles. Through the *chaturvarnya* system, the dominant groups established and perpetuated a code which fixed the position and function of individuals in a society. For centuries, the Brahminical patriarchy controlled the life of the people. Consequently the dictums thus created and propagated ensured centuries of misery to a large section of the society who were at the bottom of the caste and gender hierarchies. For instance, *Manusmriti* states that the Supreme Power/God has created *Shudras* only for the service of the Brahmin. If he disobeys he should be shackled and forcibly put under service.

As certain jobs deemed unclean got assigned to the so called lower castes, their presence in places considered sacred by the upper castes became problematic. Through various socio cultural interventions there arose a clear internalised demarcation of places of worship for the lower and the upper castes. In the general introduction of *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Writing* (2012) M. Dasan mentions that the social reformer Ayyankali who belonged to the Pulaya community, a lower caste as per the caste hierarchy, had a “lukewarm” reaction to the much acclaimed Temple Entry Proclamation that permitted the entry of lower castes to a temple premise as it was predominantly Brahminical in nature (xxix).

During the pre- modern era due to rigid caste rules lower caste people and also women who belong to the upper castes were not permitted to travel out of their residing premises. Pilgrimages to the holy places and temples were mostly undertaken by upper caste men. Therefore, in those ages, only very few women could take part in such practices. The sociocultural and political reformations that happen all over India, have brought in various reformatory measures to societies. So that strict caste rules that insisted on the practice of untouchability and other heinous customs have gradually started to decline. Such drastic changes which happened in societies helped people especially those belonging to the lower sections of the society realise their own values as individuals. This in fact reflected in the mobility of those who were deprived of travel rights. As more and more people began to cross their set limits of mobility, travels for one's own needs were served without much hurdles. Besides the required travels to meet for one's everyday lives, travels, especially for the sake of one's religious and spiritual needs began to be part of people's lives. So that, irrespective of their gender and caste positions people began to take part in pilgrimages according to their respective religious faiths.

### **Woman within Religion**

Though the mainstream religions accord a position of significance to women in the religious system, in the practical sense women are hardly given importance. Religion and patriarchy have a deep bond which determines the power dynamics in a society. They inform and nurture each other constantly evolving to maintain the status quo and keeping the power away from the weaker sections, especially from women. Uma Chakravarti observes that "The general subordination of women

assumed a particularly severe form in India through the powerful instrument of religious traditions which have shaped social practices” (138). It is thus understood that the gravity of the religiously, culturally, socially defined and positioned gender is so resilient that even the intellect of people, particularly women is strategically controlled according to their respective religious faiths. They find it hard to think above the religious structures.

In order to belong to the religious system women are burdened with a lot more do's and don'ts than any other groups in the system. While these impositions are part of the religious system, the saddest part is that several women who belong to different religious dogmatic systems largely internalize these impositions and believe that they are inferior. The socio cultural turmoil followed by the Honourable Supreme Court verdict (dated 28<sup>th</sup> September 2018) on the entry of women in the Sabarimala Temple stresses this point. The strategy of control reaches its goal when women themselves internalize the concept that their bodies should be strictly prevented from entering places which are considered as sacred.

It is understood that even the support gesture rendered by the supreme judicial system of a democratic state cannot nullify the influence of socio-cultural and religious dogmas over the general consciousness. That is, the socio-cultural and religious belief that has been followed by people much before the formation of state as a federal republic cannot be easily removed by a court verdict.

## **Women and Religious Travels**

Travel provides a certain kind of escape and freedom from the tiresome life situations. In a positive sense, it can be metaphorically taken for freedom. Those who are tired of their life situations find an escape through such travels which are generally approved by the society as well. Such instances can be detected within the history of pilgrimages. In his article “Religious and Secular Pilgrimage: Journeys Redolent with Meaning”, Justine Digance notes:

The word ‘pilgrimage’ usually conjures up images of travellers undertaking long arduous journeys to religious shrines around the world. Most of this imagery is predicated upon notions and concepts drawn from medieval pilgrimage, a social movement that occurred between 500 and 1500 CE. Pilgrimage offered a temporary escape from the generally harsh existence in an agrarian-based society, so much so that medieval pilgrimage is generally given as the first example of mass tourism as we know it today. (36)

The same situation is applicable to a section of women who go on pilgrimages. Other than the travels for job, study or family related purposes, a woman’s travel for her own sake is not that acceptable to an average Indian/ Malayali society. However, the rigid rules of a strict patriarchal society are less stringent towards women’s travels for religious purposes. It should be noted that all along in history, regardless of the caste and class positions the mobility of people has always been controlled by the various sociocultural and religious dogmas of the time. Women have strategically used the dogma of religious requirements as a tool to make the system work in her favour and grant her access to mobility.

In her book *Indigenous Roots of Feminism* (2011) Jasbir Jain shares her observation regarding the reason behind women's choice of pilgrimages. She uses examples from Ashapura Devi's novel *Pratham Pratishruti* (1964) and Anita Desai's novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) to prove her thinking behind pilgrimages. Analysing certain women characters from these novels Jasbir Jain reaches to the conclusion that going on pilgrimages gives women relaxation from routine and also from the tyranny that lingers in the closed space of family life. She writes:

Pilgrimages serve an important function in religious societies at more than one level. They allow the distancing from home, a certain contact with a community and independence and freedom within that; a contact with nature, a peaceful atmosphere away from the city humdrum and everyday pressures; and also a freedom from routine. Moreover, it is a legitimate, socially approved activity. Yet, it can be used as a means of escape, for expressing protest and seeking an alternative refuge. (159-160)

The women who belong to different caste and religious positions find religious travels as their only possibility for a travel of any kind to reach the world outside their dwelling places. These travels were probably the only entertainments they had in their entire life to beat the drudgery of their daily life. This could vary depending on the age group, caste, class and religious position to which the women belong. The Malayalam novelist Mridula Manoharan in her article titled "Pathara Maattulla Koottayma" ("Friendship in the Finest Form") writes about the bond of friendship shared among four Malayali women who have crossed sixty five years of age. While she narrates about the firmness and sweetness of the special bonding they have

maintained for more than thirty years, their leisure and travels also come into discussion. When not travelling to some ailing person's house they mostly prefer to go to some nearby or far away temples. Or else, they save money to go on pilgrimages in buses that sponsor pilgrim trips. When Mridula asks them why they have restricted their travels to temple visits alone they reply to her that it was a deliberate decision made from their part to restrict their travels to temples alone. In their own words: "We do wish to go for cinemas and beaches. But, how can we? People may complain about the wantonness of these oldies right? But if we go to temples alone then nobody can complain" (my trans.; 16).

From their words it is understood that the gendered performance of a woman at any age is under strict social surveillance. In order to fit into the sociological and cultural power dynamics which structures each society, women need to align their life accordingly. This might be the reason that majority of the travels taken up by women happened to be travels for religious purposes.

But what could be noted is that the above mentioned incidents don't in anyway cancel or question the sincerity behind the spirit of the religiously and spiritually motivated travels undertaken by women. Many women undertake the ritual with utmost sincerity and discipline. They may have participated in the shopping, may have attended the entertainment programs that come along as an additional offer with the tour packages, but they never divert their attention from the purpose. Besides everything, many have made it a point to write about the particular travel and the bliss they were able to attain through such undertakings. The narratives written about such religious journeys may have more acceptance among

the public. Tharavath Ammalu Amma's *Oru Theerthayatra* (1925) is the first published travelogue written in Malayalam by a woman. The first published travelogue by a Malayali woman itself happened to be a narrative on a pilgrimage is another noticeable specialty with regard to the history of Malayali women's travel writing.

J. Devika and Mini Sukumar in their article "Making Space for Feminist Social Critique in Contemporary Kerala" brings out the sarcasm made by the writer critic Sanjayan on Kochattil Kalyanikutty Amma's travelogue *Njan Kanda Europe* (1936) (The Europe I saw). Devika and Sukumar say that according to the noted Malayalam critic there is only one change which is required for the book and that it is about the title, i.e., the title should be changed from *Njan Kanda Europe* (The Europe I saw) to *Europe Kanda Kalyanikutty Amma* (The Europe Which Kalyanikutty Amma Saw) Devika and Mini Sukumar assess Sanjayan's sarcastic statement as a reflection of his fear over female individuation and public presence. They also observe that the same critic is all praise for Tharavath Ammalu Amma who wrote *Oru Theerthayatra*, in his obituary written of her, "Teravathu Ammalu Amma: A Remembrance" ("Shreemati Teravathu Ammalu Amma- Oru Anusmaranam") in *Sanjayan - 1936le Hasyalekhanangal*, Vol III" (Devika and Sukumar 4475), for never crossing her limits. Devika and Sukumar write that "Sanjayan's sigh over the quarrelsome women speakers of "these days" in his obituary of the author Teravath Ammalu Amma who he celebrates as the paragon of female virtue that consolidates itself in "legitimate space" and desires nothing more" (ibid 4471).

In the introduction to their book *Travel Writing* (2019), Nandini Das and Tim Youngs state that the two well acclaimed travel books of the twentieth century, Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974) and Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* (1978) are influenced by and enact versions of Buddhist thought (13). Likewise, people do not need to completely enact a religious mode of travel to write a travel narrative which has features of a pilgrimage. While "The quest is a common motif that seems to be at the heart of many travel narratives through the millennia, especially if pilgrimage is also viewed in this way" (Das and Youngs 13), it can be understood that in pilgrimages it is the quest towards spirituality and salvation.

In this section of this chapter I am wholly concentrating on travel narratives that are written out of religious faiths. While travels for the sake of religious beliefs are acceptable by the society as well as family, it is not surprising to learn that a fair number of travel narratives written and published by Malayali women happened to be based on their religious faiths. Rebecca Joseph's *Njangal Kanda Israel* (1982), Sara Thomas's *Israelinte Mariloode* (2000), Saroja Varghese's *Visudha Swapnangalumayi Visudha Naattil* (2002), Santhakumari Thomas's *Swapname Yathra* (2014), Prameela Jacob's *Njan Kanda Visudha Naadu* (2012), Valsala Mohan's *Kashi Chathurdhama Himalaya Yathra* (2004) and *Amarapathathil* (2007), Vimala Rajakrishnan's *Devabhoomiyiloode Oru Theerthayathra* (2012), Rajanandini's *Kailasa Yathra* (2015), K. P. Bhavani's *Manjumalakalil Moksham Thedi* (2008) are some of the noteworthy travel writings that are based on religious pilgrimages. While a fair number of travel narratives based on religious faiths have

been published by Malayali women who belong to Christian and Hindu religious faiths, the number of travel narratives published by Malayali Muslim women is very less. When a number of Malayali women from the Muslim community attend the holy Hajj ceremony which is being conducted every year in Mecca, Saudi Arabia only very few have come out which narrate their travel experiences to attend the holy ceremony of Hajj. P. A. Sameena's *Hajj Oru Anubhava Saakshyam* (2009) and Mumtaz Hameed's *Oru Theerdhadakayute Ninavukal* (2004) Sabitha Teacher's "Hajj: Lokame Tharavadu", taken from the anthology of Hajj narratives *Hajjanubhavangal* (2014) are the few travel narrative written on the experience of Hajj travel.

Narratives on travel generally focus on bringing out and explaining the otherness while rendering an experience of travel. This eventually leads to the revelation of one's own self. Travellers also look for the similarities between the newly confronted culture and their own native culture. And most of the time they end up with describing the otherness of the newly confronted terrain. The strength and beauty of any travel narrative is this difference and strangeness the narrator-traveller maintains throughout the narrative. While this is the case with travel narratives generally, travel narratives that are written based on religious travels usually discuss experiences of getting in close and identifying with a sociocultural and geographical space they have already experienced through religious texts and stories. As pilgrims this knowledge indeed helps them get a close connection with a sociocultural and geographical space which is of less resemblance with their familiar native.

In their article “Whither Religious Tourism?” Dallen J. Timothy and Daniel H. Olsen observe that people generally wish to be part of “socio-structural systems that venerate higher sources of power and authority” (271). All their actions within the society have to be in alliance with the supreme power they worship. The kind of inner strength, courage and wisdom they possess in their character are in a way acquired through the influence of these supreme powers. Dallen J. Timothy and Daniel H. Olsen also observe that:

Many people read books and holy scripts, exercise, eat certain foods, pray or chant, and physically travel to designated destinations as a way of materially augmenting their spiritual journeys. For millions of faithful, these elements are part of larger belief systems that provide the principles by which they live their lives and become an integral part of their individual or collective social identity. (ibid 271)

People just want to be part of a collective social identity which can make them experience the kind of security they yearn for. This is true in case with travels conducted by believers towards holy spots for worship. Anthony Bale in his article “European Travel Writing in the Middle Ages” notes that “to be a pilgrim - literally, one who travelled to a holy place - was to engage with a narrative about the organization of sacred space” (153). Likewise, by performing the rituals associated with one’s religious belief, believers are in a way physically enacting what has been written in the sacred texts and religious historiographies.

In the conclusion to her book *Connected Places Region, Pilgrimage, and Geographical Imagination in India* (2003) Anne Feldhaus observes that people have

to imitate what they believe to have been done by the Gods for whom they perform their rituals of worship. Feldhaus says: “They tell stories about the travels of the gods, then imitate those journeys in their own pilgrimages” (211).

Undertaking a travel to a sacred spot which has all the embellishments of religion enhances the bonding the believer maintains with the transcendental power. In other words the religious pilgrimages ultimately focus on the particular oneness experienced between the traveller/pilgrim and the sacred place. In order to attain this unison, people travel through the same trajectories where they believe Gods or Godly people themselves have moved.

### **I. Travels based on one’s Religious Beliefs**

In this section I analyse what Malayali women as believers of a religious faith have felt about their travels undertaken solely for religious reasons. Sabitha teacher’s “Hajj: Lokame Tharavad” (2014), which is included in the anthology *Hajjanubhavangal* (2014), is one such narrative which shares the experience of the transcendental feeling of oneness, the author experiences while reaching Mecca, known as the holy land of Muslims. Sabitha Teacher says that after reaching the place she got the feeling that she has reached a place where she actually belongs. She then goes on to express her feeling: “Last time also I spoke to Muthu Nabi. Then I get a feeling that Rasool and Ayesha are talking to each other as: ‘Ayesha our daughter has come. Speak to her a little.’ When we go there, each time we should try to visualize these through our imagination” (my trans.; 111). The instance she mentions here denotes the intense bonding she has with her religious faith. She thinks of herself as the daughter of Muthu Nabi and Ayesha and that she is finally

able to reach the place where as per religious belief she actually belongs. Through every cell of her body she upholds the spirit of the holy ritual. She says no believer can completely contain the experience Hajj provides and that her pen too is incapable of writing about the precious experience. But what should be noted is that, what one perceived through holy books and stories might not always coincide with what one experiences in the ritualistic space. Sabitha too gets disappointed for not getting the same feeling as she thought before reaching Mecca. The space as described in the holy texts has gone through tremendous change over the course of time.

Jolly Adimatra's *Jerusalem: Daivaputhrante Nattilekku (Jerusalem: To the Land of God's Son)* (2015) is a travel narrative which describes the experiences of a pilgrimage the author has undertaken to Jerusalem. This pilgrimage was conducted by a Bible society headed by a priest. The group visits Jordan, Bethlehem, and almost all places which are mentioned in the Bible. In her narrative Jolly renders the transcendental experience she feels in places where incidents mentioned in the Bible have taken place. By passing through the places where Jesus Christ was born, walked, taught his gospel, performed miracles and the place where he was crucified, she is actually experiencing the moments mentioned in the Bible. In fact she is able to experience the divine bliss she longed for. She expresses her joy in having met those trees that have once seen Jesus Christ. She writes: "Those are the olive trees that saw Jesus. The ones who have witnessed his cries out of immense pain. They might have been babies then. I stood and looked at them with wonder and respect. I extended my hands to touch them" (my trans.; 55). Throughout the narrative she

uses passages from the Bible to denote the spiritual significance of the landscape through which she passes. These biblical references are quite enough to show the connection she maintains in her self as a true devotee. She expresses her pride of being a devotee of Jesus Christ: “Once again I fixed my adoration and love for Him. Jesus, I love you for never being hypocritical or dominant” (my trans.; 60).

Jolly also narrates one incident where she feels pride as woman. She says “even if it was of the demolished condition we, a group of women from Kerala entered with joy into the synagogue where once women were not allowed to enter. We are the children of Messiah, he the one who uplifted the status of women in society. The Bible hints that, Jesus was accompanied by a group of women as well” (my trans.; 43). Here, the pride she experiences while entering a place once denied to women is justified as she is successful in an act of challenging a system that had considered women as unworthy.

Valsala Mohan’s *Kailasa Parikramanam* (2009) is a travel narrative written on the experience of a journey undertaken for a religious purpose. She also narrates such an experience of harmony and bliss she felt in the familiar yet strange arena. When she became tensed over one of the hectic horse rides through the hilly slopes on the way to Kailas she says she was able to experience the presence of divine strength through a voice of assurance which asked “Why do you want to feel afraid ... I am here” (my trans.; 123). Her emotional bond with the heavenly experience is evident in her description.

The travel narrative *Devabhoomiyile Orazhcha (A Week in the Land of Gods)* (2012) by Geetha Suraj which I have mentioned in the first chapter of this

thesis is a travel narrative written on a pilgrimage conducted to the Himalayas. The desire to go and experience Himalayas in person was so intense for her that even her physical limitation couldn't distract her from chasing her dream. In her own words: "If my life ends without seeing Himalayas then I will have to take a rebirth" (my trans.; 14). While travels and travel writings mostly emphasise the 'otherness' experienced with different cultures, pilgrim travels speak of the harmony the traveller experiences within all the cultural differences. In other words a person's faith and longing, blurs the line of division constructed through spaces and cultures. Beyond all the cultural differences the oneness they feel and experience while reaching the ultimate terrains of their religious belief make them capable of thinking above all the visible and non- visible differences. When an ardent believer like Geetha Suraj describes her experience of divine bliss in the unfamiliar geographical region, she writes like this: "The first night in the divine land. Without any sort of disturbance, in the august presence I slept just like a child in the mother's lap!" (my trans.; 16).

The kind of harmony experienced by the believers while visiting respective holy lands can be directly connected to what Rana P. B Singh says on pilgrimages. He writes: "Pilgrimage is a spiritual quest - a guiding force unifying divinity and humanity; it is a search for wholeness" (221). The intensity of faith they maintain as believers indeed leads them to such realms to experience the heavenly bliss. When one desires to have or gain something, it points towards the kind of lack the person experiences in his/her life. Here as ardent believers their desire to experience or the desire to gain the ultimate bliss points towards a lack they experience as believers or

as individuals. That is, these women as believers negate their own selves which they believe as distorted or incomplete due to some kind of lack. For the redressal they try to identify with the self of the divinely power whom they believe as ultimate and complete. Finally when they are able to experience or gain the heavenly bliss through enacting or moving through spaces which have spiritual significance, they seem to acquire an accomplished feeling.

The accomplishment of reaching an ideal state or having had dialogues with the ultimate power is what uplifts their spirits. In other words, through their travels they actually attempt to search and rectify their own selves which have been distorted due to various worldly trials. The desire to be in destinations, which as per their religious beliefs are ultimate terrains to be visited in person is thereby fulfilled through the travels they have undertaken. The involvement of their lived body is what constitutes the accomplishment of their self.

Geetha Suraj's *Devabhoomiyile Orazhcha* (2012) is travel narrative written about a pilgrimage conducted to the Himalayas. What is more to be mentioned about Geetha's travel is that she has attempted the travel with her not so able body. Though she has not specifically mentioned her short coming in this narrative, from her narration it is understood that due to the weakness in her legs she faces difficulty to walk. She says "I do not know when I have started to love Himalayas. ... But I never dreamed of a travel to Himalayas anytime. I always withdrew from that dream due to the disability of my body. By watching the C. Ds and reading books on Himalayan travel I overcame the grief that I cannot go to Himalayas" (my trans.; 13). The intensity of her desire to go to Himalayas is evident in her words. In the

next instance she says “as a person who cannot walk properly even here, how is it possible for me to go there? ... but somehow the urge to go there kept burning inside me” (my trans.; 14).

From the above mentioned instances it is clear that these women are experiencing the places which they have known only through books, stories and other means. What they have conceived through their imagination is now tangible. It thus becomes a geographical experience which has happened through one’s lived body. From Geetha’s words it is quite clear that the accomplishment one receives by visiting places on one’s own cannot be replaced by anything for that matter. In fact, that is what travel does to the corporeal persona of a person as a whole. Since body as a space where experiences and emotions are gathered in the first hand, without the involvement of the physical lived body it will be difficult to achieve the accomplishment travels are supposed to provide. Physical travels do require the involvement of one’s lived body. This perception of the world through one’s lived body is explained by Merleau Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) as “I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body” (94-95). Thus body remains the primary phase through which experiences about the different socio cultural as well as geographical terrains are gathered.

Taking part in pilgrimages provides a sense of self importance for the person who undertakes it. That is, by performing such religious gestures they are attaching themselves more to the system to which they belong. By dipping oneself in the holy river Ganges, the believer attains a kind of saturation. That is by getting to experience the power of the water tides through his/her body the believer is actually

conjoining his/her self with the supreme powers that exist in nature. The personal intimacy felt towards the holy water streams can be experienced as the gentle caress of somebody who is very close or like the protective warmth and care of a mother. In his *A Dictionary of Symbols* (1988) J. E. Cirlot states that “In the Vedas, water is referred to as *matritamah*, the most maternal” (qtd. in Jain 160). Geetha Suraj experiences the holy river Ganges as a mother’s gentle hug and care. She narrates her experience with the ice cold water as “A gentle kiss on my forehead. It was like holding close to her heart with her frozen hands. I have no idea, how many times I called her shivering, ‘Amme ... Amme’” (my trans.; 49). Here, what is to be noted is that, the biting cold did not distract her from getting close to the water. In fact it is her visionary fantasy that allows her self to experience the waters as a motherly touch which is relaxing and compensatory to her mind which longs for a union with a lack that has happened over the years.

All such experiences which describe the parental protection felt by the traveller/ believer at the sacred spots of worship could be read along with what Sigmund Freud has observed about religion. According to Freud “Religion, in short, is an illusion expressing the wish for eternal parental protection” (Muckenhaupt 136). The person who is inside the religious system, doesn’t in anyway want to lose the security assured by the system and will always wish to abide with the rules and practices of the system. The travels of women who partook in religious travels are significant because their travels and travel writings assert and reclaim spaces within a system which has been keen to keep women at bay. The intensity of faith they

maintain as believers of respective faiths is evident in their narratives. This in fact proves that women are in no way inferior within the system.

Besides attaining salvation these women pilgrims/travellers are keen about observing the new world they have been confronted with. Even though the focus will be on the ritualistic elements connected with religious pilgrimage they keep an open eye for the newly confronted territory and its socio-cultural peculiarities. Hence, Malayali women's travel narratives of pilgrimages become much more than a pilgrimage. Topics ranging from food habits to political and ecological issues find space in their travel narratives which are written out of their pilgrimages. Overcoming all those socio-cultural and religious situations which regulate women, women have travelled largely and have also written about their travel experiences. But it is a fact that most of the travelogues written by Malayali women belong to the category of religious travelogues which are based on their religious faiths.

What should be noted here is that since the boundaries of travel writing as a genre appear fuzzy it is not fair to compartmentalize it with clear cut borders. So even if travellers/writers may highlight certain aspects in their narrative with regard to the overall nature of the journey they undertook, the narrative may contain lot more than what is desired by the travel writer.

## **II. Travels which are based on one's Ideological Beliefs**

In this section that deals with the travel writings stemming from the political ideologies of the travellers, I am looking at K. K. Shylaja's *China, Rashtram, Rashtreeyam, Kazhchakal: Puthiya Chinayiloodeyulla Yathra (China, State, Politics*

*and Sights: Travel Through New China* (2015) and Chintha Jerome's *Chankile China: Oru Chinnakkadakkariyude Cheena Yathra (Beloved China: A Trip to China Made by a Woman from Chinnakkada )* (2018). In addition I have also used excerpts from other travel narratives to substantiate my arguments.

As members of social structures, individuals are influenced by various sociocultural and political situations. This creates affinities toward certain ideas and beliefs. In other words, any person who is residing within the society is subjected to ideologies which decide how the world is being perceived by the particular individual. Ideology as such is always subject to change. Jan Rehmann observes that "The term is usually employed to mark an opposition to an exact and scientific conception of the world, it was originally introduced to describe a specific *science*" (*Theories* 15). To be more specific, "It was defined as an 'idea-science' (ideology), which means that it resembled more what could be described as a critical dissection of ideas and their derivation from sensory perceptions" (ibid 15).

Ideology can be based on anything. Michael Ryan opines that "An ideology is a body of ideas that license, enable, and direct social action" (*Cultural* 40). The dominant beliefs that circulate within a culture give the particular culture a distinct identity. However, this centrality of the "ruling idea" (Ryan 40) is often met with objection by the subjugated section of the society. A set of beliefs about or against something forms the core of an individual's or group of people's perception of an ideology.

In his article "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", Althusser explains ideology as a set of ideas which is being discreetly implemented through

state apparatuses. The method in which labour power is reproduced by instilling the ideas of the ruling ideology is explained in his essay. He describes how both the repressive and ideological state apparatuses help in internalising ideologies in the individual's psyche to aid in the reproduction of the labour power. In his own words: "The school (but also other State institutions like the Church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches 'know-how', but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its 'practice'" (1485).

While this kind of institutional ideology is designed to function in "deep structures" (Decker 74), it is equally important to look into certain other ideological systems as well. James M. Decker in his book *Ideology* (2004) explains that unlike this institutional ideology outlined by Louis Althusser "Political ideology tends to exist on a more overt plane and to leave a more noticeable - even predictable - impact on society" (74). He further more explains that "Political ideologies construct a set of core beliefs that directly influences how societies react to variable conditions such as economic flux, militarism, technological progress, religious mandates, and the like" (ibid 74).

To resist or to protest against something disturbing one's life is a basic human instinct. Such basic instinctual emotions persuade people to accept certain ideologies as means of survival. That particular ideology will influence and determine the lives of those who believe and follow it. The multiple political, social, epistemological, ethical and cultural networks a person is enmeshed in will affect her decisions concerning life. Such is the case with religious faith as well. It is also

an expression of an ideology. However, a person's ideological beliefs are also prone to situational changes.

Just like any other sociocultural factors, religion and politics are also the by-products of various sociocultural situations prevalent in human society. While one's religious faith is developed out of one's worship and acceptance of divine and supernatural powers, one's affinity towards a political ideology is most often a matter of one's immediate life situations and personal choice. In most cases practicality and common logic are the main features of political ideologies. One's political ideology defines one's perception of how one's society should function. People's faith in a political ideology is prone to changes in sociocultural situations.

While the effects of religious beliefs upon individual's psyche and how this belief prompts people to take up travels are dealt within the previous section of this chapter it is worthwhile to discuss certain other travels which are based on various other ideological beliefs. Just like their religious beliefs, people also take up travels based on their political ideologies. For instance, a believer of the Communist ideology, travelling to the countries which are considered as the home ground of the left ideology will experience this travel just as a pilgrim visiting a spot of his/her religious faith. By visiting the Communist country they are going to experience their long cherished dream of visiting a land they have looked upon as the ultimate terrain of the ideology in which they firmly believe and follow. The same experience could be applicable to certain other situations as well. That is, for an ardent admirer of a writer, say for example, the celebrated Russian author Tolstoy, visiting Tolstoy's house will be like going to a sacred space. The memories of the writer could be

experienced through such a travel. The experiences of visiting places of historical importance can also be different. It depends on how the visitor/traveller had conceived the particular place. Here, a person's ideology and memory goes hand in hand.

Such intense experiences vary from person to person depending upon his/her sociocultural, economic, religious and political backgrounds. People who are not passionate admirers of China and the Communist ideology think differently from those who believe in Communism. In the interview given to Tabish Khair, Pankaj Mishra the novelist/post colonial writer speaks of his attitude towards China. Mishra says: "I can't write about China without discussing our national image of the 'devious' neighbour who stabbed our backs in 1962" (Khair 178). As each one writes from their stand point on politics and culture, it can be assumed that travel writing as a literary genre will always have something to offer to keep it going. It is a fact that the excitement and thrills provided by travel writing can get exhausted when there is hardly anywhere left untraveled and undiscovered in our globe. However, the personal elements and observations will always be valued for years to come.

K. K. Shylaja's China travelogue, *China, Rashtram, Rashtreeyam, Kazhchakal: Puthiya Chinayiloodeyulla Yathra (China, State, Politics and Sights: Travel Through New China)* (2015) is one such unique travel experience which is worthy of a close analysis. K. K. Shylaja is an active member of the Communist Party India (Marxist) of Kerala. She has adorned ministerial positions in the Left led government of Kerala. *China, Rashtram, Rashtreeyam, Kazhchakal* is her first

attempt at a travelogue of that kind. On 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013 Shylaja along with a selected group of ten members who are also active party workers visits China as per the invitation of the Chinese Communist Party. Being an ardent believer and follower of the Communist ideology she never hides her joy in getting a chance to visit China, one of the few Communist countries in the world. She writes in the introductory chapter: “We are going to China. Feeling immense joy that a long cherished wish is going to happen” (my trans.; 15). The travelogue which is divided into twenty one chapters renders the experience of a travel of ten days in the Communist China.

As part of the official travel she visits Chairman Mao’s chamber, which is well maintained by the authorities. She writes:

To see the Mao Mausoleum will be the priority of anyone who visits China. The body of the Chairman, as what Mao Zedong has been called by the Chinese, is well preserved there. ... People start to join the queue from 8’O clock in the morning. Everyone will be carrying flowers or bouquets. We will have to wait two to three hours to get inside the Mausoleum. Once we get inside, we get only about five seconds to see the Chairman. I watched the faces of those who came outside. Self-satisfaction for achieving something great is seen in all their faces. ... With raised fists we greeted the Chairman and came out. (my trans.; 47-49)

From this explanation one can understand the admiration she has for Mao Zedong. Chairman Mao is God for Chinese people. The case is not different for the Communists from other countries, and Shylaja is not different from those who hold great admiration for the leader. What is being contradictory here is the fact that

while the Communist Party in her native country does not support the ideologies propounded by Maoist groups, the supporters and believers of the communist ideology when in Mao Zedong's Communist China pay their respects to the leader. Moreover, they consider it as a proud moment. It should also be noted that the people who are the followers of Mao's ideology are called as Maoists and are viewed as anti - nationals or terrorists by the Indian government.

The author /traveller is all praise for what China as a country has achieved over the years. Every nook and corner of the Chinese society has clear markers of having been blessed by the reforms and developmental policies of the Chinese system of governance which are predominantly based on the Left-wing thought. Likewise she has touched upon various topics related to China. Every experience narrated by Shylaja is mostly through the eyes of an admirer and the readers may get confused when reading her narration of an internationally known and discussed incident known to the world as the Tiananmen Square Massacre which took place in 1989. The outbreak of the student led protest in Beijing which demanded democracy, freedom of speech and press in China was brutally crushed by the Chinese military forces. Not only students but the ordinary citizens who came and supported the goals of the protest were also shot down. The introduction given to the book *Perspectives on Modern World History: The Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989* (2010) edited by Jeff Hay speaks on the events that triggered the brutal crackdown.

The People's Republic of China, the world's second largest Communist power, was also rattled by calls for the sorts of democratic reforms arising

elsewhere in 1989. But these calls, made mostly by university students during April, May, and June of that year in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, were violently silenced by China's government. The students' protests, which had been reinforced by tens of thousands of ordinary citizens, ended with a crackdown involving China's People's Liberation Army. The toll of those who died or were wounded in the crackdown, and the number of those arrested afterward, is still unknown. Unlike the Soviet Union or its Eastern European satellite states, China remained a one-party Communist dictatorship. (4-5)

Besides discussing the historical background and the controversies surrounding the incident, the book *Perspectives on Modern World History: The Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989* includes narratives of people who are directly or indirectly engaged/ victimised by the violent crackdown of 1989. All the narratives included in the book are speaking evidences of incident. Evidences of brutal power exercised on a group of unarmed people by a state's administration.

As many books and articles have come out discussing the incident, it could be assumed that each one may have its own political intentions and reasons to discuss such an internationally known incident. In that case, the authenticity and intention behind the book *Perspectives on Modern World History* may not also be different. The foreword given to the book states that "Each volume of *Perspectives on Modern World History* includes an array of views on events of global significance. Much of the material comes from international sources and from U.S. sources that provide extensive international coverage" (2).

For this reason, the mention of the Tiananmen Square Massacre in K. K. Shylaja's travel narrative on China is something which needs to be analysed. When she writes about the Tiananmen Square Massacre, as how the world outside knows about the incident, Shylaja writes in support of the explanation given by the state appointed professor. She quotes Professor Haishen's words on the Tiananmen Square incident. It goes like this:

Of course, enemies of China use this as an issue to defame China. What have been propagated were only exaggerated things. It is true that the protest had happened. But the party and the government had only removed the protesters. ... Unlike what was published by the western media, there was no massacre but only a forceful removal that had happened. (my trans.; 79-81)

From reading her travel narrative one can make out that K. K. Shylaja and the other members of the Indian group are convinced with the explanation given by the Chinese officials. Moreover, in addition to the explanation given by the Chinese officials, Shylaja in her narrative places the information published by the Wiki Leaks. As per the information, the then American ambassador in China, James R. Lilley had sent a telegram to America commenting on the 1989 happenings in the Tiananmen Square. The contents of the telegram too support what the state appointed Chinese professor had explained on the matter. In her narrative Shylaja writes about the whole matter. She writes:

As per the American Ambassador's telegram, the slogans raised by the protesters were of 'Democracy and transparency'. It stated that the army did not block the foreign press people from entering the square; it also stated

that the People's Liberation Army instructed the protestors not to interact with the foreigners. (my trans.; 81).

Shylaja also states that, as per the Ambassador's telegram there was only forceful removal and no massacre had happened in the place. She writes:

The message says that the when the army, which entered the square on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, asked the protestors to leave, most of them left voluntarily and the rest were transferred by force. ... At the same time, some of those who assembled outside to support the protestors set fire to the army barracks and threw bombs at the soldiers. As noted in the telegram message sent by the Ambassador the rebellion was completely over by 4<sup>th</sup> June. (my trans.; 81-82)

To show the bias of the western media Shylaja brings in another incident that happened in the same year. She says that the American military attack on Panama in 1989 which killed nearly six thousand people has not come to light or been discussed in the media like the Tiananmen incident. So in short, considering the information provided in Shylaja's narrative, one has every reason to believe that the Tiananmen Square Massacre can only be a cooked up story strategically propounded by the western capitalist media to defame China.

While Shylaja has all the freedom to believe and write about what she has learnt about the particular incident, certain things also need to be looked into. It is evident that Shylaja being an ardent follower of Communist ideology and a member of the Communist party has her own limitations to talk about a Communist country

where she is invited as an official guest. She may have her own reasons to quote the verbatim what has been explained to her by the Chinese officials. If we leave aside all the limitations of the narrator to write against what has been taught to be the truth, this travel narrative could be taken as an example of how knowledge is being constructed and deconstructed using travel narratives. Here, it can be noticed that the travel narrative on China by K. K. Shylaja literally acts as a tool for protecting the party as well as its political ideology. Travel writing represents the reality as conceived by the traveller which later is propagated through their works. Each one has their own reality to confront which might be different from what others have experienced.

Chintha Jerome's travelogue *Chankile China: Oru Chinnakkadakkariyude Cheena Yathra (Beloved China: China: A Trip to China Made by a Woman from Chinnakkada)* (2018) is yet another China travel with the same trajectories and the state guest status. Chintha Jerome herself as a follower and member of the Communist party holds various positions within and outside the party. During the time of her travel to China as per her official designation she holds the position as the Chairperson of the Youth Commission of Kerala. Chintha too describes her experience in the Mao Mausoleum much the same way it was described by K. K. Shylaja in her travelogue. In Chintha's words: "China is the dream destination for any Communist. The history of China is also the history of the growth of Communism, or maybe just like Gandhi, Mao too had also placed his signature in the minds of Indians. This might be reason behind my liking for China" (my trans.; 12). Here, Chintha's comparison of the two leaders Mahatma Gandhi and Mao

Zedong sounds awkward because both the leaders are proponents of extremely different ideologies. By trying to draw parallels between a leader who stood for non violence and a leader who believed in violence Chinthha deliberately tries to validate the deeds of Mao Zedong who was extreme in his thoughts and deeds. She then narrates her experience in the Mao mausoleum. It reads thus:

In normal circumstances, people have to stand in the queue for long hours to get a glimpse of Mao's tomb. But as invited guests of the state we got special preference to enter without standing in the queue. Mao's face was shining bright in between the electric lights. The revolutionary leader lay stretched and steady in red silk. This is the man who transformed the life history of China: transformed the lives of crores of people. I am unable to explain my state of mind. I cannot recollect what was in my mind at the moment. Was my mind stuck with the overflow of thoughts? ... with raised fists we saluted the Chairman. (my trans.; 48)

As ardent followers of Communist ideology, when K. K Shylaja and Chinthha Jerome narrate their experience about their visit to the Mao mausoleum, they express their pride in having achieved their greatest dream in life.

When we read the experiences of people especially that of the believers of the Communist ideology about visiting the Mao mausoleum where the preserved dead body of the Communist leader is kept for people to visit and pay their respect, one may start to suspect whether it is necessary to preserve the dead bodies of eminent leaders to maintain people's adherence to an ideology. However, it is understood that memories need to be saved and maintained through such concrete

objects, that witnessing such objects one may easily recollect the cultural and political incidents of the past. By writing about their experience of visiting Chairman Mao Zedong's mausoleum the ardent followers and admirers of Communism in their own way building monuments for their favourite leader.

Through their writings, they express their enthusiasm and fulfilment in visiting Mao's tomb; and they indirectly announce to the readers that they are connected to the leader which definitely is a matter of pride for them. Hence their writings are in fact monuments built in as reminiscences of a fore gone past, something to keep the memory of the public alive. In his *How Modernity Forgets* (2009) Paul Connerton states that "memorials are, admittedly, powerful places. ... the desire to memorialize is precipitated by a fear, a threat, of cultural amnesia" (27). Here we understand that the nature of the Communist party as a political system is not very different from the institutionalized religious systems. The ultimate power of the political party system is enshrined for the followers to visit and pay respect. It can also be noted that by obeying the codes of worship in the Mao mausoleum, the followers of the Communist ideology get the same satisfaction as a religious believer might get by completing a religious ritual.

Writer Paul Zakhariya renders a different observation in his travel narrative *Vazhipokkan* (Passer By) (2012), a compilation of the author's various travels across the globe. Unlike what is written in the narratives of ardent followers of China no such admiration is visible in his narrative on China. Since he doesn't comment anything on his political affiliations his attitude to the Left ideology is ambiguous in his narration. In fact he successfully maintains his role as an objective traveller. For

that reason his approach to the country appears to be considerably different from that of the ardent followers of the Communist ideology. His attitude towards Chairman Mao could be read from his own words. Zakhariya writes:

From the thousands of Tiananmen visitors a good number go to see Mao. Not because of admiration, but it is because of the universal curiosity to watch a well preserved dead body. To watch the dead body of the person who had destroyed the lives of nearly two generations. It is the same strange psychology behind watching a ghost cinema. (my trans.; 225-226).

Zakhariya with his spontaneous humour narrates his travel experience on China with at most ease. Topics ranging from sociocultural changes to the recent developments China has achieved in the economy find space in his narration.

Like K. K Shylaja, Chintha Jerome has also attempted to justify the Communist government regarding the Tiananmen incident. She brings in evidences to prove that the incident was a mere hyped up allegation created by the bourgeoisie media. In her words:

The bourgeoisie media portrays Tiananmen Square as the martyrdom of 1989's student revolt. And they have succeeded in creating such an image about Tiananmen among a larger section of the people. But from the conversations I understood that the 1989 revolt is not even a memory for the Chinese. ... For China, Tiananmen is not a space that could only be connected to the 1989 revolt. It is quite natural to have met with some faults while trying to implement a socialist democracy by the post revolutionary

governing bodies. The Chinese as a people will never support the 1989 revolt. They still believe that there were foreign interventions behind the revolt. ... Purposefully, I made friendships with the natives of different age groups and enquired about their opinions about the Tiananmen riot. Those who belong to the new generation haven't even heard about it. Hence, it should be understood that the global media syndicates strategically intervened to defame and attack Communist China. ((my trans.; 41-42)

The impressions put forward by E. K Nayanar the late Communist Leader on his China travel in 1994 also discuss the same point in his travelogue *Ente Videshayathrakal (My Foreign Travels)* published in 1998. Nayanar too went as a representative of the Communist Party from India. He too recollects his visit to the Mao mausoleum. Nayanar recollects that the sight of the Chairman Mao left him with great pride and energy. He too elaborately discusses the Tiananmen issue. Nayanar writes that when questions were asked about the Tiananmen incident the then minister of propaganda branch of China, Sheng Biyan elaborately explains that China has now learnt to deal with such defamations by the bourgeoisie media. In Nayanar's own words, "Everybody including the ones in our country has circulated the news that bloodshed had happened in Tiananmen. There is no doubt that those were only the usual speculations circulated against socialism and Communism" (my trans.; 281). He then teases the acclaimed freedom of press in America. Nayanar says: "The well celebrated freedom of press in America is actually the freedom of newspaper owners which belongs to the rich classes. ... the tycoons in the news media purchase the smaller newspapers and thereby control the whole news

networks. ... Nothing should be reported against the will of the owner” (my trans.; 167-168).

E. K. Nayanar, K. K. Shylaja and Chintha have travelled to China as official guests of the Chinese Communist Party. As active members of the party and as official guests they are supposed to follow the party bylaws. The Communist party as a political system is based on the Communist doctrines and ideology which eventually aims towards a classless society. The well organised and strictly disciplined party structure expects the members to be obedient and loyal to the party. Every deed undertaken by the members of the party has to be in favour of the party ideologies and bylaws. Any kind of revisionism within the party system without the official consent is treated as violation against rules and at any circumstance such acts will be strictly demolished. Therefore, considering the nature of the party lead governing body in China, the Tiananmen Massacre is of no wonder. That is, any kind of protest or riot which can be a threat to the party system and the party lead government will be at any cost suppressed to maintain the rule.

As per the Party Constitution of Communist Party of India (Marxist), a party member should be obedient to the party and should strictly follow the rules and regulations of the party. Any member who is found to have violated the discipline is either degraded or expelled from the party with immediate effect. The bylaws of the Party Discipline in Article XIX of the Party Constitution states that:

3. Violation of the Party Constitution and decisions of the Party as well as any other action and behaviour unworthy of a member of the Communist

Party shall constitute a breach of Party discipline and is liable to disciplinary action.

4. The disciplinary actions are: (a) Warning (b) Censure (c) Public censure (d) Removal from the post in the Party (e) Suspension from full Party membership for any period but not exceeding one year (f) Expulsion.

(Article XIX)

Something more could also be added along with this. Berlin Kunjanathan Nair's (an ardent follower of the Communist ideology) autobiography *Olicamerakal Parayathathu* (2012) (*What the Hidden Cameras didn't Tell*) also contains a note regarding the Tiananmen incident. He writes on the effects Communist parties worldwide suffered due to various revisionisms. He writes:

During the 1988-89 the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Zhao Ziyang, encouraged student riots in Beijing and brought the country to the brink of counter- revolution. But Deng Xiaoping, the supreme leader of the party and military forces had sent the army and suppressed the student rebellion; thereby saving Chinese socialism. (my trans.; 178)

Nair further states in parenthesis that, "(The communist party of India removed P. Govinda Pilla from the party State Committee as a warning against writing an article justifying the counter-revolution as the advancement of democracy in China.)" (my trans.; 178). Such a comment by a revered member of the communist party speaks volumes regarding the unfortunate happening. That is, whatever be the situation, members of the party system are expected to stand with party policies thereby

securing the party. Considering the party's bylaws and the statements made in the travel narratives of K. K Shylaja and Chintha Jerome the reader can fairly suspect the validity of their opinions on the Tiananmen Square incident.

The Malayali solo female traveller Anjaly Thomas's travelogue *There are No Gods in North Korea* (2016), a compilation of her various travels through North Korea, Mangolia, Turkey, Africa etc. contains a section on the author's travel experience in China. Anjaly's narrative is entirely different from that of the narratives written out of the state sponsored travels conducted by K. K Shylaja and Chintha Jerome. Anjaly Thomas goes to China as a mere traveller. With nobody to offer help and with a very complex language to cope with and above all the unfriendly attitude of the Chinese people Anjaly feels exhausted in the country. Without any admiration for China and with no burdens of sponsorship she sums up her travel narrative with all the disregard she feels for the country. However, what should be noted of her narrative is that she concludes it with no mention of anything on the Tiananmen Square Massacre. She says: "Briefly I considered a life of teaching English in China but the heat soon put an end to that thought. Passing out on sidewalks in Tiananmen Square was not really a great start to a career of teaching in Chinese schools" (177). Anjaly Thomas, as a person who is so vocal about her experiences opts not to comment anything on the Tiananmen Square issue makes her narrative all the more noteworthy. Her silence in this matter speaks for itself and keeps her narrative open-ended.

To examine the point further, it would be worthwhile to discuss travel narratives written on China which discuss the incident of the Tiananmen Square.

When cruelty is justified and truth itself is challenged it is better to look upon other narratives which show different facets of the same story. Pallavi Aiyar's *Smokes and Mirrors: An Experience of China* (2008) is one such book that discusses her travel and stay in China. Pallavi Aiyar, who is a correspondent of *The Hindu*, went to work in the Beijing Broadcasting Institute. She was there to teach English Broadcasting to TV journalists. The five year stay in the country (2002-2007) took her to writing a book on China. In the book Pallavi renders a different version of the Tiananmen incident. When she asked her students in the fifteenth anniversary of the incident, Pallavi was astonished to learn that even the top achievers among her students were not able describe the details of what happened in Tiananmen Square in 1989. They only said that such incidents should not be repeated again. Aiyar says:

The consensus appeared to be that the students back in 1989 had been misled by a few ringleaders who had their own interests rather than those of the community in mind when acting to fuel 'trouble' thus 'forcing' the government's hand. Once again, I was confronted with a situation in which my brightest students presented what was in fact official propaganda as self-drawn and carefully considered conclusions of their own. (Aiyar 248-249)

This can be taken as an example of how state using its repressive power strategically controls the questioning minds of people. Chintha Jerome says in her travelogue that native Chinese have not even heard of the incident. It is not surprising to learn that in a country where media is strictly kept under check such an internationally discussed incident is unknown to the natives.

Here, Chinthas and K. K. Shylajas supportive gesture towards the Chinese state authorities regarding the Tiananmen Square incident can be well comprehended as a gesture of support from the devoted followers and admirers of the Communist ideology who are at any cost expected to render their support to the institutionalized political system they are imbibed into. As persons who are into the institutionalized authoritarian system their own individuality is kept under control. Such is the functioning nature of the institutionalized political system in which K. K. Shylaja and Chinthas Jerome are members. As a political party with an institutionalised frame work its members are expected to be obedient to the system. The institutionalized system which functions as the supreme authority cancels the agency of the personal self. The members within such a system are conditioned accordingly to fit to the dogma. The individual opinions, desires and emotions of the members are suppressed to fit to the larger frame work of the institutionalized system. The authoritarian decisions thereby taken by the institution has a strong hold over the individual psyche of those who are in the system. Here, being members of an institutionalized party system K. K Shylaja and Chinthas Jerome are expected to go along with the party decisions, which is the supreme authority.

The inclusion of women in the official group to visit China, however, should be appreciated as a mark of the party's outlook towards gender sensitizing. The publication of K. K. Shylajas and Chinthas Jeromes travel books on China was carried out by Chinthas Publishers, the official publishing group of the Communist party of Kerala is also noticeable. Publications produced from the group would have to be in favour of the political ideology and the party system. Hence highlighting the

success achieved by the party monitored system of governance and social life in China, both K. K. Shylaja and Chintha through their narratives try to break the stigmas propagated against Communist China. The Tiananmen incident and the justification given by K. K. Shylaja and Chintha Jerome can thus be viewed as a gesture of support rendered towards a system which is being targeted by the Capitalist imperialist media. The disclaimer given by the Chintha Publishers to both these travel narratives too is worthwhile noticing. The publisher's note given for Chintha Jerome's book reads thus:

There was a time when China was considered as a closed society. Whatever happens within the great wall is considered as strange. The capitalist world was shocked when China became the largest economic power in the world. ... China was able to achieve success and development in almost every field. Today China has turned to be as place where people can freely come and go. This book is about the travel of a woman who hails from Chinnakkada, a place where China had kept trade and cultural exchanges from ancient time onwards. (my trans.; 8)

Here, when the publisher is trying to normalize the travel of Chintha Jerome by mentioning it as a 'travel of a woman from Chinnakkada' one can understand that the 'woman' mentioned is not a civilian but Chintha Jerome, who was the Chairperson of the Youth Commission of Kerala. Unlike a simple civilian she has travelled with all the privileges her position and party provides. Since Chintha is the member of the Communist Party and somebody who holds a very responsible position in the governing body led by the Left wing government, it is quite clear that

as a selected member of the travel group from Kerala to China her travel will not be like any other civilian travelling to China. Besides, she goes to China as the invited state guest.

The publisher's note given to K. K. Shylaja's travel narrative is also not very different from the publisher's note given to Chintha Jerome's travel narrative. In Shylaja's travel narrative the publisher clearly declares that this book has incorporated the explanations given by the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and hence, this book could provide direction for those who wish to study about the reformations that are happening in China. It is understood that both K. K. Shylaja and Chintha Jerome are travellers who are privileged with facilities provided by the Communist party and the state government.

Every individual exists amidst several power structures. Every deed of a person is made in accordance with the rules propounded by the respective systems in power. That is, when the traveller/ writer is answerable to the system or systems the narrative or the knowledge gathered or created out of his/her travels tend to be supportive of the power structures he/she may belong to. In other words, the narrative performance has to suit the rules of the system. Therefore such travel narratives that may act as mouth pieces of the system can be considered as apparatuses that stand in favour of the authority. Mary Louise Pratt in her landmark study *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) opines that travel writings that are produced in favour of the empire were performing as the "ideological apparatuses" of the empire (23). Here, these travel narratives are

functioning as mouth pieces of the Communist political system against those external elements that may question its authority.

### **III. Travels Taken up for the Gratification of One's Admiration and Fascination**

Apart from the travels undertaken for the sake of one's religious and ideological beliefs, there are travels which are undertaken for the traveller's personal interests. This section of the chapter is on travels that are undertaken to reach destinations which have long been the focus of an intense admiration and desire of the traveller. The admiration can be towards a writer, actor, performer, sports person, magician, culinary expert, painter or anybody of that kind whom the traveller had knowledge of through texts or performances. The reasons behind such admirations might be too personal and sometimes cannot be defined even by the admirer. Travelling to Mother Theresa's home or to see a pop star or a film star or anybody or anything for that matter can be inspired by a variety of reasons. These travels may or may not have acceptance within the society. These travels are influenced by factors such as gender, age, class, caste and the religion of the traveller. There are travels that are of extremely secretive nature that the traveller never discloses to anyone. Though there can be exceptions, only those travels which have acceptance within the socio cultural space to which the traveller may belong is going to see the light.

Women's travel narratives which contain expressions of desires, worship, admiration etc. are specially appreciable as they never let their desires fade away despite the odds. These narratives are expressions of determined minds who chased

their dreams. In that case this particular visit acquires the status of a pilgrimage. When the acclaimed Indian English writer Anita Nair sets forth on a journey to visit the acclaimed writer Hans Christian Anderson's home in Denmark she says the whole endeavour felt like a pilgrimage to her. She narrates about this experience in her travel narrative "Hans Christian Andersoninte Vettil" ("In the House of Hans Christian Anderson") which is taken from her own travelogue *Kakke Kakke Koodevide* (2018), a compilation of her travel experiences from various places across the globe. The physical belongings of the writer invoked her childhood memories as she wonders about the writer's magic behind the creation of such captivating characters admired by children around the world. She remembers that at the age of six years with very lean legs and heavily framed spectacles she used to think of herself as yet another 'Ugly Duckling'. Anita writes:

Now that I am on a pilgrimage to see the house of the person who wrote that story. ... Who knows from where all these stories are created? Which all paths the author had travelled before the birth of these stories? As a writer I am always curious to know about other writer's lives. I felt like knowing about Hans Christian Anderson's life. (my trans.; 28)

When after getting into those tiny rooms in his small home where Anderson had spent his childhood from two to fourteen years of age Anita Nair says she felt exactly the same when she visited Jane Austen's home in England and that the silence she felt in Austen's house and the one in Anderson's house felt the same.

Conversely, having not been able to visit a place where one had long wished to go is quite disappointing. Vidhu Vincent, a journalist turned film maker, in her

travel book *Daivam Olivil Poya Nalukal: Oru German Yathranubhavam (The Days When God Went Hiding: A German Travel Experience)* (2019) shares one such experience. Her visit to Germany to meet her sister who is residing in the country gives her an opportunity to visit the birth place of Karl Marx. A friend had asked her to bring him/her a handful of soil from Trier, a place near the banks of river Moselle, the birthplace of Marx. However to her disappoint her plan to visit Marx's birthplace didn't work out. Her affinity towards Karl Marx and the Communist ideology is evident in her words. She writes:

However, not being able to go all the way was too disappointing. The birthplace of the man who pitched the ideological project that turned the world upside down. Then who am I? Coming from a place ruled by the Communist party, which was the first in the world to have come to power through ballot on the heels of this ideology. Even if the ideology has failed in their own country, many people in many countries would have wanted to follow that thought process. A name that always excites those fighting for their labour rights. ... A place I want to go someday. What to do? All my dreams are in vain. ... I thought I would go home and boast to some friends that I had seen Marx's place, but nothing happened. (my trans.; 27)

While Vidhu Vincent's narration is about her disappointment in not being able to fulfil her wish of visiting the birth place of Karl Marx and the Communist ideology, A. Nabeesathu Beevi's travelogue, *Boston Tea Party* (2015) describes her excitement in having able to experience a historical place she long wished to visit.

Though the book *Boston Tea Party* (2015) contains descriptions of the author's travels to various places in America and Canada her preference in naming the book *Boston Tea Party* denotes her personal interest and affiliation towards Boston where the historical incident Boston Tea Party had taken place. Nabeesathu Beevi being a professor of History, it was her long-cherished dream to visit the place where the historical incident Boston Tea Party had actually taken place. Even during her post graduate days as a student of History she was so fond of learning about this historical incident which marked a turning point in the American War of Independence. In the preface to the book she says "As a teacher who had studied and taught World History giving emphasis to the American history I always had the desire to see the background places where American historical events took place" (my trans.; 5).

So when the plan to visit her daughter's family who resides in the United States came on her way she was so determined to visit the place Boston where the historical incident Boston Tea Party had taken place. In her own words, "When it was almost sure that I can go to America, it was my wish that I have to go and see Boston, the place where the historical event had taken place" (my trans.; 31).

Later when all her travel memoirs got published in the form of a travelogue she couldn't think of any name other than *Boston Tea Party* for her travel book. From her choice of title to the book it is understood that it was a travel towards a place which was of great influence in her life. The satisfaction Nabeesathu Beevi experiences for reaching a place where she long wished to visit could be seen as the fulfilment of her long cherished dream. By visiting a place where the author

/traveller had maintained deep connections in her psyche, knowingly or unknowingly she experiences an identification with the incident that has happened in the past as well with the people who participated in that historical incident.

K. M. Jameela's *Shakespeareante Naattil* (2015) (*In the Land of Shakespeare*) is yet another travel narrative which holds expression of the author/traveller's admiration towards William Shakespeare, arguably the world's greatest playwright of all time. Though the narrative contains descriptions of her visit to places which are famous for world renowned writers and poets like Wordsworth, Charles Dickens, she bestows her book with the title which proclaims her admiration for the great writer. In the book she elaborately describes her experience of having visited the museum which preserves the memory of the bard. Jameela writes:

We entered a large hall with many inscriptions on the walls and shelves containing information about Shakespeare's writing methods and works. Through the journey along these sights, we get to know Shakespeare, the world's greatest writer. For more information, we have the documentary about his daughter and the comments made by many prominent people can be heard and felt. (my trans.; 157)

She then goes to visit the house where Shakespeare was born, grew up and emerged as a world renowned writer. She writes: "When I heard that it was the house where Shakespeare was born and grew up, spent his childhood running around with childhood mischief, had written enough to rise to the level of a universal writer, I was thrilled" (my trans.; 157).

When Shakespeare plays are adapted into varied forms of art and literature across the globe, Shakespeare continues to remain a cultural icon of colonialism internalised by people around the world. Thomas Cartelli in his book *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* (1999) observes that “Shakespeare is “refashioned” outside the national boundaries of British culture and society “in the image” of cultures and societies seeking either to establish their independence from imperial influence or to identify, define, and assert their own national values or priorities” (3).

At a time when almost every region/space is available in the virtual form as videos or photographs, it is the desire to experience the physicality with all its smell and texture that makes an experience special enough to be remembered and written about. The argument put forward by Dick et al. in their article “Multimodal Ethnography” goes along with what has been perceived as the limitations of such images. Dick et al. argues that, “Photographs allow us to see modes that are visual: colour, shape, size, position, light. What they do not show us are modes that operate through the other senses - of touch, smell, hearing and taste - such as bodily movement, texture, three-dimensional shape, sounds” (88). Hence, the involvement of the body with all its senses while getting to know and experience is all what matters here. That is, the whole experience turns out to be a corporeal endeavour. As per Merleau Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) the experiences which are derived out of one’s lived body is what makes the completion of the person’s self. In Ponty’s own words: “My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my

‘comprehension’” (273). It is through one’s lived body that one experiences different terrains, ultimate destination points, tastes, smells, colours etc. That is, the traveller is becoming part of what she is experiencing. In other words, the traveller establishes a personal connection with her own self and the self of the worshipped.

Here, Vidhu Vincent, A. Nabeesathu Beevi and K. M. Jameela never acknowledge their travels as pilgrimages, but their affinity and worship towards the places they wish to visit is quite evident in their narration. Even though as people who belong to different socio cultural spaces, the common ground they share as writers/lovers of literature, worshippers of the domains and followers of ideologies prompts them to take up travels, just to experience such ultimate entities.

The travelogues written on certain places have deeper psychological connections in the traveller’s mind for the places the traveller or the pilgrim confronts is pre- known to them through respective texts and stories connected with the particular place. By undertaking travels to such places the traveller gets a feeling of accomplishment. They are able to make use of the opportunity that came their way and tried to fulfil their long cherished dreams.

#### **IV. Dark Travels /Dark Pilgrimages**

In the fourth section of the chapter, I look into Kshema K. Thomas’s “Andaman - Ekanthathaykumappuram” (“Andaman: Beyond the Solitude”), Indu Menon’s “Mruthyuvinte Shayyagruhathil” (“In the Home Where Death Sleeps”) (2012), a travel narrative on the author’s experience of visiting the Catacomb in Paris and Vidhu Vincent’s *Daivam Olivil Poya Nalukal: Oru German*

*Yathranubhavam (The Days When God Went Hiding: A German Travel Experience)*

(2019) written from the author's experience of visiting the concentration camps in Dachau, Germany. Both Indu Menon's and Kshema K. Thomas's travel narratives are taken from the anthology *Athens Muthal Haridwar Vare (From Athens to Haridwar)* (2015) edited by Saji Varghese.

While the other three sections of this chapter dealt with travel narratives that speak of the traveller's worship, admiration and fascination towards an ultimate and ideal matter to be worshipped, this section is about the author/traveller's confrontations with the ultimate truth of life, that is death. So this section is all about the author/traveller's experiences on visiting places/spaces that have a close affiliation with death- the ultimate truth of life. Before analysing the travel narratives it is important to look into matters that constitute a place or space to be looked upon as a site that is connected with death.

Changes are always there in the air. Changes can occur to anything, anywhere or to anyone. Changes can happen expectedly or unexpectedly. Some will be for the good and some for the bad. A sudden and unexpected happening that has totally shattered something is viewed as a disaster. Be it an accident, a death, a massacre, mutiny, calamity, war or anything for that matter which has created fuss over lives are always remembered as incidents that have happened unexpectedly. Time is then divided accordingly as before and after with respect to the incident. After the well known incidents like the attacks on Hiroshima, Nagasaki, September 11<sup>th</sup>, time was divided into a pre and a post incident world. Victories, defeats and disasters generally are marked in history in the form of monumental constructions.

The identity of the place is affected by the incident that has happened and later on the place is going to be known for the incident. It should also be noted that monuments and memorials will be erected in memory depending upon their political relevance. Human emotions and memories get engaged with these memorials and museums which have come out as memorabilia of these incidents. Those deemed worthy by the ruling class will only be memorialized; some memories are thus purposely erased out. But it is a fact that whether monuments are constructed or not, memories of certain incidents will never fade from people's memories. Such memories will be impinged in the collective memories of people forever. The place or location where the disastrous incident has happened thus becomes a site to be remembered and hence visited. In other words, this place becomes a site to be travelled which can be categorised as a dark or depressive site depending upon the attitude and approach of the traveller. In his article "The Geographies of Thanatourism" Tony Johnston observes that "When a deathscape is consumed by an outsider, thanatourism occurs" (23). In other words death is being commodified. While the idea of tourism is generally considered as travels for pleasure, Peter Bishop in his article "To Witness and Remember Mapping Reconciliation Travel" observes that visiting the darker side of places in between a pleasure trip "may be just macabre curiosity, a desire to rub up against a marker of big history, or a counter to being caught in a tourism package, a desperate attempt to find authenticity" (Bishop 193).

While any incident may have different facets, people's approach towards each incident can be different with regard to the socio cultural, religious beliefs and

ideologies. In the article “Shedding Light on Dark Tourism: An Introduction”

Richard Sharpley states that,

Although it is the death of an individual or group of people that is the initial driver, it is the collective celebration, remembrance or mourning that is the dominant factor. Thus, dark tourism becomes pilgrimage, or a journey followed by the experience of ‘communitas’, either at ‘one-off’ events such as the funeral of Princess Diana or at annual celebrations like the anniversary of Elvis Presley’s death at Graceland. Such play may also be sensed rather than actual, in as much as an individual pilgrimage to, say, the grave of a celebrity is given extra meaning by the knowledge that many others have shared, and will share, the same experience. (18)

People have their own preferences and interests behind each of their travels. A person travelling to a particular geographical region may have his /her own preferences. Travel writings on sites that can be categorised as dark is a segment in the travel writing genre which gains attention in the academic circles. Justin D. Edwards in his essay “Dark Tourism” states that visiting places of death, disaster, destruction and human suffering is often referred to as dark tourism. Such tourist attractions include a wide range of dark places: battlegrounds, sites of atrocities, massacres and genocides, natural and accidental disasters, slave forts and prisons, as well as the locations of murder or violent crime (308).

In their article “Souvenirs in Dark Tourism: Emotions and Symbols,” Jenny Cave and Dorina Buda opines that emotions in tourism are crucial in that they affect the ways we travel and how we interact with others, with places, with material

culture, and with ‘things’ (716). Dorina Maria Buda has something more to add to this point. She notes that “the concept of affective tourism has been put forth to refer to ‘the ways in which affects, emotions, and feelings are accessed, felt, experienced and performed in encounters between touring bodies and places’” (qtd. in Cave and Buda 716 ).

Conceptualising the nature of sites/regions where dark tourism and travels of the kind may occur, Jenny Cave and Dorina Buda observe that a kind of dark souveniring also occurs along with such regions. That is, places of on-going socio-political turmoil, post-disaster sites, recent and ancient heritage sites, battlefields, submerged and land-based archaeological sites, post-war cemeteries, sites of infamous murders, sites of staged horror such as Dracula’s castle and imagined movie versions are the sites that can induce people’s fascination for fear and death (718).

The increase in visiting sites of death, decay and disaster, natural and manmade calamities work as evidence towards the growing interest in tourism that can be categorised as dark. Richard Sharpley opines that it can be for “the fascination not being in death itself but in the broader context within which death occurs” (18). For the curiosity about the mysteries associated with death, people take up travels to places which are considered as sites of death or disaster. Tony Seaton in her article “Purposeful Otherness: Approaches to the Management of Thanatourism” notes that “The otherness of death has been an important element in travel throughout history. Medieval pilgrimages were substantially journeys to death sites and relic viewing” (84).

Here, through their travel narratives Kshema K. Thomas, Indu Menon and Vidhu Vincent are conveying their experiences of getting in close contact with the ultimate truth of life, that is death. Considering the peculiar nature of the places they have visited their travels can also be put into the category of dark travels. In other words, all the three women may have approached the respective sites with the mindset of a pilgrim who is disciplined and consistent to pay homage for the departed souls.

Kshema K. Thomas's "Andaman -Ekanthathaykumappuram" ("Andaman - Beyond Solitude") is a travel narrative taken from the anthology of travel narratives *Athens Muthal Haridwar Vare* (2013). Herself a poet who writes in Malayalam, the author/traveller describes her visit to the Cellular Jails of Andaman Nicobar islands, the place that is marked in history of Indian freedom struggle. While the thought of visiting an island gives her feeling of loneliness, the thought of visiting the Cellular jails gives her a terror filled lonely feeling. But what is to be noted is besides her anxiety of visiting the jails that were infamous for extreme cruelty and punishment, she experiences a mixed feeling of fear and admiration. Kshema writes:

A place founded by the British to lock up the expelled Indian freedom fighters might be the reason why Andaman appears as a dreadful island of seclusion in my mind. When I headed for Andaman, for some reason my mind was disturbed with the feeling that I am going to a mysterious and strange place. A pilgrimage to the sacred soil that was drenched in the blood of fighters. (my trans.; 149)

Getting close to the grounds where the freedom fighters had lost their lives gives a proud moment for the traveller whose memory is filled with the history of the freedom struggle. The feelings of pride and oneness could be read out from this narrative. Though such places can be counted as sites associated with the dead, people who have historical and emotional connections with the place may find themselves as pilgrims who have great affiliations to this particular site.

Kshema says that entering one such prison cell she literally experienced the terror of being alone in a strange and secluded prison cell: “Even as a mere onlooker too an unbearable loneliness covered me ... heard the heavy sound of the boots. The filthy language of the British. The ghost which has never left the Indian” (my trans.; 152). Here, the Cellular Jails of Andaman Nicobar islands are in fact a battlefield where many freedom fighters have lost their lives. So somebody who maintains close connection with the incidents that have happened in the past may feel the site for a sacred space. Hence, the experience can be felt almost like visiting a pilgrimage spot. Frank Baldwin and Richard Sharpley in their article “Battlefield Tourism: Bringing Organised Violence Back to Life” observes that “Battlefield pilgrimages can be defined as travelling for remembering with the focus on the spiritual and emotional experience of visiting graves and memorials” (194).

Here, Kshema literally experiences the terror the young inmates have once undergone inside the jail. She writes: “Mind suddenly throbbed when I read the very old board ‘Cellular Jail’. As if time has gone towards the past within a moment. The construction of the Cellular Jail was completed in 1960. The three storied jail is now known as the pilgrim spot of freedom fighters” (150). She then goes to visit the

inner space of the Cellular jail which holds all the memories of all the mysterious incidents from the past. She writes about the experience:

Went to see the hang room first. The invisible presence of the innocent souls who have been hanged was still felt in the room. The bodies went straight from the gallows to the underground cell. Went down the stairs and looked into the cellar. Was not sure whether it was the reflection of my state of mind or not. A lot of terror was felt. (my trans.; 151)

Visiting such a place of historical importance the traveller is getting connected to the bygone past. By being in the historical site where she maintains deep connections in her psyche she was in fact experiencing the chills and horrors of death too.

Indu Menon's "Mruthyuvinte Shayyagruhathil" ("In the Home bed Where Death Sleeps") is a travel narrative with a difference. The choice of the place the traveller opts to visit makes the travel and its subsequent narrative all the more special and bizarre. Indu Menon has chosen to visit the Catacombs in Paris, a cemetery, or in other words an ossuary which not everyone will prefer to go for in a flamboyant place like Paris. Other than as a hub of serious thoughts and intellectuals, Paris, the envied city of the world is also known for its perfumes, fashion, art and everything that is connected with glamour, pleasure and wonder. The stark contrast of choice in preferring an ossuary over a world filled with life and colour makes this travel all the more special.

The curiosity to know and experience the mysteries connected with death quite often drives people to places like cemeteries or ghost ridden places. Here, the

writer /traveller's curiosity towards death and its aftermaths may have driven her to such an eerie place. Such experiences are revealed through her narration.

Haa ..death, death, mania of death... all the four of us shivered out of terror by the very sight of this underground tomb. The death home of about a six crore people. There were no walls...instead bones were stacked. ... rows of skulls kept in the shape of heart. Pond of knee caps, towers made out of hip and thigh bones, sculpture shapes made with backbones ... somewhere around altars for sacrifices. The sacred yet frightening sight of the cross. Pictures of ghost on walls, dialogues of death.. oh...! what an experience. To get down in the cemetery pit before the arrival of death. I could smell the fungus from the decayed bones. Those infinite number of souls who were crying have invisibly set blocks before me. My own shadow turned ghostly in the pale yellow light emitted from the lemon bulbs. I was shocked. (my trans.; 121-122)

The narrative captures the fearful fascination the writer holds for the mysterious entity of death. To experience the mysteries that death beholds and to get closer to the mortal remains of the once so alive bodies is all that she wishes to do in the ossuary. In other words Indu Menon with all the bodily senses of her lived body wishes to experience the remains of the once so alive and active bodies. The excitement in getting a closer view of the ultimate truth gives pleasurable sensations to the corporeal senses of the traveller. Hence, her joy could be taken as an expression of some mysterious pleasure she experiences for having come face to face with ultimate truth of life, that is 'death'.

People who are curious to know what happens after death come in large numbers to visit this place. In other words the curiosity behind the mystery of death attracts people to visit such places. That is, “the otherness of death is the central, distinctive and compelling element of thanatourism” (Seaton 84). From the narrative it is understood that the authorities /keepers of the Catacombs have maintained the ambience efficiently to suit its purpose of aiding the visitors to experience unknown terror.

Here, the author/traveller’s libidinal instinct for death, the thanatos might be the reason behind her joy while standing in between the artistically arranged bones and the skulls of dead humans as she writes, “the intoxication of death ... fear of death ... my secret affinity for death. ... I became confused about the relation between birth and death. From darkness to darkness. From cold to cold. I opened my mouth for breath like an infant who cried silently. I asked myself whether there is anything more intoxicating than death” (125-126).

In his article “Thanatourism: A Comparative Approach” Erik Cohen theorizes one’s fascination for death. He states, “1. Human life is a once-only event; 2. Death is an inevitable terminal point of individual life, the point of the ontological cessation of individual existence; 3. There is no afterlife, either as eternal life or as rebirth; 4. Hence, death is meaningless; there is no hope” (158). Hence in his opinion, “under these premises, thanatouristic sites offer a potential opportunity for thanatopsis. That is, the contemplation of one’s own death, and its stoical acceptance, without striving to overcome it by some act of faith or belief” (158).

Considering all these explanations given the fearful fascination people have towards death as an entity, certain thoughts could be read out from Indu Menon's narrative that she too is trying to convey certain truths which are related to life. In other words her narrative on the experience of the hysterical intoxication she gets at seeing the artistically arranged skulls and skeletons in the ossuary could be taken as an outcry against a world which is so keen to subjugate and exploit the weaker set for its own benefits. Her expression of joy over experiencing the dark and gloomy inside of an ossuary in a flamboyant city like that of Paris can be taken as expressions of a revengeful state of mind she has in her subconscious. The common history of subjugation which is imbibed in the collective unconscious shared by the female psyche might be the reason why the author as a woman gets into such an intoxicated excitement. By detailing her experience of getting close to the mortal remains of human life, Indu tries to convey the universal truth that however strong and powerful one might be, nobody is going to escape from the final destiny, that is death, the ultimate truth of life. Since imprints of personal elements could be read out from her narration as it becomes all the more self-revelatory for a travel narrative.

Vidhu Vincent, a journalist turned film maker narrates her travel and stay in Germany in a style not typically seen in the genre of travel writing. Vidhu goes to Germany on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2013 to stay with her sister in Germany. Her stay of two months extends her expeditions to the Nazi concentration camps as she ends up writing a travelogue *Daivam Olivil Poya Nalukal: Oru German Yathranubhavam* (2019). Along with writing she adorns her narrative with interesting and catchy

sketches that she herself has drawn. The use of two different mediums simultaneously to express her mind makes the narrative all the more special. This intermedial quality gives the book the impression of a partly graphic travelogue.

In the travelogue *Daivam Olivil Poya Nalukal* the author skilfully combines drawing and writing to bring in the horrors of a forgotten past created by a fascist regime. Since Vidhu's visit to Dachau, the notoriously infamous concentration camp in Nazi Germany, is the focus of the book the illustrations she done in black and white goes well along with her writing as it aptly expose the terrors of the past. For all the agony and anxiety she expresses over her own country's present situation, her narrative in fact acquires the status of a socio- political critique. In the preface of the book she shares her anxiety when she happens to see the billboards of India's sixteenth Lok Sabha election. A new image of nationalism towards building a new India has been painted on the billboards. She writes:

Seeing the Nazi regime and its horrors as part of memory and guilt of the people and a nation that wants to forget, the images imprinted in the mind take on new meanings when seeing these nationalist billboards. The rise of fascism and nationalism in its early days and the people who are forced to bear it think about what happened in Germany, which may be repeated in our soil like a farce. (my trans; 9)

The travelogue *Daivam Olivil Poya Nalukal: Oru German Yathranubhavam* is divided into three sections with subtitles: 1. "Njangaleyonnum Ormippikkaruth Please" ("Please Do Not Remind Us"), 2. "Njagalenthupizhachu? Ellam Hitler Cheythathalle?" ("What did We Do Wrong? Isn't Hitler the one who did

everything?") and 3. "Ormakal Avaseshippichathu" (Remains of the Memories").

Her choice of name for the book *Daivam Olivil Poya Nalukal: Oru German Yathranubhavam (The Days When God Went Hiding: A German Travel Experience)* is apt as no better name could have matched with the nature and theme of the narrative which holds the terror of an era which literally destroyed the lives of many.

The first portion of the travelogue deals with the experiences of her stay and short trips in Germany. She visits the nearby groceries, bakeries and pubs etc. She then goes to a German friend's house in Aubing, a village which is situated outside Munich. The second and third sections of the book deal with her visit to Dachau, the notoriously infamous concentration camp in Nazi Germany. She has also added excerpts from other books to substantiate the terror of torture bestowed upon a certain group of people to satisfy the wrath of Fuhrer and his Nazi army. In the beginning of the book Vidhu says that she is not a writer or an artist, but it is that she has used both the mediums of writing and drawing simultaneously to convey the readers what she felt about a place which is marked in history for the blood chilling incidents that took place. How a nation got crushed and destroyed through the evil thoughts of brutal leader is very well rendered through Vidhu's captivating strokes and writing.

When Vidhu, herself, a trained journalist, says that it was very difficult for her to overcome the trauma of witnessing the mortal remains she happened to see in Dachau her writing goes much beyond her journalistic insights. In her own words:

It became quite late when I came back from Dachau. Tiredness felt from a full day's walk ... but still not able to sleep. The disturbances and

suffocation caused by witnessing those lives that are crushed away by a Fascist regime. Each sight constantly reminds of the kind of vigilance that is required against the authoritative power structures. (my trans; 73)

The experience of travels to those historical sites that were once used as killing camps, places the narrative into the category of dark travels. What is to be noted is that when there are other options of travel which can provide pleasant experiences what prompted Vidhu to choose such a place to visit is a question that answers itself while reading about the trauma she underwent after visiting the Dachau concentration camp. Reading the experience of watching the physical remains of the people who were severely tortured to death leaves the reader too in the traumatic vortex created by the place.

At this juncture, Vidhu's method of narration has to be brought to attention. Vidhu begins her book commenting on Gunter Grass's book *From Germany to Germany*. She writes:

The book I held in between the travels was that of the German writer, Gunter Grass. The book *From Germany to Germany* is the diary script that Grass wrote in 1990. During the 1989, the turbulent political situation after the demolition of the Berlin Wall, Grass has travelled to and fro both in East and West Germany to know about people's reactions, these notes are about Grass's investigations on the matter. The book was given to me by a friend who thought that I should read it and get a little prepared before leaving. (my trans.; 15)

She says the very book also led to the acquaintance with Herman, a German fellow traveller. To Herman's questions whether she knew Grass except as a writer, and how can the writer's political background be not considered to read him (Grass was a member of the Hitler youth generation and the S.S., the paramilitary organisation of the Nazi party), Vidhu answers him that except for a few books like *The Tin Drum*, *Cat and Mouse*, *Peeling the Onion* (memoir) etc. she doesn't have much knowledge about Grass's works. She also reveals to him about the special liking she has for the charcoal sketches of Grass. Even after knowing about Grass's Nazi connection she counters Herman by stating it was not necessary to consider the political background to read a writer.

Vidhu's unique and genuine bold strokes in black and white in the book *Daivam Olivil* complement her prose. However, the note on Gunter Grass's *Germany to Germany* in the beginning pages of her book and the mention of her liking for the charcoal sketches of Gunter Grass may give chances for the reader to think of Grass's charcoal sketches and his unique method of narration using different mediums. Grass compiled his prose, poetry and drawings together to complete one book. The use of this method is quite visible in his books *Germany to Germany*, *Peeling the Onion* (2006), *Show Your Tongue* (1988) etc. In addition to these factors something more has to be mentioned on Vidhus's book. That is, her two months of stay in Germany, her traumatic and confused state of mind after her visit to the death camps of Dachau and the graphic representations along with prose etc. may sometimes remind the reader of Gunter Grass's *Show Your Tongue*, a literary and visual diary of Grass's five months stay in Calcutta in the year 1986.

The book *Show Your Tongue* which is a mixed media work of his prose, drawings and a lengthy poem put together is the reflection of the author's experience in Calcutta. In her article "Gunter Grass's Apocalyptic Visions" Monika Shafi observes that the text is typical Western expression of "third world misery-reporting" (120). About the book Monika Shafi writes that "In text and images, *Show Your Tongue* presents Calcutta and India as dark, gloomy and overwhelming, as spaces of abject poverty, hopelessness and incomprehension" (120). The richly illustrated folio *Five Decades: An Account from the Workshop* (2004) which marks the artist - writer that Grass has always been, contains remarks on the illustrations he has done in *Show Your Tongue*. In the folio Grass has commented on his red-chalk drawings and messy black-brown ink washes which he used to portray Calcutta in *Show Your Tongue*. He writes: "Calcutta stayed with me for a long time. In my new studio ... I drew with stinking octopus ink. ... This natural black bleeding to sepia was just right for the scenes of Calcutta, also for the written words which were derived from the drawings" (qtd. in Schade 174).

Through her graphic travel narrative Vidhu indirectly signals a warning to people who are at the brim of certain situations. She says such situations can at any time acquire the nature and form of fascism. When she returns from Germany with the traumatic memories of the Dachau concentration camp, to her astonishment, what she witnesses in her native country are the very slogans which were once the trademark of the Nazi regime creating terror to a great majority of people who belonged to the country. She writes:

I returned to Kerala while the country and the city were making preparations to welcome the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections. Competition between political parties to spread new slogans and posters could be seen all over the roads. I happened to notice one of the posters put up by the Bharatiya Janata Party appealing for votes for the Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi. On the poster it read, 'One leader, one people, one nation' - the slogan that had been circulating among the people since the Nazis took power in Germany, suppressing all voices of opposition. A shudder ran through my body as I remembered how blatantly the Sangh Parivar forces including Modi started using the life mantra of the Nazi ideological plan. (my trans.; 126)

When the slogan 'One leader, one people, one nation' is propagated in a multicultural and multilingual country like that of India, it attains the nature of fascism. The political dimension of the book is quite clear when she connects her country's present day situations to a dreadful bygone past of another country. The book in fact acts as a warning against a turbulent future which awaits India considering the present political situations of the country.

Though all the three travel narratives I have mentioned in this section are about different spaces and different time periods, all of them share a common feature. That is, all three works in one way or the other are narrating confrontations with the different facets of death that have happened at different time zones in history. In fact, they have travelled to regions and spaces to experience the most dreaded. Thus the ultimate chill and horrors which stands in contrast to the halo of life are brought into their narratives of travel. While the generalised idea associated

with travels are meant for relaxation and enjoyment, the idea of deliberately being in spaces/ places and experiencing the tediousness is something odd.

It can be concluded that the travel narratives included in this chapter can be viewed as testimonies of fulfilment and achievement by women who were able to do justice to their own selves by making their ardent desires happen. By travelling and experiencing such ultimate terrains of their beliefs, desires, admirations, fascinations and fears, they are in a way proving to themselves and others that they too have desires to satisfy and are in no way incapable of chasing their dreams. Women's travels to satisfy their own desires, hence become political acts that stand against those power structures that control and subjugate women's selfhood. Through their travels they get to realise their own potential which ultimately is a self-knowing process.

## Chapter IV

### Marginal Travels: Perspectives on Caste, Gender and Narration

When it comes to gendered positioning within societies which are predominantly patriarchal, finding spaces within the mainstream socio-cultural arena is often a challenging endeavour. As discrete entities, women's lives are always under the surveillance of the hegemonic power structures that constitute the mainstream. The discrimination/ marginalisation women face can be experienced differently based on the socio-cultural, economic and political situations to which each woman may belong. While the socio-cultural contexts like religion, caste, class and society to which she may belong define her identity, a woman's identity is most often defined in accordance with the identity of her male counterpart. Hence within all these socio-cultural variants the identity of women is more often than not along the margins. It can be concluded that the very foundation of a patriarchal society is built on a process of consistently denying women's self-defined identity. Here, in this chapter, I am going to examine how factors like caste, gender and narration formulate discourses and how such are discussed in the travel narratives written by Malayali women. For the convenience of analysis, the chapter is divided into three sections focusing on the themes of Caste, Gender and Narration mentioned in the title.

In the first section of this chapter, the intervention of caste as a socio-cultural factor in women's social mobility is discussed in the light of Malayali women's travel writings. The texts chosen for this purpose are S. A. Leelavathi's *Bharathathinte Urdhvarekhaloode (Through the Zenith of India)* (1983) and

Devaki Nilayangodu's travel narrative "Yathra Kattilum Nattilum" (2006) ("Journey Through Towns and Forests") taken from the anthology *Athens Muthal Haridwar Vare* (2013). In addition to these two texts, I am also looking into Malayali Muslim women's travels and travel writings. Belonging to an institutionalized religious system where rules regarding women's travels are specifically mentioned, the travels of Muslim women need to be looked upon. For this reason, this chapter contains a section that examines the travels and travel writings of Malayali Muslim women.

### **I. The Question of Caste and Religion in Travel Narratives**

Though some similarities could be detected between racism prevalent in the western countries and the caste system that exists in the Indian situation, both have considerable differences with regard to their origins and practice. While racism generally divides people based on their genealogy and skin colour, the caste system divides people according to the *Chaturvarnya* criteria set forth by the Brahminical hegemonic power structures. The commonality detected in both the situations is that a lot many people are victimized and put to suffering due the intervention of these two sociocultural evils. The caste system in India distorts the lives of the people who are marginalised due to their status in the caste hierarchy. The Kerala situation is not different from that. Historians have noted that the social harmony that existed in the Dravidian land of Kerala before the Aryan invasion. M.G.S. Narayanan in his book *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala* (1972) notes that the pre- Aryan society was in fact "a casteless community vertically divided into groups on the basis of topography and occupation" (2). With the Aryan invasion this social situation was destroyed and

society was divided according to the *Chaturvarnya* system with Aryans as the superior. The sociocultural conditionings continued to prevail till the renaissance and reformations movements that happened in Kerala in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Communal rules literally reigned the pre- modern society of Kerala that a person's caste was one of the major constrains which took toll on one's life. The sociological and cultural developments which happened as part of the renaissance and reformation movements could not completely succeed in annihilating this social evil that prevails in the name of caste.

Apart from one's gendered positioning, people are furthermore bound to their respective caste and religious situations which henceforth constitute their self and identity. That is, the grip of caste over people's life is so strong that these two sociological and cultural positions have great role in determining one's social mobility and its further experience too.

In the modern context it is the class and gender rather than caste and religion that determine people's mobility. Unlike the earlier days if the person wants to travel, and if he/she has money, time and energy then it is easy to go for travel. The increased number of travel narratives which are produced from the socio-cultural space of Kerala these days could be viewed as evidences for the sociological, cultural and economic changes that have happened over the years in our society. The travel narratives like Leelavathi's *Bharathathinte Urdhvarekhaloode*, (*Through the Zenith of India*) (1983) and Devaki Nilayangodu's "Yathra Kattilum Nattilum" (2006) ("Journey Through Towns and Forests") may act as sociological bridges that

converse with the past foregone days when caste and creed determined women's mobility especially.

Before delving deep into these travel narratives it will be worthwhile to take a look at the pre modern history of Kerala to better understand the situations that fore grounded casteist situation in the socio-cultural space of Kerala. In Kerala, during the pre-modern era, the mobility of both men and women were largely controlled in accordance with the caste and creed to which they belong. In his book, *Writing the First Person: Literature, History, and Autobiography in Modern Kerala* (2016) Udaya Kumar states that "People's movement in public spaces was normatively, and often practically, regulated through the practice of distance pollution. Separate spaces of sacredness and bodily purity were maintained through restrictions on proximity and access to other bodies- in terms of visibility, touch, hearing, and clearly specified distances" (4).

In such a scenario even the people who belong to the upper strata of the society were not free from this pre-set caste rules of the society. Tradition did not allow the men of Brahmin community to cross oceans for it was considered as something that might bring dishonour to the entire community. The women who belonged to the upper caste also had to strictly follow their respective community's rules and regulations. Safeguarding the purity of the community was a big ordeal the accountability of which was completely placed on the community's women. As the elements which can defile these repositories of honour and purity of the community are presumed to be in abundance outside their domestic premises, the movement outside their homes, for these women, was always a risky matter given the stakes.

The societal practices like *Mannappedi*, *Pulappedi*, *Parappedi* were directed upon the Nair women, which curtailed their mobility at certain time periods every year. The rule was that if the upper caste/ Nair woman was touched or even seen by the men who belonged to the Pulaya, Paraya or Mannan community she had to leave her caste privileges and live the rest of her life with the lower caste people who were responsible for this plight. All these communal ordeals accumulated to keep the upper caste women in check in the name of safeguarding the community's purity became the societal norm. The proverb "*Kettilamma poyal kottiyambalam vare*" which can be roughly translated as, 'if *kettilamma* goes she will go only upto *kottiyambalam*', clearly denotes the attitude Malayali society holds for upper caste women's ventures outside domesticity. *Kettilamma* is the upper caste woman whose mobility is limited only up to *kottiyambalam*, the main gateway which is constructed in the compound wall of the house. This proverb hints at the socio-communal situations women with communal privileges are trapped in.

When the mobility of the upper caste women was strictly controlled as part of the communal laws, the women who belonged to the lower strata suffered more direct assaults. The fear of getting assaulted, raped or even killed was always in the air that these women who belonged to the lower strata of the society were also forced to lead secluded lives within limited spaces. Hence the mobility of the lower class /Dalit /untouchable women was worse compared to that of the upper class women. The protests of the people who belong to the lower strata for the right to lead a decent human life were also protests to claim mobility.

The roads which were considered as public were not at all public in the sense that in a largely casteist society like that of Kerala, casteist people were not at all willing to allow people who belong to the lower strata of the society to use the roads which were called as public. Here the word public becomes problematic in the sense that it applied only to very few people who invariably belonged to the creamy section of the society. The public places in those days were purely meant for the ruling upper castes. People who belonged to the lower strata were denied access to public roads and they had to cross muddy tracks or depend on other unconventional paths to reach destinations. It was a time when certain humans were given a status lower than the animals, as animals were allowed to wander freely. The caste system was so strong that certain practices had to be followed by the lower castes to show their obedience and obligation to existing communal laws of the region and thereby maintain their untouchability status. Each caste group has to maintain specific distance from the upper caste Brahmin. This distance which is called as *theendaldooram* denoted people's status in the society. P. Bhaskaranunni in his book *Patthompatham Noottandile Keralam* (2012) mentions that in those days certain boards named as *Theendalppalakakal* were placed near major roads to denote the distance allowed for each caste to travel (151). A. Sreedhara Menon in his *A Survey of Kerala History* (2007) notes that other than untouchability, the people of the lower strata had to observe other restrictions too with regard to their existence and visibility in public places. Menon observes:

Apart from untouchability, unseeability and unapproachability also existed in a dreadful form. A Namboothiri who happened to be seen by a Nayadi or

Pulaya considered himself to have been polluted. A strict schedule of distances at which members of castes below the Nairs had to stand with respect to the higher castes was evolved. Thus the Pulaya had to keep a distance of 60 feet from a Nair. When Nair nobles came out in the public roads an attendant of theirs preceded them shouting *po, po* (get away, get away) so that they would not be polluted by a person of low caste even by a chance encounter within the prohibited distance. Failure on the part of the lower castes to make way for the Nairs and other upper castes on the public road even led to their being murdered with the connivance of the custodians of law and order. (221)

The biography on Ayyankali by Velaydhan Panikkasseri brings out a clear picture of the social condition that existed in the pre-modern society of Kerala and the plight of the downtrodden lower castes. The right to use the roads which were actually built by the “sons of the soil” (199) was denied to them because of their lower status in the caste hierarchy. It was in this scenario that Ayyankali, the great social reformer set forth his iconic struggle to use roads freely by all the people disregarding their caste position. Ayyankali’s bullock-cart travel through the ‘public’ road was a blow to the upper caste impudence. After this incident there had been a series of conflicts that happened between the Dalits and the upper castes which later paved way for great social transformations resulting in the upliftment of the downtrodden communities.

Thaha Madayi in his book *Desame Desame 25 Asadharanajeevithangal (Locales: 25 Unconventional Lives)* (2011), a compilation of life writings, focuses

on the lives of people who are unknown to the mainstream memories and history. The book captures the lives, emotions, memories, experiences, agonies of people who are in some way marginalized and forgotten from the mainstream history and memory. In the interview conducted with a Dalit woman, Kanjiradi Narayani, Thaha Madayi brings out the harsh social situation that existed some seventy years back in Kerala. At a time when the Dalits were treated as worse than animals, the humiliation and insult she faced as a Dalit girl during her school days during the 1930s still lingers in her memory. The segment from the interview gives a clear cut picture of the situation:

Question: What are your memories related to untouchability?

Kanjiradi Narayani: We were not supposed to travel much outside our dwelling place. To inform about our presence we had to make a sound like *cheya cheya* when seen by the upper caste people. They would stop there hearing this sound. We then had to change our route. When at the sight of Brahmins we had to produce an even louder sound. Then we had to take an even more distant route. Those days were like that. While returning from school we had to walk away at the sight of children from other castes.

Question: Will you then feel angst or distress in your minds?

Kanjiradi Narayani: Will feel sad and become annoyed. We cursed them without being heard. We then had to pass through the fields filled with blocks of mud instead of walking through the wedge path. We feel terrible

pain when our legs hit on the big blocks of mud in the fields. We used to curse them with filthy words without being heard. (my trans.; 190)

This interview clearly demonstrates the strategy of control implemented by the upper caste people to control the mobility of the Dalits thereby making them more and more crippled. M. Dasan in his article “Validating the Voices of the Avarnas: A Study of Vaduthala’s Caste Stories” observes that the political parties that took up the struggle against caste atrocities could not completely throw away the caste system. He even finds fault with the Communist Party in the manner in which the party addressed the issue of caste. He says that even the Progressive Literary Movement, an offshoot of the Communist Movement failed to bring out the issue of caste as a major agenda.

The Progressive Literary Movement started in 1930s produced a lot of poems, novels, and plays dealing with themes related to the oppressed, low castes, peasants, workers and the landless from a Marxist perspective. As Marxism does not recognize caste- a unique feature of Indian Society- the treatment of Dalit themes and situations by the leftist writers were modelled on the socialist realist literature produced in Russia based on the theory of class struggle. Often the heroes and heroines in these works were ideologues/representatives of proletarian/ peasant class and their rhetoric was turned against the upper class/bourgeoisie and not against the upper class. Hardly ever these writers mounted their attack on Brahmanic Hindu culture, which is mainly responsible for the exploitation of the lower castes/Dalits.

(51-73)

So in short, even the leftist parties who believed in a classless society failed to address caste as a social issue and hence were not able to wipe out the issue from the Kerala society. Caste operates at every miniscule level in the society. The Dalit writer Bama rightly points out in her semi autobiographical novel *Karukku* (2000) that “if you are born into a low caste, you are forced to live a life of humiliation and degradation until your death. Even after death, caste-difference does not disappear. Wherever you look, however much you study, whatever you take up, caste discrimination stalks us in every nook and corner and drives us into a frenzy” (23).

In his article “Parswavalkaranam: Sancharam, Sahithyam” (“Marginalisation: Travel, Literature”) A. K. Vasu observes that, the Dalits in Kerala were a group of people who were not able to actively participate in travels due to their downtrodden situation. That is why there are very few travelogues written by Dalits in Malayalam. Mobility of the Dalits was largely curtailed due to various interconnections with their immediate locality as explicated in their local folk and mythical stories. They were also made to believe that their lives will be under threat if they ever dared to cross the boundaries of their localities. Vasu writes:

As such, for the Dalit people, leaving one’s dwelling place was a disgraceful penurious situation. The Dalit identities that were bound up with folk beliefs kept them rooted to their isolated lands. Their folk tales which contain stories of getting cheated or killed prevented them from venturing into the outer worlds instilled a kind of fear for their life. Such tales are mostly seen in the stories related with *Bhadraakali*, the main deity of the Dalit people. The

retrieval of Kovilan by Kali is the common theme sung in the *Kalamezhuthu* songs of the Velan community, and the *thudippattu* of Paraya community. Kovilan who goes to Pandi Naadu to sell *Chilambu* is accused of theft and later on sentenced to death by the king of Pandi. Kovilan is rescued and settled down in Kodungallur by Kali is the theme of all such stories. Stories of grandfathers who went up the mountains in pursuit of knowledge and got killed are all common themes in the chanting of Pulaya community. (my trans.; 153)

The stories of disasters that awaited those who crossed their rightful boundary appear as warnings for the community's people. Such stories which had great implications in the minds of people who belonged to the Dalit communities in fact prevented them from going outside their native lands. This subaltern life in fact deprived the community from acquiring wealth and power and hence could not be part of any of the trade or work opportunities which actually prompted people's mobilizations. Their instincts for mobility were largely controlled by the agricultural lands and their locality. Moreover, the huge emotional attachment that prevailed within familial structures also prevented the Dalits from taking up travels. Vasu observes that, "The people of the Pulaya community considered it as unethical to leave their landlord under whom they worked. Their lives were thus locked up in their isolated lands near the built-in mud tombs of their ancestors" (my trans.; 154).

While the article "Parswavalkaranam: Sancharam, Sahithyam" ("Marginalisation: Travel, Literature") by A. K. Vasu puts across certain reasons as to why the Dalits of Kerala have been deprived of taking up travels, it has not tried

to encapsulate the brutal life situations in which the dalits of the earlier generations were made to suffer. The book *Adimakeralathinte Adrishyacharithram (The Invisible History of Slave Kerala)* (2021) by Vinil Paul can be taken as an overview regarding such confiscations. Vinil Paul's book gives a comprehensive picture of the dalit lives which was bound to the brutal system of slavery and slave trade that existed in Kerala during pre- modern era till the nineteenth century. The book states that while the rules of untouchability which demarcated people's communal status were strictly followed during the pre- modern period, the system of slavery and slave trade was considered a normal affair. The first chapter of the book "Kaadum Kadalum Kadanna Keralathile Adimakal" ("Slaves of Kerala who Crossed Forest and Sea") states that hundreds of people were deported and sent as slaves from the harbours of Kerala to the African colonies by the Dutch and French companies (Paul 17).

Vinil Paul observes that the practice of slavery that existed in Kerala was never mentioned in the mainstream history writing of Kerala and terms like "slavery, slave trade" have never been a topic of discussion in the world of Kerala historiography (17). Paul adds that such concepts were treated only as an imaginary creation by the British and that discussions on the topic were never promoted by the main stream schools of historiography (17). According to Paul the Dalit family histories which contain incidents of getting sold and alienated are quite different from the history writings of any other group of people in Kerala. Paul writes: "The historiography which is done by excluding the memory of brutality that was spread

throughout Kerala is literally an exclusion of the social life of the downtrodden section” (my trans.; 60).

The study *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala* (2015) by P. Sanal Mohan needs to be analysed at this point. The book with historical evidences underlines the fact that slavery and slave trade as a common practice existed in Kerala till the early twentieth century. The missionary narratives included in the study bring in the brutal situations the slave castes were put to suffer. In the second chapter of the book “Discourses and Constructions of Slavery in Nineteenth and Twentieth-century Kerala” Sanal Mohan quotes the oral narrative of a former slave (name is not mentioned) which is included in the Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Record of 1905. Sanal writes:

Then an old man from Ayroor recounted his experiences. Every morning people would be led out to work and would not be allowed to bury their dead, even their father or mother, till the day’s work was over. They were sold, the father to one man, the mother to another and the children to several separate persons and would not be allowed to see one another afterwards and under such cruel treatments some have entered the forests preferring to be eaten up by wild beasts than to lead such miserable lives. (qtd. in *Modernity* 75)

From the narrative it is evident that the people who belonged to slave castes always lived under the threat of getting separated and alienated. Such people who were treated as mere slave bodies did not even have the slightest clue as to what is meant by one’s family, locality, subjectivity, leisure etc.

At this juncture it is also important to address the migrations of people who were taken as indentured labourers to various parts across the globe during the colonial period. People who belonged to the oppressed social classes were the main victims of this system. Unlike the slave trade which kidnapped, bought and sold the black people of African continent, the system of indentured labour worked on the basis of “the choice of the intending emigrant himself” (Emmer 187). Many found this indenture labour in plantations as a way out of their existing situations which prevented them from leading a life of minimum dignity. Hence they easily fell for the tempting promises of the recruiters. Emmer writes that “the recruited usually considered indentured emigration an escape hatch for his economic and social problems” (204). In that case it can be understood that the lower caste people from India took this opportunity to escape the debilitating conditions they faced in the caste ridden society. The book *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian labour Overseas 1830-1920* (1974) by Hugh Tinker states that people from rural India were taken as indentured labourers to British plantations in countries like Caribbean Islands, Burma, Ceylon, Malaysia, Mauritius, Guiana and South Africa during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The book states that during the 1840s coolies from South India were taken to Ceylon and Mauritius and that some of them were identified as “Malayalis an ambiguous term which usually means the people speaking Malayalam” (55) and “some of the recruits were taken from the aboriginal tribes, such as Puliars and Mandavars” (55).

But what is to be noted is though they had emigrated to escape wretchedness in their home country the conditions which awaited them in the unfamiliar terrain

were much similar to what they had experienced in their native place. Many tried to escape the wretched situation but could not succeed. They had no choice but to compromise and continue. In fact, only a few could make profit from their emigration. The travelogue titled *Indiayude Makal (India's Daughter)* (1974) written in Malayalam by Bharathy Vidyarthi describes her experiences spanning three years in Guiana, the land which once was infamous for indentured plantation labour.

Bharathy Vidyarthi along with her husband had to fulfil the purpose of teaching the cultural and heritage values to the present generation who were brought in to the British Guiana as indentured labourers from various regions of India during the period of 1838 to 1917. During her stay in Guiana she notices that the majority of population now constitutes the descendants of those who were brought in from India as indentured labourers. She writes that when she and her husband reached Guiana as 'cultural lecturers' they could meet many Indians who had now become an indomitable presence in the sociocultural, economic and political scenario of the present Guiana. She writes that they included "Bangalis, Sindhis, Panjabis, Malayalis and Tamilians" (35). Though the history of indenture labour is about enforced emigration which contains the depressing experiences of loss and pain, one could hardly find a first person narrative. In other words there is much to be discovered and studied about in such travels.

When *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012) edited by M. Dasan et al. made an outstanding compilation of Dalit writings like poetry, short fiction, excerpts from novels, drama, life writings like autobiography and

biography, critical interventions etc., the book did not include anything on travel writing. Though the literary works which are included in the book may have experiences of journeys undertaken, it should be noted that the book does not contain a section either on travel or travel writing. However, considering the life situations and circumstances faced by groups who belong to the lower strata of caste hierarchy at a time when caste rules are intense, it could be understood that those who are denied entertainment, leisure, and are made to stand outside the codes of individuality and liberty for a life time can have experiences which are intense and painful. In fact their experiences of mobility are much more than the conventional formats of travel. Hence considering it is not surprising to learn that the book *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012) which looks specifically into the writings of the marginalised does not specifically contain anything on travel or travel writing. In fact such 'absences' lead to discussions and thoughts on how travel as a bodily activity has been perceived by people who are treated as marginalised.

It is a sad fact that the revival of the Kerala society brought on by the reformation movements couldn't completely do away the social evils like caste system. Even after all these years of India attaining independence from the colonial rule, situations regarding caste and gender have not changed much in several states. Gender has always shared the front seat with caste in dictating and determining the contours of people's mobility. Though the presence of caste these days may not be as visible and loud as it was in the pre-modern days in the history of Kerala; even today caste operates in every miniscule section of the society. The matrimonial

columns present in almost all the leading dailies, the increasing number of honour killings that happen in our country in the name of caste and religion are all direct markers of the stronghold that caste still has over societies in our country. It is in this context, that the travelogue by a person who belongs to the Dalit community becomes very relevant. S. A. Leelavathi, a Hindi teacher from the Thrissur district in Kerala undertook a journey through several Indian states which prepared her to write a travelogue *Bharathathinte Urdhvarekshayiloode (Through the Zenith of India)*, published in 1983. It can also be noted that the travelogue won the first place in the travel writing competition held among people who belonged to the scheduled castes and tribes by the then Harijanakshema Department in 1983. Throughout her narrative, one can see how she had actually perceived the journey within the premises of her caste position. As a person who belongs to a community which has been denied access to public roads or places for centuries, her travel narrative is all the more remarkable and needs special mention.

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1982 along with her friend's family, she set forth on a long journey to the various regions of India. This train journey with very limited facilities was described with utmost sincerity by the narrator traveller. She says,

My greatest wish in life from my childhood onwards is to see different countries. I also wished to understand many things based on detailed description on trajectories. Being a *Harijan* teacher I could only sit and dream without any hope. Though I didn't get the chance to travel around through countries I used to find satisfaction by reading travel books written by famous and eminent personalities. When I read such books on travel, in

my mind, I used to think “today or tomorrow “... Why can't I too go? Is there any point to wish with an impoverished status? No there is no point. But being a teacher I could have learnt so many things from a travel. (my trans.; 1-2)

Leelavathi, a teacher by profession, uses ‘Harijan’ as a self-referential term to denote her status in the society. The term Harijan which was largely affixed by Gandhiji, meaning ‘people of God’ was an attempt to safeguard the downtrodden communities from communal clutches. However, it fell flat under the weight of the centuries old caste system. Leelavathi uses the term to assert her identity. It is an identity strongly embedded in lineage which has endured every possible suppression, despite the name. While the instances of an author inviting the reader’s attention to her caste identity are quite rare in travel writings, the mention of her caste position in her narrative makes it unique and special which is worthy enough for an in depth analysis.

Leelavathi’s travelogue *Bharathathinte Urdhaarekhayiloode* was published in 1983, i.e. thirty six years after India’s independence in 1947. Even after all these years, a woman, who is a teacher by profession, and who is aware of her rights as a citizen grieves over her communal status as a Harijan pointing at the intensity of the socio-cultural conditioning she has endured. The trauma of this conditioning from her childhood which lingers in her identity might be the reason why she thinks of her social status as a Dalit woman. Though Leelavathi comments on her ‘impoverished status’ it is also an obstacle that prevents her from taking up travels, however, if the narrator deliberately comments on his/her downtrodden communal

status in a travel narrative it can be understood that more than the hazards of the impoverished status (something that can be improved) it is the communal status as a harijan that worries the traveller. Moreover, except in the religion oriented travel writings the traveller's religious/ communal status is never a necessity or commonality. With written constitution as the supreme law of the country, India became a sovereign republic in 1950. While the constitution of India regardless of caste and gender, assures its citizens equal status and equality before law, the social and cultural systems which are based on Brahminical and patriarchal dogmas find it difficult to tolerate the idea of an improved social status assured by the supreme law of sovereign India.

Here in Leelavathi's narrative, the case of caste and gender becomes equally crucial. The socio-cultural and communal systems to which the author/traveller belongs, have not changed enough to welcome the sociological changes that have happened over time due to the reformation. Hence, the narrator who is educated and a teacher by profession is not able to think above the caste norms. The socio communal laws which are to be followed by the members who belong to a community /societal system have larger implications on the person's psyche that even the rights assured by the Constitution of India do not make them capable enough to think above the societal situations regarding caste and gender. In her book *Gendered Citizenship: Historical and Conceptual Explorations* (2005) Anupama Roy observes that,

Citizenship, as a legal status and as organizing principle for a sovereign nation and democratic political society, was incorporated in the Indian

Constitution in the context of the struggles for self-determination waged against multilayered oppressive structures and discursive constructions of racial and caste superiority. Within this context, the cultural/religious community on the one hand and the national-political community on the other acquired equivocal primacy, leading to tensions in citizenship as it has unfolded over the years after independence. (229)

If this is the situation then the acclaimed freedom attained from the British/colonial rule can only be viewed as something peripheral as there are people who still cannot come out or think above their attributed downtrodden life situations due to the hierarchical caste positioning.

In her travelogue *Bharathathinte Urdhvarekshayiloode* besides the narration on the experiences of travel through the not so familiar Indian states, Leelavathi has made a genuine attempt to depict the life and social status of the people of her community, the Sambavas. Sambava is a Dalit community whose traditional occupation is weaving baskets out of bamboos. Her monologue of “being a *Harijan* teacher I can only sit and dream without any hope” (my trans.; 1) speaks volumes about the restrictions imposed upon the mobility of the people who belong to the lower strata of the society. Despite being a teacher, the anxiety regarding her community’s downtrodden status and the deep rooted stigma associated with the caste is a constant reminder of the limits she has to set for herself. Such angst and worries are felt throughout her narration.

Leelavathi’s *Bharathathinte Urdhvarekshayiloode* is also unique in the fact that it is one of the very few instances in which a travelogue will document the

financial budget essential for any trip. With great sincerity she explains the hardships she underwent to find enough money to fulfil her long cherished dream. Her passion for travel was so intense that no obstacle could deter her from fulfilling her dream. She was mentally prepared to tackle any situation. Very fondly she mentions her husband who was sportive enough to encourage her to undertake the journey. Apart from packing her luggage he volunteered to make snacks for her. She is grateful for such acts of love which could not be expected in most relationships. With great honesty she comments that the happiness she felt at the moment of the journey dominated her thoughts more than the sorrow of leaving her family:

“Having heard the train’s whistling sound, everybody made preparations to board the train. But more than sorrow I felt happiness in my mind” (my trans.; 8). She is not bothered about hiding her joy and emotions from the readers or from her family members, on starting her journey. Though she is genuinely concerned about her family, the kind of concern expected from a woman regarding her family, a common phenomenon seen in the travelogues written by women, is not so visible in Leelavathi’s narration. By sincerely admitting her desire for travel and the support she receives from her husband and family, Leelavathi challenges the normative gender role expected from a woman while documenting her travel experience. In his study on the eighteenth and nineteenth century western women travel writers, Carl Thompson comments that the women travel writers were expected to be writing in a style in which they never crossed the limits of their gender roles. He writes,

“For a great many women travel writers, there has certainly been a rhetorical need to balance the fact of their travelling with the adoption of an appropriately feminine persona on the page.” (*Travel* 181)

While narrating her travel experiences Leelavathi is consciously or unconsciously transgressing the boundaries of gendered positioning expected from women who are bound with familial responsibilities. Hence, the performance expected with regard to her gender role is subverted through her deeds and narration. This might be due to the relatively better position enjoyed by the dalit women in their households. The kind of expectation as a female is much more progressive. Kancha Ilayya in his article “Why I am Not a Hindu” observes it as:

The Dalitbahujan of India are the only people on the globe who, while living in a civil society, have lived outside the defined structures of all religions. Take, for example, their marriage contract. It is basically a human contract. It is governed by the rights guaranteed to women within the framework of the broad system of patriarchy. A situation of disrespect to each other’s rights can result in breaking that contract and will result in divorce. If after divorce the woman or the man comes across another possible partner, either by way of paternal arrangement or because of her/his own initiative, such individuals have the right to enter into another contract. Because of these inherently assured rights, a wife does not have to treat her husband as a God. A Dalitbahujan woman does not have to perform *pada-puja* (worshipping the husband’s feet) to her husband either in the morning or in the evening. She does not have to address her husband in the way she would address a

superior. In a situation of dispute, word in response to word, and abuse for abuse is the socially visible norm. Patriarchy as a system does exist among Dalitbahujans, yet in this sense it is considerably more democratic. (88)

While she displays her joy and thrill of going on a journey in her writing she actually crosses the boundaries which are set with regard to a woman's, (especially when a woman has family and children to take care of, she is expected to be writing her worries about her family and not the excitement of the journey) performativity expected in her narrative on travel. But what is to be noted is, while she is able to cross such set boundaries she is not able to leave aside her perceptions regarding her caste positioning.

Though Leelavathi does not have any bad experience due to her caste position in her travel, the dilemma she feels as a Dalit consciously or unconsciously gets reflected in her writing that whenever she happens to come across things or incidents which may have stories of sufferings she thinks of her community's life situations which are not very different from what she has confronted in regions other than her native place. She keeps on thinking of the people who are destined to suffer due to their life situations. More than the majesty and splendour of the heritage buildings and forts she thinks of the sufferings of those unfortunate souls who sacrificed their lives to build such wondrous constructions. She says, "When I thought about the construction of the building, the slave workers who were the real makers behind it came to my mind. Even small children will understand that without the lives and blood of the crores it is impossible to build such splendour"

(my trans.; 41-42). A kind of encounter with one's own self is what happens when such incidents are narrated.

Usually people are not very concerned about what happens on the other side of the extravaganza and splendour. Most of the time, stories of hard labour and exploitation behind the glitter are ignored. One should need a certain level of sensitivity to feel for the people who do hard labour just to keep their pots boiling. The thought of the sufferings of the workers made her think of her community's people whose life situations are not very different from the wretched life of those workers. This might be the reason why even as a teacher by profession she finds it difficult to think above the oppressive state of her caste position. The downtrodden status of their caste position assigned in the memories of those who belong to the Dalit communities do not easily fade away with class differences.

Even when she holds the respectable position of a teacher she finds it difficult to leave aside the oppressive and subjugated status of her caste. As a person who belongs to a community which had a history of torture and sufferings she could relate with those subjugated selves. The kind of affinity she shows with the life of those unfortunate people brings back her own memories as a person who belongs to the oppressed group. Her unconscious that constitutes her Dalit self which is imbued with memories of sufferings and oppression identifies with the life of the people who were put to suffer. The oppressive status as a *harijan* quite often appears in her conscience that even at the time of rejoicing and travel she finds it hard to completely involve in it with a free mind. During the train journey while she is

relaxing in her berth, memories of her community began to torment her. Her community's life situations could be read out from this passage:

I don't think there are many people among Harijans, especially in the Sambava community is as lucky as I am. The people of my community- sisters and brothers- worked day and night really hard to earn a living. They weave out different types of baskets out of bamboos. These vessels are then stacked, balanced and taken either to households or to markets to sell. They buy rice, chilly and salt out of the money they got from selling the vessels. The mother of the household will be boiling water to cook rice. The master of the house after giving these foodies goes to the local liquor shop. When he comes back, out of his intoxication he will beat and kick the people in the house. This is the usual sort of life within our community. Going for a cinema itself is considered as dishonourable. It is difficult to tell how many all are there who haven't seen the Thrissur city. I don't think there is even a ten percent who are educated in our community. ... Being a person who belongs to such a community- I feel extremely lucky to get such a chance. Thoughts like these came to my mind and I began to think of the misery of the working class people. (my trans.; 47-49)

Through her monologues one can make out the deprived situation of her community. Leelavathi's self critical approach is quite visible when she narrates the life situations that persist within her community. Even after all these years of India attaining the status of a sovereign republic the prevailing socio-cultural and traditional systems are not quite favourable for the lower castes. Without much

improvement in their lives majority of Dalits in the country are still caught up in their traditional occupations related to their community. The reform movements have not done enough to improve the status of the Dalits. M. Dasan observes:

What is hailed as the ‘Kerala experience’ is the glittering surface of the liberal and democratic politics that conceals the dark underside of intense communal feelings. This is evident from the fact that the various political measures undertaken in the name of development in Kerala and hailed as progressive by ‘Malayalis’ are anti-Dalit and anti-Adivasi. ... the various governments that ruled the State forced the Dalits into ghettos called colonies - devoid of even bare necessities like drinking water-restricting their mobility. (*The Oxford India Anthology* xxi)

So from Leelavathi’s travel narrative it is understood that while she is able to subvert the gendered performances expected from a woman travel writer, she finds it difficult to come out from her caste position as a Dalit. Nevertheless, considering her life situations the pain she undertakes to fulfil her long cherished dream of travel is quite appreciable, that towards the end of the narrative we see an altogether different person who has started to view things in a wider perspective. That is, from a teacher who laments over her downtrodden situation she has turned into a person who seems to be much more relieved and accomplished in her thoughts and deeds. She writes:

We were able to touch many states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, Punjab, Jammu Kashmir in our travel. Although the trip did not provide a

complete review, it helped to get a general overview of the vast country. The state of mind assuming that the world is Thrissur has now been changed due to this wider experience. The diverse landscapes, people and customs have also helped in changing the narrow attitude. If such variance is available in this considerably small area what would it be like in the larger world? A tour, however proves to be more heart touching than any particular studies.  
(my trans.; 78)

By fulfilling her long cherished desire to travel she is able to surpass the mental blocks which had developed in her as a result of her caste consciousness. Considering the personal elements in the travel narrative it becomes a personal history of the self. By narrating the hurdles faced to make this travel happen, she in a way is celebrating her own selfhood and subjectivity. So by taking upon such an initiative to an extent she has succeeded in throwing away inhibitions she faced as a *Harijan*. When we consider the time period in which this travel narrative was published, it can be considered a landmark in the history of travel writings and more particularly of Dalit writings.

The act of travelling gives the traveller an authority over what she surveys. When travel is enacted by a person who belongs to a marginal group, he/she gains a certain authority for a specified time. In India, when a woman who belongs to a Dalit community attempts a travel, the experience she gains might be considerably different from the experience gained by the member of a privileged group. That is, the difference can be located within the double oppression of her gender and caste position. Unlike race, one's caste position cannot be read out from one's body. That

is caste as a socio-cultural situation exists within one's consciousness. A person's self is largely bound with his/her communal consciousness. Here, a person who belongs to the oppressed caste with a history of long term suffering and untouchability goes for a travel to various states in India, a land where the system of *chaturvarnya* was the norm, and writes about the experience mentioning her caste position, makes this travel narrative all the more special.

### **Travel's of Namboothiri Women**

At a time when everyone's life was bound by the strict caste and communal rules each one was expected to follow the unwritten law. When the people of the lower strata had to suffer due to the disparities there were some others who had a different story to tell. During the pre- independent era of Kerala, apart from the social recognition received by the Namboothiri women for their upper caste status, the life of the Namboothiri women within the community was not favourable. As the Namboothiris of Kerala wielded their power by setting limits to the mobility of the lower caste, their own mobility was affected to a certain degree. Though both men and women had to strictly abide by the norms, the codes of conduct to be followed by the Namboothiri women were more challenging than what the men had to follow. The safeguarding of the community dictum in fact kept the mobility of the Namboothiri men in check to a certain degree. The Namboothiri men were not allowed to travel abroad or cross oceans as a result.

In her book *Travel Culture, Travel Writing and Bengali Women 1870-1940* (2021) Jayati Gupta observes that for high- caste Hindus, from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and into the 19<sup>th</sup> century “being contaminated by travel across oceans to the Western

world became a nightmare shared by the community” (22). She also observes that those who have crossed the communal dictums “faced public ostracisation by a xenophobic Bengali society” (22). Hence, “The public debates about the taboos on Hindus crossing the seas was a discourse initiated by high-caste Hindus, who perhaps felt destabilised in their social hegemony by the rapid changes being brought about by the infiltration of unorthodox values and customs” (ibid 22).

Safeguarding the laws of the community was almost the same with the upper castes. Hence, it could be understood that as long as the Namboothiri men did not attempt to cross huge water bodies, they were safe to enjoy the benefits of their caste identity. The Namboothiri women on the other hand were largely confined to their domestic premises and apart from the routine visits to the temples, they hardly had access to the outer world.

Devaki Nilayangodu’s travel narrative “Yathra KattilumNattilum” (2006) (A Journey Through Lands and Forests), included in the edited volume of travel narratives *Athens Muthal Haridwar Vare* (2013). Devaki Nilayangodu who belongs to the Namboothiri community reveals the strict communal laws prevalent in this upper section of the society. Nilayangodu, who hasn’t had any formal education started to write about the life within the Namboothiri community after she turned seventy five. Her writings were mostly in the form of reminiscences and memoirs. *Nashta Bodhangalillathe: Oru Antharjanathinte Athmakatha* (2003) and *Kalappakarchakal* (2012) were some of her noted works. She writes that, apart from the routine travels to temples, the Namboothiri women had no access to the outer world. Nilayangodu recollects: “All my journeys were stopped when I reached

puberty. I was not allowed even to go to the temple. The only place I was allowed to go was to the pond near the kitchen. With nowhere to go I felt like a bird with no wings” (82).

The narrative “Yathra Kattilum Nattilum” (2006) (A Journey Through Lands and Forests) have been incorporated in this study because the narrative portrays a clear picture of the limited mobility allowed to the Namboothiri women during the pre-independent era. Even if all these rules and regulations have become old stories, to know about the lives that went into oblivion and about the community’s social and communal situation in a different era this travel narrative “Yathra Kattilum Nattilum” by a woman who belongs to the community contributes much in this regard.

In her narrative Devaki Nilayangodu, born in 1928, recalls her early travels as a child when she was hardly nine years old. Since she hasn’t mentioned the year of the travel in this narrative, we can deduce from the author’s year of birth and her mentioned age at the time that the narrative describes the socio-cultural situation of Kerala in the 1930s and 40s. She says her mother, a typical Namboothiri woman, an *antharjanam*, had to figure out a way to get the money to cover her travel expenses if she wished to visit her natal home known as *illam*, which is far away from her husband’s *illam*. The mobility of the Namboothiri women in those days apart from their temple visits was strictly regulated. She says “in those days even for their smallest needs the custom did not allow *antharjanams* to have anything from the property of the tharavad. Tradition insisted that they had to find their own money for their needs” (my trans.; 43). In order to fund their

expenses the Namboothiri women used to save *pidiyari*, i.e. a fistful of rice, in a container on a regular basis. When the container of this *pidiyari* is full, it was sold outside with the help of a maidservant. Earning even a rupee in this manner was quite time consuming as several fistfuls were required to fill the container.

Nilayangodu recalls that “even for their very urgent needs the women in almost every aristocratic families of those days saved money through this method. Even this facility was denied for women in the not so rich families” (my trans.; 43). This economic dependence of the Namboothiri women could be viewed as a clear cut strategy of control bestowed upon them to curtail their mobility thereby making them completely subservient members of the system. Thus going to the temples for worship remained their only means of travel other than the occasional travels to their natal homes. This was the system designed by the patriarchal orthodoxy and without any opposition the women of the community remained as silent observers within the system.

Nilayangodu recalls that when her mother’s savings touched the five rupee mark she planned the trip with her children to her natal home. This journey was always accompanied by a maid servant who was entrusted to take care of the bus fare. The description of the bus travel throws light on the socio-economic situation as well as on the transport facilities prevalent in pre-independent Kerala of 1930s and 40s. In this context, this travel narrative becomes all the more relevant for its historical value. In Nilayangodu’s own words:

It was a long wait for the bus to come. But there is no certainty that the Namboothiri woman with the *marakkuda* will be permitted to board. ...

those days the buses were run on charcoal. The charcoal was filled inside a large container and placed in the middle of the last seat of the bus. Hence, the interior of the bus will be filled with smoke and charcoal dust. The fair skinned children would look dark when they get out of the bus. The conductor would hold Amma's umbrella and give it back to her from the outside. Amma would sit all covered up in the edgeway of a seat holding the umbrella tight to prevent it from flying. ... what a thrilling and exciting experience it was! As the speed increased the trees and houses appeared to fly backwards. We would sit with our hearts filled with joy praying that this journey lasts for a long time. (my trans.; 80)

The passage from the narrative speaks volumes on the dress code and behavior expected from a woman of the Namboothiri community. J. Devika remarks about the prescribed dress code for the women of the Namboothiri community are notable:

“Women were called *Antarjanams* ('inner- people'), and had to observe elaborate seclusion, and if they moved out of their homes, they were shielded by a cloak (*putappu*) and a large cadjan umbrella (*kuta*). Women in the *illams* carried out a highly ritualized form of domesticity, combined with considerable amounts of domestic labour (*En-gendering* 122).

The attire was a clear marker of the caste status of these women and they had to strictly adhere to it. The dress code was the first line of defence against the elements which threatened the purity of the caste. Each caste had to thus strictly follow the dress code allotted to them. The maid servant mentioned in the narrative is not from the Namboothiri community and follows a different dress code which

differentiates her from the *antharjanam*. Nilayangodu's description of the journey helps the readers to capture the detailing of a foregone era. The descriptions of the water journeys in traditional boats, the cook and stay stations called *oottupura*, the Namboothiri homes that provided food for passersby give a vivid picture of Kerala at the time.

By curtailing the instinct of mobility in a lively person the community has shut out the outside world and suppressed the emotions of these women. Being denied the freedom of movement, the Namboothiri women were conditioned to occupy an invisible marginalized position though belonging to the upper caste. In the Namboothiri *illams* the births of girls were not welcomed as that of boys. In her memoir *Nashta Bodhangalillathe: Oru Antharjanathinte Athmakadha* (2003) (*Without Regrets: Autobiography of an Antharjanam*), Devaki Nilayangodu recalls that, "When a woman becomes pregnant, special prayers and pujas were performed to have a baby boy. If the baby was a boy, it was welcomed with applause. But if it was a girl the news was conveyed with soft knocks on the door" (my trans.; 16).

Through these reminiscences the readers get to know the hushed up lives the Namboothiri women were born into. The lives of the majority of the Namboothiri women of the older generations were literally limited in the collective sense to safeguard the purity of the community. A woman's life within the community is largely defined by her male counterparts. Even the minimal freedom allowed was taken away after the death of her husband and that the rest of her life she is forced to remain in the darkness of the domestic confinements. Nilayangodu's observations

on the traditions within the Namboothiri community throw light on the oppression faced by the Namboothiri women. This in fact becomes sharp criticism too.

Though the community enjoyed wealth and power than any other communities in the society, the life situations of Namboothiri women were not very favourable. Their lives were largely controlled by the community's customs. In other words the men decided and defined the lives of the women. The play, *Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku* (1930) written by V.T. Bhattathirippadu had a tremendous impact on the general conscience of the Namboothiri community, that the people within the community began to think of discarding the age old customs that largely curtailed the individual freedom. While the reform movements happening within the community helped to revive the community as a whole, due to the lack of proper direction the lives of women within the communities did not improve drastically. P. Geetha in her article "Streemunnettangalude Keralabhoomika" ("Women Uprisings in Kerala") observes that, "those reformers couldn't direct the women who have come out of the kitchen to the arena. The men did not even look into the kitchens. Women had to shine both in kitchen and in the arena at the same time. The double burden of women's work load thus started there" (my trans.; 92). Geetha criticizes this attitude of the reform movements which were not keen on improving the societal lives of the Namboothiri women. She also notes that while Lathithambika Antharjanam wrote a lot about the condition of women within the Namboothiri community, the community or society never acknowledged her as a reformer, and she was only known as a writer. Within the Namboothiri

community, the freedom which was “granted by the men to their women” (my trans.; 93) was the only freedom the women enjoyed.

C. S. Chandrika in her book *Keralathinte Sthree Charithrangal, Sthree Munnettangal (Women’s History of Kerala, Women Movements)* (2016) notes that due to the strong feminist nature of the play *Thozhil Kendrathilek (Towards the Workstation)* (1948), written and staged by women of the Antharjana Samaajam, it did not get its due recognition when compared to the plays staged by the male reformers. The play which resists and discards the common notion that a woman’s survival is possible only through marriage was a real blow for orthodoxy. Through the play *Thozhil Kendrathilek*, Antharjana Samaajam tries to put across the idea that if a woman wants to attain freedom then she should come out of the *illams* and make herself economically independent. Economic independence will be attained only through education and employment. *Thozhil Kendrathilekk* instigated the Namboothiri women to come out from their subjugated and wretched life and lead a dignified life by finding employment. Chandrika observes that while the plays like *Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekk* (1929), *Rithumathi*, *Marakkudakkullile Mahanarakam*, staged by Yogakshema Sabha proclaimed that the upliftment of women’s lives is possible only through marriage, the plays were actually meant to revive the lives of those Namboothiri men who had no property rights and marriage rights within the community (287-288); whereas the play *Thozhil Kendrathilek* (1948) staged by Antharjana Samaajam largely stresses the importance of freedom, education, employment and economical independence in the lives of Namboothiri women. Hence, it is evident why a play which promotes the mobility and

individuality of the community's women was discarded by the strict patriarchal Namboothiri community. Chandrika notes that even the Malayala Naataka Vedi did not give the play the recognition and acknowledgement it deserved for the message it tried to convey (Chandrika 71-72).

The community had many women who were in the forefront of the reform movements. Parvathi Nenmenimangalam, Devaki Narikkattini, Arya Pallam, Lalithambika Antharjanam, Thadathil Priyadatha, Priyadatha Kallatt, Kanjoor Gaury Antharjanam, Kaanjoor Kaali Antharjanam, Pathiyil Priyadatha were some of the women reformers who risked their own lives to help improve the lives of the fellow women in the community.

The travel narrative of Devaki Nilayangodu is important in this context as it is one of the few texts which talks about the issues of caste at the time. For the Namboothiri women it was their responsibility to keep themselves pure. Nobody should touch them and they shouldn't touch anyone. With all the caste symbols (*deeksha*) which actually restricted the free movement of their bodies they too might have suffered discomforts. So in short, the narrative documents the anxieties over the social custom of untouchability which affected both the upper and lower caste womanhood albeit in completely different ways.

In her article "Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State" Uma Chakravarti notes that "the safeguarding of the caste structure is achieved through the highly restricted movement of women or even through female seclusion. Women are regarded as gateways, literally points of entrance into the caste system" (579). This statement clearly proves the case of

women's mobility. The anxiety of safeguarding the purity of caste completely vested in the community's women alone. The women of the lower strata were comparatively less burdened with such concerns of purity.

Though the practice of the social evil of untouchability is banned through constitutional law, even today the positions of caste as per the *chaturvarnya* system still lingers in several societies. Thus, the travel narratives which contextualize caste do serve as bridges that connect with those unpleasant social situations that existed in the past.

A person's self is largely bound with his/her caste class, gender and religious positions and every deed the person undertakes may overtly and covertly have the reflections of these entities. All these factors can add to get a deeper understanding of the knowledge which is created by the author/ traveller. In a travel narrative, when compared to the gender of the author, all the other factors are difficult to ascertain. Since the declaration of one's caste position is not a requirement in travel narratives, it is not easy for the reader to determine the travel writer's communal status except may be from the usage of surnames or specific clues from within the narrative. As such, *Utharendian Yathrakurippukal (Travel Writings on Northern India)* (2012) by Jyothirmayi Sankaran requires special mention for the author's caste position. *Utharendian Yathrakurippukal* is a compilation of the author's various short travels made in the northern regions of India. What is to be noted here is that except in the description about the author, nowhere in her narration does Jyothirmayi Sankaran mention anything about her communal status. The reform movements that happened within the Namboothiri community have improved the

miserable lives of the *antharjanams* and the restrictions, especially the travel restrictions imposed on the community's women have now become an old story.

At this juncture the feature “At 77, This Solo Woman Traveller has Visited All Continents But One” (*Onmanorama*) written by Rajesh Noel about Sreedevi Antharjanam and her travels needs special mention. The feature talks about the travels of a Namboothiri woman who had been subjected to various restrictions due to her caste and gender. Sreedevi Antharjanam also known as Sreedevi teacher is a retired teacher hailing from the Thrissur district in Kerala. At an age when Malayali women withdraw into household matters, the travels of Sreedevi Antharjanam stand apart. In fact, she sees nothing as an obstacle to follow her passion to travel and see the world. It is after her retirement from job as an L. P. School headmistress in 1998 she started to go for travels and that she has travelled all inhabited continents except Australia. The article states about her travels:

She has been to the Himalayas about 6 times. She visited Kailasam (Mount Kailas) in 2005 along with a group in Kerala. She bathed in Lake Manasarovar at -20 degree centigrade. She went up the Everest in a helicopter from Kathmandu and posted an Indian flag there. She even had ‘jeera rice’ from the monasteries there. Her rich travel experience can drench you like a heavy snowfall. (*Onmanorama*)

Moreover, from the wide range of experiences she has acquired through her expeditions she confidently claims that “travelling solo is safer, no need to have a company” (*Onmanorama*). In fact, the expeditions of Sreedevi Antharjanam can be considered as experiments she carries out on her once restricted purity clad upper

caste feminine self and body. Her travels are testimonies of the celebration of selfhood. The selfhood which carries the history of suppression and oppression has finally found a way to evolve through her travels.

Though she has not written about her travels, her life itself can be taken as an example to substantiate the observation made by Michel Foucault in *History of Sexuality* (1978) “where there is power there is resistance” (95). The hindrances and restrictions she had to face for being born in the Namboothiri community might have literally chiselled the traveller in her who is ready to go anywhere without being accompanied by anyone. Sreedevi Antharjanam through her travels subverts every notion associated with age, caste and gender. She says “I cannot move about as fast as earlier. I am ageing. Still, I want to travel as long as I can move my limbs” (*Onmanorama* ).

### **Travels and Travel Writings of Malayali Muslim women.**

Travels for the sake of religious beliefs are accepted to an extent by many traditional societies and family. We can find plenty of travelogues written by women who undertake religious travels to satisfy their spiritual quest. The case of Muslim women is not different. While a number of women from the Muslim community attend and perform the holy Hajj ceremony which is conducted every year in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, what is to be noted is that very few narratives written by Malayali Muslim women regarding this ceremonial travel turn up.

As per the Muslim religious laws if a woman needs to travel she should be accompanied by a *Maharam*, a male guardian whom she cannot marry. The book

*Women in Muslim Society* (1991) by N. M. Shaikh, states that as per the rules of Islam “it is unlawful for a woman who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgment to travel for three days or more without being accompanied either by her father, brother or husband or son or any other male *mahram*” (39). A person who has a strong belief in his/her religious faith finds it difficult to think above the laws of faith. The strict religious laws to be followed can also be a reason why women from the community could not make much contribution to the field of travel writing.

However, standing within the faith Muslim women in their own way have had their fair share of contribution in the field of travel writing. The anthology *Three Centuries of Travel Writing by Muslim Women* (2022) edited by Lambert-Hurley et al. can be taken as an example to prove this fact. The book is a compilation of travel excerpts of Muslim women belonging to different sectors and nationalities spanning from a period of 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the book it is clear that Muslim women across the globe have travelled to destinations which are quite different from their natives. They have travelled as pilgrims, captives, migrants, queens and so on. Moreover, they even took time to record their experiences on what they witnessed. Hence their narratives could be viewed as evidences for their take on the sociocultural and political situations on wherever they went and what they have seen and experienced. The book can be considered as a testimony on Muslim women’s travels and travel writings.

At this point it needs to be mentioned that there are a few narratives on Hajj travel which have come out as published travel narratives by Malayali Muslim women. P. A. Sameena’s *Hajj Oru Anubhava Saakshyam* (2009), Mumtaz

Hameed's *Oru Theerdhadakayute Ninavukal* (2004) and Sabitha Teacher's *Hajj: Lokame Tharavadu* (2014) are the Hajj narratives written by Malayali Muslim women. It should also be noted that other than the religiously motivated travels there are some other travel narratives written by women who belong to the Muslim religion. A. Nabeesathu's *Boston Tea Party: Oru Veettammayude American-Canadian Sandarshanam (Boston Tea Party: The American- Canadian Visit of a Homemaker)* (2015) which describes the author's various journeys outside India, K. M. Jameela's *Shakespeareante Naattil (In the Land of Shakespeare)* (2015) which describes her experiences in England, Sajitha Abdurahman's travel narrative on Australia *Swan Riverile Varnamaralangal* (2014), television anchor Subaida's "Aana Kazhchakalkkaayi Kaattilekk" (2013) are some of the travel narratives written by Malayali women who belong to the Muslim community. Through their travels and travel writings Malayali Muslim women in their own way have tried to transform the perspectives and perceptions regarding women's mobility. In other words, their contributions many a time gather thoughts regarding the existing discourses on women's mobility within and out of the religious faith. It is sure that their travels and travel writings may have an impact on women's, particularly Muslim women's, mobility and will continue to do so for generations. It can be noticed that unlike the earlier generations, Malayali Muslim women have largely started to take part in travels and that many Muslim women have made their marks in various travel undertakings.

While commenting on Muslim women's travels and travel writing the travels of Sajna Ali ought to be mentioned. Sajna Ali, a Malayali Muslim woman who is a

software engineer by profession is the founder member of the women's travel group *Appooppanthaadi* which undertakes and organizes short and long travels exclusively for women who are ready to explore. The group now has become an icon in the field of travel that many women have become beneficiaries of this venture.

Sajna owes credit to her father, a truck driver, who used to fascinate his family with his travel stories and photos. This indeed was inspirational for Sajna to take up travels as a passion and profession. About the travels conducted by *Appooppanthaadi*, Sajna says “it's all about women and their dreams. There is no age bar for dreams. The only thing is maybe I am looking at life a little differently than others” (*Yourstory*, February 02, 2018). About the travel group she says that “it's an open forum for them to discuss anything under the sun. For the same reason it's more like a family. Those who have met during the trips as strangers are now friends for a lifetime” (*Yourstory*, February 02, 2018). What should be noted here is that, though Sajna Ali belongs to a community that maintains orthodox views with regard to women's mobility, she has not turned away from her passion that she now owns a travel company.

## **II. The Treatment of Gender in Women's Travel Narratives**

In the section on Gender, the issues of gender are analysed as and how they surface in the travel narratives. For this, I am looking into travel narratives like Geetha Idamarku Skarner's *Ottakku Oru Deshaadanam (A Solo Migration)* (1991), K. A. Beena's *Nadi Thinnunna Dweep (Island Eaten by the River)* (2016), various experiences taken from the book on Malayali women's mobility *Pennira (Female Prey)* (2011) edited by Tissy Mariyam Thomas, Bobby Aloysius's *Swapnam*

*Nilacha Russiyil (In Russia Where Dreams are No More)* (2003), Tissy Mariyam Thomas's *Irangi Nadappu (Walk About)* (2008), Renuka's and Sheeja's "Kaalidaraathe" ("Without Tripping" written by P. Jaseela) and Shalu's "Enne Thanne Kandupidikkanulla Yathra" ("Travels in Search of Myself" written by Tissy Mariyam Thomas) from the anthology *Penvazhi (Female Path)* (2015), Kalitha's "Yathrayude Pennanubhavangal" ("Female Experiences of Travel") (2013) K. A. Beena's *Chuvadukal (Foot Steps)* (2015), K. Gouri Amma's *London Diary* (1959), K. K. Shylaja's *China, Rashtram, Rashtreeyam, Kazhchakal: Puthiya Chinayiloodeyulla Yathra (China, State, Politics and Sights: Journey Through New China)* (2015) and Chintha Jerome's *Chankile China: Oru Chinnakkadakkariyude Cheenayathra (Beloved China: China: A Trip to China Made by a Woman from Chinnakkada)* (2018).

While the travel narratives mentioned in the first section of this chapter become historical documents on women's mobility with regard to caste and religion it is worthwhile to look into some other matters that affect people's especially women's mobility in the changed scenario. Unlike the pre-modern days, in the modern context it is class and gender rather than caste and religion that determine people's mobility. That is, unlike the earlier days if the person desires to go for travel and if he/she has money, time and health then it is easy to travel. Nevertheless, we find that gender operates as a major force and a defining factor in people's mobility. This indeed becomes crucial when it comes to the mobility of those who are considered as the feminine gender. Hence the mainstream socio-cultural discourses around women's travels and travel narratives which are formed

out of gendered conceptions need to be specifically addressed while looking into Malayali women's travel writings. Hence, I am looking into excerpts from select travel narratives which address issues solely related with one's gendered positioning.

It should be noted that the gendered equations constituted by the mainstream dogmas do not always support the interests of people especially of women and the other marginalized sections of the society. Not all men are free to do whatever they like to do; likewise, not all women are free to do what they actually want to do. Right from birth, people are categorized according to their gender. Predesigned dress codes and colour schemes compliment their gendered performances. Interests, emotions, desire and the likes which are the reflections of individuality are highly monitored by the society. Likewise, bodies are disciplined through constant surveillance of the society. Judith Butler points out "that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" (*Gender Trouble* xv).

In a social system which is monitored by patriarchal power structures the pressure of rising up to the pre-set gendered concepts can be challenging to individuals. The approved masculinity is not supposed to flaunt certain feelings which are considered as soft or feminine. Certain emotions which are coined as feminine are not allowed in the case with masculinity. That is why Judith Butler argues that gender is socially constructed and so is performative. Every deed a person undertakes becomes a performance which eventually is measured by the

mainstream dogmas. Gendered performances have to be regulated in accordance with the demands of the system. Butler observes that,

The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of gender as a constituted social temporality. (*Gender Trouble* 191)

While looking into women's travels, it should be noted that the challenges women undertake to fulfil their travel desires and dreams are far more exasperating than her male counterparts. They will have to deal with the pressures of being targeted for crossing the allotted limits. While Robyn Davidson the traveller who penned *Tracks* (1982), took pride for her thousand mile camel trek through the Australian desert and for proving the world that a woman could cross a desert on her own was totally disappointed with the media for addressing her merely as "the camel lady" (qtd. in Carl 196). She says if it was a man in her place they wouldn't have called him "camel gentleman" (qtd. in Carl 196).

In her article "Travel Writing and Gender" Susan Bassnett observes that the studies that were made about women travellers often tried to portray these ladies as slightly eccentric who are in an urge to escape from the constraints of their family and society. Bassnett further notes that the titles given for some of the studies often prove this case. *Ladies on the Loose, The Blessings of a Good, Thick Skirt, and Spinsters Abroad* were some of the titles which aimed at degrading the women who

dared to venture out of their domestic premises. She notes that, those women who dared to venture out were treated as exceptional and out of normalcy and hence their achievements went unacknowledged.

One consistent line through discussions of women travellers is the notion that they were somehow exceptional. The theory of the exceptional woman who is somehow different from other women and therefore empowered to perform feats no normal woman would be capable of carrying out has been one of the classic ways of marginalising women's achievements. (Bassnett 228)

Carl Thompson also agrees with the observation made by Bassnett that he too notices that media is all keen to tag such women for "exceptionalism and eccentricity" (196). Though the women travellers of earlier generations faced lot of ridicule and criticism, their bold steps have indeed helped the future generations to succeed in their trajectories. Moreover, the attitude and approach towards women travellers have also met considerable changes that more and more women are deliberately and actively involving in travels which at times are equally risky and thrilling.

Coming to the Indian situation, Somdatta Mandal in her article "Mapping the Female Gaze: Women's Travel Writing from Colonial Bengal" observes that though travel has been primarily a masculine enterprise, women were not excluded from the terrain. She says that,

They also travelled, migrated, moved, often for the same reasons as men - their husbands or fathers or sons. The kind of experiences they related to and the metaphysical roads they travelled were quite different. Their writing was not seen as a metaphor for quest or as an act of empowerment; instead their writings were seen as narratives of their journeys and representation of their personal experience. (127)

### **Negligence towards Women's Travel Writing**

Geetha Idamarku Skarner's *Ottakku Oru Deshadanam* (1991) published by the Indian Atheist Publishers is a travel narrative which needs special mention for its outstanding narrative quality and unique travel experiences. The travelogue is about the travel experiences of Geetha Skarner a Malayali woman, who sets forth on a travel which crossed many countries at one stretch. Her travels starting from Vietnam cover countries like Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Mongolia, China, Burma etc. and the state of affairs of the world in those days are well documented in the narrative. From Geetha's narration one can make out the risk she took to make this dream journey possible. She travels by ships, airplanes, trains, buses etc. to reach different destinations in different countries. With very less communication facilities and no companions she was able to finish her journey successfully. From her narration it is understood that most of the travels documented in the book were undertaken with great potential risks.

However, it is quite disappointing to learn that this travel book which is commendable for its travel experience and narrative style was largely ignored by the reading public as well as the critics. Either due to a lack of critical appreciation or

outright neglect by the mainstream academia or some mysterious reason, this brilliant narrative which describes a Malayali woman's solo endeavour quietly went into oblivion. What could be noted about her narrative is that throughout the book she maintains a consistent and well organized narrative style. Her attitude towards cultures other than hers is all the more appreciable that she tries to get into the nuances of cultures and that she speaks of them with due respect, a quality which is lacking in many great travel writers.

Apart from Geetha's travelogue, there are many brilliant and interesting travel narratives by women which went into oblivion without any critical appreciation. Such negligence towards Malayali women's travel writings could be read along with what Barbara Smith's has observed in her famous essay "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" (1977). The essay talks about the negligence towards the writings of black women by mainstream critics. Smith opines that, "For books to be real and remembered they have to be talked about. For books to be understood they must be examined in such a way that the basic intentions of the writers are at least considered" (2303). Smith's observation could be applied to the general attitude society holds towards the travel narratives written by women.

The discourses which are formulated out of gender conceptions across the ages might be the reason why people's general conscience fails to recognize and acknowledge women's travels and travel writings. Therefore while looking into the intervention and impact of gender on the travel narratives written by Malayali women, I am able to locate a number of such instances in the travel narratives written by them. Though Malayali women may have experiences which are even

more intense, painful and memorable to narrate, the unavailability of such experiences in the text form makes it difficult to incorporate in this section for an analysis. Hence, I am analyzing excerpts from the travel books which I am able to locate. How situations which are in no way progressive, affect the travel experiences of Malayali women are examined in this section.

### **General Attitude towards Women's Mobility**

In her travelogue *Nadi Thinnunna Dweep* (2016), K. A. Beena narrates an incident when she got posting in the D. A. V. P. (Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity). As part of her job as an exhibition officer she had to travel extensively through the villages in Kerala to conduct photo exhibitions. As a person who has immense passion for travel, Beena says that it was the chance to travel that attracted her the most when she got appointed for the post. But when she went to join the department, the officer told her bluntly that “this is not a job suitable for ladies. For us it is quite difficult to take you along as it may incur bad reputation. Your security is another headache. Getting a transfer will be better for you and us as well” (my trans.; 15-16). The officer's words reflect the stark reality of how gender sensitivity on paper falls flat in real life even in working environments controlled by the government. If a woman wishes to pursue her dreams, she has to be prepared to face a never ending barrage of challenges. Besides the discouraging attitude of the authorities, the nature of the job she undertook made her realize the practical problems associated with women's travels. For instance she finds it extremely difficult to find a place to stay during nights. In her own words:

Had lot of experiences of wander to find a place to stay during nights. I had even travelled for hours to reach my relatives or friends to stay in their homes. Without prior information even the working women's hostels did not provide stay just for one or two days. A safe place to stay in nights during those days was quite rare. The attitude of the hotels towards a woman who came to stay alone was quite vindictive. (my trans.; 15)

The experiences mentioned above are expressions of the mainstream ideologies based on discourses formed out of the common beliefs and concepts keen on placing women as victims in the heterosexual matrix. However, what is to be noted is that all the hindrances which have stood in the way couldn't divert the spirit and determination of someone like K. A. Beena who was determined and confident to chase her dreams.

Even though experiences like these are exceptions, the general attitude towards women's mobility is not very progressive. It could be noted that women's interventions in public spaces are not always hopeful that they are more prone to discriminations, assaults, insults, molestations etc. in spaces which are considered as public and male oriented. In Malayalam, there are a few compilations in the book format based on women's travel experiences. *Pennira* (2011), *Iranginadappu* (2008), *Penvazhi* (2015), *Penyathra* (2013), *Ranimar Padminimar: Malayalishreeyute Kaivitta Sancharangal* (2016) are some of the books that have compiled Malayali women's experiences on travel. Among these books *Pennira* (Female Prey) (2011) and *Iranginadappu* (Walking Out) (2008) and *Penvazhy*

(Female Path) (2015) mostly focus on issues faced by women in their travels and their experiences of interventions in the public spaces.

While the book *Iranginadappu* (2008) written by Tissy Mariyam Thomas focuses on the author's own experiences while travelling across Kerala in different periods, the anthology *Pennira* (Female Prey) (2011), edited by Tissy Mariyam Thomas discusses various travel experiences of Malayali women who belong to different age groups and classes. The book *Pennira* is divided into three sections. The travels and interventions of women in public spaces mentioned in this book narrate disturbing and troublesome experiences they face because of their gender. The book clearly portrays the misogynist attitude of men, especially of Malayali men towards women who have tried to enter the mainstream. Being in public space/public vehicles at odd times happens to be the trigger for the maltreatment they receive as women. All the instances mentioned in the book prove that regardless of caste, class and religion the visibility of female bodies in public spaces is always under scrutiny.

Sara Mills in her book *Discourse of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (1991) notes that there are a few elements that women deliberately avoid mentioning in their travel writings. One such is about the fears one has to tackle solely for being the feminine gender. In her words: "Surprisingly, few of them refer to any fear of sexual harassment, one of the discursive constraints which is the strongest in the context of women and travel, especially in accounts of women travelling alone" (82).

The experiences included in this book are evidences that prove that women's participation in public spaces can turn out fearsome and haunting when undertaken at wrong times. The horrible experiences of assault narrated by Thasni Banu (a B. P. O employee in Cochin), Kani K. and Jolly Chirayath, who are artistes proves this point. The experiences of assault and moral policing they faced in public spaces in fact are only the tip of the iceberg of hostility faced by women. The narratives included in the book *Pennira* showcase the misogyny that is ingrained in the society. The book is dedicated to Soumya, the Malayali woman who was raped and killed while travelling in a train in Kerala in the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2011. The editor Tissy Mariyam Thomas acknowledges that,

The book *Pennira* is the uproar and grievances of women from various domains of life for the right to walk fearlessly. These writings by women acknowledge that the experiences described are not imaginary or romantic. I have attempted to present a cross-section of women's experiences all over Kerala. From women of sixteen to women of fifty-six years of age, from a maid servant to the university professor, disparate revelations, worries, indignations and survival methods, all of them bound by one common aspect, their helplessness in having to suffer humiliation on account of being a woman (my trans.; 12).

The complexities of women's gendered positioning within the socio-cultural situation are revealed through these narratives. In fact these personal experiences when narrated through the medium of this literary genre of travel writing become political. Here, from the experiences mentioned in these narratives it is understood

that the phenomenology of the female body felt within spaces which are largely structured as public leaves them insecure. This might be the reason why their presence within such spaces is regulated. When something is done against the preset norms it creates turbulence to the existing system. The case is very much true when it comes to the gender regimes that are to be followed by each person who belongs or is a member of particular socio-cultural space. What Doreen Massey has said about gendered structuring of spaces in her book *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994) can be read along with this. Massey writes that: “From the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit, to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood” (179).

Here, when the rules created by the patriarchal orthodoxy have been challenged through gestures which are unacceptable to the social structure it creates fuss. That is, when the performance of bodies which are biologically and sociologically considered as females do not go along with the rules propounded by patriarchy it becomes intolerable to the predesigned social structure. The book *Why Loiter: Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets* (2011) Shilpa Phadke et al., which is the consolidation of a three year project done by Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan and Shilpa Ranade, analyses the visibility of women in public spaces. They conclude the book by stating that as citizens of the state, across class, caste, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, clothing and behaviour, it is the right of the individual to have access to the public space. About women’s loitering they write

that “The unconditional claim to public space will only be possible when all women and all men can walk the streets without being compelled to demonstrate purpose or respectability. Women’s access to public space is fundamentally linked to the access of all citizens” (186).

In her book *Seeing Like a Feminist* (2012) Nivedita Menon makes her observations on gender identity. In her own words:

It seems that the last bastion of sex difference, the body itself, is revealed to be, not simply given by nature, but made visible in specific ways by different kinds of discourses. Of course, we do experience the world and live in it, in embodied ways. If the body we inhabit is marked male, it has one kind of effect; if female, another kind of effect; if Black, or Dalit, or disabled, yet other effects. These effects are simultaneously structural, material and psychological. But the point is that the body by itself does not produce effects-these are produced by its location in a world structured around certain qualities, assumed to be universal. (89)

Along with the experiences of travel and interactions with the public the experiences of driving auto- mobiles like cars are also discussed in the book *Pennira*. The misogynic attitude that Kerala’s public spaces and roads hold is revealed through the narratives by women who drive automobiles. The motor driving experiences narrated by Baby Shari and Tincy Ann Thomas, narrate experience of two women who come from two different socio-cultural backgrounds. Baby Shari, a university professor by profession begins her narrative “Ole Pokkottenni” (a typical north Malabar slang which means “Let Her Go”) with the descriptions of hurdles she

faced to break the stereotypical assumptions that exists in the society. Shari observes that more than the vehicle and road women need to learn to tackle the misogynic attitude of the people. She says, “Even the five year old boy will not hesitate to pass inappropriate comment against a middle aged woman” (my trans.; 84). It could be noted that Shari who hails from a Muslim background owes all the credit to her mother for making her a self-reliant woman. Nevertheless, what is to be noticed is that even though she has attained confidence and control to take up long distance drives, her family insists on the distance she has to maintain while attempting longer journeys. In their opinion she should not be “impudent” (78).

In her “Doore Yathra Bassukalum Driving Pathangalum: Pennanubhavam” (“Long Route Busses and Driving Lessons: Female Experience”), Tincy Ann Thomas a medical transcriptionist by profession reveals the hurdles she underwent to gain a driving license. Finally when she received the license she says “That is not license but it is the memorial of my mental trauma of two months” (my trans.; 89). The abovementioned narratives might not always be the case with driving or attempting to attain driving licenses. The general discourse formed around women’s automobile skills was in fact disapproving. In her book *Moving Lives: Twentieth Century Women’s Travel- Writing* (2001) Sidonie Smith notes that,

Women’s relationship to automobility may have been-and may continue to be- represented through gender stereotypes. ... Nonetheless, women used automobiles as vehicles of resistance to conventional gender roles and the strictures of a normative femininity. Autos provided access to jobs and continuing education. They provided access to recreational travel. These

opportunities for activities outside domesticity offered new identities for women. (175)

In between all these discouraging attitudes that surround women's mobility it has to be acknowledged that there are many women who excel in handling difficult automobiles as well as off road drives as passion or profession. The case is not different with Malayali women that many narratives have come out in Malayali women's credit depicting experiences of off-road drives or handling tough vehicles. However, it is quite relevant to discuss the narratives of Baby Shari and Tincy Ann Thomas to bring into focus the socio-cultural changes that have happened over the years in Kerala.

*Pennira* is probably the only book in Malayalam which has done a compilation of all those disappointing and unfortunate experiences of travel and the likes which Malayali women come across while engaging with public spaces in Kerala.

Here, when women's lived body comes into contact with spaces it is expected to have experiences that only a female body/mind can comprehend. That is why Fullagar reaches the conclusion that "travel is also a means of coming home to the feminine self; signaling the different inter-subjective relations inherent in the journey of identity that are not dependent upon masculine ways of knowing" ("Narratives of Travel" 72). Safety becomes the prior concern in case of women who engage in spaces that are considered as public. As for men they do not need to get concerned over the safety of their body as it is in the case with women. Constant fear of getting raped or assaulted prevents women from taking up travels or

engaging with public spaces just like their male counterparts. This doesn't in anyway mean that women are completely safe in the privacy of their domestic confinements.

Anthropologist Shirley Ardener argues that patriarchy has created "social map" and subsequent "ground rules" (qtd. in Blunt and Rose 1) which are to be followed by men and women to construct certain spaces into "feminine" and "masculine" (qtd. in Blunt and Rose 1) which in turn "allocated certain kinds of (gendered) activities to certain (gendered) places" (Blunt and Rose 1). Women crossing the preset limits of patriarchy are seen as a threat to the prevailing social structure. Here, what is to be noted is that amidst all the turmoil created by these bad experiences women didn't stop their movement. Moreover, women have gained strength out of these unfortunate incidents and so are able to stand firm against the currents that try to pull them down.

While studies on travel writings mostly concentrate on travel experiences that take place within the normative structures, most often the travels of those which are out of the conventional normalcy are left out. It is at this juncture that the travels of the sensory and physically challenged become relevant. Their travels are often misunderstood for their inability in approaching the outer world in its full splendour. Charles Forsdick, in his article "Travel Writing, Disability, Blindness: Venturing Beyond Visual Geographies" observes that,

The study of travel and blindness has wide implications for the reading of travelogues more generally, and encourages an understanding of travel writing that at once identifies and challenges a discursive normativity

associated with sightedness. At the same time, it reveals an approach to a poetics of travel writing that reveals the multisensory as opposed to the mono-sensory, and privileges *telling* as opposed to *seeing*. (114)

It is with this understanding that we need to interpret travels which goes beyond the accepted normativity. Renuka's and Sheeja's narrative titled "Kalidarathe" ("Without Tripping") taken from the anthology *Penvazhy (Female Path)* (2015) opens up new levels of discussions in the travel narrative scenario as it is about the travels of two differently abled Malayali women. Since their experiences have been written by P. Jaseela, it brings out the oral nature of the narrative. The first part of the narrative consists of Renuka's experiences. Renuka who is visually challenged, is an employee who works in the C. H. Muhammad Koya library in the University of Calicut. She lost her eye sight at the age of twenty seven. In the narrative, Renuka touchingly depicts the subjective experience of losing her eye sight and thereafter the change that has come in her life. She says, "After losing my eye sight my solo trips began to decrease, rather, it ceased. ... Since then I have divided my life into two, as before and after losing my eye sight" (my trans.; 102-103). Though her narrative isn't particularly about any of her travel experiences, she tries to convey what she as a visually challenged person felt about travels. For Renuka, travels and friends are the breath of her life and "when you have lot of worries, you can forget everything when you share it with your friends or go on a solo trip. These are the only things that motivate me to survive when life tries to defeat me. While travelling, mind becomes free" (my trans.; 104).

The second part of the narrative “Kaalidarathe” (“Without Tripping”) is about the experiences of Sheeja who is physically challenged. Though Sheeja had faced difficulty during travels due to her inability to walk properly, she says that she never let her physical disparity take away her mobility. She says “My dreams got wings when I started riding a three wheeled scooter” (my trans.; Jaseela 105). From her Pre-degree days onwards she had started to travel alone and she now enjoys all her travels. For her, travels are her confidence boosters that keep her spirit going. Evaluating both Renuka’s and Sheeja’s experience it can be understood that being mobile is something that actually helps them overcome their traumas due to their physical disparities. Here, both the women speak of the positive codes of mobility in their lives. From their narration it is evident that Renuka and Sheeja see travel as their greatest solace.

If the experiences mentioned above are associated with one’s senses and physical shortcomings, it becomes equally important to discuss travel experiences which are related to one’s gender manifestations. The travel experiences shared by Shalu, a transgender woman give a different dimension to what has been perceived so far in the area of women’s travels and travel writings. Shalu’s narrative “Enne Thanne Kandupidikkanulla Yathra” (Journey to Discover Myself) from *Penvazhi* (2015) sheds light on the harsh realities faced by people who are out of the “heterosexual matrix” a concept Judith Butler uses in her *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. The narrative is written by Tissy Mariyam Thomas. After being expelled from her family and native place due to her gender, she is in a constant flux. The pain of having lost her roots worries her immensely.

Shalu's narrative "Enne Thanne Kandupidikkanulla Yathra" touchingly shares various such experiences. As a person who has been so passionate about life, travels and dance performances, she is quite often left heartbroken when people mistreat her or call names on account of her gender. She describes her life:

My old name is Satish. My house is in Muppainad panchayath of Vaithiri taluk of Wayanad district. Bangalore was completely strange for me. I lived there like a beggar. I travelled far and wide in this great city in the form of a beggar with a female mind and male body. I love to travel a lot. I want to see this world and meet different people. ... I don't like being called hijada while travelling. I too want to live like all other people. (my trans.; 52)

As travel as an activity requires a certain involvement of the travelling person's physicality along with his/ her aural, haptic and gustatory senses, it is not that easy for someone with a physical or sensory disparity to travel or keep themselves mobile. In Shalu's case it is her sexual orientation as a transwoman that makes it difficult for her to cope with the heteronormative society. Societal insensitiveness towards gender orientations which are beyond the so called normal is what makes the lives of people who belong to trans communities a mess.

Sociologist Jennie Germann Molz in her article "Cosmopolitan Bodies: Fit to Travel and Travelling to Fit" comments on the challenges that prevent people from being mobile. She writes:

It can be harder for travellers to move and harder for them to fit in when the

meaning of their bodies is being read off the surface, especially when the body's surface already tells another story about the traveller and when skin or gender or secured for some bodies, made difficult for some bodies and altogether denied to other bodies, so too is 'fitting in' contingent on the body. In particular, women, travellers of colour, queer travellers and disabled travellers may find moving and fitting a difficult affair. (16-17)

When Shalu says, "Life is almost like a journey for me. A journey to discover myself," we get to know the depth of her wound (57). Though the positive code of mobility is not that visible in Shalu's case, travels however provide her panoramic views that assure her the kind of acceptance she has yearned for all her life.

Though Renuka and Sheeja have very positive notes on their travels, it is understood that their physical and sensory disparities as visually challenged and 'physically unfit' at times trouble them in their travels and lives. They being women, such experiences can be even more severe and problematic. In that way, be it Shalu, be it Renuka or Sheeja, all the three in some way or the other are out of the so-called normative orientations. In other words, they belong to the lowest categories in the hierarchy of 'able' 'normal' bodies. Their lived experience bring them together on a common ground of alienation of being treated as 'the other', i.e. the 'other' who are being looked upon either with sympathy or with hatred. To be more specific, be it queer, be it differently abled, societal attitude towards orientations that go beyond the normative is still not that progressive.

When experiences during travel are analysed in the context of one's gender, Kalitha's narrative "Yathrayude Pennanubhavangal" ("Experiences of a Female

Travel”) which is taken from the book on travels *Kandedukkaatha Parudeesakal (Paradises Unexplored)* (2013) edited by V. Abdul Latheef needs special mention. The book is a compilation of two week travel experiences of a group of people in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Meghalaya. Kalitha, a member of the travel group adds a different experience through her travel narrative “Yathrayude Pennanubhavangal”. A misogynist incident that she herself gets into is narrated in this short yet thought provoking travel narrative. While travelling in a ferry through the river Brahmaputra in Assam, Kalitha, along with her male co-travellers boarded the upper portion of the ferry to watch Brahmaputra’s vastness. But the employees of the boat told her that only men are allowed to stand there that she should immediately get down. When she tried to ignore this and tried to stay back the workers in the boat told her that “Women are not allowed to sit or stand on the upper berth” (my trans.; 105). This response was quite insulting for Kalitha, but what astonished her the most was none of the fellow travellers including her male co-travellers from Kerala uttered a word against this discrimination that happened just in front of their eyes. This incident totally disappointed Kalitha that she had no other choice but get down to continue the journey. All these hints toward the fact that regardless of region and culture, patriarchal power structures operate in a homogeneous way that the set of dogmas and the prohibitions imposed upon women are almost similar in nature. Her gender forces Kalitha to sacrifice her wish to enjoy the beautiful sight of the river Brahmaputra. The travel guide told her that dizziness can occur to women if they are allowed to stand on the deck. For a person who hails from the Vypin islands in the Ernakulam district of Kerala and as a person who is

quite familiar with waters, the explanation felt quite absurd for Kalitha. But she understood that arguing with them is of no use at all.

Here, what went wrong is her performance with regard to her gender. That is, the performance expected from a person with a female body did not coincide with what Kalitha had done. By attempting to stand there on the deck of the ferry, Kalitha appeared to be crossing the socio-cultural and traditional norms of the region. The men too have internalized this rule against women as a rightful norm that for them what Kalitha was trying to do is something against the norms of the culture. In any culture such tacit rules have deep connections in the general psyche of those who belong to the culture. This can be further explained by the concept of 'bodily hexis' propounded by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu uses the term *hexis* to denote on the ways of carrying one's body in a socio-cultural space which has its own rules and regulations. That is, how one's bodily postures, behaviour, need to be regulated according to the tacit rules one has to follow to be in a society. Bourdieu observes that, "Body hexis speaks directly to the motor function, in the form of a pattern of postures that is both individual and systematic, being bound up with a whole system of objects, and charged with a host of special meanings and values" (87). He also states that "Bodily *hexis* is political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*" (93-94).

Any person who belongs to a particular sociocultural situation internalizes the set of rules of the particular situation. The violation of any of these rules can cause great tantrums in the society. Here the physical presence of Kalitha's female

body which attempted to share space among bodies which are biologically and sociologically different from Kalitha created the turmoil. It is quite a universal phenomenon that societies and cultures across the world instill in the members of the community the sense of appropriate bodily postures which are to be followed in accordance with the respective biological gender. As what Butler observes in her *Gender Trouble* “Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration” (xv).

A travel of any kind can provide experiences that cannot be gained from any book or any study for that matter. The experiences that are gathered through travels can be varied in accordance with the socio-cultural, economic and political situations of the traveller. The experiences conceived by women during travel can be considerably different due to the various reasons which only women can comprehend. The reason for this kind of a conception is undoubtedly related with gender. While gender is constitutive of one’s physical body, it can be said that the perception of the physical world is largely bound with one’s gendered situations too.

K. A. Beena’s *Chuvadukal* (2015) is a travelogue which narrates the travel experience of a train journey conducted through the northern states of India. Beena is joined by her friend Ancy to take part in a tour program “Village on Wheels” conducted by the IRCTC (Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation) which passes through various pilgrim sites in India. The travelogue is divided into fourteen chapters. While each of the chapters describes the fun and thrills of the long train journey one narrative stands out by the peculiarity of its content. The chapter

titled “Theevandiyum Oru Veedaanu” (“Train too is a Home”) describes an incident which brings out the common misogynist notion which considers women who are out of their domestic confinements other than for any religious or for allotted purposes as ‘out of place’ and immoral. Here the incident mentioned in the chapter refers to one such attitude Beena had to face from a Malayali male co-traveller. His perverted attitude came out as an invitation offered to spend time in a hotel room, a reflection of the general mindset which treated women who are out of their domestic confinements and travelling for her own purpose as a woman who is out of societal standards of morality. Though Beena was shocked for a while, she didn’t sit idle. When she came back after the journey she wrote an article “Njarambu Rogikaludeyum Swantham Naadu” (“The Homeland of Perverts”) harshly criticizing the misogynist attitude that men hold towards women who are seen out of their domestic premises. Though there can be exceptions, the general attitude towards women’s mobility is not quite favourable. Patriarchal notions expect women to be in the confinements of domestic spaces and not in the public space for any kind of enjoyments. In other words the visibility of the female bodies in spaces which are considered as public may disrupt the social order which is based on the patriarchal dogmas. Thus one is expected to be careful for one’s gendered performances.

Here what is to be noted is that Beena is quite adamant and confident about her future travels. Whatever be the situation she is not willing to give up her dreams and desires of exploring the world. She says “Lessons taught by travels cannot be learnt from any university. ... No sight should be left out. No experience should be

wasted. Who told that travels are not meant for woman? What else can give the intoxication that travel gives?" (my trans.; 32)

The observations made by a foreign lady Beth Whitman on the Indian society are not very different from the narratives by Malayali women. The attitude of the men who belong to a strict patriarchal society like that in India is documented by Beth Whitman, a traveller from Seattle, Washington in her book *Wanderlust and Lipstick: For Women Travelling to India* (2008). She expresses her wonder over certain misogynic experiences she happens to come across in this country. In her own words:

As a traveler, you'll find it easy to recognize some behavior that will immediately strike you as sexist. Men hold the majority of jobs - they'll be your drivers, waiters, salesclerks, hotel managers and, often, your tour guides. Indian men are more likely to engage in conversation than women and, if you're traveling with a man, he will be spoken to, not you. I met a couple of Australian gals in Darjeeling who had just arrived from Kolkata, their first stop in India. They had expressed absolute amazement that so few women were seen on the streets. It was the men that dominated every sidewalk. I had become so accustomed to this that it was a surprise for me to hear, but it is so true. (34)

In most of the travel narratives written by Malayali women, they make it a point to feature the lives of native women in the foreign lands they visited. Their lifestyles, the amount of freedom they enjoy, ways of dressing and even their body language are themes constantly seen in travel narratives written by Malayali women. Most of

the time they are amazed by the amount of freedom women enjoy in European and some other cultures. While such kind of freedom is unthinkable for an average Malayali mind set. The constrained and restricted life style of Malayali middle class women who belong to the strict patriarchal society is a curious matter for others to look on. When certain observations made by Malayali women on other cultures where women enjoy better lives are analysed it is quite understood how the gender restrictions in the patriarchal society bothers the women who belong to it.

K. Gouri Amma's travel narrative *London Diary* (1959) is one noteworthy example of a travelogue to be discussed while looking into Malayali women's travel writings. K. Gouri Amma's *London Diary* (1959), is about the author's official travel, the first of its kind taken up by a Malayali woman. K. Gouri Amma, a Kerala government officer, goes to London on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1958 to attend a training program initiated by the central government conducted for the Local Self-Government officials which is held in London.

Besides commenting on the official duties Gouri Amma's in her travelogue *London Diary* makes a detailed analysis of what she has come across in the newly confronted terrain. In her narration she is all praise for the progressive and well organized English society of the 1950s. She makes it a point to mention the amount of dignity and freedom women enjoy there. When Vijaya, a Malayali girl who studies in London comes to visit Gouri Amma she expresses her concern over Vijaya's safety while on her way back to her hostel late night. She says, "It became too late. Vijaya has to travel by train or bus to reach her hostel. I felt a bit uneasy to send her back alone. But Vijaya is not bothered at all. The self assurance that the

weaker sex can freely and safely travel without having to bother of any allegation could be read in Vijaya's little face" (my trans.; 31). By writing on Vijaya's late night travel in the European metropolis Gouri Amma indirectly hints at the constraints women face in her own native place during the time.

In her travelogue *Ottakku Oru Deshadanam* (1991), Geetha Idamarku Skarner who is married to a Swedish citizen writes on the life of Swedish women. She says that the women in the country enjoy enormous amount of freedom in their lives and that they were also able to acquire respectable positions in their country. However, about a hundred years before this was not the condition. Just like the downtrodden situation of women in many other countries the Swedish women too were considered as second grade citizens. But over the years this situation underwent tremendous change due the farsightedness of the authorities. Women and men started working together. The burden of house work too was shared equally. For children, learning the kitchen work became a mandatory subject in Swedish school curriculum. Reformation started from the smallest unit of society which later on reflected in their overall development towards a better society. What Geetha tries to convey here is how things of 'lesser importance' have transformed an entire society into an extremely progressive state.

Another instance of women's empowered status is narrated in veteran athlete and Asian games medalist Bobby Aloysius's travelogue *Swapnam Nilacha Russiayil* (2003). Bobby as part of her athletic practice had the opportunity to travel and stay in Russia for long and the stay in Russia made her write the travelogue *Swapnam*

*Nilacha Russiyil* (2003). In the book she has written about the empowered life of the Russian women. Bobby writes:

About 99 percentages of the drivers and conductors are women. The strong influence of women is seen everywhere in the social life of Russia. In the markets, supermarkets and in the streets there are only smart women. Be it drivers or sweepers the majority of people are women. It was the same women who stood strong with the men during the victorious World War Second. (my trans.; 42)

In the travel narrative *China, Rashtram, Rashtreeyam, Kazhchakal: Puthiya Chinayiloodeyulla Yathra (China, State, Politics and Sights: Journey Through New China)* (2015) which is mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, the author-traveller, K. K. Shylaja narrates her experience in China. Shylaja, who has adorned ministerial positions in the Left led government of Kerala explains on the empowered and advanced life of the Chinese women. From the information gathered by the narrator /traveller it is understood that the lives of women in China had undergone tremendous changes after the Chinese revolution in 1949. Shylaja writes: “Before 1949, China was the most conservative and anti- feminist society in the world. The imperialist conquests did not bring about any significant progress in women’s society except to curb the feudal customs of the pre-capitalist society. ... It was the 1949 revolution that helped in lifting up the lives of the Chinese women” (my trans.; 154-155).

The same situation is narrated by Chintha Jerome in her travelogue *Chankile China: Oru Chinnakkadakkariyude Cheenayathra (Beloved China: China: A Trip to*

*China Made by a Woman from Chinnakkada*) (2018) which is mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis. As a follower of the Leftist ideology and member of the Communist party Chintha holds various responsible positions within and outside the Communist party. In her travelogue on China, Chintha Jerome writes about the elevated social life of the present day Chinese women. The presence of the Chinese women in every field of social life was one noteworthy thing Chintha tries to convey in her narrative on china. The situation of Chinese women is far ahead when compared to the situation of Indian women. From bus drivers to local vendors in the commercial markets one could see the undeniable presence of Chinese women. However, this was not a transformation that happened over night. The days before Communism and revolution, Chinese women were subjected to various kind of oppression. The brutal system of foot binding which existed within Chinese society literally controlled the mobility of many Chinese women. In her own words:

All over in China I was able to see women who act and think freely. The awareness of freedom maintained in relationships between man - woman in China is democratic. Not only on campuses but also in cities and streets the native women walk freely. Stares can never frighten them to the slightest. Most of the vendors in the places of trade are women. Tourist guides are also women. In China regardless of day or night women enjoy freedom. Within few days I understood that the Communist revolution that happened in China had opened a heaven on earth for women. (my trans.; 87)

Chintha specially mentions about the help provided by the brilliant and smart Chinese girls who came as interpreters and guides. She says many of them are

university students and have good command over the English language. Chinthia says that the famous remark of Chairman Mao Zedong, “Women hold up half the sky” had literally transformed the downtrodden lives of Chinese women. Post revolutionary China had witnessed tremendous changes in the sociocultural life of women. Both in the workplace and in her home her labour is valued and acknowledged. From bus drivers to ministerial positions, the presence of Chinese women is felt everywhere in China. It could hence be understood that the rise of Chinese women’s status as mentioned by K. K Shylaja and Chinthia Jerome is supposed to be a feather in the Chinese Communist party’s cap.

As followers and members of the Communist party, both K. K. Shylaja and Chinthia Jerome comprehend this as the achievement and impact of Communist ideology/party in the lives of Chinese people on a whole. But as women their expression of joy on getting to know the improved and advanced life of Chinese women can be taken as an expression of fascination with a desired and idealized feminine self/other.

Luce Irigaray in her book *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993) opines about the associations among women themselves as a category thus: “Women want to find themselves, discover themselves and their own identity. Which is why they are seeking each other out, loving each other, associating with each other” (66).

Malayali women’s travel narratives which express wonder and fascination at the advanced life of women in different regions across the world could be read along with the observations put forward by Paula Gunn Allen from the perspective of her Native American Culture which she attests was predominantly woman-centred

societies. Allen in an interview given for *MELUS* (The Society for the Study of the Multi- Ethnic Literature of the United States) in 1982 criticizes a feminist movement that has been predominantly white and middle class. She says: “My white sisters- and they have influenced the Black and Asian and Chicano sisters-have given the impression that women have always been held down, have always been weak, and have always been persecuted by men, but I know that's not true. I come from a people that that is not true of” (2106). Discussing the culture of Native Americans in her article “Kochinnenako in Academe: Three Approaches to Interpreting a Keres Indian Tale” Paula Gunn Allen throws light on the different dimensions of time in human history where groups /societies have also functioned as matrifocal, matrilineal and egalitarian communities where women enjoyed better status. To take away the misconceptions regarding American Indian life Allen says when it is essential to unlearn what has been taught and propagated by the “paternalistic male-dominant modes of consciousness” (2109).

Considering this empirical knowledge proposed by Paula Gunn Allen, it should be noted that the common memory imprinted in the general feminine psyche quite often displays a nostalgic longing for the bygone ages when women enjoyed a privileged status. This urge/ nostalgic longing could thus be inferred from women’s narratives which describe the advanced and respectful life of women in different terrains. The common selfhood they share as women makes their desire for the idealized other which is quite promising and rewarding. Malayali women’s desire towards an idealized other/self becomes quite evident when they narrate instances on the much more developed and advanced lives of women who belong to different

cultural regions across the globe. The desire or urge to be on par with an idealized self they themselves are lacking in their own lives is a common feature detected in the travel writings of Malayali women. This lack which is imbued in the collective psyche of women who belong to the rigid patriarchal society like that of India and Kerala, prompts them to desire for an ideal other /self.

Whatever are the differences between them as individuals, when it comes to the desire for a dignified and empowered life, Malayali woman seems to share a common ground. This actually points towards the gender discriminations they face in their everyday lives as women. Regardless of caste and creed the desire for freedom which is imbued in every human psyche prompts people to discard everything that constrain their freedom. Hence the urge for unification with the idealized feminine self seen in Malayali women's travel narratives can be viewed as expressions of resistance against a system that limits the potential of female selfhood and subjectivity. The situation can be read along with the observation made by Jackie Stacey in her essay "Desperately Seeking Difference". The essay deals with the phenomenon of fascination women have towards an idealized other. Stacey targets the pleasures felt by the female spectator watching the film *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1984) directed by Susan Seidelman. The main protagonist in the film is a bored and insecure American housewife who is drawn into a series of adventures through her fascination towards the virtually launched seductively anarchic Madonna cult who represents everything a housewife is not. Stacey writes that the fascination, the spectator is invited to share is "is neither purely identification with the other woman, nor desire for her in the strictly erotic sense of

the world. It is the desire to see, to know and to become more like an idealized feminine other, in a context where the difference between the two women is repeatedly re-established” (qtd. in Ghose 56-57).

### III. Narratives of Travel as Gendered Performances

While all the sequences taken from women’s travel narratives can be viewed as expressions of desire, there are some other features which are common among the travel narratives of women. Hence this section looks into such features of Malayali women’s travel narration.

While discussing women’s travels and travel writings, the mode of narration becomes an important segment to be probed. When women narrate travel, certain matters which are crucial to women’s body and sexuality are generally omitted from the narratives of travel. This peculiarity detected within texts written by women is analysed in the light of theories propounded by theorists such as Judith Butler. In this section I am looking into Sujatha Devi’s travel narrative *Kadukalude Thalam Thedi (In Search of Forest Rhythms)* (1998), Anjali Thomas’ *Almost Intrepid* (2013), Anita Nair’s *Koo Koo Koo Koo Theevandi (Koo Koo Koo Koo The Train Whistles)* (2013) and K. R. Ragi’s “Kutti Sancharikal” (“Little Travellers”) from the anthology *Ranimar, Padminimar: Malayalishreekalute Kaivitta Sancharangal (The Ranis, The Padminis: The Carefree Travels of Malayali Women)* (2016) Raja Nandini’s travel narrative *Kailasa Yathra (Kailas Travel)* (2015) and Padma Jayaraj’s “Kadalilekk” (“Towards the Sea”) from the anthology *Penyathra (Female Travel)* (2013) edited by K. V. Sumangala.

As per the theory of performativity put forward by Judith Butler every deed a person undertakes is valued as expressions of gendered performances. Therefore, travels and their subsequent narratives too become the kind of performances which are to be evaluated in association with one's gender. In that case, when women narrate experiences of their travels, the public's acceptance also becomes a matter to be concerned with. Hence women need to be more vigilant while narrating their travel experiences. As women they are expected to stand with the society's gender norms.

In the beginning pages of her travelogue *Kadukalude Thalam Thedi* (1998) which is written in the epistolary form, Sujatha Devi mentions her struggles to get her study travel done. While Sujatha Devi maintains her fighting spirit for the successful completion of her study travel in the forest regions of the Himalayas, her first letter itself happens to contain a remark on one such gendered performance which is a necessity to satisfy the general reading public. Her letter goes like this: "I always think of everyone else at home, I promise you to take care of myself and not to get into any danger. Right now I don't have an address to contact. Since there is no way to get a reply, I believe that everybody there is fine. ... Please don't worry about me" (my trans.; 17). While these sentences are filled with the concern she has for her family, from the narrative point of view, this can also be taken as an expression which is required for the acceptance of the reading public as well as the society to which she belongs. That is, by assuring her family she in fact assures the reading public that she is very much in contact with her family that wherever she goes or whatever she does her family will be her first concern. Therefore,

mentioning her family in her travelogue can be considered as a deliberate attempt by the author to satisfy the reading public.

One could assume that the prevailing social orders of respective time are not at all favourable to women who undertake solo travels. This can vary depending on the class caste, socio-economic and political situation of the travelling woman. K. Gouri Amma's *London Diary* (1959), which is about the author's official travel she stresses on the support rendered by her family for her international travel. She says that more than her wish it was her husband's wish that she should participate in the training program conducted for the Local Self-Government officials held in London made her take up the travel. Being a mother of four children she says this program was not very attractive for her. She says: "As a mother of four children I was not in a condition to stay away from my home. Therefore, this golden opportunity is not at all attractive for me. But when I told my husband about this offer he told me not to give up the opportunity of a foreign trip. So finally an opinion had turned into a wish to be fulfilled" (my trans.; 5).

Carl Thompson in his book *Travel Writing* (2011) brings out the pressures faced by the women travel writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He observes that in order to get acceptance within the society women travel writers need to perform femininity in the pages of their narrative. He notes that,

Some sort of *rapprochement* in this regard was usually necessary, on the one hand, simply to get published in the first place and, on the other, to avoid hostile criticism from reviewers and commentators. To this end, accordingly, women writers were usually keen to stress the extent to which they

conformed to contemporary codes of female propriety in the course of their travels. (181)

Though it is difficult to generalize, this kind of expression could be taken as an immediate requirement towards social acceptance. Analysing the travel writings of American women who pioneered the trope of travel writing, Susan L. Roberson observes that women made it a point to mention their husbands and family thereby taking a safe stand. Roberson observes: “By making it clear that they are not women alone, these authors assure readers that whatever else they may have transgressed, they were not crossing boundaries of sexual comportment or threatening established standards of sexual morality. They probably knew that they had much to risk if they were perceived to be sexually available or active” (224). Since travel books are meant for public places, the writer/ traveller’s narrative performance with regard to his/her gender need to be taken into account. Travel narratives are expected to contain elements which reflect the conventional notions associated with gendered performances.

Though there can be hurdles and other socio-cultural and political challenges in case with men’s travels and travel writings too, the fact remains that men are much more free to enjoy societal and familial freedom by the advantage of their gender. Nevertheless, men too may have their own pressures regarding performances that are classified a masculine.

### **Omitted Narratives: Menstrual Body**

It is a fact that the experiences of travel are first and foremost felt through one’s lived body. The kind of experiences that have to be incorporated in a travel

narrative is a matter of concern when it comes to travel narratives written by women. The experiences that pertain exclusively to the female body are hence significant while narrating travels. The physiological and biological factors that constitute the female body are vital in this regard. Though women seem to challenge the traditional notions of space and gaze through their travels and travel writings, a significant number of their thoughts and orientations remain fundamentally rooted in the patriarchal dogmas and are reflected in their writings. This explains the hesitance of women to address or include matters exclusively related to the female body in their narratives of travel which is essentially the result of an activity done with one's lived body. Hence, biological process like menstruation, menopause etc. of the female body which can even determine or affect a woman's travel are most often left unaddressed in the travel narratives written by Malayali women. This doesn't mean that it is compulsory or important to mention bodily process or matters related to their periodic cycle- menstruation. But when they detail their daily experiences and activities in their travel narratives, the omission of this particular body matter is worth noticing. Victorian false moralities, taboos associated and practiced are all reasons behind such exclusions.

If a woman is going on a lengthy travel which may require days and months of departure from her familiar surroundings, it is definitely a crucial matter which could possibly have disturbed her. Though these matters can vary from person to person, the problems associated with women's 'not to be spoken out' difficulties are endless. It can be assumed that the unrecorded travels of the working class women

and other less privileged women without access to basic necessities may have even more difficult situations.

K. A Beena in her article “Enthanu Sanitary Padukalude Anthima Rahasyam” (“What is the Final Secret of Sanitary Pads”) observes that, “Menstruation is the main issue which makes it difficult for women to take up travels. . . . Not only during the menstrual periods even on normal days, travells are quite impossible for women because, toilets are unimaginable in the rural villages in India” (my trans.; 11).

For a lot many women, coping with pre-menstrual symptoms and menstruation as such can be really disturbing and irritating while on road. Therefore, if the woman traveller is in her monthly cycles, her experience about that particular travel will in every way differ from a travel made on her ‘normal’ day. That might also be reflected in her narration as well. The woman who is on menopausal phase is also likely to experience yet another different set of bodily issues as a result of their hormonal imbalances. In short, biology plays a significant part in the travel experience of women. However womanly issues like pre-menstrual, menstrual and menopause symptoms which affect the female bodies and their experiences fail to get space in the narratives of travel written by women. This is a result of the socio-cultural conditioning each female is subjected to. In order to project a dignified identity which in every way is bound with the institutionalized patriarchal society’s customs, traditions and expectations, they are expected to remain silent about their innate bodily experiences. These omissions are evident in the few travel narratives I have selected. In an age when openness and frankness is counted as normalcy in life

writings and in travel writings, those narratives that deliberately omitted to comment anything on their intimate bodily issues should be read as those were the characteristic peculiarity maintained within the narratives of women travel writers who belonged to different sociocultural situations; or else the traveller/writer may have her own reasons. More than anything it is all a matter of choice and attitude.

The acclaimed Indian English writer and traveller Anita Nair's travel writings are noted for the vivid descriptions of her experiences. She never hesitates to express what her body felt in her writing. By appreciating the different tastes she experiences during her travel she lets her body enjoy the unfamiliar terrains in all their taste and splendour. Wherever she goes she makes it a point to taste the wide variety of delicacies available there. In Italy by dwelling on the delicious world of ice-creams, in Malaysia tasting the endless cuisines, beverages and the likes. Swimming in the beaches and whirlpools, she lets the water waves and pools caress her body. Anita Nair's narratives of travel are filled with such aesthetic sensibility that the readers too will get mesmerized by its magic. A celebration of body could be read out from her narratives of travel. Here, what should be noted is, when such detailing is included her travel narratives, she deliberately excludes matters that are unique to a female body. The incident that happened in Maldives in her travel book *Koo Koo Koo Koo Theevandi* (2013) elucidates this point. In Anita's words:

The airport in Mali is majestic. It is quite tidy and extremely efficient. ... As we are waiting in the queue I noticed an elderly officer and his assistant scrutinizing every single baggage carefully. I began to sweat as if I was facing death all on a sudden. I was caught by the fear of getting insulted. ...

The advice given in my travel kit became the villain here. An advice to place sanitary pads on things inside your suitcase. It will act as a protective shield if something spills. ... But luckily I didn't have to open my suitcase in front of the customs officer. Without being heard by anybody I recited thank you words. My travel stars were shining indeed. (my trans.; 62)

It is worth mentioning that, even a much travelled and acclaimed writer like Anita Nair finds it hard to discard the cultural conditionings she herself is prone to. That might be the reason why even the thought of others seeing the sanitary pads that are kept inside her bag just to keep it spill proof turns into an 'embarrassing' situation for the author. The point to be noted here is that, even a much travelled and acclaimed writer like Anita Nair fails to come out from her own cultural limits which are associated with menstruation.

The silence regarding menstruation is reasoned by women's social and cultural conditionings that have a tyrannical influence over the feminine selves. By keeping aside the physiological process which is quite normal and natural, the women writers themselves curtail the possibilities and potentials of the female psyche thereby straitjacketing their own subjectivity. In her *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993) Judith Butler observes that,

To the extent that the naming of the 'girl' is transitive, that is, initiates the process by which a certain 'girling' is compelled, the term or, rather, its symbolic power, governs the formation of a corporeally enacted femininity that never fully approximates the norm. This is a 'girl', however, who is compelled to 'cite' the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject.

Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is in dissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment. (232)

This can be further explained through the observation made by Simone de Beauvoir in her *Second Sex*. Beauvoir observes that from the initial stages of childhood itself “the body is first of all the radiation of a subjectivity, the instrument that makes possible the comprehension of the world” (267). Hence the experience of the outer world is gathered and comprehended through one’s body. Therefore, when one narrates experiences that are associated with one’s lived body overtly and covertly his/her body is getting narrated. This eventually is the narration of the self. Merleau Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1958) states that the experiences generated through one’s lived body with the interaction of the outer world defines that the body is the primary phase where experiences are gathered and generated. That is, it is through the senses of the body that one gets to know the world with its entire splendour. As per Ponty’s perception of phenomenology we as bodies are susceptible to the world and not separate from it. He says: “To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world, as we have seen; our body is not primarily *in* space: it is of it” (171). When travel writing is also about the traveller/ narrator’s bodily experiences, discarding experiences which are formulated through the lived body of the traveller leaves the narrative lifeless and incomplete.

The acclaimed traveller and travel writer Anjaly Thomas in her *Almost Intrepid* (2013) which is a book on her travels hints on the womanly issues she experiences while on her journey to Indonesia. How her PMS blues and the

hormonal changes associated with the process have put her into emotional tantrums is narrated in the book just like any other bodily discomfort as she says, “1. Exhaustion and irritability; 2. Wanting to hide in the room; 3. Pity and anger- everything I wrote in the book was a complaint; 4. An urge to call someone often; 5. Hating the local coffee” (118). She also mentions how the Indonesian foot massage has helped her overcome her hormone related mental stress. At the beginning stages of her career as a travel writer she mentions her inexperience in tackling such issues while on road. But this doesn't in anyway set her back from achieving her travel goals. Now as a proficient traveller and travel writer the sincerity and frankness she showed in her narration is quite appreciable and commendable that in her own way she has tried to break the dogmas by keeping it to the levels of normalcy just like any other bodily discomfort.

K. R. Ragi's travel “Kutti Sancharikal” taken from the anthology *Ranimar, Padminimar* (2016) is one such narrative which blatantly encroach the tacit rules set by the traditional dogmas. Ragi narrates the memory of a bicycle journey undertaken by herself and her friend Priya in the Army Cantonment premises in Binnaguri in 2006 during her Plus Two days. She explains that in between the frightening experience of losing their way while peddling in the night near the unknown forest areas three things happen to them. She says, “1. The back wheel of my bicycle lost its air, 2. Priya got her periods, 3. The memory of ‘The Four Musicians of Bremen’ came to my mind” (my trans.; 163). She then hilariously explains the ordeal she and her friend undertook to get a piece of cloth and then to trace their way to reach their homes. Ragi concludes the narrative with a note that though the incident was not

that big a deal, at that age it was quite difficult to tackle that and she concludes her write up on the night journey like this “1. Menstruation- Not a big deal, 2. Night- Not a big deal. Just like the life we have lived till now both have got its own grace and disgrace” (my trans.; 164).

Though experiences like these are not unique, women tend to avoid incorporating such experiences while attempting a write up on travel. It is at this point that the narratives of Ragi and Anjaly Thomas become important. Without attempting any exaggerations both the women have written about the ordeal just like mentioning any other bodily discomfort. The reason why they were able to narrate things with ease points towards the socio-cultural changes that have happened over the years. In other words, women have started to reclaim their bodies which have been deliberately kept disembodied in travel writings, the product of an activity done with one's lived body.

Narratives like that of Ragi's and Anjaly Thomas's prove that women have started to break the dilemmas associated with women's bodily matters which have been largely kept in the margins.

### **Body-Sexuality**

Narratives are expressions of feelings which are derived out of someone's body and mind. A person through his/her lived body and its active senses experiences and opinions on anything and everything. Travel narratives reflect a lot about the traveller's self, but when it comes to expressing certain emotions and feelings that are be considered as intimate, women tend to avoid expressing it in

their narratives of travel. In other words such internal censorings women do for the sake of the sociocultural norms curtail the possibilities of a woman authored work. The pleasures of the female body are not generally included in the travel narratives written by women. While men do not hesitate to include bodily matters or matters related with sexuality or other intimate experiences in their travel narratives, women often skip mentioning such matters in their narratives of travel.

The travel narrative “Arunachal Malakalilekk” (Towards the Hills of Arunachal) by Binoy V. taken from the travel book *Kandedukkaatha Parudeesakal* (2013) which is mentioned in the previous pages of this chapter flaunts the usual male gaze which always is eager to objectify the immediate nature and women with its ‘dominating’ attitude. Binoy’s narrative could be taken as an example to state that the average male perspective is always eager to mark women into mere sensual beings and objects of desire. Such attitude is quite clear in his words:

In the boat, more than half of the people are women. The women in Assam are beautiful. Tribal women are extremely beautiful. Their eyes contain the slight flutter of a *rohu* fish. Their waistline always looked ready for *bihu* dance. Their lips contained the lines of a folksong. We get to know the wild feeling of butterfly when they show the *mudras* of the *bihu* dance with their fingers. (my trans.; 90)

While this sort of expressions are not rare in the travel narratives written by men moreover it enhances their narrative performance. Malayali women in a general practice tend to avoid thoughts which express their sexual content. In fact they are very sure of the consequence they may face due to such inclusions. A quote taken

from Raja Nandini's travel narrative *Kailasa Yathra* (2015) could be taken as an example for this kind of a deliberate diversion from the narrator/traveller herself. It goes like this:

The sensuous mood of the streams that flushes from the peak of the mountains is quite astonishing. A communication beyond time and place through the great silence. Every chord of my soul is captivated and I am spreading all over. I slanted my head and looked at the driver who is sitting next on my left side. Instead of the Chinese driver I wished if that was someone who is dear to me. A person who is in tune with my perspectives and thoughts. At once I shut out the cry of such dreams. (my trans.; 114)

From the narrative it is quite clear that Raja Nandini immediately diverts her thoughts in order to avoid herself from getting caught in such intimate thoughts. It could be understood that women are always conscious about what to include in their writings for they are to be judged by the content of their writings which is evaluated as a gendered performance.

In her travel book *Almost Intrepid* (2013) Anjaly Thomas narrates a romantic episode which she happens to experience while on travel. She explains how she couldn't divert herself from falling for the charms of the British man named Mike, who is also travelling. She hints at the difficulties she faced in resisting the advancements of her own body. ... "his lips were most attractive and no young, hot-blooded woman had ever escaped the attraction of bow-shaped lips set below a straight nose" (37). Though her romance with Mike meets an abrupt end it could be understood that by including such intimate thoughts in her travel narrative she in a

way distorts the norms associated with the feminine gender. What could be noted here is that when women especially Malayali women generally tend to avoid incorporating such intimate thoughts in their narratives of travel, this particular instance by Anjaly Thomas stands unique. In other words such inclusions could be taken as examples of changes that have happened in women's attitude towards expressing things that were once kept at bay.

The absence of such experiences in the travel narratives by women invites another reading. About the exclusion of topics related with sexual experiments in women's travel writing, Susan L. Roberson in her article "American Women and Travel Writing" notes that there is always an element of conservatism maintained in women's travel writing that majority of women stay away from commenting on such matters due to valid reasons. She writes:

It may be that even as the woman traveler dares much in taking to the road, the woman travel *writer* conservatively draws the veil on this most risqué and economically risky of topics – sexual engagements away from home. Indeed, there is a conservative quality in much of women's non-fiction travel writing despite whatever other freedoms or adventures their tales may relate, demonstrating their negotiations between the conservatism of writing for an audience and the radicalism of travel. (225)

She concludes the essay saying that the ideals of freedom and mobility in women's travel writings need to be further studied as "not all of which celebrate ideological mobility as they narrate geographic movement" (225).

However, while discussing the representation and narration of the female body in women's, especially Malayali women's travel writing, it should be noted that expressions of the female body have started to gain space in travel narratives. In that case, the travel narrative "Kadalilekk" written by Padma Jayaraj requires special mention. In this narrative the writer traveller, a retired professor narrates her experience of scuba diving conducted in the Havelock islands in the Andaman Nicobar. The narrative begins with the description of the unknown strange connection she maintains with the aquatic from her childhood onwards. She says as a child she was always fascinated by the myths and stories associated with the sea. The grandiloquence of the huge waves had always thrilled her that years later when she happens to get a chance to visit the Havelock islands which is the hub of scuba divers, she didn't have to think twice to give it a try. From her words,

The next day morning I went to the diving unit. Even I could not recognize myself in the swimming dress. I went with others in a small boat wearing a mask and carrying oxygen cylinders just like an astronaut. ... the guide taught me signals that are used under water while diving. My guide was a lady. I could hear my own heart beat. I jumped into the deep waters with my guide while my husband, daughter and grand children stood watching. ... It took a short while to familiarize with the new method of breathing. There starts the travel. To the unknown and unseen depths. Underneath the turbulent plain lay the silent deep. The state of weightlessness began to feel like a sensation. Only the rhythmic thud of bubbles of my own breath that

escapes through the scuba set. Slowly the colour of the deep sea began to change. (my trans.; 96-97)

The whole endeavour was like experiencing a new world which she has never known. Besides the beautiful sights she also describes the extreme fear of getting trapped under the deep. She writes:

Whether the rhythm of bubbles has changed? Fear spread over my nerves. Am I losing my control? Along with the distress signal my fingers became numb. Moments seemed like ages with the twitch of life. Somehow I was able reach above the water with help of my guide. Immediately took a deep breath removing my mask. The beat of life that fills my lungs. What a relief!  
(my trans.; 97)

She says even after all these years this unique experience of going underwater remains as an intense memory. Here, what is outstanding in the narrative is that the traveller is a retired professor who is nearing her seventies. She without any prior experience has experimented with the act of diving with her own body. Here, body itself becomes the subject of narration, that is, the body's experience which is acquired through physical contact with a different terrain/atmosphere is the highlight of the narration. Here the traveller's age too is a matter to be commented on. At an age when people especially women and specifically Malayali women (not every Malayali women) tend to dissociate from activities which demand involvement of the physical body Padma Jayaraj's narrative on her scuba diving experience becomes all the more unique and interesting. By attempting on the unfamiliar activity of scuba diving at an age of almost seventy she literally flouts all the

stereotypes associated with age and gender. The nuances of bodily experience, be it of pleasure, terror or of any experience for that matter is not a common feature seen within the travel narratives written by women. Hence Padma Jayaraj's narrative can be viewed as one major leap in putting forth an experience that is in every sense adventurous and so is revolutionary. In other words her narrative can be taken as a call for women who have put aside their desires and wishes. Hence her writing could be taken as example of what Helen Cixous has tried to convey in her "Laugh of the Medusa". Cixous says "I wished that woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns, might exclaim: I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs" (2040).

That is, in order to explore the fathomless myriads of womanhood Cixous opines that women should not limit themselves to exploring their own bodies. The experiences derived through bodies have to be explored to celebrate womanhood. Cixous says women should not hesitate to express themselves through writing; in fact the multiplicity regarding the physical capacities of women's body is what constitutes the *écriture féminine*. In that case everything that are viewed as submissive and powerless has to be explored and celebrated in a positive light.

Iris Marion Young observes that "we often experience our bodies as a fragile encumbrance, rather than the medium for the enactment of our aims. We feel as though we must have our attention directed upon our bodies to make sure they are doing what we wish them to do, rather than paying attention to what we want to do *through* our bodies" (34). Therefore, it has to be assumed that in between all the

sudden flashes, mood swings, bodily disparities women have managed to achieve what they desired for.

By taking part in an activity like travel which demands the involvement of the physical body, these women are in a way getting to know about their own potential and short comings. While bodily conceptions become relevant in the construction of a person's self, by making their bodies go through experiences which are not so common, they rediscover their own selves, which indeed find expression in their narratives. Thus the experiences of the female body steps into language which is inherently phallogocentric in nature, thereby creating what could be termed as the 'écriture feminine'.



## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion**

Malayali women have travelled and have been travelling for a number of reasons. Travels for professional or educational reasons have become part of their everyday routine. But these are travels undertaken for a specific purpose. The travel history of Malayali women is replete with stories depicting the challenges of migration, the chills and terrors of discrimination and subjugation, resurgence, survival, rebellions and so on running parallel to their travel experiences. Since travel is an unavoidable presence that keeps human lives going, a number of instances which depict travels that one takes up or become part of life situations can be seen in biographies, autobiographies and memoirs. This study is exclusively focused on the travel writings of Malayali women and the negotiations they made within systems through their travel narratives.

Most of the travel narratives I have included in this study are not by women who are ardent travellers or writers. But as I continued my journey exploring the narratives of travel written by Malayali women I could locate many who avidly wished to travel. Travel without a specific purpose defined by the societal norms was not seemingly acceptable in the strict patriarchal societies of Kerala and other states of the country. Hence a travel, seeking pleasure or as an act of leisure was not acceptable to the Malayali society till recently. Even getting out of one's thresholds can be challenging to many women. But now Malayali women have started to experience worlds hitherto unknown to them. They have started to venture out in

pursuit of their own desires and drives. They have even started attempting journeys which demand adventure and thrill.

The general change that has happened in the socio- cultural situation indeed has affected the attitude towards women who travel. This has in turn helped Malayali women to mark themselves as travel writers in the larger canon of travel writing. Even though the number is less when compared to the plethora of travel books written by men, the travel experiences narrated by women are in no way of lesser quality. In this section, I sum up the main arguments and observations from each of the chapters in this thesis.

Besides grounding the idea of travel with the help of theories propounded by Carl Thompson, Sara Mills, Peter Hulmes, Tim Youngs, Paul Smethurst, Julia Kuehn, Patrick Holland, Graham Huggan, Justin D. Edwards, Susan Bassnett, Paul Fussell, James Clifford, Mary Louise Pratt, Sidonie Smith, Kristi Siegel, Indira Ghose, Shobhana Bhattacharjee, Jayati Gupta, Somdatta Mandal and Nandini Das etc., the **Introduction** of the study retraced the trajectories that led to Malayali women's travel writing reaching the present status.

The **Introductory** chapter examines how travel as an inevitable part of human lived experiences has contributed to the core themes in literatures both globally and regionally. The chapter also checks into the role of travel in women's lives across disciplines and ages, i.e., how women have been strategically removed from the travel plans and from expeditions; how she was forced to remain in the confinements of her home and how patriarchy has tactfully controlled her mobility for the sake of domestic services.

The European society was too keen about men's educational status and saw travels, especially the Grand Tours- the customary educational travel- as an inevitable activity during adolescent stages of young boys /men. Women were completely denied such opportunities and that travels of women were never supported by societies. However, over the ages, women have skilfully ventured into the deprived areas of travel and travel writing. The travels of renowned women travellers like Mary Kingsley, Isabella Bird, Gertrude Bell, Stella Benson, Freya Stark, Rose Macaulay, Rosita Forbes, Dervla Murphy and others can be taken as examples of women's will power and determination to venture into an area where women are given less significance. It should also be noted that the intervention of disciplines like Women's Studies have in fact helped in retrieving many forgotten travels and travel writings of women. The travel ventures undertaken by women have thus been brought to light for analysis.

Exploration of the writing and reception of travel books by women revealed that the western women initially wrote about their travel experiences in the form of diaries and letters addressed to their close relatives. When she took up travel writing in a serious manner she was expected to maintain her gender position and never hurt the male ego in any way.

Examining the nature and content of the narratives I have selected for study it was found that women touch upon a variety of matters that have direct influence over the society. The matters included in Malayali women's travel writings discard the general notion that women do not write on serious matters and they prefer to

include only trivial matters. The chapters which follow focus on select themes like ecology, caste, religion, ideology, narration, gender and sexuality.

The second chapter is titled as **Travel and Ecology: Questions on Gender and Narration**. This chapter examines how Malayali women perceive ecological matters in their travels and subsequent narratives. The travel narratives I selected for this study focus on women's engagements with ecology as a whole within the patriarchal and capitalist power relations. That is, destruction and exploitation done by the domineering factors are critically examined in the light of eco- feminist theories.

The chapter examines how Malayali women have made use of their travels to look into matters that may appear trivial or are of lesser importance to the dominant ideologies prevalent in the society. It should be noted that most of their observations are warnings to a system that take everything for granted. What they have seen and experienced in regions they have travelled into provide insights into their own selves which make them capable of coming up with suggestions and solutions to implement and there by improve the system. Through their suggestions and observations they make meaningful intervention into systems which are designed with no regard for nature or the marginalized and exploited human beings. As such, the narratives become a re-articulation of their own citizenship.

The exploitation of nature, animals, human and women enforces the women travellers to raise their voice for them through these narratives. In fact they take their writings on travel as platforms to express their thoughts. Their narratives contain expressions of pain and anxiety over various issues that adversely affect the weak

and marginalized. Their writings include themes such as how they feel for those who have lost their natural/familiar surroundings and traditions, how the environment becomes targets of exploitation and how encroachments in the name of development distort people's especially women's lives etc. From the narratives that I have included in this chapter it is clear that these women could easily relate with the problems, worries and anxieties of people who are socio-culturally distinct from them. Women's urge to redress the damaged and degenerated relationship of man with the environment is put across in their travel narratives. Hence their writings could be taken as warnings about the ecological disasters and degenerations.

The third chapter titled **Pilgrim Travels: Rendezvous with Gods, Spaces and Memories**, focuses on the theme of Pilgrimage. Attributing different shades of content to the term Pilgrimage, I have attempted to analyse the terms 'belief' and 'worship' which act as the driving forces behind people embarking on a pilgrimage. As one's self and identity is largely bound with one's religious belief, people take up travels for the sanctification of the same. Pilgrimages are travels people undertake out of respect and worship they hold for something. The kind of worship, subservience, loyalty and obedience a person holds is what makes pilgrimages different from other travels.

However, other than religious beliefs the belief in a particular ideology also forces people to take up travels. The same experience could be applicable to various other situations too. Admiration towards someone or something can also prompt people to take up travels and write about it. These are in fact the written testimonials of pride and satisfaction for having achieved their long cherished dreams. The travel

writings on China by K. K Shailaja and Chintha Jerome who are members and ardent followers of the Communist party express their pride in getting an opportunity which not all people especially women who follow and worship the leftist ideology get access to. In comparison to the religious dogmas that force women to take up a predetermined subordinate position, they feel pride in being part of an ideological system which does not discriminate on the basis of gender. They are equally proud to narrate the socially and culturally upgraded life of women in China. While China's policies on people's liberty have always been under constant scrutiny by the international media, both K. K. Shailaja and Chintha Jerome never turn critical on the human rights violation that happened in China on account of their political and ideological commitment towards the party. In short, irrespective of gender, people who are the worshippers of anything or anyone are driven by devotion. The depth of their passion and worship blinds people to think logically or critically. The people who are ardent followers, very rarely go critical against their adored idols. The approach of women travellers/authors is also not different.

Besides the travels that are undertaken for religious beliefs and political ideology, I have included travels that are undertaken out of sheer admiration. Visiting the birth places of literary and historical figures, travelling to places where certain historical events have taken place etc. gives the traveller the experience of a pilgrimage. That is, the devotion and adoration towards someone or something is what prompts the traveller take up such a travel.

I have also analysed certain travelogues which discuss people's strange and hidden obsession towards places /spaces which in one way or the other are

connected with death. Travels to locations like prisons, catacombs and museums provide travellers varied experiences that are inspiring, horrifying, bizarre and painful as reflected in their responses. For Kshema K. Thomas, visiting the Cellular Jail in Andaman Nicobar is a proud moment which helps her connect with her country's historic past. For Indu Menon, visiting the Catacombs in Paris is a moment of joy for her. Having come close to the most dreadful and depressing location in a metropolis like Paris, a place famous for all the flamboyancies and glamour, she reminds herself and others about the bare reality of life. For Vidhu Vincent, visiting the Dachau concentration camp in Germany- where the dark shadows of the fascist regime loomed large- was quite a disturbing experience. Considering her country's present political situations, Vidhu feels her country is also on the edge of a dark phase where people are targeted for their caste and religion.

The fourth chapter titled **Marginal travels: Questions on Caste, Gender and Narration** examines the various facets of marginality surrounding women's lives. This chapter is divided into three sub-sections focusing on the themes of caste, gender and narration. The chapter examines how socio- cultural entities like religion, caste and creed directly engage with mobility in the light of travel narratives written by Malayali women belonging to different religious faiths and castes. From the study it is evident that various factors constitute a woman's marginalized position. Since her mobility is much restricted, her desire to travel is quite often forced aside. The historical relevance associated with each of these travels makes it all the more important to be looked upon while studying Malayali women's travels and travel writings.

In the Indian context one's caste, religion and gender has a significant influence on one's self and identity. In almost all cultures the female gender is often treated as marginal. The situation can vary with the class to which the woman belongs. The women who belong to the advantageous sections of the society, due to their caste and class positions may not have to experience marginality like the women who belong to the lower strata of the society. The travel narratives of Malayali women who belong to Dalit and Namboothiri communities have been examined in this context.

The next section is on the impact of gender on women's mobility. To investigate this I have looked into excerpts from travel narratives written by Malayali women which engage with the theme. Apart from religious and caste positions, gender is the inevitable factor each woman has to confront when outside their threshold. The peculiarities associated with their gendered body may sometimes act as barrier against their mobility. I have analysed the socio-cultural aspects that stand as barriers against women's engagements within public spaces.

The last section of the chapter focuses on the theme of narration. While discussing women's travels and travel writings, narration becomes an important segment to be analysed. When women narrate travel, certain matters which are crucial to women's body and sexuality are generally omitted from the narratives of travel. The chapter offers evidence to prove how Malayali women have started to express themselves in a manner which is different from the earlier generations of women travellers. That is, they are no more worried about their public appearance or the reception awaiting their travel narratives.

Travels help one to understand one's own strengths and weaknesses. Travels are hence not simply movements done towards the outer world but are internal journeys as well. Through such internal journeys women realise their own potential and drawbacks. Moreover, through travels women gather innate strength and courage to handle life's worse situations. Considering this, women's travels and travel narratives become a celebration of their respective selves and subjectivity. The varied experiences of travel narrated by women acknowledge the active and autonomous female psyche as well as their respective lived bodies. Therefore, travels and their subsequent narratives become a celebration of their physicality too. Crossing the various constraints that came along their way women prove to themselves and to others that being a woman one does not need to discard one's dreams and wishes.

It should be noted that it is within the strict patriarchal system that they are able to stay strong without being bothered about getting out of place or destroyed. Through their endeavours they are in fact redefining/ rebuilding the socio-cultural systems they are part of. Their narratives about their travel experiences are the written proofs of their resilience to stand against the waves in their own way by not letting any force stifle their progress towards a new beginning.

Though qualities like love, care, concern and worries are largely expressed in the narratives by women, it shouldn't in any way mean that they are mere angels or they fit into the gendered slots created by patriarchy. Over the years women from a passive status women have acquired strength and voice to fight back against the forces that the ability to respond, think, strive, struggle, fight, tease and enjoy are

largely evident in the travel narrations. They have gained voice which is clear and loud and can be heard by everyone. Each hazard and hindrance that came along their way had only strengthened their spirit to strive. Sujatha Devi's *Kadukalude Thalam Thedi (In Search of Forest Rhythms)* (1998) proposes such a reading. The objections from the authorities made her realize her own strength to resist and continue with her study travel. That made her even stronger to face the raw and wild nature and climate in the Himalayan ranges. In *Chuvadukal (Foot Steps)* (2015), K. A. Beena mentions one incident she had to face from a male co-traveller which made her write an article which was a blow to those who are champions of fake morality practiced in the society. Beena's article titled "The Homeland of Perverts" written as a warning against the male co-traveller could be taken as a gesture of courage and resistance against the misogynist attitude of the society. Malayali women's depressing travel experiences compiled together in books such as *Pennira (Female Prey)* (2011) and *Iranginadappu (Walk About)* (2008) become sharp criticisms against a society which sticks to its patriarchal norms. The bitter experiences they faced while engaging with the public spaces is narrated by Kani Kusurthi, Jolly Chirayath, Thasni Banu in the book *Pennira*. It should be noted that none of them stepped back or hid themselves. Besides they came up all spirited and courageous to face the myriad challenges of the world.

*Ranimarum Padminimarum: Malayali Streeyude Kaivitta Sancharangal (The Ranis and Padminis: The Carefree Travels of Malayali Women)* (2016) is one book which holds together such various travel experiences. Each narrative included in the book becomes testimonial to what women have achieved through their travels.

While most of the women travellers I have included in my study may not like or want themselves to be labelled as feminists, however, it is evident that they knowingly or unknowingly display the kind of sensibility that can be considered as feminist consciousness in their narratives. When the ability to act or react against the odds is what counts as the quality to be considered as a feminist, these women who have penned down their experiences of travel display plenty of that attitude.

By engaging in travels women are making space for their own desires and wishes which were forced to be withdrawn or kept aside for the sake of safe guarding the social and familial structures which were always keen to observe them in the desirable and attributed roles. Their expedition to the worlds unknown thus becomes powerful expressions of protest against the hegemonic ruling systems. When they narrate travels they literally make interventions into the mainstream conscience of the society. The insights they have acquired through travels have made them capable enough to sort out the problems of the society. The guise of travel narrative or travelogue has been wisely used by these women to deliver important arguments and criticism against the existing system.

Belonging to a land which is infamous for sati, female infanticide, child marriage, polygamy, widowhood, denial of education and various other disparities that target women's freedom of thought, expression and mobility, what women of the present age have achieved is a strong statement of perseverance and will. Through their travels and travel writings they are actually reconstructing / deconstructing society's notions about women. The existing sociocultural systems from when and where the woman traveller sets forth and the different socio cultural

systems she confronts are excellent evaluations of cultures from a female perspective.

The travel narratives written by Malayali women can be considered as writing back against what has been constructed through the perspective of the mainstream ideologies. The criticisms, warnings, suggestions, opinions and solutions put forward by women in their narratives of travel are in a way excellent social criticisms which may help to redraw, restructure and refine the existing systems. They stand and struggle within the system to get it reframed and refreshed. Their agency as a travel writer is used as a tool to probe into the socio-cultural problems faced by the society.

From the depressing experiences narrated through travel writings one can understand the amount of indignation they might have felt for having been sidelined, insulted, denied access or even targeted for molestation. While women narrate such experiences in their travel books, their writings indeed acquire the nature of resistance as well as protest. This is a protest against a system that has created rules which denied women access to spaces/places just as their counterparts.

Foucault rightly points out that where there is power there is always a tendency to resist. Women's travels and travel writings can be taken as examples to prove this point. They are in a way reconstructing their own identities which have been subjected to distortions by the patriarchal world. Engaging with the various famous and non-famous, private or close travel groups, women proclaim to the world that they do need the kind of self renewal which is necessary for each surviving soul to get through with life situations. Women too have their own dreams

and desires; and they too need to move on just to satisfy their own psychological and physiological needs.

Helene Cixous opines that women should write down all the experiences they have gathered through their bodies. When travels require the engagement of the traveller's lived body, the experiences gained with the help of one's body has to be written. These experiences according to Cixous should be glorified and celebrated to create a self-loving attitude among women and thereby re-capture their lost selves and bodies. Cixous says,

Woman must write herself; must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies - for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal.

Woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history - by her own movement. (2039)

Travel as an activity keeps one engaged with the outer world. While narratives of travels are evidences or markings of gaze, speech and the corporeal self, when women narrate their travel experiences they are gaining agency over what has been denied to them for centuries. In other words they are getting their voice heard. Each travel and its subsequent narrative by women should also be viewed as a resistance against a system which has always subjugated the feminine subject hood.

The experiences and knowledge they gathered through travels can act as catalysts to their own psyche; to get them transformed to better persons. Their socially and culturally refined manifestation may be reflected in their perspectives

and approach to everything. They may thus look upon the world with a much more refined gaze which is capable of viewing things in a better light. They may thus influence and inspire the future generations with their acquired insights and prepare them to face the world with its fullness. This knowledge can be passed on to the next generation and can act as leading lights in their yet to be discovered trajectories. This will empower the future women/ traveller to find her own pathways to fight, resist, lead and create a new world where everybody can have their share of happiness, joy and freedom.

In travel writing there is always a subjective and objective position. The dominant gaze of the traveller is subjective and everything the traveller sees becomes the other to be gazed upon and objectified. In male narratives everything including the immediate nature the traveller confronts is viewed as feminine to establish an upper hand over those around them. When travel and travel writing remained a male bastion for centuries, women lacked this agency to recreate what has been constructed through the dominant gaze. When women started to narrate travel, this monopoly of male gaze is dispersed. New perspectives are brought into travel writing through the female gaze. The voices of the women who have been silenced are thus being made audible. It is a necessity to fill in the fissures created by centuries of oppression. Through their travel writings they are able to construct an identity which is of substance thereby claiming a subject position of authority.

Hence, experiences they have gathered through travels have to be written down. That is, by getting to know about the lives of women outside their familiar zones makes women as a community become more alert and vigilant against certain

forces that can at any point take away the freedom or even the lives they enjoy. This may help to redress the selves which have been damaged and distorted across generations. Their travel writings may eventually lead to the acquisition of a collective subjectivity spirited with a resistive capacity to stand up against those forces which have kept and always are keen to keep the female spirits at bay.

Unlike their earlier generations who were anxious as well as conscious about the society's rules the younger generations are audacious and sure about what they actually want and do not want. They do not get much bothered on societal rules which always are keen and critical towards female lives. By being louder and more expressive than the earlier generations, women of the younger generation do not hesitate to declare to the world of their wishes and dreams. Analyzing the travel narratives with regard to the time of their publishing, the change in attitude that has happened in women over the ages is very much visible in their narratives of travel. The travels and travel narratives of the present era Malayali women evince that they have achieved almost all the freedom the women of the earlier ages wished to achieve.

Mode and method of travel have changed over the years that travel has become less risky and time consuming. The narratives I have included in the study are not specifically about an era, but predominantly they do not belong to the internet age when everybody has access to almost everything. The travel narratives I have included in this study are records of times when people had less access to facilities provided by technology.

Women of the earliest generations travelled with none of the facilities people enjoy now. They travelled without internet, GPS, smart phones, smart money, travel sites to check for or even without guide books or the countless facilities that people make use of. Yet they crossed countries and continents with very little equipment. Besides these limitations both in their travels and the subsequent narratives they have had to limit themselves for the various sociocultural rules they are obliged to follow.

It is equally important to address the changes that have happened in travel writing due to the digital revolution. In the introduction to their book *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (2019), Nandini Das and Tim Youngs describe the changes that have happened over the years within travels and travel writings. They observe that:

Anyone with an internet connection can post their travel stories and pictures nowadays, making for a more democratic situation than before, when access to publication and audiences was restricted. There is also more opportunity today for pluralism, with a greater variety of travellers able to make their stories heard, and with possibilities available for indigenous peoples to represent themselves and their regions. (15)

Therefore, it is understood that the internet is providing immense possibilities for those who wish to narrate their expeditions and experiences. Furthermore, it can also be seen as a space which is possible for revisions.

At this juncture it is important to note that in between all the constraining socio- cultural situations Malayali Women are able to set their mark in the realm of travel writing. The Kerala Sahithya Akademi award for the best travelogue has been awarded for two women, i.e., for Sujatha Devi for her *Kadukalude Thaalam Thedi* (1998) in 1999 and Vidhu Vincent for her *Daivam Olivil Poya Naalukal: Oru German Yathranubhavam* (2019) in 2020. While the award is a gesture of appreciation and support, it can also be viewed as an expression of socio- cultural change that has happened over the years.

While most of the Malayali women have travelled within the customary socio-cultural boundaries put forward for women by patriarchy it should be noted that through their travels and travel writings, Malayali women have challenged the conventional notions related to space, gaze and mobility. Believing in their own potential, they have in their own ways made expeditions into worlds unknown and have created literature from their travels. The travelogue *Thazhvarakal Pookkunnidam* (2022) by Aparna Sivakami could be taken as the latest example to state on the changes that have happened to Malayali women's attitude towards travels. From Aparna's narration it is quite clear that apart from the women of earlier generations she never hesitates to express the extreme joys travels provided her. Her attitude in a way breaks away or more precisely redefines all the norms that are mandatory with Malayali womanhood. While an able healthy body is necessary for travels which demands the traveller's bodily participation, her first travel just after her cancer treatment itself happens to be a trekking to the Himalayas. We cannot but wonder at the travel spirit that has invoked the traveller /narrator to take

up travels just to enjoy the special bliss only travels can provide. Her travels are the travels of the Malayali woman of the new era. Knowing and experiencing forests, mountains, rivers, rains, tastes, smells, colours, sounds and so on, they need to continue their journeys. By letting others know about their expeditions they fearlessly write and publish their experiences. In the section titled “Preparation” in her travel book *Thazhvarakal Pookkunnidam* Sivakami writes this:

There are a lot of dreams related to travels, specifically of female travels. From the time when we started our travels, we now see many women travelling. There are travel groups only for women. The biggest wish is that every woman who cannot get support from home or who doesn't even recognize the shackles should be able to go on at least one trip to keep in their memory. Our travels and this travel book should inspire them to take up such journeys. (my trans.; 12)

Considering all the challenges in production and reception, their writings on their travel expeditions are acts of protest against the existing system. The literature they have produced out of their travels thus becomes narratives of resistance. These pages of resistance tell us how the Malayali women encountered their true ‘selves’ amidst the ‘selves’ they were forced to take up. These women who are constantly on the move refuse to be tied down by the contours drawn by the male gaze. A lot more has changed with Malayali women’s travels and travel writings. The borders they were doubtful to cross, the attires they feared to wear, the statements they were worried to make, the topics they barely touched and the like have now become old tales. They have started to care less about what others may think or the aftermath. In

short, the surveillance on them does not bother them anymore. They are not worried of letting go of images acceptable to patriarchy. Consequently their travels and travel writings become carnivals flung against the authoritarian patriarchal systems. A system gets cleansed better from within far better than without. Here, by being part of the socio- cultural system these women in their own way are trying to refine it into a much more gender neutral one. These women through their travels look forward, dream and strive for a better world where women are no more treated as the “second sex” or as second grade citizens.

In the changed world of possibilities women began to take advantage of each of the opportunities that came along their way due to globalization policies. The exposures they gained through international media and the effect of social media in their lives have in fact helped women to be accurate on their thoughts and deeds. This change has certainly helped in enhancing their will power. They have started to believe in their potentials, have started to love themselves, have started to add more colours, fragrances, tastes and differences in their lives. Malayali women have dared to claim those spaces and moments which weren't for them to occupy. The risks, thrills and adventures have become theirs to claim. The celebrations of womanhood have become part of their lives.

This study has shown that the Malayali women's attempts have not been futile as there is a strong surge of women who have started to view travels as therapeutic and leisurely activity, a necessity to keep one going. Independent travel groups are formed in favour of women's travels. Malayali women have no qualms about hitchhiking just to experience the thrill of being unplanned. They are grabbing

every opportunity that comes their way making use of each and every facility to make their dreams true.

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir states that the dominance and rule of the other doesn't do any good to the entire humanity. Instead we need to adapt a unified strategy which can bring everything into place. In the concluding paragraph of *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir states her views on gender equations: "The case could not be better stated. It is for man to establish the reign of liberty in the midst of the world of the given. To gain the supreme victory, it is necessary, for one thing, that by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequivocally affirm their brotherhood" (687).

It is like applying soothing balms on the bruises of the female psyche which has been severely damaged from centuries of suppression and oppression. The constraints and restrictions directed towards women's mobility succeeded in destroying and distorting the feminine psyche and eventually taking away their confidence. Therefore, the journeys which are made to the outer worlds turn into journeys directed towards the interiors of their own psyche which act as a method of rebuilding their seriously damaged inner selves. Women should deliberately overcome their limitations to face the world. The experiences and knowledge women gather through their travels becomes an asset and real capital for generations to get inspired. As what Simone de Beauvoir has said "Let her swim, climb mountain peaks, pilot an airplane, battle against the elements, take risks, go out for adventure, and she will not feel before the world that timidity which I have referred to" (332).

Let their travels and travel narratives help find answers to the questions raised by Edward Said in his book *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1999), “When did we become a people? When did we stop being one? Are we in the process of becoming one? What does this big question have to do with our intimate relationships with each other and with others?” (34). Therefore, travels and travel writings need to provide insights to people, especially to women and thereby to generations, to think above the prejudices and boundaries that drift people away on the basis of race, gender and class, as marginal and mainstreams, as superior and inferior, as subject and object/other, and all the illusory barriers which manipulate humanity and the ecosystems.



## **Chapter VI**

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Since this study is solely based on written / published form of travel narratives which are precisely in the first person, inclusion of travel experiences which have come up in the digitalized form (blogs, vlogs, interviews etc.) are not included in this research. Today as people have access to various mediums to share their experiences of travel, it is recommended that the diverse narrative methods/techniques such as intermediality (the method of narration combining different media) and graphics be taken up for future projects.

It can be noticed that the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent constraints have tremendously changed people's general attitude towards mobility. As such, the manner in which corporeality and mobility go hand in hand needs to be theoretically analysed using texts engaging with such representations.

The travel experiences of people who belong to different gender manifestations is another major concern to be examined while studying travel. Since studies that focus on such specificities require extensive research and analysis, this study could not carry out such a research. As there is a dearth in the availability such narratives in the written/ published forms, travel narratives shared in different media, especially in social media platforms may be examined. Several life/travel accounts of women that fall outside the accepted normative structures but are worthy of future academic pursuits have also been discovered during the course of this

research. Similarly, studies should also be focused on the mobilities of people who are physically challenged and therefore stand outside the purview of stagnant most normative ideological structures need the attention of the discerning eye.

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