

**Emancipatory Imagination in Anton Chekhov's and
Vaikom Muhammed Basheer's Writings**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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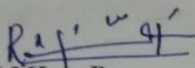
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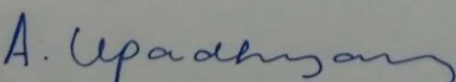
DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "*Emancipatory Imagination in Anton Chekhov's and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer's Writings*" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.


RAMLA P

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


PROF. ARCHANA UPADHYAY
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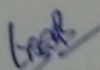

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Ramla P

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This study examines the question of emancipatory imagination in the writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. Emancipatory imagination, for the purpose of this study, is understood as literary imagination that informs the imperative to free the marginalized groups from oppressive social conditions and injustices through emancipatory political interventions by depicting their life conditions through textual and visual narratives/stories. The choice of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer in this study is because both authors speak about the problems of oppressive social groups such as serfs/slaves minority community and other disadvantaged groups in their respective societies. The works of both the authors reveals their social commitment, philosophical content and an alternative narrative style which common people can grasp. Chekhov's and Basheer's writings could be considered as a prelude to minority discourse which appeared later, arguing in favor of giving lawful space to the marginalized in the society. The progressive and emancipatory literary imaginations of these authors are still relevant in the 21st century because many themes they have reflected still prevalent in both Russian and Indian societies. Their ideas born from their emancipatory imagination provide food for thought on darker sides of human life for understanding the trajectory of today's social order. Therefore, this study considers that their imagination is impregnated with emancipatory thoughts, values and ideas, and the emancipatory imagination of these authors regarding a better world for the oppressed humanity.

Profile of the problem

Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammad Basheer wrote about the miseries and life of less privileged sections of the society which is mainly working classes in Russia and Muslim community in the case of Kerala. The time in which these stories were written

was historically important and the context has actually been reflected in the stories. Anton Chekhov's lived experiences had come in many of his stories and most protagonists were he himself. Chekhov felt that inner freedom was more important than political or social freedom. Chekhov's struggle to attain this freedom was painful work: Chekhov wrote that he was always 'trying to squeeze out the slave in me' (Chekhov 1886). Before and throughout Chekhov's lifetime (1860-1904), Russia was affected by the historical events occurring throughout the mid nineteenth and early twentieth century. Chekhov's Russia was experiencing one of militaristic exertion and sudden social displacement that followed, creating the environment in which Chekhov would create his work. The overall atmosphere was mixed with frustration over inequalities and power shifts, giving rise to Chekhov's focus on character psychology in which his main characters experience the same existential difficulties not just because of economic reasons but also social differences. It is the historical context around Chekhov's life that impacts his literary works as all authors are product of their time.

Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer speak about the problems of oppressive social groups such as serfs/slaves and Muslim community in their respective societies. The works of both the authors reveals their social commitment, philosophical content and an alternative narrative style which common people can grasp. The progressive and emancipatory literary imaginations of these authors are still relevant in the 21st century because many themes they have reflected still prevalent in both Russian and Indian societies. Their ideas born from their emancipatory imagination provide food for thought on darker sides of human life for understanding the trajectory of today's social order. Therefore, this study tries to examine the emancipatory imagination of these authors and regarding a better world for the oppressed humanity

Anton Chekhov's and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer's stories parallel with each other in terms of their themes and characters. Their stories are to be considered as the creation of their emancipatory imagination because those stories were written on the topics that were never thought to be writable before. And the way of writing and narrative styles are like the communication that the reader and the protagonist of the story is not about the most important developments in science or future of the world but

about the normal life of common men and issues entangle their lives. These stories were written for the direct consumption of common people in their respective societies as its their thoughts, though simple but throwing stones at the larger hypocritical world that ignores the existence of these sections of the society mostly.

These writings are emancipatory for many reasons such as their choice of characters and themes. The characters are women, serf, peasant, lower level bureaucrats, beggars, lonely person, helpless people as in case of Anton Chekhov and women, ordinary people, person in jail, prostitute, struggling artists or writers as in the case of Basheer. By writing about such people it is a struggle for equality or asserting these people's identities in the mainstream literature, to assert a 'space' even in the imaginations of readers (Preucel and Meskel 2004). There is a dynamics of 'space' and place that is playing in these stories, in Anton Chekhov's stories it is space the physical setting that is creating the background of the stories but in case of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer it is 'place' the social process of valuing space and a product of imaginary that is playing the role. One who read these stories are likely to broaden their canvas of world to such untold stories of lesser heroes who are the main protagonists of these stories. The topics or the themes are also as unique as these, though they seem very personal they are very much political in nature.

Both the writers did not refrained themselves in the boundaries of conventional storytelling and went beyond to define and redefine the narration and story was mostly told in the first person narrative form. Anton Chekhov as well as Basheer mostly wrote in the biographical style and utilized immense experience they gained in their travels. In choosing the themes and characters they defied the unsaid rules and norms of literature. Stories depicted the voices that shouldn't/wouldn't have heard and sketched scenes that shouldn't /wouldn't have seen otherwise in the mainstream literature. The language used was of colloquial that was used mainly by the larger sections about whom these stories were written and it in a way acted as a push for the popularization of these stories and carved a place in larger literature which used polished and grammatically correct language.

Literature is the complex dynamics of personal responses to reading and close reading of any text help us understand the psyche of the author in creating such an imagination and also the thought process of the characters in the stories. And if the stories represent a particular section that was not given a ‘voice’ and ‘agency’ in the larger history of literature then it becomes identity ‘creation’ and ‘assertion’ of that section in the mildest sense (Cote and Levine 2002) and is emancipatory in nature. When imagination reflects emancipatory function it helps in creating empathy in the minds of reader at one level and identity creation and assertion in the case of society/section that has been talked about or depicted in the stories. Creating identity should not be confused with the political opportunistic way, but the consolidation of identities of people who were nameless for a larger part of history of a land (Fraser 1996). Fraser concedes that “the politics of recognition encompasses not only movements aiming to revalue unjustly devalued identities but also deconstructive tendencies which reject the ‘essentialism’ of traditional identity politics. Thus it is broader than the identity politics in the conventional sense (ibid.4)”.

This identity consolidation helps in the assertion of identity by oppressed sections of the society and helps in their struggle to make a better society that guarantees them equality and justice. And writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer had this deconstructive and social distributive effect in their respective societies for the reason that they recognized a large section of society who were not recognized before as their textual narratives reveal.

Both these writers are writing in two different time frames and different socio political contexts yet they share the same satiric and sarcastic way of looking at the ills of the society and push you to think about them. Chekhov’s stories such as *The Chameleon* (Chekhov 1884), *Fat and The Thin* (Chekhov 1883), *The Death of a Government Clerk* (Chekhov 1883) pours light on changing nature of government officials and hierarchy and hypocrisy that exists in people’s social relationships, which in fact is not unknown even today. *Viswa vikhyadamaya Mukku/The world Famous Nose* (Basheer 1943) talks about fake news and how bureaucratic regulations controls the aspirations of people, and herd mentality, hero worship in politics,

Pavappettavarude Veshya/The Prostitute of The Poor (Basheer 1952) discusses the societal reasons why one takes up the profession of prostitution and how police and society treat them, the imageries used in these stories are exceptional and simple so the stories and characters remains in the minds of readers (Asher and Achamma1991).

These authors redefined the boundaries and grammars of literature itself. *The Culprit* of Anton Chekhov(1886) and *Neeti Nyayam* by Basheer (1943) shocks us to the core with their similarity of representing and criticizing the judiciary's unnecessary complicated procedures and slapping the morality of society by punishing the simple village men, these stories also represent the conflict between 'ethical correctness' and 'procedures established by law' and also loopholes in judiciary. The story telling by them is a 'natural art' reflecting on different perceptions defining and redefining obscenity and universality of true feelings and keeping themselves away from the boundaries of shame of body and language. At times we may feel some stories are dark comedies and full of cynicism but it actually force us to think where we locate ourselves in this world, so their stories are never monologue but an engaging experience (Asher 1991).

The peculiarity of the characters and identities discussed by both Chekhov and Basheer and most often their protagonists were from the marginal sections of the society whose stories were hardly told before (Karasseri 2015). Anton Chekhov talks about the working class or the section of lower middle class or poor or the rich class with unconventional view of society while Basheer talked about Muslims of Kerala who had never featured as protagonists in short stories before. The societies which are represented by Basheer and Chekhov are different, but they share the same socio-economic background beyond the politico-historical differences, with poverty, backwardness and illiteracy that both these sections shared in common in their respective societies. Emancipatory imagination runs along the order of the society and humanity and goes to the extent of defying social practices to uphold the moral righteousness according to these two authors. Regardless of the difference in culture and socio-political background such instances are seen in the stories of both Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. Emancipatory imagination through these

stories laid new sets of norms such as thirst for equality as in the “place” stories of Basheer. Imagination can be the desires and aspirations members of society possess which are envisioning a better tomorrow and it’s the essence of each story of these authors to establish just society through their stories in the imaginations of readers as well.

Conceptual Framework

Emancipatory imagination/ fundamentals of this study are based on the theory of *Emancipatory Social Science* by Eric Olin Wright (2010). Emancipatory social science engages the central purpose in the production of knowledge and the elimination in the oppression that facilitates human flourishing. As social science recognizes the importance of systemic knowledge and allows philosophic and social criticism about how the world works. Emancipatory imagination comes under critical imagination which pours light into the possibility of development of human potential that could free them from constraints in all forms social, political and economic arenas. This idea is closely related to the ‘social imaginary’ of Charles Taylor as in his words “social imaginary is not a set of ideas; rather it is what enable, through making sense of, the practice of a society (Taylor 2002).” Though he was trying to explain the origin of modernity by using that term, but it could be used to understand the social nuances of any society. Taylor says the moral order of any society was once just an idea in the minds of some influential thinker. These points to the larger impact of writers and authors in the society in impacting the horizon of readers in accommodating various sections in their imaginations

According to Sartre (1965) a theory of literature as praxis is emancipatory discourse as it eliminate oppression. Writers shape reader’s feelings, names them and attribute them to an ‘imaginary personage’ and act as a liberator (Sartre 1965: 39). Emancipatory Imagination is a medium of change and means of action as the writer offers forceful and moral communication. Imagination is a sphere that allows critically engaging with the problematic questions of society and offers an interesting axis to view political positioning as imagination is a socially constructed element. For this

purpose Frankfurt school's critical theories, post modern and post colonial approaches are employed in addition to literary criticisms, phenomenology, and semiotics.

In order to study emancipatory imagination in the writings of Chekhov and Basheer this study mainly draws theoretical perspectives from critical theories that had written on the precarious lives and people who constitute the peripheries of society and bottom sections of cultural hierarchy. This is not to romanticize the poverty and associated deprivations of the people but to problematize the literary and social horizon of the respective times. Despite the establishment of legal systems in the world to ensure delivery of justice the lives of the poor have not changed much even in the 21st century. We still live in a world where 'dehumanizing' acts of some individuals perpetuate violence and we are forced to redefine modernity and our concept of 'self identity' in this era of 'liquid modernity' where modernity has failed to rationalize the amplifications of constant change in our lives (Bauman 1999). As Gopal Guru (2009) expressed to draw attention to a social phenomenon, first we need to expose (humiliation) through a new conceptual language for identifying and understanding this. It is immediately accomplished by these stories. Spivak's (2008) essay explains historical and ideological factors that obstruct the possibility of being heard for those who live at the peripheries and this underlines the significance of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer and their stories. And it has become very important to write 'subaltern history' from its perspective to analyze 'silent majority' and to answer questions 'who' dominates 'whom' in today's world (Guha 1997) which is going through the age of globalization, interconnectivity, digitalization, inequality, human miseries and new risks.

Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (2015) defines 'emancipation' as "the fact or process of being set free from legal, social or political restrictions; liberation" and 'imagination' as "the faculty or action of forming new ideas or image or concepts of external objects not present to the senses." Any branch of science is emancipatory when it poses ways to eliminate oppression and creation of condition for human flourishing. Emancipatory imagination seeks to critically narrate social issues and their consequences to disposed and oppressed people. Emancipatory imagination runs along

the moral order of the society and humanity and goes to the extent of defying social practices to uphold the moral righteousness. These stories are emancipatory imagination because they challenge human oppression through the characters and envision betterment in the society. These stories explain the causes of inequality in the social practices and Chekhov restrains himself from giving any solution while the stories of Basheer not just give the roots of all problems but also the solutions as well in the form of universal humanistic epochs such as love and environmentalism. This definition is the fundamental base for emancipatory social sciences that had contributed for the progress of this research. Thus it reflects the imagining of liberation from oppressive conditions, resistance and a social change that demands better life conditions and dignity.

In order to study the emancipatory imagination in the writings of Chekhov and Basheer critical theories generated in the Frankfurt school, post colonialism and subaltern studies are useful theoretical fields because the nature and intent of the writings were to highlight the lives of common men and women who were non-existent in Russian and Indian Literature before. At the same time, we must keep in mind that the essence underlying Frankfurt school theories explained by theorists such as Herbert Marcuse (2006), Theodor Adorno (1970), Max Horkheimer (1937), Walter Benjamin (1936), and Erich Fromm (1976) were very much reflexive of emancipatory imagination although the term was not used in their theorization.

Horkheimer (1982:244) argues that a theory is a critical theory when it seeks “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them”. Emancipatory imagination is such category of critique which is directed at changing the practice so as to better conform to the standards of wellbeing of society. Traditional theories were used to understand society. While critical theories are oriented towards critiquing and changing society and provide normative bases for social enquiry to increase freedom. ‘Social critique’ (Habermas 1963) in its transformative sense is an activity that uses evaluation of social practices so that they become better. The impact of literature had on reading public through emancipatory imagination didn’t involve invading certain spaces physically but invading the thinking horizons of readers. Social imagination

represents the new consciousness of a society as an economy and polity. This is how people imagine their social existence and give us a picture on deeper normative notions and images that underline these expectations.

Studies on literature is essentially is a part of cultural studies where in culture is an 'object of empirical knowledge' while 'cultural difference' and 'diversity' are to be meticulously noted as mostly its 'constructed' and this very difference explains the political meanings of it either in the form of 'domination' or 'resistance' (Bhabha 1994). The task in the 'politics of culture' is to combat the elitist definitions of culture with democratic secular culture of modern civic values and radical equalities (Jawed 1999). To define and re-define prevalent values in the society is to imagine creatively and unconventionally, it's at this juncture that emancipatory imagination that is depiction of certain people in stories to give a different view on their life and the way of conduct of society itself. Emancipatory imagination is a term used in this course of study to understand the usual way of life of any simple person/community and close look at it gives us the ways in which it could be changed.

Emancipatory Imagination would mean the emancipatory function of imagination that is depicted in Anton Chekhov's and Muhammed Basheer's works. These two authors possessed different perception in which they shared the deepest sense of humanity towards the subject of their stories. Chekhov expressed that purpose of literature is to depict life 'as it is' this indicate the realistic nature of his writings (Chekhov 1885). Both Chekhov and Basheer shared deep social ideals and uncommon sense of social responsibility which is hopeful towards the future and proves to be an emancipatory imagination. Emancipatory Imagination takes us to liberation and freedom which underlines the imaginative autonomy and moral right of characters and topics on whom their stories are written. On the sight of it, we would be misled to believe that Chekhov and Basheer are explaining the darker sides of life and hopelessness but if we are ready for a closer reading the layers unroll before us and we get the reason why they have written on the topics they did.

Emancipatory imagination is conceptualized drawing from the critical school of thought of Frankfurt School in which the dialectical method of learning by

interrogating society's contradictions is focused. This school of thought is known for rethinking of classical Marxism which is updated to the socio-historical period and used widely in the cultural studies and political sociology. The concept of emancipatory imagination helps to understand the problems of 'ideology', 'mass culture', and 'cultural hegemony' by keeping itself out of these categories and bringing a new set of rules that defied the earlier ones (Adorno 1970, Markus 2006). Frankfurt school explains the sameness in the production of culture leading to the creation of certain section of the society intellectually inactive and politically passive it's on this very section that Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer had written extensively on. While Frankfurt School explain the ways in which mass produced ideologies and goods infiltrate the conscience of larger masses Chekhov and Basheer carefully explains how these groups of people could have a voice when they are given lime light in stories, by doing so these authors defies the hegemonic culture that ignored these groups for such a long time. This is very interesting not that Frankfurt school theorist never used the term emancipatory imagination though they shared the same concerns that of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer that is the focus on precarious lives.

Anton Chekhov's works which was written in the nineteenth century context Russia depict themes of appearance, identity, struggle, misery, despair, disease, death, social degeneration, environmental issues, love for nature, prison life, freedom, hopes and aspirations. Like Chekhov, Basheer's work reflects humor, pathos, nature love, human and non human's rights on earth, religious conservatism, dowry, exploitation, attack on the superstitious practices that existed among Muslims, homosexuality, male prostitution, hunger, poverty, life in prison, loneliness are recurring themes in his works. Basheer is known for his unconventional narration style as a story teller and 'humble historian' and for the colloquial language usage in writing (Kumar 1999). He observed the life of people on whom he wrote stories and skillfully mixed humor with miseries of life and this style was new not just to Malayalam literature but also to larger Indian literature itself. His association with Indian independence movement, Gandhian ideology, and immense travel within and outside India has enriched his stories in

including wide variety of topics and characters he talked about and in thinking the possibilities and solutions that is beyond the reach of our culture.

Review of Literature

The role of authors in the society has been different in different times (David 2000). By force of their commitment there are members of the writers 'striving to change' the world such as Jean Paul Sartre *Existentialism and Humanism* (1936) and Albert Camus *The Fall* (1956) in France in twentieth century. One of the most engaging qualities of these two authors and of the moral passion with which they attacked the great questions of the human condition, and their pursuit to a ruthlessly logical conclusion in life (Adorno 1970). It is this quality which the two giants of the tradition, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and theoreticians in Frankfurt school such as Horkheimer (1937), Adorno (1970), Marcuse (2006), and narrow critical connectionist such as Bourdieu (1980) Althuser (1974) and Foucault (1975).

According to Thomas Hobbes every philosopher is a product of his time and socio-political circumstances of his time affect his writing (Allain and Gottlib 2000). At the same time an author can also be the igniting force for the social changes and political actions that have taken place in a society like in the case of Montesquieu (1748), Rousseau (1762), and Voltaire (1763) whose writings sparked French revolution (1789). This is what Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer does, they take you in an eventful journey with the characters and let you explore the possibilities beyond the 'rights' and 'wrongs' of the society and in that way define and re-define the boundaries of 'accepted' and 'unaccepted' in literature and the larger morality of society itself (Vijayan 2015). This is the first step in recognizing the issues as mentioned by Fraser (1996), Habermas (1963), Jawed (1999), Preucel (2002), Sen (2004). The question of recognition in Muhammed Basheer was taken up by many scholars such as Adler (2007), Azhikode (2000), Asher and Achamma (1991), Abdullah (2004), Karasserri (2015), Asees (2005), Tharakan (1989), Sanu (2005), Sherrif (2007), Satchidanandan (2009) and Sivasankaran (1989). The place stories of Basheer were immensely studied by Udaya Kumar (1999) in his various works. The

same aspects in Chekhov was studied by Downey (1999), Clyman (1985), Malaev (1993), Koh (2013), Cote and Levine (2002), Constance (1920), Garnett (1920), Gottlib (2000) and David (2000).

‘Organic Intellectual’ by Antonio Gramsci (1939) is yet another concept that can be used to understand why studying Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. Gramsci wants the awareness among the oppressed to unite and struggle towards the upliftment of exploited class and as these ‘organic intellectuals’ belongs to the same section/class they would better understand the nuances associated with oppressed living (Gramsci 1939). We can consider Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer as organic intellectuals because their stories are capable of making awareness among and about the sections of the society they talk about. But it’s to be noted that in none of the stories an explicit call for uniting to fight against exploitation can be seen. These two authors are not political theorist to inspire revolutions but their stories are capable of awareness generation, identity creation and identity assertion which is definitely is very political in nature. The same idea is shared by other theoreticians and practitioners such as Marx (1880), Lowenthal (1957), Fromm (1976), Woolf (1929) and Benjamin (1936).

Subaltern approach (Guha 1953) is another lens through which we can understand Anton Chekhov’s and Muhammed Basheer’s stories. Subaltern perspective give away the importance of hegemonic understanding of history and society and the same way these two authors have given the lime-light to people who never received attention. The same idea is been written by Spivak (2008), Guru (2009), this lead us to question the very basic reality of modernity of today and can be seen in the writings of Bhabha (1994), Bauman (1999) and Edward Said (1978, 1993). By doing so it was not just giving voice to the voice less but its making the literature more inclusive and democratic by giving space to a section of society who was not capable of voicing their opinion. In the story *The Prostitute of the Poor* (1952) and *Birthday* (1945) of Basheer explains the everyday reality of a poor person that is hunger. In the history of Malayalam novel there were stories that were written about poverty, hunger and difficulties of life of underprivileged but the meticulous way in which these stories

explains the same emotion is different for the reason that the writer itself felt these helplessness situations where the other authors mostly wrote within the comfort zones and wrote about these topics because of compulsion but not because they had a lived reality of the same experience. These stories in a way opened new horizons to readers as well as other authors too.

Focus of the Study

The study seeks to understand the emancipatory function of literary imagination in the writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammad Basheer. Literature is not all about imagination it's also reflections of the society. Focus of this research is this reflection of the society in literature and also emancipatory imagination possibilities it opens up after that even if it's not explicitly mentioned in stories. Both these authors believed life and literature are not very different from each other so overlaps each other at various points. In general life is important while if we are ready to look deeper into the question some lives are more important than others and literature represents the same.

Lower sections of the society are marginalized not just in the socio-political lives but also from literature. Basher and Chekhov as a part of intelligentsia had given lime-light to these otherwise marginalized sections by not just giving them the characters but also pouring their perceptions on life and politics. These stories giving them a space that was otherwise inaccessible, this study tries to understand it as the assertion of Muslims of Kerala and lower sections of Russia at least in the sphere of literature which is a new trend and that itself is emancipatory imagination.

Stories of Anton Chekhov and Basheer give us the details of subaltern lives in their respective societies in time periods. These two authors have meticulously written and observed about life of oppressed and peripheral people it's also because of the lived experience of the exploitation of writers themselves. These writings are considered as emancipatory because writing about such details of difficult and complicated lives and reasons behind the sustenance of exploitation for such a long time and writing on this topic itself is a bloom of hope though they don't explicitly preach for any political or

social actions that are to be undertaken. Emancipatory imagination in these stories are alternative understanding of society that are ignored by most writers and readers or taken for granted as in the words of Foucault concepts of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ (Foucault 1975). We are often tempted to avoid critical or alternate thinking over the way institutions conducted in society thinking it’s the ‘normal’ way it has to be taken place. This study, therefore, mainly focuses on the following points:

1. Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer: Life Time and Socio-Political Context of their writings
2. Chekhov and Basheer’s main works and themes
3. Emancipatory Imagination in Chekhov’s and Basheer’s writings

Research Questions

1. Why is emancipatory imagination important?
2. How social structure and political contexts both in Russia and India influenced in shaping Chekhov’s and Basheer’s writings?
3. What are the themes reflected in the works of Chekhov and Basheer and how far it’s reflective of their socio-political context in which it’s written?
4. How are the questions of identities and their assertions being depicted in their stories?
5. How is emancipatory imagination being reflected in the writings of Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer?

Hypothesis

- The emancipatory imagination that Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer reveals in their works affect societies at large and enable ordinary people to relate the narrative and characters with their own life situation and understand socio-cultural difference.

Research Methods

Research methodology that the study follows is a qualitative research. Qualitative research is a type of scientific research which can be used in analyzing variables that are intangible in nature. The study depends both on primary and secondary sources. The short stories of Chekhov and Basheer and letters/speeches or notes written by the authors would be considered as primary sources. Studies pursued by other authors and documentaries on Chekhov and Basheer are considered as the secondary sources. This research draws theoretical perspectives from Critical theories; post modern and post colonial approaches are employed in addition to literary criticisms, phenomenology, and semiotics. Relevant aspect of discourse analysis, speech act theory and hermeneutics are used in the study as well.

Structure of Study

First chapter outlines the overall framework of proposed research and background of this study. The introductory chapter lays the entire structure of the research and gives the glimpse of chapter-wise description and topics covered under each section in this chapter. The chapter focuses on the conceptualization of emancipatory imagination and role of it in politics of culture and the ways in which it could help in understanding societies better by inclusive understanding which promote democratic ethos of equality.

Second chapter explain the life and work of both Anton Chekhov and Muhammad Basheer. The personalities themselves could be considered as a text and also their biographies and letters written by them as these explains why these writers wrote what they wrote. This chapter looks into the Russian and Indian socio-political and cultural background in which these stories were written by Chekhov and Basheer. A close reading of authors' lives gives us the inevitable role of lived experience of authors and the characters and themes of their stories. This chapter tries to see the life of authors and background of their works.

Third chapter seeks to discuss Chekhov's and Basheer's characters and themes in their writings. Chekhov's writing on the character psychology reveals their struggle with prevalent societal systems and existential difficulties of 19th century Russian society. Chekhov and Basheer believed that how characters see themselves is more

important, than how an author sees them, and that we as readers can understand characters more deeply if we don't have an author standing between us and them. Basheer's prose tale brought a new style of writing which perhaps only Basheer could handle with dexterity. Nineteen fifties thus mark the evolution of new kind of writing in which Basheer had his impact not only on short stories but also dramas.

Fourth chapter tries to see the trajectory of evolution of these authors on one hand and use of emancipatory imagination to represent and understand society on the other. Emancipatory imagination provides a space of possibilities in terms of resistance imagination and critical imagination. Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammad Basheer become very relevant in understanding Russian and Indian societies namely in terms of differences in geography, history and sociology yet similar in some ways. This explains why the Anton Chekhov's and Muhammed Basheer's imagination reflected in their writings is considered as emancipatory imagination. The final chapter five presents the summary and conclusion of the study. It also states the validation of the hypotheses.

CHAPTER TWO

ANTON CHEKHOV AND VAIKOM MUHAMMED BASHEER LIFE TIME AND SOCIO POLITICAL CONTEXT OF RUSSIA AND INDIA

Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer as prominent writers in Russia and India are shaped by the particular time they were born and socio-political context in which they lived as Thomas Hobbes observed “every philosopher is a product of his time”. Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) was a grandson of a serf and serfdom was abolished (1861) when he was just one year old. It was a time revolutionary activities began in Russia. He observed that serfs were emancipated in legal terms in reality they remained as marginalized. Therefore, the older social order played a central role in many of his writings. Chekhov’s writings reflected the turbulent time his homeland went through such as emancipation of serfs, various changes in the Russian Czar Monarchy and policies such as the social and cultural reform under Alexander II and humiliating Russian defeat in Crimean War (1856). During the life of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer (1908-1994), his India was going through exploitative colonial British rule, anti-colonial movements in which he was a part of, and many social reform movements. Basheer witnessed political and social movements in his life as a part of independence movement in India such as Gandhian Satyagraha, Vaikom Satyagraha in the beginning of his political career, and various revolutionary movements in the later years. His home state of Kerala was going through regional uprising against colonization, political and popular steps were taken to improve education, proclamations of community rights, and reformation in the form of temple entry movement.

Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer and Their Chronotope

Every author writes in different styles to communicate their ideas and in long run it so happens that their ideas and works gets added to the cultural content of the society. Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept ‘chronotope’ can be a represented how literary writings are also historicized (Borghat et al 2010). A ‘chronotope’ is a particular way that time,

space and plot are interwoven in the dominant literary genre of a given time period. According to Fabian (1981) “time thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible likewise space becomes charged with a responsive to the movements of the time, plot and history.” There are also chronotope that are timeless cultural categories yet any literature reflects particular social circumstances. Authors use different techniques and genres to reach to people and satire is the method used by Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer in their stories and it’s the focus of this study. A satirist uses wit to ridicule the shortcomings of the society to expose stupidity that is prevalent, no matter how long it had been in practice or of how large is the group that is practicing it. Most often subject of satire is a contemporary issue mainly politics or the politician for their ineffective decision or policies. Chekhov and Basheer use almost all the techniques in satire such as irony, sarcasm and hyperbole to make their point through their short stories of chronotope.

George Orwell the author of the book *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949) mentioned in an interview (*The Atlantic* 1946) that a writer has a sheer egoism, aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse and political purpose in writing and most importantly these motives change from time to time in accordance with the atmosphere in which s/he lives. The chronotope in which any author writing is important and it’s explicitly or implicitly shown in their stories. Sometimes it’s important to know the circumstances in which a certain story is written to understand the real essence of the story. This is pointing towards the times in which Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer wrote their stories.

Vaikom Muhammed Basheer reflected the time in which he lived in his stories. It was the height of anti-colonial and independent movement in India. The way poverty, and helplessness (*Birthday* 1945) of people was depicted is not very different from the sorry state of affairs prevailed in any colonial nation of that period (*Voices/The Walls* 1965). The way Basheer criticized government and inspired readers to work for emancipation and freedom throws light into the time of author’s life when he was the part of a revolutionary writings (*Fools’ Paradise* 1948).

There is a definite chronotope of threshold in the writings of both these authors for the turbulent circumstances in which they wrote and in their case it is of a nature of instantaneous crisis or break from old times to modernity, the same can be seen in the chronotope of Dostoevsky's and Tolstoy's biographical time. In these particular cases of focus the chronotope becomes interrelationship between literary time and historical time that could have complex repercussions in political and social spheres of society. As Bakhtin points out, "a literary work's artistic unity in relationship to actual reality is defined by its Chronotope" (Bakhtin 1981: 84). Thus, chronotope makes the time representable through narrative and integrate literature to a historically developing social world (ibid). This is the juncture to analyze the contribution of these two authors in the modernization of their respective communities/societies that are less acknowledged.

Anton Chekhov: Life, Time and Socio-Political Context

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was born on 17 January 1860 in Taganrog in south Russia a town just outside present day Ukraine on the shore Sea of Azov. His father Pavel Egorovich Chekhov belongs to serf family and his mother was Yevgenia Iakovlevna Morozova. Chekhov was born in a religious family but in his middle age in a letter to his brother he called himself an unbeliever but it did not stop him from using religious terms or themes in his stories and dramas and few of his finest stories like *Easter Eve* (1886), *The Artist* (1880), and *The Bishop* (1902) are examples. His father Pavel Egorovich Chekhov was a struggling grocer and though his mother was kind to him Anton Chekhov had difficult childhood. Anton Chekhov was their third child.

There was a great transformation Russia was going through, it's yet to be an industrial country and hardly moved out of medieval condition. So Pavel was a classic self made Victorian puritan who was a fierce believer in self help and work ethics and despot in the family. It's to his mother that Chekhov is indebted in the narration part of his works because his mother Yevgenia who was an excellent story teller entertained her children with tales of travel with her cloth merchant father all over Russia though she was Ukrainian by birth. "Our talents we got from our father but souls from mother"

Chekhov once remembered. Like majority of houses in the poorer parts of Russia then Chekhov's house had a single story and a tin roof. Chekhov often slept in a shed where his father kept his life time store of newspapers (Adler 1992).

Serfdom in Russia's serf was abolished by Law on 19 February 1861 under Emperor Alexander II when Chekhov was just one year old. Chekhov himself was a grandson of a serf and a peasant. Chekhov often did his home works sitting at the counter of his father's shop. Big ships were turning away from Taganrog the harbor was neglected and commerce declined over time, and shopkeepers like Pavel was hit and he went bankrupt. For three years Anton Chekhov was kept as a hostage by the creditor of Pavel Chekhov. When Chekhov's father's business failed family moved to Moscow this can be considered as the first step in the intellectual growth of Chekhov. In 1881 Alexander 2nd was assassinated followed by reaction against the reforms under his successor Alexander 3rd. People back then had a traditional taste for joking, lying and vulgar and crude comic magazines were popular. In Moscow to support his family and to pay tuition fee at university he started writing under pseudonyms such as Antosha Chekonte and Man Without a Spleen. His writings then included daily, short humorous sketches and anecdotes of contemporary Russian lives and worked as a freelance writer for newspapers and magazines. It gradually earned him reputation of satirical Chronicler of Russian common man. But Anton Chekhov did not quite enjoy this reputation he had ambitions of a more established writer like Tolstoy (David 200).

In 1884 Anton Chekhov qualified as a physician it was during the same time he developed tuberculosis, he was to deny for several years that he was tubercular. In 1887 Chekhov travelled to Ukraine and touched by the beauty of nature in general and steppe in particular on his return he wrote the novel length story *Steppe*. *Steppe* (1888) is called the "dictionary to understand Chekhov's poetics" (Malcolm 2004). Thus, travels proved to be the food for his thought and imaginations with curious observation gives the realism in his writings.

Though Chekhov was a skilled humorist he began to write darker comedies which were psychologically probing works such as *A Dreary story* (1889) and plays such as *Ivanov* 1887-1889 which is a work that questions the social phenomenon of

suicide. In 1890 he went to Shakalin a remote island and notorious Russian penal settlement. He studied the islanders and about prisoners and these are recurring topics in his stories. Also he published a work on his findings in Shakalin. The immediate reward of Chekhov's Shakalin adventure was an extraordinary leap of imagination to his writing. The *Seagull* (1896) and *Cherry Orchard* (1904) were the famous plays in the mature and later stage of his career and they are talking a lot of topics such as nature, human relations and best known as the commentaries on the Russian society itself. Chekhov changed the horizon of theatre with his plays. Chekhov believed that the darker side of plays and dramas should no way undercut the funny and comic elements that are present even at the seemingly darkest moments. This mix of comic and tragic genre is Anton Chekhov's contribution not only to plays in Russia but literature in general. These stories possessed simplistic but commendable literary works that are down to earth in terms of themes and narration (Allien and Gottlieb 2000). His works revolved around trivialities and saturated Russian life which were poetic to imagination and remained in the minds and literature legacy. He showed readers the deeper and levels of his character's inner world and also how they dealt with the troublesome circumstances of their lives.

To the end of nineteenth century his secret illness was attacking his stomach and bowels. No matter how busy and ill he remained he would start a long journey for the peasants who are suffering from famine or villagers who are troubled with cholera outbreak (Adler 1992). He requested landlords to donate money to them and help them in these times of difficulties. As he was a reputed writer by this time rich people felt they are obliged to help and Anton Chekhov's efforts did not stop here, he charged minimum from the people for medical consultations and often conducted it free too. One would be amused to see the austerity of Chekhov's style of writing. The narrator investigates the dreadful condition of an out of the date hospital with the amusement of a doctor as well as a curious citizen. He went on explaining like this "the hospital stands in a barren wilderness outside the town the only other building is the sight of the prison" (*Ward 6*). Chekhov had projected a frightening and sterile universe the line by line events of the story are powerful and blasting. Perhaps he felt that the irony of the

situations in life as in the story *Ward 6* in which a prison governor himself becomes a voluntary prisoner. This story very much goes in explaining the ‘governmentality’ theory that is written and propagated by Foucault (1977).

The lines of the story not just explain the storyline but draw the picture in the minds of reader. There is always a burly, ignoble and shameless character in Chekhov’s stories it’s because his stories are an extended canvas of reality around him that he saw in his travels. In any crisis Chekhov’s instinct was to get away emotionally or physically. He was in any case an instinctive nomad and to meet his friends or escaped into the horizon of writing and observing people who are the potential themes and characters of his forth coming stories. Taganrog was a place that had often come in his stories was not just associated with sweet memories of childhood with family one shouldn’t be shocked to hear that he had ideas of making this place the background of a topical novel on the theme of the wave of child suicides that was sweeping across Russia. This could be also possible because of his experiences in Taganrog after his family left for Moscow. By the summer of 1893 Anton Chekhov came to stay in Melikhovo. Often Anton went off to one of his sudden journeys to the south for his health all what he said was to write and never conveyed his sickness. It’s these journeys that gave him immense time and experiences to write. He gave up cigar for some time in the severe winter of the same year and for a short time he went through s depression and dreamt and talked of going abroad to countries like south Africa, Japan and India by spring of 1895. Chekhov had been three years at Melikhovo was doing better at responsibilities as a son, a concerned landowner, a doctor and restless writer. During this time his stories reflected upon deteriorating health and struggle with nature during farming (Clyman 1985).

In August 1895 Chekhov visited Tolstoy and this meeting had a marvelous impression on Chekhov and he wrote *Seagull* after this. But the first performance in Petersburg was a disaster and Chekhov was embarrassed and said he would not write another play. Yet *Seagull* stands alone among Chekhov’s plays even today as a lyrical experiment that was never repeated. In 1901 Chekhov married Olga Knipper, Anton Chekhov insisted her to stay in Moscow and stayed himself in Yalta mostly even after

marriage for her own growth in career and in the fear of losing interest in her company if spent more time together. In 1903 Chekhov started writing *The Cherry Orchard* in Yalta by this time his disease possessed his all body grabbing his intestine and bowels. His doctor advises him to the German Spa in Black Forest. Olga travelled with him to Berlin; it was evident that he would never return to Russia, they knew that this would be the nomad's last trip. He started getting, better in the first leg of this journey only to get worse off in the second. Chekhov (1904) wrote, "There is more talent in Russian villages, in Germany there is no talent but there is order and honesty".

A few hours before he died on July 2, 1904 Chekhov was telling comic story to Olga and she was laughing at his account. A few hours later he was gasping for breath and Chekhov preferred champagne over sending for oxygen. He had one of those odd vision in *Ward 6* and asked "has the sailor gone?" then Russian he said "I'm dying" and in German and died at once. The journey back to Moscow and funeral was simple which would have delighted Anton Chekhov but Gorky was infuriated. He wrote the coffin was put into a goods wagon and mourners got mixed with another funeral and "this is how we treat our great writers" Chekhov was buried beside his father's grave (Clyman 1985).

Chekhov's Works and Socio-Political Context in Russia

The chronotope in which an author writes affects her/his works. Likewise, the time and socio-political context in which Anton Chekhov wrote was a historically important period for Russia. A very important factor influencing an author is the society he lives and the political structure. As an author and a physician lived throughout the early revolutionary period of Russia in late nineteenth century and his works can be understood as the reactions and reflections to the society in which he lived. The presence of political and philosophical themes in his works underlines this point. The socialist idea struggle brings progress is explained through the actors in the play *The Seagull* while his last play *The Cherry Orchard* examines the repercussions of abolition of serfdom and emancipation of serf in 1861. Chekhov explicitly states his political views on freedom in the compilation of letters (Garnette 2011).

Chekhov lived in the time of Russian Empire ruled by Alexander II the period preceding revolution and Lenin's communist government. However, socialist ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were developed and were popular. Among the intellectuals of Russia Marx's socialism and Hegel's philosophy were gaining momentum and history as the story of human labor and struggle was accepted. The difference was in the details of the struggle where Marx understood it as a struggle against the hostile world while Hegel thought it was a spiritual one. Hegel saw personal struggle leading to growth while Marx saw class struggle leading to equality. It's difficult to say in which school of thought we could locate Anton Chekhov and his characteristics because he used both approaches in different stories (Downey 1999).

In *The Seagull* Chekhov uses his socialist theme in the protagonist Nina an aspiring actress from the Russian poor countryside. At the end of the play Nina evolves from a rural farm girl to an established actress. Nina's repression at home is a representation of oppression of Russian people under the emperor. As Marx and Hegel would have understood Nina progressed due to her struggle and hardships. *Seagull* could give an insight to the historical undercurrents in the Russian society it's a play about romantic and artistic conflicts of four characters in the end of 19th century when social and political reforms were on the way. From mid 19th century Russia underwent a social and cultural reform under Alexander II. According to Martin (2010) Russian population was growing and learning new ways of self governing and emerging an ambitious society. As education rose realism became the important aspect of society not just in terms of physical nature but also spiritual nature as well. Chekhov successfully realized the 19th century naturalistic person who fulfilled realistic actuality through *Seagull*. Chekhov used the characteristics of nature to reflect upon the social relationships and bring out various aspects of Russia's social reforms at that time. Chekhov brought nature and art which were important aspects of social reform which lead to the idea that an organic, natural background that is something coldly intellectual (Lahr 1968). The way Nina calls herself a Seagull also explains the desire of a woman to freedom.

The application and consequences of communism and socialism are explained in *The Cherry Orchard*. It was the last play Anton Chekhov wrote in 1904 before his death it's about Lyuba Ranavsky on her trip back to native rural Russia. On her return she realizes that she has a large debt to clear and have to sell some of her orchard in which Lopakin helps her. At the end of the story Lopakhin purchase the orchard and its shown as the evolution of a peasant to bourgeoisie. There is a desire for equality that is brimming in these stories and this is Marx's view of economic progress.

In *The Letters of Anton Chekhov to his family and friends* (Garnette 2011) Chekhov captures the oppression of Russian empire on its citizen and socialist reaction to its tyranny. He travelled to Shakalin islands through Amur river and noted "the lowest convicts breathes more freely on the Amur than the highest Generals in Russia (Letter 211)." He finds a stark difference between the Russian civilization and Amur and the lack of freedom held by its citizen. He emphasizes the need for Russia to change by giving a simple observation and it goes like this "people are not afraid to talk aloud here, there is no one to arrest them and nowhere to exile to, so you can be as liberals as you like (Letter 209)." This is the most powerful way to say how important it's for the censorship to go for a liberal society to exist. Chekhov becomes a sociologist himself when he examines Amur countries as "independent, self reliant and logical." After seeing these liberal societies the oppressive society Chekhov lived became more tyrannical for him. Anton Chekhov never called himself as a socialist yet there were many political themes that are talked about in his stories. Chekhov indirectly contributed to the revolutionary social ideas with implicit socialist themes and sociological non fictions which talked about the condition of his country and his longing towards a more liberal lifestyle.

Chekhov's critics claim that he had a split personality in his style of writing (Dresen 2011). In the beginning of his career as a writer he was a master of short humorous stories. *The Telephone* written in 1886 is one example of his sense of humor with insights into minds of people. At the same time he wrote several serious stories based on human suffering it was a way of dealing with the pain that a doctor witnesses. Such experimentation is the story of *Vanka* (1886). In 1888 Chekhov was published in

highly acclaimed *Northern Herald*. The Steppe marked Chekhov's production of long stories and plays. This is an autobiographical work of a child's trip to Ukraine. In 1889 Chekhov wrote his first novel *Ivanov* it's a heavy and tragic story of a young terminally ill man committing suicide. This was in the same year Anton Chekhov lost his brother to tuberculosis. As the years passed by he wrote fewer short stories concentrated on plays. Chekhov wrote or revised 240 short stories between 1889 and 1901. The full length plays include the *Wood Demon* (1889), *Uncle Vanya*(1898), *The Seagull* (1898), and *Three Sisters*(1901).

Anton Chekhov's life is bounded by events in Russian history. The most important even happened one year after his birth in 1861 was the Russian emancipation of serf. The reign of three Tsars and end of their regimes within months, the incidents of Bloody Sunday and the political upheavals during this period shaped Anton Chekhov's thoughts. Serfdom in Russia had matured into a new form of slavery by the time of ascendance of Alexander II in 1855. Russian serfs were under utter oppression and lack of possession though they were tied to the land they worked on day and night, they were taxed mercilessly. The Russian Empire was the largest in Europe but Alexander wanted the glory of being the best as well and it's when he followed the path of Peter the Great's policy of westernization. This included emancipation of peasants and abolition of serfdom to reduce the reaction by landowners Emperor provided government issued bonds putting undue pressure on government coffers. Land distribution did not followed the steps by the government further increasing inequality among haves and have not's. This was further pushed Russian agrarian crisis as the country already lacked agricultural technologies (Carola 2008).

In 1853 Russia sent troops to defend Crimeans in Ottoman Empire. Within months Russian troops occupied the territory and Turks were compelled to declare war on Russia. Britain and France were in panic that Russia may further use the war to occupy more areas of Ottoman Empire and declared war on Russia. The Russian transportation was not ample enough to transport supply and troops and suffered an embarrassing defeat. The humiliating defeat in war (1853-1856) and loosing Crimean peninsula to British and French Chekhov's Russia was in real trouble and this burn

intensified after the Russo Turkish war of 1877-78 when it had to renounce the gains of war due to the pressure from the other powers of Europe. This war was a result of Russia's ambitions to gain access to Black Sea and to conquer Caucasus, dominate Balkan Peninsula and to control Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits (Carola 2008). Russia had to return the territories to Ataturk's Turkish government and this step back of Russia in the international arena had affected the Russian nationalism domestically.

The loss of Crimean war was a scar on the Russian government and it emphasized Russia's backwardness in comparison to industrialized Europe. The Russia needed to modernize in terms of weaponry and technology, reorganization of military and transportation networks. Russia was fundamentally an agrarian society and serfdom was at the base of it, this is what compelled Alexander 2nd to abolish serfdom and emancipation of serfs. The reforms did not bring anticipated results and the overall situation was a mix of optimism and dissatisfaction over inequality and power shifts. Former slave families like that of Chekhov's were struggling to overcome the slave mentality and desiring economic success with limited resources. His career as a physician allowed him to come in contact with different social strata and provided him with subject matters for his stories. The hope and frustration of a politically and socially changing society had impacted the characters of Anton Chekhov and his themes. Chekhov depicts character from all the levels of society whose response to life is to fall in routine and mundane to blur into nothingness. Chekhov choose not to emphasize on traits that are unique to a person that set him apart but traits shared by all this is Chekhov's reaction to the mentality that was prevalent during that time to unite Russia as a nation. Chekhov's work was culminating of events leading till his works and historical happenings thereafter. In his writing *The Seagull* Chekhov writes about an estate much like one from the 19th century Russia in which everything from the land is sold to sustain it (Adler 2007). He throws light on the old aristocracy whose concerns with art outweighs their real problem of money and social upheaval. His focus on character psychology reveals with struggle with surviving and existential difficulties of Russia then.

Russian military participated in various military campaigns during this period. But frustrated with slow actions and political reforms there emerged many grassroots radical political movements many used terrorist tactics too. In 1881 a handmade grenade ended the reign of Alexander 2nd and paved way for Alexander 3rd a conservative and traditional ruler. New ruler blamed the reforms and foreign powers for the unrest of the empire. Alexander 3rd brought back Russification and shut the doors of the nation and promoted nationalism and equated it with Moscovi culture. He began policies to hunt down the radical elements. He cared little about the policies that reversed his father's policies and their implications in the lives of people. These policies had damaging effects on economy by stopping international exchanges in terms of goods and ideas. It's during this time Anton Chekhov cemented his reputation as a writer through his stories that he began in the early part of career. By 1889 Chekhov refocused on the medical profession as well. He visited the exile colony north of Siberia and each of these travels allowed him new geography and populous to observe. By 1892 Chekhov bought an estate outside Moscow and meditated the village life and started a career of writing again. In 1894 Alexander 3rd died and Nicholas 2nd the unprepared ruler came in. the state of unrest in populous and backward infrastructure were the shortcomings. His coronation ignited a riot and many more to follow later. The new Tsar was determined to follow the conservative policies began by his father. The death of Chekhov in 1904 was neither the end of his legacy nor the historical undercurrents of Russia. On January 22nd 1905 the catalyst of revolution came when the troops fired at a peaceful march through St.Petersberg to present a petition to Tsar killing many and incident came to be known as Bloody Sunday and ignited the 1905 Revolution in Russia. Chekhov died few months before the bloody Sunday but he lived and worked with the people involved. Through his writing he expressed the attitude and feelings of people and certainly had generated the conscience in them regarding their position in the society (Dresen 2011).

The book Island of Shakalin is ethnography as well as Anton Chekhov's horror of what he observed. Born into the first generation of freed serfs freedom and self determinism was a very important factor to Anton Chekhov. Inner freedom is as

important as social and political freedom. This focus of internal struggle for freedom was reflected in his artistic creations as well. But Chekhov was cautious about not giving any prescriptions to deal with this struggle because he believed in personal choices of people in finding their own solutions. He understood that all the people are different and their struggle for inner freedom must be different too and an author does not have any role in providing solutions to the readers. The time in which Anton Chekhov wrote his stories were very much tumultuous due to militaristic exertions and sudden social displacements. The overall atmosphere was hope and frustration over inequalities and power shifts. He focused on character psychology of protagonist who goes through existential difficulties and mostly it's in an autobiographical manner that is being written (Clyman 1985).

'There is a peasant blood in me' Chekhov once wrote (*Letters*, vol.5) later he went on to become the synonym with intelligence and refinements and this mix of genealogy helped him to handle the most tricky characters in his stories. Chekhov was exposed to the Church Slavonic language through compulsory church attendance, singing in the church choir religious rituals at home and studying the bible like any other home and later when he chose to remain an atheist these experiences helped him to experiment with different themes in the stories he wrote later. This influence of church in the lives of people was a policy that was tacitly allowed by the administration to the Orthodox Church and in the larger context a moving away from the pagan and other belief systems that are considered as inferior. Chekhov knew how to take advantage of any situation to his benefit, he kept on experimenting with new styles and exploring new areas of lives. From the stories he had written throughout his career it's difficult to discover a social stratum, profession or group that he had not used in stories. From the beginning Chekhov was an innovator a writer of universal style and range. In his story it's the characters that created the actions and there is no explanation to the cause of these actions. As Chekhov wrote characters must be introduced in the middle of a conversation the avoidance of extended authorial comment is the most underlining feature of these stories.

The dramatic works have the same humorous genealogy such as random or meaningless remarks through mutual misunderstandings which were mainly thought not so important topics to write about by other authors (Garnett 1920). It's not a characters biography or a universal problem that becomes the basis for a comic story but a quite specific everyday situation that creates a disagreement. The satirical content is secondary his comic stories have always developed out of an entirely concrete situation such as in the stories of *Fat and the Thin*, *The Death of a clerk* (1883), *A Chameleon* (1884). Chekhov always focused on the complex socio psychological problems but they were not necessarily the central to the story. Characters helps to reveal the tight bonds between people and the objects that surround them and so lead Chekhov to the conclusion that everyone is bound by his or her environment and the struggle to get away this is a struggle against the system as well as against oneself. On the sight of it we would feel some characters are brought without any beginning or end but in reality they are representing some fragment of life which has a deeper meaning in the social circumstances in which it was written.

Vaikom Muhammed Basheer: Life Time and Socio-Political Context in India

Basheer was born on 20th January 1908 in the village of Thalayolaparambu in Vaikom then Travancore District of Kerala to Kunhachumma and Kayi Abdu Rahim. Abdul Khader, Muhammed Hanifa, Abubacker, Fatima and Anumma are his siblings. His father was a timber contractor by the name Abdul Rahiman. Living conditions of life was on the boundaries of poverty and petty affluence as father's business was fallen on bad days. His formal education was discontinued when he ran away from school to take part in the freedom struggle of India. That was the time of freedom struggle of India under colonial British rule. Young Basheer was excited with the names of political leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and others. He 'touched' Gandhi when Gandhi visited Vaikom in 1924 as a part of Satyagraha movement it became a turning point in his life. Gandhi conducted a Satyagraha to demand the rights of lower castes to enter into Vaikom temple. In Calicut Basheer participated in Salt Satyagraha and defied Salt law and was locked up. Time

and again Basheer mentioned the atrocities one has to go through in police custody. By the time was released he was convinced that Gandhian methods would not help and abandoned it. Giving up Gandhian doctrine of Ahimsa he embraced terrorism as a means to fight British. Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev and Raj Guru became his new role models and he organized a terrorist movement (Achuthan 2002).

He took up the responsibility of *Ujjeevanam (Revival)* in 1930 which acted as the mouthpiece of terrorist movement although earlier it had started as a congress newspaper. Government banned this newspaper and police set out for him with a warrant. Basheer went underground, left Kerala, wandered around the country for nearly seven years. He drifted from one place to another and reached as far as Arabia. During these wonderings he took up various jobs. He was a Hindu mendicant for some time, a palmist, magician's assistant, a private tutor, a tea shopkeeper etc. in the book *Ormayude Arakal (Chamber of Memories 1973)* he describes his attempt to join film industry and his stay in Pune and Bombay. In Bombay he stayed in Kamathipura for sometime which is the notorious place of prostitutes and thieves. There he worked in a shop crushing herbs for a *vaidya* (practitioner of traditional medicine). His fluency in English got him a job to run a night school teaching elementary English. He had an intense desire to sail on high sea started working in ship that took Hajj pilgrims from Bombay through Aden along Red Sea to Jeddah. He even travelled to present day Pakistan and spent time in Hyderabad (Sind), Lahore and Peshawar (Adarkar and Ishaque 1978).

He came back to his family (1942) which is by now impoverished and started writing. Very soon there was an arrest warrant against him for seditious article published in *Rajyabhimani*. He was arrested by the government of Travancore and sentenced to two and a half years of rigorous imprisonment. In 1943 he was released before completion of his term in jail and from 1943-45 he worked for a magazine *Mangalodayam* in Trichur. In 1944 he earned fame as writer for his novel *Balykalasakhi*. When he wrote a forward to *Visappu (Hunger 1954)* he actually had the lived experience of it. His stories were published in *Navjeevan* a weekly from 1937 to 1941 and he remembered the days when he was not paid for them. In one letter to the

editor he wrote “the ink that I’m writing is borrowed. I have borrowed the paper and the envelop. I am in want. I request you to send something to help me” (Akbar 1993). During his long years of exile from home he travelled widely and lived on his wits. Seeing humor in the most pathetic conditions of life sharpened over time and with uncertainty of his basic necessities such as food and shelter itself. Footloose and fancy free he read a lot during this time and varied experiences were reflected in his writing and most stories sounded autobiographical.

Vaikom Muhammed Basheer started writing late in life as his first book *Balyakalasakhi (Childhood Friend)* published only in 1944 when he was thirty five. From the very first book as an author he had huge impact in Malayalam. *Balyakalasakhi* is a simple tale of love and friendship that is written in the simplest possible Malayalam in the colloquial slang that people talked. Sanskritised or bookish Malayalam was deliberately avoided. Basheer was not the first one to adopt this style but his conscious adherence to it began a new trend thereafter. The life was depicted as we lived sometimes raw, sometimes slushy and sometimes smooth. This book struck an emotional chord in the heart of every Malayalee beyond the time they lived and age they are in. From 1947-48 Basheer worked for a magazine *Jayakeralam* in Madras. His journalistic career before this was stints on editorial board of *Sarasan*, *Purnadam*, and *Bharathachadrika*. Basheer had great hardships in life and had witnessed seamy side of humanity but he never wrote tragedies for the sake of it. He was essentially a humanist and had tried to see goodness in every man and women and never gave up on people that easily. His sense of humor was tremendous which he shared with his readers. In 1965 while he was jail he penned *Premalekhanam* a hilarious love story in which request and experiences of numerous prison mates were considered. Later he started writing in a journal called *Jayakeralam*; he started a circle book house called *Basheer’s Book Stall*. He also contributed to Raghavan Nair’s *Narmada* in the form of a column in the name *The True and the False*. M P Paul a literary critique and respected teacher had advised him to give more attention to writing. It was Paul who launched him as a writer by giving insightful criticisms in case of *Balyakalasakhi (Childhood friend)* a story of unfulfilled love (Azhikode 1977).

Bookstall had to close when Basheer had a nervous breakdown for which he was treated for six years after that. The novel *Pathumma's Goat* was written when he was going through the treatment. Basheer talked about this experiences afterwards without any inhibition he mentioned once "many years ago I suffered an acute insanity, one can see vestiges of it in many things I said and written." This is the reason readers believe not just the text he written but his life itself was a text in itself. In 1970 *Kerala Sahitya Academy* confers a fellowship on him. In 1972 government of India presented a *Tamrapatra* for his involvement in freedom struggle. Basheer was a Muslim and this community concerns him a great deal. His stories focused on the shortcomings especially lack of education and exclusive socialization. He preached to them in a mantle of a prophet at times and sometimes just explained the situation without any prescriptions attached. *Balykalasakhi* (Childhood friend), *Nduppupakoranendarnnu* (My Grandfather had an elephant 1951) and *Pathummade Aadu* (Pathumma's Goat 1959) were his masterpieces and they focused on the life of Muslim community. The artistry and wit in these stories are unparalleled. Through these stories he portrayed the Kerala Muslim ethos and taught us a rare language of irony. In *Pathumma's Goat* the pendulum swings from laughter to tear in a rhythm and it is the simplest way to convey the life as a mix of bliss and sorrow. Either Basheer reiterated or his stories talked his identity but it was beyond the narrow confines of narrow faith. He went out to criticize the bad practices they followed and exclusivity they maintained. This could also be a way to mock others who stick on to the caste and sub castes in Kerala and practice narrow obligations to primordial identities without questioning (Asher 1999).

Basheer threw stones at almost all hypocrisies in the society like system of marriages. Love and marriage was not seen as personal events but political attitudes were exposed through them. Human suffering is very much in these stories puts across in simple narrative and everyday speech in a way that touches readers directly. Basheer had written on variety of issues and experiences from supernatural powers to taming of wifely shrews. Some were written in prison and its topics vary from hilarious to heartwarming not monogamous at all. Basheer is not a prolific writer because he started

late to write in comparison to other writers and he had written less as he was a perfectionist. He writes and re-writes and achieves maximum economy of words.

In *Mathilukal* (Walls 1965) he had written savagery of war and rioting has been depicted. There is a stark narrative of soldier in *Voices*. Man's primordial yearning for a woman is etched in *The Walls* with lightness of touch in political prisoner languishing in jail. His topics included politics and prison, asceticism, pick pocketing, homosexuality to the dilemma of whether the world belongs to man alone or the lives in all the forms. But the innumerable other stories he had written is not about any particular community or locale. His arena is human community and all issues are universal. This is what singles him out from his contemporaries. The story *Bhoomiyude Avakasikal* (The Rightful Inheritors of Earth 1977) reveals his modern sensibility as this story is concerned with preserving ecological balance in the world dominated by human beings. What is more astonishing is the manner in which he transformed all human experiences to stories and biography into history (Tellicherry 1996).

Basheer was a contemporary of reputed writers like Karur Nilakanda Pillai (1858-1975), Kesav Dev (1904-83), Ponkunnam Varki (1910-2004), Lalithambika Antharjanam (1908-87), Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai (1912-1999), S. K. Pottakkadu (1913-82), Kuttikrishnan (Uroob) (1915-75). Basheer shares only social conjecture and consciousness with them. Many of them were conscious practitioners of social writing and what Basheer wrote was not very different from it yet he was unable to share anything more with them. Although Pottakkad also had the experience of extensive travel it was only who had the creativity to transform his travel into literary experience. He became the first Muslim writer in Kerala to challenge the literary conventions of Sanskritized Malayalam. His native talent of narration made him unique and that itself was a challenge to the prevalent mainstream literature (Asher and Achamma 1991).

In 1958 Basheer married Fathima Bi. They shifted to Beypore in 1962. Soon after he was relocated to Kozhikode he suffered a mental break down. Coming to a conclusion his drinking was the cause Basheer gave up alcohol. His wandering came to an end with the settling down in Beypore. this place gave a total change in him from a restless public life into a quite private life. He lived there till his death in 1994. In the

last three decades he had a frail health seated under the shade of a mangosteen tree, listened to *ghazals* and talked to never ending visitors. Basheer called himself the Sultan of the two acre land and later his readers called him Beypore Sultan. Music is Basheer's next favorite art form though he had not penned a single song but he never tired of listening to music. He had an old gramophone and hundreds of discs and he carried them all where he went. Basheer was a kind man and it was manifested in his way of dealing with people who were considered not good in the society like pick pocketers, thieves, whores etc. There was a burglar who addressed Basheer as *Ustad* Basheer would give him one rupee and bless him Happy Burglary on the days he visited (Ashraff 1996).

He revolutionised the art of storytelling not just in Malayalam but in Indian literature as well. Radical change in the literary vocabulary was the prime way he differed from others. In 1982 Basheer was honored with *Padma Shri*. In 1981 he received *Keralasahitya Academy Fellowship* again. Other award he received at different point of time includes *Abudabi Malayali Samaja Award* (1983), *Samskara Deepam Award* (1987), Calicut university Honours him with *DLitt* (1987), *Lalithambika Antharjanam Award* and *Prem Nazir Award* (1992), *Vallathol Puraskaram* and *Muttathu Varkey Award* (1993), and *Jeddah Arangu Award* (1994).

Basheer's Works and Sociopolitical Context in India

The context of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer (1908-1994) was a historically eventful years in case of India as well as Kerala history is concerned. One century before Basheer has thrown many challenges in the forms of social and political revolutions worldwide and it had repercussions in the time he wrote too. Nineteenth century witnessed religious reforms, enlightenment, industrial revolution, exploration of world for religious and political reason and spread of ideology of Marxian mode of production. India was facing a different set of concerns during early twentieth century as after Revolt of 1857 British political occupation happened. India was trying to defend in all the ways she could by inventing a New India by Vivekananda and Enlightenment in Bengal and other parts of India. Political context was raising

questions of autonomy and self determination of Hindu and Muslim identities politically with Morley-Minto Reforms. In Kerala during the same time regional uprising against colonization, political and popular steps were taken to improve education, proclamations of community rights, reformation in the form of temple entry movement, spread of National Congress and Kerala Congress, spread of Communism and revolutionary ideologies, Malabar Mutiny all these had impacted the horizon of literature too.

Despite his reputation as a writer who could make people laugh he never laughed mostly he said it was because of his commitments towards the suffering humanity around him. According to him what he shared with the world is not a laughing matter although he had an amusing way of telling them with striking gestures and facial expression a skill usually found only in theater. Even the simple way he lived was to show his solidarity towards the suffering people. He always dressed light and moved around his home in a thin mundu. The letters he received from all over the world mattered a lot to him and respected them more than the awards. He called the letters from women admirers as 'love letters' and read it aloud with his wife and family (Ibrahim 2009).

According to Basheer he turned into religious at a time when he was too young to decide anything himself but liked to remain as a believer. He was a Muslim but not a practicing Muslim nobody seen him performing religious rituals although he kept on saying the phrase "Allah the most merciful." Love and compassion were his favorite topics he was talking about and he give credit to his religious belief and Quranic education to see love in everyone and everything. Gardening was his obsession and he began garden even in prison where he was a political prisoner. Another important personal trait that had immensely contributed to his writing was his Sufi heart. He considered life as a journey of an ascetic carrying the bundle of sorrowful solitude ignoring hollow human bonds. This is exactly is the reason why death was a recurring topic in his writing. Deep inside him he was all alone a man who droves sorrow of the world into him this sensitivity beyond the rights and wrongs of the society make him the real humanist. Like a true sufi he led life along the pathway of love, music and

humor and never prayed and believed that life itself is a long prayer (Hassankutty 2004).

In the story *Birthday* (1945) the rich student was complaining to the author that his stories are tragedy oriented and after reading them we would feel that there is something wrong with this world, the author does not reply to him but on his way back to his room which is actually a store room which he rented from the landlord for lesser money, thinks silently that world was always full of miseries and difficulties and people conveniently avoided it for the reason that acknowledging a problem is to take action and we all are very happy in our own lives. This is the most powerful reply to this very attitude of the privileged sections of the society who thinks the miseries in the stories are not just the imaginations of the author and this is exactly is the reason why Vaikom Muhammed Basheer as a writer is different from other writers who never wanted to address the themes and problems he wrote about.

The Story of a Picture (1945) is a story of ideal society in which ideal judge, ideal doctor, ideal police inspector, ideal citizen constitute a society and yet it breaks down, this story is explaining claiming idealness is not the real necessity of a better society but the readiness of mind to understand where as a society one lag behind and work on it. Basheer wrote this story as a reaction to the people who wanted to live in the ideal society and not ready to see the problems it was also pointing a finger at the colonial government of the time and the regional monarch who gave a tacit support to their policies without thinking the repercussions that would have in the lives of people. This story throws a stone at the morality of the society that is not ready to acknowledge the real problems of society and it's a rational effort of the author through cultural critique by questioning the norms of society (Jayakumar 1978).

Vaikom Muhammed Basheer was a political activist before he became anything else (Karassery 2015). He was involved in politics from his school days. His real name was Kochu Muhammed and adopted the name Vaikom Muhammed Basheer to write his fiery political tracts. At the age of 16 Vaikom Satyagraha ignited his political passions. There was a struggle that was called under the leadership of T K Madhavan the SNDP leader and KP Kesavamenon, EV Ramaswami Naicker and Sree Narayana

Guru. The protesters demanded the opening of roads around the temple for the untouchable caste. Basheer was influenced by this cause, and started wearing khadi in the influence of Gandhi. Vaikom Saidu Muhammed was his first inspiration; he also befriended Muhammad Abdurrahman and Moidu Maulavi who were two of tallest leaders in Congress in Malabar. He later started Vanarasena a terrorist outfit under the influence of revolutionary terrorism which was in vogue in the freedom movement of India. During 1930's Basheer wrote a series of articles attacking and satirizing both Thiruvithankur monarchy and British colonial rule in India. *Ente Hathabhagya Nadu* (My Unlucky Land) which published in *Deepam* magazine from Ernakulum provoked a warrant against him. In 1938 when he was in jail he wrote *Pattathinte Pekkinavukal* (Pattom's Nightmare) a satirical one act play on Pattom Thanu Pillai who was then Thiruvithankur state Congress leader and later became the Prime Minister of Thiruvithankur and *Bharatamatha* a short story on India's struggle for her independence are powerful political texts. His stay in Ernakulum helped him to develop good contact with communist leaders of Kerala like P Ramakrishna Pillai, KC George, K Damodaran T V Thomas and MN Govindan Nair. But when country attained independence Basheer abandoned his associations with both Congress and Communists. But he believed in the values of nationalism, democracy and secularism but distanced himself from active politics. Basheer's solidarity with oppressed is evident in his writing and this political writing went beyond the party politics to him (Rosemary 2004).

Although he was impressed with the Communist Party's struggle for peasants and workers in Kerala he was not a fan of it for its regimentation practices and die-hard atheism as Basheer was a believer at heart. Basheer wrote a brief biography of Karl Marx in 1937 which underlines Marx's greatness as a humanist. At the same time he also wrote an article called *Gandhi* who is projected as a whole chapter in the history of the world. These two short writings give us the idea of what is Basheer as a political being, it's not important to locate him as a communist or a Congress but essentially a humanist who wore different cloaks to write on political themes. Malayalam literature had rich history of long narrative tradition in the form of ballads and folk tales and

genre of short story is borrowed from western literature. The 1930's was apolitically volatile period for Kerala society due to anti-British sentiments in Malabar and anti-monarch sentiments in Kochi. Modern ideas of democracy, socialism, and communism were gaining momentum and reformist movements of different communities were active. *Jeeval sahityaprasthanam* (Living Literature movement), left led *Purogamana Sahithyaprasthanam* (Progressive literature movement) had launched. European literature like Chekhov and Maupassant and Emilie Zola were soon appeared in Malayalam translation and shaped the style and narrative in Malayalam (Vijayan 2016).

This period can be considered as the democratization of Malayalam literature and Basheer started his career in this background. His first story was *Ente Thankam* (1938) in a magazine *Jayakesari*. Another story written in the same year was *Amma* (*Mother*) is regarding the narrator's participation in Vaikom Satyagraha and grief stricken mother, the mother in the story could be Basheer's own mother, mother of any of the millions of young men who fought for the country's freedom or motherland Bharatmata. In the story *Tiger* the dog named tiger represent the authoritative government and how much the common man detested it and wanted to kill it yet aspired to be in association with it. These stories were written in the backdrop of India's independent movement and the oppression and indignities that a freedom fighter had to go through is very well explained. The time in which these stories were written is evident in them with all traumatic essence.

The experience of life is the most important raw material for Basheer's stories and *Janmadinam* (Birthday) is one of such story where the author had to go hungry the whole day which is happened to be his birthday and at night breaks into his friend's kitchen and steals his food. Anything he saw around him also became the theme and characters for his stories like in *Poovanpazham* (1980) a male chauvinist husband is putting his wife in place, and *Ayshakutty* (1984) an illiterate woman insist that her baby must be delivered by a doctor. Basheer's stories boldly transgressed traditional notions of 'complete stories' and 'unity of the plot' and are always about people belonged to oppressed, marginalized and unorganized sections of the society such as Muslim way of life, beggars, burglars, convicts and sex workers (Jayakumar 1978).

The novels in Malayalam were socially oriented. O Chandu Menon's *Indulekha* (1889) is considered as the first typical novel in Malayalam. Basheer wrote his first novel *Jeevitha Nizhalpadukal* (Shadow of Life 1939) which was serialized in a weekly *Navjeevan*. This novel was mostly unnoticed but it challenged contemporary social attitudes of society towards a female sex worker. The theme of the story is radical for even today's Kerala society to parameters of a Muslim marries a Hindu; a 'normal man' marries a sex worker. The typical Basheerian humor is less in this story. The story *Premalekhanam* (Love letter) is also an unconventional love story between people of different believes. The hero Kesavan Nair appoints Saramma to the post of a scribe to write love letters to him story makes a statement on love that breaks the barriers of caste and creed also gives an idea of practice of giving dowry which was a social menace then and even today.

Basheer once written about his observation on how Muslims were depicted in the books he read in childhood "all the villains were Muslims, the thieves, the cheats, the muggers and the rapists. I was astonished. None of the Muslims I knew were anything like that. There were good and bad people in all the communities. It's not true that all the bad people came from one community. I resolved to become a writer when I grow up and to write about the good people in my community (Basheer 1989)." This argument goes in parallel with the critique of Ansari (2015) in the 'representation of Muslims' in the larger literature where the vested interests are playing a role in the negative and biased symbols that are shown as Muslims. This politics of representation is to be understood in the context of 'Muslim responses to colonial India' and 'memoirs of Malabar rebellion.'

Basheer's novel *Shabdangal* (*Voices*) shook Kerala society out of their comfortable morality (Hassankutty 2004). The novel is the form of a conversation between demobilized soldier and a writer. For the first time in the history of Kerala male homosexuality was openly discussed, thus invited many criticisms. One of the title of a chapter itself is *Aanveshya* (Male prostitute) and when the soldier went on to explain his life with beggars, criminals and whores one could see the conventional morality crumbling. The literary pundits branded Basheer as a kitchen sink writer'

(Radhakrishnan 2002) The novel was considered too obscene for the public to read, but it actually inspired other writers like OV Vijayan in the time to come to take such bold decisions writing *Dharmapuram* (1985) and thus redefine the boundaries of art and obscenity.

The novel *Nte Uppooppakoranendarnnu* (My Grandpa had an elephant) was a call for modernization for Muslim community. This story also underlines the need for change in the community to cope up with the changing world and since the story was couched in humor and his unique narration the reactions were not very explosive. This had inspired KT Muhammad to write a play *Ithu Bhoomiyan* (This is Earth) on the same lines of need of change in Muslim ways of life. *Pathummayude Aadu* (Pathumma's Goat 1959) documented the sorry state of lives of women in Kerala. Goat in the novel represented the traditional image of womanhood with infinite level of patience and tolerance to exploitation. Novel is also about his deep sense of ecology as his family is inclusive of goats and hens that they domesticated and the story *The inheritors of the Earth* (1977) focuses on the point that world is a large joint family consisting of millions of being including human. *Mucheettukalikkarante Makal* (The cardsharp's daughter 1951) is a story that would feel a very apolitical and personal but there are under currents of question of choice of woman and politician's role in the story. Poker in the story represent the typical politician who is one eyed which are the short sighted policies of politician. The game of card in the story is representing the fraudulent practices in the electoral politics and story is the summary of unholy nexus between politicians and master of culture. It was an indirect criticism on the *Progressive Literature Movement* in Kerala under the left leaning intellectuals and left government in power.

Basheer wrote serialized stories like *Viswavikhyadamaya Mookku* (World renowned Nose 1954), *Sthalathe Pradhana Divyan* (The Chief Holy man of The Place 1953), *Anavariyum Ponkurisum* (1953) all these were satires that attacked politician, intellectuals, writers and media persons. Basheer called them not political satires but histories, he called himself a humble historian and his readers thus became the students of history. The word *sthalam* (place) can be translated into place/space and locality and

it's a term widely used in discourses today. Space is a term derived from geography and later taken up by sociology. In geography it's studied under socio-economic geography and feminist geography. Sociology of space explores the socio-material constitution of space which explains the relationship between human and space interact with respect to social practices and institutional forces. This approach is helpful in locating Muslim community in the larger Kerala society and how through these stories they claim a space in literature which was never offered to them before. Concept of space is disruptive of pre-existing notions which were around distinctions and exclusivity of certain communities (Kern 1983, Soja 1989). Literature is not just an artistic creation especially when Basheer had resolved to be a writer to write about his community which is different from other authors. Basheer's conscious decision to be an author and representing the characters in the way he did was nothing less than an awareness generation and identity creation among Muslims of Kerala and at the same time is a window for readers of other believes and classes to see people of this community without any bias.

Chekhov's and Basheer's Writings as Emancipatory Imagination

The study considers Chekhov's and Basheer's writings as emancipatory imagination because of the similarity in their lives and lived experiences and socio-cultural and political context which shaped their writings. There were various similarities between the lives of Anton Chekhov and Basheer, this can be narrowed it down to the personal experience of poverty in their early youth and childhood which forced them to start writing in order to gain financially and to support family with that. The impoverished family and humble origin as a freed serf gave Chekhov the lived experience of a petty bourgeoisie in the second half of 19th century Russia. With the failure of father's grocery shop and left behind as a hostage with the debtor allowed him to experience the loneliness and psychology of such a kid in growing years musk have come in handy when he wrote *Vanka* (1886). Basheer was born into an affluent family but it deteriorated with the failure of father's business. There were stories written on the uncertainty of life and basic human necessities like food and shelter. In the story

Birthday (1945) and *Hunger* (1954) the tragic experience of an young man who had to go through extreme hunger was explained.

Second similarity is the time when they wrote the stories which was politically loaded and historically important in their respective societies. Chekhov wrote stories during the most tumultuous time that preceded Bloody Sunday and it was when a lot of historically important events such as Emancipation of serf (1861), Modernization of Russia under Alexander 2nd, beginning of terrorist movements and assassination of the empire, Russification under Alexander 3rd and social displacements that followed, Rule of Nicholas 2nd all these affected all the spheres of life including the literature of Anton Chekhov. Whereas in Indian context it was the freedom movement and Muhammed Basheer was active in freedom struggle against British imperialism in the Satyagraha path of Gandhi as well as revolutionary terrorism later. There were many reform movements that undertook in Kerala and post independence India had her own political issues that an author like Basheer had to go through. Thus the time in which these authors written stories shaped their writing and forced them to be modernizers themselves in their respective societies .

Third similarity is their new style of writing which was an innovation that revolutionalized literature in their own horizons. Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer were writing in a style that was new to their respective literatures. They wrote in the first person narrative and most stories sounded like an autobiography in themselves. The language they purposefully chosen were colloquial and it was readily consumed by all sections. These stories were written in the ink of humor and included the most ironical and political satiric writings of the time. Through such writing they not only allowed a new experimentation with language and tools of writing bur set a new trend by boldly choosing to write about the most trivial topics. In the context of Anton Chekhov the mundane life of a peasant and a bureaucrat could take his attention and would do a socio-psycho analysis through their conversations and thoughts. While Basheer had the ability to amuse the readers with any event that occurs in the 'place' which is a small locality geographically and how a personal love story of a village

could have repercussions in the political decisions at the top. The topics they chose were political in nature and chose to write on insignificant people in the society.

Phenomenal approaches with the right historical and political contextual understanding throws light on modernity's nuanced relationship with imperialism, industrial capitalism and globalization. The stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer compelled us to deconstruct the aura of modernity and questioned the basic realities such as why are poor the one to suffer most and first? This is the fundamental point that paves the theorization on emancipatory imagination because it these troubled times that allowed authors to question the reasons behind exploitation. Modernity is been understood as the 'the culture of time' (Osbrne 1995:10) while non modern time according to Benjamin (1940) is 'homogenous and empty time, historical progress is a myth to justify the Barbarism of modern history and stories of this two authors hit at this very point by underlining the difficulties of precarious lives.

The state from which a thought originate is dipped in the reality of its surrounding so every imagination is socially situated so does the emancipatory imagination. Imagination is an intersecting of three orders of human existence, symbolic and real (Macey 1994). Emancipatory imagination does question the basis of human existence and social implications of it in the society and this is the reason the chronotope in which Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer wrote are examples of the times of an author shaping the themes that they talk about in their stories. In the words of Sartre (1940) phenomenology of imagination explains that image is same as consciousness and as our consciousness is same a reflection of social reality the human life is nothing but the time s/he lives in. Thus historical context influenced the emancipatory imagination of both these authors and the themes and characters depicted in their stories because emancipatory theory should be directed at the totality of society in its historical specificity.

The normative orientation of emancipatory imagination, at least in its form of critical social inquiry, is therefore towards the transformation of society. It affected philosophy by preserving the notion of meta-analysis of society through its economic, political, and social systems. It introduced the notion of social philosophy and made

theory part of everyday practice by ‘mixing’ philosophical problems, and empirical problems and chronotope was very much a part of these developments. Both the writers did not refrain themselves in the boundaries of conventional storytelling and went beyond to define and redefine the narration and story was mostly told in the first person narrative form which was also used by many post colonial authors afterwards. Anton Chekhov as well as Basheer mostly wrote in the biographical style and utilized immense experience they gained in their travels which was added to the heritage of their writing as well as the critical theorization later that helps us to understand the society better. In choosing the themes and characters they defied the unsaid rules and norms of literature by writing about normal/ordinary people and setting a new wheel in motion in literature. Stories depicted the voices that shouldn’t/wouldn’t have heard and sketched scenes that shouldn’t /wouldn’t have seen otherwise in the mainstream literature before these writings and those voices were so strong that echoes even today. The language used was of colloquial and was understood easily by lower sections of the society that was used mainly by the larger sections about whom these stories were written and it in a way acted as a push for the popularization of these stories and carved a place in larger literature which used polished and grammatically correct language. These writings are narrations of marginality and also assertion at the same time.

CHAPTER THREE

THEMES AND NARRATIVES OF LIVES OF PEOPLE AT THE MARGINS IN CHEKHOV'S AND BASHEER'S WORKS

The themes and characters of an author is a proposition in the larger writing scheme and the rest is derived from it. The credibility of margin/marginality as a theme depends on their consonant with the actual facts and they are the closest possible descriptions of realities in the stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. Themes in the writings/stories supply new materials to think which qualifies emancipatory nature not only for the author but the reader as well though follow a basic premise of reality embedded with the imaginations of the author. The theme of margins in the stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer are important because they draw our attention to phenomenon that pervades social life yet is absent in literary horizons that is marginality. Social phenomenon occurs in different forms, context and discourses so to understand and analyze it the idea of emancipatory imagination is employed in this research. These themes highlights our current lack of understanding of people of peripheries/ margins and compels us to think the need to make these as the centre of academic inquiry and reasons behind the inherent inequality (Guru 2009). Understanding people who are at the margins from the mainstream is not only interesting but also imperative for a sustainable society because inherent inequalities paves way to repercussions likes revolutions and agitations.

Anton Chekhov and Muhammad Basheer: Features of Themes and Characters

According to J Fabian there always remains 'other' in the literature on man and 'otherness' is mostly accusations of primitiveness and backwardness (Fabian 1983). This indicate the politics of representation in literature and this is the reason the writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer stand out in the larger writings of literature as they undo the boundaries of 'otherness' through their stories. Their writings focus most on the margins of the society that the readers forget the

difference between the margin and the core and realize the fact that the ‘margin/ other’ were absent in stories in general. Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer not just wrote about the ‘margins’ but the stories and characters that is represented without the accusations of biasness in them. In the words of Spivak (2008) this trend goes against the ‘hegemonic’ narrative of literature and also gives a distinction between ‘Subaltern’ and ‘oppressed.’ Each story of these authors are criticism on representation of margins in the stories and that is the underlying reason that they were given primary focus in these stories and portrait as though it’s their own stories and mostly given first person narrative. These stories are trying to recognize the ‘agency’ of people of ‘margins’ and this is a habit of democratic behavior in the rudimentary sense as historically ignored people are given imaginative treatment by attempting for the voice to be recognized (Spivak 2008). Tracking the margin in their texts is done under three sub themes such as women, nature/ ecology and politics.

Chekhov’s Themes and Characters

(a) Women

Presence of women was loud in most stories of Anton Chekhov and it was in a way giving space to women of all the strata of the society regardless of the noble or ignoble birth or moral or amoral characters and conventional beauty or otherwise. The presence itself was important at a time when women were rarely talked for themselves or hardly any women writers present in Russian society back then. This can be seen as a ‘deconstructive attitude’ of the author to sail against the currents if we go by the definitions of Derrida (Austin 1991). In society women constituted the subject position as oppressed while in these stories they were active participants which are possible through the narrative approach of emancipatory imagination. This binary opposition was mutual and inter-dependent (Said 1978) in society in general and true in the case of literature as well.

Women always attracted the attention of Chekhov as a writer to his stories; the travelogue of *Shakalin Island* (1893) was not different. He noted most women were ill, bitter and had purposefully forgotten their age and where they were born. Chekhov

wrote “Shakalin women unfortunately embarrass you with her crude illiteracy” (Chekhov 1891). While Russia and rest of Russians would forget these ignorant and abused women he made efforts to preserve their memories through census and book in which they constituted a big role. There was a library and school that was set up after many years but remembers the efforts of Chekhov in Shakalin. This effort of Anton Chekhov goes against to the power/ knowledge of Foucault (1975) and hegemony concept of Gramsci (1939). By writing about the most backward women Chekhov had gone against the cultural hegemony that remained till then, and led to the construction of new opinion regarding the themes and characters he wrote about. For the first time the absence of these people for such a long time in literature was talked about as ‘absence’ is to be understood to understand the power relations in the society (Morrison and Muller 2010)

From the point of view of gender problematic the women in Anton Chekhov’s writings can be divided into four (1) the woman who aspires to take up the new roles in her life as in career and getting away from the traditional values of women of her times such as Nataliya Gavrilovna in *The Wife* (1892), Lida in *The House With An Attic* (1896), Nataliya Feolodovha in *The Duel* (1891), and Nadya in *Bride* (1903) (2) the feminine images who would want to preserve the traditional values such as Olenka in *The Darling* (1899), Anya in *Anyuta* (1886) and Pelageya in *The Huntsman*(1885) (3) The Floozie who externally keeps the biological sex but internally do not possess the urge to make a family and uses men to get their wishes fulfilled as in the cases of Anna in *Anna On The Neck* (1895), Ariadna in *Ariadna* (1895), Olga in *A Drama on a Hunt* (1884) (4) the real women as in the cases of Anna Selgeevna in *The Lady With a Dog*(1899) and Anna Aleksena in *About Love* (1898) according to Hwan Shing Liu (Hwan 2013). It’s difficult to classify and understand the women images in the Chekhovian stories according to today’s parameters of gender problematic and his heroines would seem traditional and less progressive but very strong.

According to Rayfield (1998), Anton Chekhov like Tolstoy inherited many notions of mysogyny from his predecessors like Schopenhauer. These are reflected in stories such as *Anna On The Neck* (1895) and *The Spouse* (1903) which depicted

female characters as manipulators who tyrannized men. He further goes in explaining that this is from the author's experience from life that he perceived women and commitment towards them could be a hindrance to his creative freedom and remained aloof for a long time but kept 'lighthearted' anonymous encounters with his female acquaintances. This may not seem true fully as his personal views on various themes remained different from what he wrote and most of his protagonists were women and as in the world he gave chances to good and bad women their share of appearance in his stories.

In the definitions of post colonial and subaltern understanding Anton Chekhov went on to give a differential sphere to these subjects who were at a position without identity and spaces of social mobility. Women in Russia remained a section who was robbed of agency for such a long time because none in the power position had the time to hear the heterogeneous voices of women's subjectivity as the subjectivity theories of colonial women (Spivak 2008). This is because the discourse of knowledge was controlled by people in power and women were deprived of power even in Catherine's Russia and there were hardly any women authors during Anton Chekhov's period. Chekhov had written about women immensely but as a researcher I have used the techniques of 'contrapuntal reading' in understanding the essence of stories and the context in which it is written as stories such *Anna On The Neck* (1895) and *A Drama on a Hunt* (1884). 'Contrapuntal' reading is helpful because it questions the inherent assumptions about women/sex/gender in the texts as it is written by a male author and at a time gendered values were not questioned which often which often suppressed women's sexuality (Said 1978).

Though Anton Chekhov gave voice to the women characters of his stories some stories are as though characters are used as a mouthpiece to serve the needs of society at large such as Olenka in *Dushechka* (1899), Anya in *Anyuta* (1886) and Pelageya in *The Huntsman* (1885). This is going against the moral agency of women in doing their daily roles in family and society (Saba 2005). Understanding political and moral autonomy of the subjects and characters are the first step in libratory politics, an underlying factor in emancipatory imagination. According to Boddy (1990) even the

subaltern women has their gendered agency so does Anton Chekhov's characters such as Olenka, Anya and Pelageya. Embodied capacities in them are the foundations of subject formation that are to be acknowledged in Chekhov's the post emancipatory Russia. Subject formation can base only on everyday resistance of women's lives as they are mostly involved in it though consciousness on dignity and heroisms are important too (Lughod 1990). Unfortunately politically perspective projects are not always seen in Russia then. This could also be because of the time in which these stories were written as it was immediately before first revolution and aspirations of gender equality was yet to be experienced by the countrymen, yet extending important character formations revolved around women in the stories of Anton Chekhov are impressive.

(b) Ecology

Nature and ecology is a theme that recurs in the stories of Anton Chekhov and it indicates his notions of life that is inseparable from the nature and he had a craze to maintain gardens around his house. He used various ways tools in writing about nature, first was to describe nature, it mostly consisted of explaining the beauty and pictorial depiction of nature. In later stories and dramas he wrote about the functions of nature and necessity to conserve, this is seen in the later dramas written by matured Chekhov. These stories categorizes Chekhov's stories under deep ecology and conservation green politics thought as a political movement developed century later (Smith 2014).

Panpipes (1888), *Fortune* (1887) and *Steppe* (1887) are stories written about nature and they are celebrations of ecology that was being destroyed by the myopic approach of man and his greed. *Wood Demon* (1889) was written after these stories and it's about a man who frantically saves the trees in a forest and the academics was to develop theories on preservation of ecology and environment years after these stories. He wrote about his concerns over the deforestation and how it had an effect on the weather and the winters were getting harder in an area he lived due to this. Anton Chekhov tried to see the problems of nature not in singularity but also with the social problems one goes through which is very much goes in line with 'social ecology'

(Bookchin 2004). This indicates the meticulous observations he undertook with the lenses of an ecologist though not knowing that he was actually beginning a new vogue. There were others who wrote about environment but the curious observer he had no match. In the story *Shakalin Island* (1891) the way in which he wrote about the geography of that area is nothing less than the depth of a geologist.

The cult of nature in *Wood Demon* (1889) in Original and can be considered as world's first 'green' drama according to Cambridge companion to Chekhov (Gottlieb and Allain 2000). In the *Wood Demon* Chekhov shows his conservationist phase to educated men who are the consumers of his theatre and drama as books. In *Panpipes* the hero says "they are cutting the forest and burning up and nothing new grow" these lines indicate the concern of young Chekhov towards nature. In *Wood Demon* the protagonist says "don't do it...to fell a thousand trees to destroy them for the sake of two or three thousand roubles...so that prosperity will curse our barbarity." By this story Chekhov sounded the adamant conservationist who is no more tolerating the deforestation and fully aware of the repercussions it would bring. Anton Chekhov also uses the terms like degeneration and struggle for existence in other dramas as well, these are considered as neoDarwinian terminologies in the evolutionary theories perspective which further boost the arguments of conserving forest and rich variety of flora and fauna (MacGregor 2006).

(c) *Politics*

Chekhov is one of the most political story writers for the reason that he is not ready to be bound by the chains of the society and defied all rules in literature in writing politically colored themes and the way it was written. Political themes are brought in the personal style or the conversation of the protagonist. The friction in politics and society are explained in the conversations of characters and the inequality is the main reason causing friction at one point and pliable behavior of people at another point. Ivan in *Gooseberries* (1898) and other characters in *My Life* (1896) and *In The Ravin* (1900) tries to assert their viewpoint to the society and politics of the time. Olga in *The Darling* (1899) is not having anything to say while Gurov from *The Lady and the Dog*

(1899) finds it's difficult to communicate his thoughts, even this broken channels of communication is a means to communicate the silent conversation with the conscience of politics without actually talking or prescribing (Senelick 1985). Couple left alone in the garden or a room as in *Uncle Vanya* (1898) and *Cherry Orchard* (1903) respectively and not able to come in agreement with each other yet talking is a indication of necessities of political debates and discussions and coming to a point where people live peacefully with others who do not share the political ideology is underlined this is an effort against the dictatorial tendencies in the society (Clyman 1985). These may not be seen explicitly in the stories but can be inferred through close-text reading.

Chekhov is rather careful in representing change; he neither tells change is good or bad. He had even talked of revolution in his stories but in a subtle way and let the reader make his mind regarding such politically colored topics for Anton Chekhov revolutions are the tool to dispose the person in power without taking sides as in the story. *In The Ravins* (1900) in which Grigory Tsybukin is ousted from his position when his daughter in law takes over the business through mischief. This is the beginning of Female-ism conceptualized by Woolf (1929). This has to be understood as in the context of their feminism because each event has a 'situated context' of our lives (Saba 2005). In *The Black Monk* (1894) the transfer of orchard to younger generation is for the ruin of the family thus Chekhov's stories are full of yes and no to change. Change is a politically perspective project and representation of it in the stories are important regardless of an author's personal opinion and representation itself becomes resistance (Beavoir, Irigaray 1997).

The conversation of old friends in *Fat and Thin* (1883) could be a humorous story on the face of it but if we watch closely it's trying to thrash the political and bureaucratic regimentations that remained in the society back then. The interaction between the friends changes when the Thin comes to know about the high position the Fat hold in the hierarchy of bureaucracy and it's a strong message against the regimentation of the society on the basis of political power one holds, this story is an indication of the fragmentation of society on various grounds and also how the

occupation determines the position of a person in the society and expected behavior of the society. Here a particular kind of discipline is at work which can be understood with concepts such as biopower (Foucault 1978) and governmentality (Foucault 1977). The physical conduct of a person is controlled/ determined by the social status/political power of a person it also decides the privileges of a person. The thin was talking and behaving in a friendly way to Fat when they met at railway station at first later he altered his conduct after knowing his childhood friend is now a senior officer in bureaucracy and this is when the rules are determining not just the bodies of people but also minds. This is an indication of the political system that enabled such a bureaucratic practice back then and hierarchy and fragmentation that came in the way of personal relationships.

Prison and asylum are two recurring themes after death and disease in Anton Chekhovian stories. These two institutions are society's tools of control of people who constitute a community. 'Governmentality' of state is evident through bureaucracies and political machineries of the state which are oppressive and exploitative (Foucault 1977). Prison and asylum are full of people who are 'abnormal' for the rest of the society and are to be controlled physically and mentally by using force and this is what society does in general. Free movement in their ward or cell is restricted and pain is enforced on their bodies to torture and control their minds.

All the stories and characters constitute microcosm of the then Russian society. *The Death of the Clerk* (1883) is the best example to understand this bureaucratic regimentation. The simple clerk is worried that his sneeze might have disturbed General at the auditorium. He starts to believe that his job and identity as a government official is depended on the General's acceptance of his humble apology, there reached a situation after many attempts he is not able to do so he dies with this heavy heart. The clerk's anxiety of losing his job to the displeasure of General and would end up in leading a life of poverty and impoverishment is the condition of Russia then (Constance, Gagrnett 1920). Disregard of clerk's apology by the General is an indication of how people in government with power subordinated a clerk. This story is helpful in understanding how the government worked back then and how people feared

it. The death at the end is the disposition of a person that cost him life appears to be the natural fear people had in their minds towards authority (Cote and Levine 2002). General in the story can be bureaucracy and clerk is any citizen who hardly had any power in determining his life. Fear cultivated in the minds of people was a direct clues how the people in position conducted themselves during Tsar and Anton Chekhov's time. Story is full of comic expressions, playful absurdity and the social theme entangled with it till the end. One would feel the clerk is acting paranoid but it's actually must be understood in a different time of Russia's history where bureaucracy represented 'hardpower' which is inseparable from political bureaucrats (Nye 2012).

Anton Chekhov tried not to give any normative stories regardless of genre of literature yet most of his writings were politically relevant and stood out in all times. The theme of *Gooseberry* (1898) can be understood in the political background how well a person can live with money and also use the same to help others. The brothers in the story are so different and what they perceive as good life is all the more different. By giving such difficulties and anxieties of people Anton Chekhov tries to give the picture of politics which can be a big mix of people but different their own way for the better of the society and how well these differences can be used not just at the level of society but also at the sphere of politics as well. The most interesting fact about this story is that though it talks about politics in the most philosophical terms it never explicitly mentions anything political at all. This was a particular narrative style of Anton Chekhov that he pushed the readers to infer the meaning rather than putting it on paper directly. His stories may seem very harsh in dealing with the themes but they are essentially rational and realistic (Preucel, Meskel 2004).

Vaikom Muhammed Basheer: Features of Themes and Characters

(a) Woman

Basheer's women were not just the fragile women who are suffering under the social difficulties but also one of the strongest women who took the names such as Suhra, Kunjipatthumma and Kunjithachumma. He was moved by the sorryful condition of

women of his time. We can see this from the very first story he wrote *Thankam* (1938) in which the main protagonist is a dark complexioned hunchbacked girl. Through this story he was reconstructing the idea of beauty from body to mind and defines womanhood in love and kindness. In the story *Jeevithanizhalpadukal* (1939) the conversation between two friends are enlightening radical even for today. Protagonist talks about the true love of a sex-worker for a man here sex-work is not judged on the parameters of morality. Hunger and destitution would have forced one into prostitution but it no way lessens the intensity of one's love towards another. This was a new discourse in the direction of representing marginality and people from the peripheries in which women constitute a larger share. As power and knowledge are inter depended and knowledge is a discursive manifestation of power (Said 1978) the margins remained where they are for such a long time.

Stories of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer is noted for giving lime light to these margins of the society and the constituent of women is important in it. The time in which Basheer was writing was the time of social reforms in independent India. Writers began to change their themes from myth to contemporary social life of pre-independent India and exclusive categories of people who are colonial subjects. *Amma* (1937) is one of the most powerful stories written in Malayalam about motherhood. This story gives the portrait of a mother who is the embodiment of love and sacrifice. Majid's mother in *Balyakalasakhi* (1944) is representing patience and kindness. *Pathummayude Aadu* (1959) is an autobiographical story and Basheer's own mother and sisters are characters in it. They show remarkable willingness to sacrifice anything for the family. And on realizing their hardships Basheer felt uneasy to continue receiving the better facilities at their cost. These are stories that could be used to deconstruct the colonial narrative of West as the pinnacle of civilization because Basheer portray colonial landscape not as a geographical space but values, culture and moral conduct involved in them (Said 1978). While for British it's a mutually exclusive category and orient/ other is excitingly exotic. Basheer's stories are equally against the economic exploitation of British as well as class exploitation of one Indian by another (Rao 1938)

Women in Basheer's fiction are nimble-witted and courageous as they never given up on difficulties of life or love which are the most compelling factors of human existence. Kunhupathumma in *Nteppuppakoranendarnnu* (1951) is innocent but stern Muslim women who is ready to accept the change in the society that is required in her believe and way of life. She represents that no education is a match for raw innocence of human mind. Aysha in the same story represent cheerfulness, progressive thinking and lively sense of humour. Saramma in *Premalekhanam* (1943) displays extraordinary discretion and courage in keeping her love for a man who is born in another religion and finally defying the stranglehold of society to take a decision of her own. To have taunted her lover throughout the story is the indomitable spirit of womanhood. Narayani in *Mathilukal* (1945) who fell in love with the prisoner whom she had never met is an extraordinary heroine for a tale of love. These could be understood as the heterogeneous voices of women against the hegemonic patriarchal narrative (Spivak 2008). These women represent how far and more oppressed an individual could be and Basheer's attempt for the voice to be recognized to welcome that in the dominant discourse by exceeding the borders of intending subjects who are from the margins. Thus, emancipatory imagination acts as the part of cultural identity in voicing the opinions of margins through the dynamic process of lending more agency to shape ourselves (Rushdie 1991).

Basheer's women also include Kunjuthachumma who is who is full of vanity, selfishness and false pride on her aristocratic lineage. Aishukutty represents a ridiculous woman who is stubborn, Shahina involves in an incestuous relationship with her brother and in *Oru Chithrathinte Katha* (1945) the daughter of the judge involves in a promiscuous relationship with four men. And pouring negative light on some of his women characters make his stories more realistic and representative of the society in the humblest way. This is supposed to give the readers an attitude of 'eclectism' by giving 'cultural position' of each action by characters we are bound to gain universal acceptance regarding the themes that Basheer had talked about (Walcott 1990). These women may or may not resemble us but they definitely are people who are no more 'disempowered' and remains in the zone of 'speechlessness' and Basheer created an

enabling situation for these women to talk about themselves. This push us to try and learn from subaltern and sensitize ourselves in her needs and desires and ‘learn to learn from subaltern (Spivak 2008).’

Basheer’s stories have consistently took a stand against custom, laws and religion that subjugate women. He was vocal against the atrocities committed against women even using the garb of a religion. In doing that satire is his tool he chose. Women in Basheer’s stories are not victims and often rising against their oppressors. Often Basheer took the side of victims if they went against the system. It is to acknowledge women’s ‘moral agency’ which is the first step in recognizing political and moral autonomy of the subject (Saba 2005). Women oriented stories of Basheer had helped in understanding women’s embodied capacities as a means of subject formation which goes parallel to the ideas of resistance as a diagnostic of power (Abu Lughod 1990). Everyday resistance is a way to capture exclusion and conceptually ‘unproblematic experience of body and imaginary’ which is evident through these characters (Beavoir, Irigaray 1997)

(b) Ecology

Stories of Basheer are full of nature descriptions and Basheer falls to the side of conservatism and deep ecology (Smith 2014). Mangostin tree often comes in the writings of Basheer and its benevolent shade. He wrote about it as one of his close friends and it has become an alter ego for his readers in their psyche. Basheer was always awed by the beauty and grandeur of nature. Basheer recognized the seamlessness of universe and cohabited with rocks, trees, animals and birds. Basheer’s characters also had same attitude towards nature and fellow beings. Kunhupathumma had second thought on killing the leech that drank her blood and imagines it’s wrong to kill it because its parents may be worried and leaves it back to the pond and after a warning. In the same way in another story Basheer explains it to his wife that why he does not like to kill a mosquito and thinks it’s his duty to donate some blood at his old age.

Basheer had the habit of conversing with animals and birds in general and also in his stories. In *Mathilukal* (1965) he talks with a squirrel in jail compound and in *Pathummayude Aadu* (1959) he talks with the goat as though it's his family member like others in the story. According to him all the living beings share brotherhood even with animal kingdom. It's to be noted that all these were written at a time when eco-criticism as a discipline had hardly developed in Kerala. *Pathummayude Aadu* (1959) represent Basheer's deep sense of ecology. He calls the animals with names and for the first time reader could be confused that about which member of family he is talking to, only to realize it's any bird in the backyard. The catch phrase *Bhoomiyude Avakasikal* (*Inheritors of the Earth* 1977) being used in discussions of ecology and environment was coined by Basheer. At the end of this story the hegemony of man's unquestionable rights and privileges on earth and nature is questioned and readers are forced to accept anything but the right of all living beings on the resources of nature. These are ideas that are part of deep ecology an academic branch that had developed in the new millennium (Anderson, Guyas and Suominen 2015)

In the novel *Pathumma's Goat* (1959) there is a close explanation of goat and the women in the family there reach a point where woman herself is goat. It's the image of women the infinite patience and sacrifice and the system of scapegoat created by family and society. One could see the parallels this brings about in the arguments of ecofeminism where womanhood can be compared to nature and understood better in this process as both are strong at the same time choose to be fragile on the first look (Shiva 1988, MacGregor 2006). Ecofeminism is the offshoot of two significant movements such as environmentalism and feminism both stands against anthropocentrism and patriarchy. There is an organic bond between nature and life in his stories and nature is inseparable from the story and the characters. Ecofeminism underlines the factor that integration protection and sustainability of life and life on earth is important at the same time for earth itself and for men and women without any discrimination of gender and by all theses parameters Basheer qualified to be called ecofeminist though on a lighter note he says inside the head of a woman there is nothing other than moonlight (Basheer 1977).

Basheer's writings are to be understood also in the light of social ecology (Smith 2014) because it explains the intricate relation between social problems and environment issues and tries to see the solution in a comprehensive manner. This is more appreciable as these stories were written way before theorization of social ecology as a branch of Critical theory in social sciences. While social ecology (Bookchin 2004) gives primary importance to moral rights of a person in understanding nature and inequality Professor Gopal Guru (2013) emphasizes the importance of legal rights. Basheer doesn't mention about legal rights but underlined the importance of moral rights and need for conservation of nature.

(c) *Politics*

As a political activist who fought for freedom and democracy in the youthful years of his life Basheer created space in his writing for a section of people who never figured in the annals of language and literature (Asher and Achamma 1991, Karasseri 2015). His political writings were serialized in many journals and he called them histories not political satires. 'Sthalam' is an inseparable factor in these stories (Udayakumar 1999). *Sthalam* can be conceived as geography of Thaliyolaparambu Basheer's village. *Sthalam* is sometimes Kerala and sometimes India too. The international events that happen here are not less significant, according to the author. Inhabitants of the *sthalam* believe that their forefathers were pioneers of scientific and technological revolutions. *Sthalam* is a secular space where Hindus, Muslims and Christians lived together and shared one another's superstitions. This can be attributed as an attitude of 'eclecticism' which develops out of universal acceptance by accepting cultural position of different groups of people (Walcott 1990, Benjamin 1940)

Basheer's political writings do not come under a single genre and as diverse as his other writings. *Pattom's Nightmare* (1965) is a satire drama on Pattom Thanu Pillai who was a congress leader then. It was a one act play in which the souls of martyred political activists challenge their leaders, which in reality is the direct attack on regimentation in political parties and the celebration of violence in politics. His political writings are not just about the unjust practices of a political leader or political parties

but also against the feudal landlords. The *World Renowned Nose* (1954) indicates the hero worship in politics and herd mentality of people which has a damaging effect in politics. In the case of Basheer as an author he wrote explicit stories on politics which allows him to be categorized as political writer (Abdullah 2004).

The idea that literature should represent contemporary society to make readers aware of its corrupted state became the vogue. Art was no longer the tool to recreation but also to transform lives. Basheer's encounter with state and bureaucracy was not very good in the beginning as he was active in freedom struggle in British colonialism and took part in defying salt law by being a part of salt satyagraha first. Later he abandoned Gandhian methods and began revolutionary terrorism and was under the surveillance of police (Tharakan 1989). There was a warrant on his name and his writings were banned and he had to go underground to escape from police. Once Basheer mentioned that the change of mind from Gandhian to revolutionary terrorism was due to the torturous experience in jail. For one of his stories in *Pouranadam* journal his writings were banned and imprisoned.

The World Renowned Nose (1954) is sharp criticism on government with regard to attention a big nose receives while so many people trouble under the garb of poverty and other miseries. On a satirical note Basheer explains how government tries to gain popularity by associating it with *Mukkan* by conferring title and gold medal. This is a big criticism that an artist could give regarding the endless number of meaningless award ceremonies. This is a criticism on hollowness of policies of government too. Political parties went crazy in claiming the alliance of *Mukkan*. The absence of political wisdom and how the political views and opinions are playing lesser and lesser roles and hero worship of a popular person is blindly followed by people. Basheer was a politically aware writer and knows the socio-political necessities of a political party to survive.

Tiger (1947) is a story that represents the oppressive side of police and state. The cruel policeman tortures the jail inmates to an extent only to be killed inside the prison itself. Police represent state at the level of people because politicians don't have any time for the people. Through some stories Basheer reports his displeasure to over

censoring of government on the lives of writers. He explains the life of a writer on run to escape government and police. Basheer talks of government in humorous tone but is not disrespectful of it (Asees 2005). At points he says though elected right to implement policies and make new rules. Anavari Raman Nair and Ponkurissu Thoma ended up becoming thieves due to the lack of social support to lower sections of the society. Same is the case with large number of destitute, beggars, burglars, pickpockets, prostitutes in various stories of Basheer. The sorry state of environment Muslim communities lived and impoverishment and lack of education was a problem that could be solved if the government took up them with sincerity. His stories are gentle reminder for governments and bureaucracy to do the needful for the struggling masses from the bottom layers of society.

Prison is one of the recurring themes in Basheer's writings. He himself spend time in various prisons in his young years as a part of freedom struggle for India as a political prisoner. *Walls* (1945) is story that is written to pour light on corruption and discrimination that is prevalent in our prisons but the main theme of the story is desire. Love and desire would be the last thing one would imagine in a prison but in Basheer's stories it is possible and reader is not astonished with the simple developments it makes (Sherrif 2005, Sanu 2007). It's about the love story that developed between two inmates in a prison one is from the women's ward and they don't get to see each other but they talk. They decide to meet but one day before the protagonist is released and his first reaction is "who needs freedom?"

Prison had become a free space with the fragrance of woman and their desire for each other and the real freedom outside the prison was actually putting insecurities regarding basic necessities of food, shelter etc. The other stories in the backdrop of prison are *Portrait of a Jail Bird* (1955) is the story of two freedom fighters falling for each other without seeing each other. *The policeman's Daughter* (1945) in which daughter of a policeman loves and marries a nationalist hounded by her father. *Handcuffs* (1947) was written at a time when Basheer was held in Kollam Kasaba police station and explains the traumatic experience of nationalist activists. *Tiger* (1947) is the story that depicts the cruelty of policemen towards the under trails and

how the life of pet dog of police stations is envied by the prison inmates and one day as a revolt against the system kills it. Prison and asylum are themes that most writers hardly choose to reach to their readers as these are places where society banishes the 'abnormal persons' (Foucault 1977). These themes actually gave an opportunity to Basheer to explore different depths and under currents under a deceptive idiom of 'abnormalcy' (Taylor 2002). These stories might draw a correlation between the life stories of Khalil Gibran and makes the point that walls are ineffective to reach the humane side of life. Creating difference between people in terms of normal and abnormal is the first step in marginalizing certain group from mainstream.

Through his writings Basheer in fact redefined the personal and political space by bringing problematic private questions into light such as male prostitution, credibility of love of a prostitute, the intellectuality of a burglar, the kindness of a pick pocket etc. the marriage as an institution is mostly understood as a social sacred one but the nuances involved in it comes out when a woman choose to marry outside caste or religion or against the wishes of her family and it suddenly becomes a politically important question rather than personal one (Ravindran 1996). In the story *Cardsharp's Daughter* (1951) the marriage of Zainaba to Mandan Musthafa against the wishes of her father Ottakkannan Pokker had become the international issue in *sthalam* and inhabitants feared that it would affect the *sthalam*'s relation with others! Basheer never stayed away from criticizing Islam for the orthodoxy when and where is required and indeed is political. Basheer's political activism, brief life as a journalist, travels and the circle of writers, journalists and political activist, he was made to be the part of Kerala's Renaissance.

Understanding Marginality in Chekhov's and Basheer's Stories

The stories of Anton Chekhov and Basheer are tracking the marginality in the society because they through their writing distinguish between community and society, mechanic and organic solidarity, and culture and civilization and emphasized the questionable value and attempted to apply them to concrete problems in the societies which led to the creation and sustenance of marginality (Bhabha 1994). These stories

mostly talked about poverty and deprivation which are two of the most important strings in the discourse of social exclusion of periphery. By skillfully using the language of exclusion in every kind of deprivation the relational features such as active and passive exclusion is important in understanding the ‘genesis of social exclusion’ (Sen 2000). Excluding various themes and characters in their stories by other authors is one such passive exclusion and Chekhov and Basheer have touched upon through unconventional themes.

Today we see a lot of social justice claims in politics of recognition. New paradigm of justice put recognition at its centre (Nancy Fraser 1996) and in acknowledging distinctive identities the role played by dominant culture is not very democratic in nature. Dominant culture in most societies decoupled the cultural politics of difference from social politics of equality. Not depicting certain sections of the society in the larger literature is not recognizing their existence and thus is a hindrance in the pursuit of social justice. Social justice is well done in distributive politics/distributive justice and the first and foremost stone in this direction is recognizing people. Chekhov and Basheer imagined a spectrum of different kinds of social collectives thus creating awareness about them among other sections of society and also among themselves. Structural injustice that the bottom sections of the society are suffering can be traced to the political economy easily. But its members also suffer hidden cultural injustice in the form of unjust status order which in literature is reflected as absence of underprivileged in mainstream literature. Thus themes and characters are absent in literature at large and imaginations of the readers in particular. It’s in this context writing on such themes are emancipatory in itself in extending otherwise nonexistent people and themes that hitherto found a way to literature before such brave attempts. A close look at the themes of these two authors would further explain why they are emancipatory. They are emancipatory because it promises more just, more differentiated and harmoniously organized ‘sthalam’ stories in case of Basheer and most miserable working class/ serf life reflected in the stories of Chekhov (Udayakumar 1999).

Although the imagination of Anton Chekhov was used at various stages of this research to see that imagination has got an important role to play in the creation of new identities in the margin/periphery as well as in the metropolis such as a uniform nationalism at the same time there is an impending need to question the ‘uniformity/homogeneity’. Such questions are necessary to accommodate ‘marginal’ ‘minority’ and ‘post colonial’ in the larger discourses on society (Bhabha 2004). In his essay *DissemiNation* Bhabha (2014) explains drastically uneven and unequal ways in which different communities are included or excluded from national belonging and legal citizenship. According to him Anderson misses the ‘incommensurable temporalities’ that affects the ‘cultural homogeneity and democratic anonymity’ (Bhabha 2014). For any narrative to be inclusive the characters and the themes should be inclusive too. Minority discourses such as critical, subaltern and post colonial provide us with empowering knowledge which is a branch of knowledge of discontinuity and inequality and qualifies to be called emancipatory imagination. This goes with the arguments of Antony Reed’s *Freedom Time: the Poetics and Politics of Black Experimental Writing* which goes beyond the norms of the day by imagining forms of ‘nonsynchronism’ in the present (Reed 2014). Non-synchronism represent the unequal time of Black living experience same as the case of theme and characters of Chekhov and Basheer.

Their themes would seem like trivial at first hardly suitable for the story or a novel in normal cases. Most themes were found from the lives of poor and toiling masses was a common ground between both. They gave attention to both sides of life contradictions that often is unnoticed. Such conflicts are also ignites the chain of humor. Their choice of themes/subjects was ‘not’ about genius but about ordinary people. They spoke also about extraordinary things happening to ordinary people or ordinary things explained in an extraordinary narrative style. After choosing banal themes authors narrated the things in an inflated tone, rhetoric is drawn from discourse of national and international politics and in case of Basheer it’s directly from the Marxist methodologies as it was popular in Kerala then. We could notice the terms like ‘comrade’ ‘foreign regime’ ‘reactionary’ and ‘bourgeoisie’ used throughout the stories.

In some instances ‘the humble historians’ the pet name he calls himself also includes footnotes and cross references to ‘make’ the story a history.

The lived realities of women’s lives are mirrored in these stories like never before. Politics, religion and society are prescribed and ordered by man centric rules and logics which are ‘normal’ in a society. In family, workplace, street, slum and every place women are unimportant bodies, and at a time when these stories were written women mostly led a prey life and was lifelessness of a consumable good that’s is exactly why these authors are important as they gave a very important role to women and said their stories through them. This is how Chekhov and Basheer gave voice to voiceless through their unconventional themes.

In the words of Max Horkheimer (1937) “establishing of a relationship between simple perception and conceptual structure of our knowing is theoretical explanation.” Through the stories Anton Chekhov and Basheer had coded the relationship between perception and structure of knowledge/ commonsense in the society. Their characters and themes are so reflective of the marginality in the society that it completely fits in the imaginations and knowledge systems of the people. Culture acts as an important factor in creating imageries in the minds of people. And dominant cultures generally contribute in the further marginalization of deprives sections of the society and is true in the cases of Russia and India as shown in the stories of Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer respectively.

Conclusion

The themes and characters in the stories of Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer are about the marginalized sections of the society who receive a demeaning stereotypical depictions in the media, harassment and disparagement in everyday life, exclusion and marginalization in public sphere these harms these sections further (Fraser 1996). Overcoming such stereotypes require changing institutionalized cultural norms and contribution of these two authors are in this very juncture. Through their stories they began a new vogue of politics of recognition which replaced the norms of socio economic misdistribution and cultural misrecognition that remained till then. This

in long run can result into an economic structure that generates gender specific forms of distributive justice keeping in mind regarding social exploitation, economic marginalization and deprivation.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMANCIPATORY IMAGINATION IN CHEKHOV'S AND BASHEER'S WRITINGS

Ability to imagine had allowed woman/man to conquer over nature and other living beings to lead a life that is comfortable for him/her. The journey from rudimentary tribal life to today's complex social life is a result of his imaginations. According to Sartre (1965) a theory of literature as praxis is emancipatory discourse, as it 'eliminates oppression' in the society. Emancipatory imagination is a medium of change and means of action as the writer paves forceful and moral communication. Imagination is a sphere that allows critically engaging with the problematic questions of society and offers an interesting axis to view political positioning as imagination is a socially constructed element.

Understanding Emancipatory Imagination in Chekhov's and Basheer's Literature

Marx and Engels (1859) may say that it's not consciousness of men that determines their existence but their social existence that determine their consciousness yes to an extent this understanding of conscience and abilities to imagine describe the world we live in. The state from which a thought originate is dipped in the reality of its surrounding so every imagination is socially situated. From this understanding, reading and knowing the writings of an author is like knowing his/her surrounding and situating his/her imaginations. 'Social space' or society works in a very comprehensive way that it distinguishes different people and norms are connected to each group of people (Taylor 2002). This is how most people are 'given their position' in the society and various space is claimed by one section and deprived some people of the same space. This is how working section of Muslims of Kerala are deprived of literary space and working class life of Russia in nineteenth century is depicted from the aristocratic understanding rather than in a way they would want to be depicted. It's not just about whether they were given a presence in literature that is important but also in whose

interest they were given that space and intention behind their representation. There were few but stories that written about Muslim community of Kerala but were represented as ‘other’ by most authors (Fabian 1983). It’s very much important to see who consume such stories and for whom they were written. These stories were written at a time when literate people among these sections were very few. The characters and themes in these stories not just gave the descriptions of lives of these sections of society but also the insight into their thoughts and various practices.

Emancipatory imagination seeks to critically narrate social issues and their consequences to disposed and oppressed people. Critical interpretation of society and government was the main theme in both Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer but it was done either using the tools of sarcasm or different levels of humor that it mostly got away from the brunt of government’s reactions, but it wasn’t unusual that some stories of Basheer invited arrest warrants from colonial government and some were under the category of ‘banned’ stories. These are because of their critical interpretation of norms of society this is exactly is the reason they chose to write on the topics in a way they wrote which is unique and paved a new representation of identities and sections of societies. The stories written by both these authors gave a literal map of the area on which they wrote and social life that involved. In that way these are ethnic studies with a pinch of imagination. Since both these authors came from the section of society mostly they wrote about these are stories of theorized form of social imagery.

According to Francis Fukuyama (1996) the imageries extends well beyond what has been theorized and it can be understood with respect to economics of social trust. Social virtues are creations of imageries in the presence of culture and both of these are enriching each other. In this context understanding the concept emancipatory imagination is better involved with the cultural context in which these stories were written where a large sections of society is toiling in the colonial background in India and monarchical rule in Russia. Toiling masses are further pushed to the peripheries of history and literature but this has been given a different role to play in the stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer by giving the narrative from the perspective of these sections of society by putting forward a hope for better tomorrow

in most stories of Basheer and by explaining the details of apathetic lives in the stories of Anton Chekhov. This hope or apathy necessitate a change that a society must brings its own and never calling for a bloody revolution but a call for change in itself is emancipatory.

Imagination, Imageries and Emancipation

“It’s imagined because members of even the smallest nation would never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear them but in the minds of their each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 1991). Throughout his book Anderson tried to explain the origin of modern nation states as a cultural and psychological development rather than mere improvement in the maps and territories. Members feel mutually connected not physically but emotionally and psychologically. This is how national identities are grown over time. Newspapers, books, same law and courts play a part in this as people start to perceive themselves as being the part of same community. This is how imagination becomes important in any society in bringing together people and accommodates other fellow members in their minds. In fact Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammad Basheer had done this imagination on behalf of the larger society in bringing a particular section/s that lived in the peripheries of the society and never constituted the imaginations of larger society before this in this massive scale.

Impact literature had on reading public through emancipatory imagination didn’t involve invading certain spaces physically but invading the thinking horizons of readers. No threshold of aggressivity or violence could have brought such a drastic change possible in the minds of readers. There is a speech act involved in these stories. There is a pictorial description that is given in these stories and there is ‘an addresser’ and ‘addressee’ in these stories. There is a picture of ourselves that is speaking to others to whom we are related in a certain way. The addressee and addresser stand in relation to each other and public space provide them the background. The relationship is to be understood not in a democratic manner of equals but that of an exploiter and exploited, mostly. And relationship between them is taken forward with the conversation that they have with each other. This unequal relationship and hierarchical conversation is either

imposed by the society itself or by the internalized value systems of the characters. Like all other speech acts all the conversations or acts by the characters are addressed to a previously spoken word in prospect of a 'to be spoken' word (Bakhtin 1986).

'Social imaginaries' through the words of Charles Taylor (2002) are lenses to understand the practices of society this is broader than a set of ideas and values. In his writing he tries to explain the connection between the moral order and social imageries that was first an idea in the minds of some influential thinker later shape the social imagery of large strata and eventually whole society. This is how this research would try to see the works and ideas of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer who started giving insights to the lives of people from the bottom of the pyramid. This can be considered as a bottom up approach of the elite theory. The ideas of the way we imagine our society was in common parlance since seventeenth century. This must have begun with the Grotius's version as a theory of what political society is. Pre-modern social imaginaries were structured by various modes of hierarchical complementarities. This would include every level of society and way people's lives operated all the way from the kingdom, to city, to parish to clan and the family.

New principles of society brought new social imaginaries as in the case of post colonial India and post serfdom reality of Russia. An event such as freedom or abolition of serfdom not just changes the level of theory but transforming and penetrating social imaginary. It's because imagination is such an important link of societies of unprecedented power in human history and it is difficult to resist. Social imagination represents the new consciousness of a society as an economy and polity. This is how people imagine their social existence and give us a picture on deeper normative notions and images that underline these expectations. This is most often seen in images, stories and legends and comes into light through their conversations. A theory is held by small minority while social imagination is shared by large number of people. This extends beyond the immediate background and helps us in making sense of particular practices.

Narrative of the story goes with what we are doing today to the characters and situations that must have taken place a long time ago, a wider predicament that decides the relation to each other and that to power. The police officer in the story *The*

Chameleon (Chekhov 1884) is one such example, it would be defined as a behavior of a corrupt officer and his unstable decisions to punish or reward a dog and the person who got bitten with respect to the ownership of the animal. But this is actually how we behave even today with respect to positions of power and people associated. We may try to imitate or try to distance ourselves with different characters of these stories and that is also related to our imaginations of what is right and wrong and expected and unexpected. Time and space is a component of this predicament we live in a reality of democracy and participating in the narrative of our becoming and trying to understand the stories written in a completely different historical background yet most instances are related to our daily life and that's why these stories are relevant even today. It's said that people wouldn't go for utopia which is impossible, and ideas such as imagination in general and emancipatory imagination in particular may be categorized under such categories. But it needs not to be concluded that utopias do not deal with possibilities. The underlying idea is that themes in these stories are possible and they lie in the bend of human nature (Moore 2003).

This window of possibilities gives the essence to the stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer and the concept of emancipatory imagination through their stories. Emancipatory imagination runs along the moral order of the society and humanity and goes to the extent of defying social practices to uphold the moral righteousness. Regardless of the difference in culture and socio-political background such instances are seen in the stories of both Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. Emancipatory imagination through these stories laid new sets of norms such as thirst for equality as in the 'place' stories of Basheer. 'Place' is such a democratic, secular and critical space that it stands with the people for justice. That might seem a utopia for many because in that historical context such a democratic set up would have been impossible but what could be a better revenge to the undemocratic practices of then government than by giving the possibility of a better 'place' in Basheer's stories which is never explicitly against government nor political set of the country but funny characters definitely reminded the readers of the bluffing real time politicians and

authoritative bureaucracy that in turn increased the difficulties of people who already lived a sorry state of life.

A modern understanding such as the notions of emancipatory imagination and its possibilities of betterment gradually infiltrates in the minds of people and transforms social imagination. In this process ideas are converted into complex imagery and importance with its contact with other social practices and evolve into a new set of understanding. Almost all the dominant views that exist in our society today couldn't have become one unless it penetrate and transform our imagination. These ideas at first could have acted as a source of conflict and uncertainty and thus evolved constructivism which in turn has become a central feature of modern political culture. When an idea penetrates and transforms the social imaginary people take up, improvise and induct it into new practices. This is how the poor Muslims come into the literary imaginations of Malayalam writers and readers at a large scale through the stories of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. The same applies to the Russian context of nineteenth century where the prisoners of Shakalin Island, the poor women who tried hard to meet the ends of life and troubles of peasants came to be discussed in literary circles. This is different from Kant's notion of abstract category becoming schematized when it is applied to reality in space and time and theory is schematized in dense sphere of common practice (Guyer and Wood 1998). This modifies the older ones and constitutes a new social imagery which is exactly happened after the writings of Anton Chekhov and Basheer in their respective societies.

According to Eric Olin Wright (2010) envisioning real utopias is a central component of a broader intellectual enterprise that can be called emancipatory social science, it seeks to generate scientific knowledge relevant to the collective project of challenging various forms of human oppressions. The writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer come under both the definitions of emancipatory social science as it is envisioning utopias and challenging human oppressions. The 'place /sthalam stories' of Basheer are real descriptions of a utopia where justice is done to everyone and all are having a voice to protest if some injustice is been done to someone. In the story *Card sharper's Daughter* (Basheer 1951) the father of heroine is

representing the corrupt politician and entire village support the marriage of protagonist and Zainaba who defies the will of her father. Though 'Sthalam/place' represent a village like small place it is very familiar with the revolution and political terms like comrade, counter revolution etc which is just the representation of envision a means to change no matter even if it is bloody for the sake of protecting justice. It's emancipatory in this regard as its looking forward to a change and challenging oppression. The very use of tool of 'sthalam/place' itself is an alternative just society which is poles apart from the exploitative real society (Udayakumar 1999).

Any branch of science is emancipatory when it poses ways to eliminate oppression and creation of condition for human flourishing (Fraser 1996). The emancipation of humans depends not just on inner life of a person but on the transformation of the social world also. The tasks of emancipatory sciences are systematic diagnosis and critique of the world, envisioning viable alternatives and understanding obstacles, possibilities and dilemmas of transformations. The stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer had identified the ways in which existing social institutions and social structures systematically impose harm on the people. These social institutions in the context of Anton Chekhov's Russia were hierarchical monarchy in the beginning in the form of serfdom and hierarchical and authoritative government and bureaucracy after the abolition of serfdom and emancipation of serf. In the context of Basheer's Kerala it was exploitative colonial British government in the beginning and corrupt bureaucracy and undemocratic governments in the post independent India. It's not enough for the emancipatory social science to depict and prove that the people suffer in the world and inequality exists all around.

A scientific emancipatory theory is bound to show the specific property of institution and social structure that is leading to the suffering and inequality (Dijk 2012). The stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer explains the causes of inequality to the social practices and Chekhov restrain himself from giving any solution while the stories of Basheer not just give the roots of all problems but also the solutions as well in the form of universal humanistic epochs such as love and nature

love. Nature love and conservatism is something that is common to both these authors and they wrote extensively about deteriorating nature and natural resources and need to preserve it. Basheer is one of the first writers in Kerala who started writing about the claims and rights of other animals on nature and said human beings are not the only inheritors of nature but all the animals have got the equal claim on nature. Eco criticism as a branch of study had begun in the west in 1980's and in 1800 Chekhov wrote about cherry orchards and deterioration of forest land that is making the winters unbearably cold and harshening summers. He even went on to the details of deteriorating numbers of seagull and his famous drama on such a topic which is brave effort for theatre experimentation. Eco centric writings as a branch of academic study began very late but these two authors were ahead of their time.

Imagination is the way in which an individual would want to channelize the thought process to conceptualize his/her thoughts especially in case of writers. Imaginations are one kind of visions according to Goldmann Lucien (1974) that envisions a change in the current way of social interactions. According to David Hume (1740) imagination can be compared with perception and memory and when one think the ideas flows forcefully and human is most free when he is engaged in imagination. According to him Imagination can take one into a realm of what if and if-only and indeed nothing we imagine is absolutely impossible. Our fantasy or imagination facilitates to move beyond and change our present reality. This is true with regard to many scientific discoveries and the way it had brought revolutionary changes in our lives as in the case of Leonardo Davinci's *Flying Machines* inspiring Wright Brothers and HG Well's novel *War of Worlds* (1898) inspired first fluid space rocket. Imagination help us in two ways one it is a means to escape into the literary fiction and fantasy, two it is an attempt to make sense of what other people are thinking or to problem solve and to make decision. There is a branch of academic study that is called imaginative research about the symbolic function and spaces of mind. And feeds into the social space as minds expand its space as it is ready to learn from wide ranging experiences.

Emancipatory imagination is such category of critique which is directed at changing the practice so as to better confirm to the standards. Social critique in its transformative sense is an activity that uses evaluation of social practices so that they become better. Nietzsche's (1887) and Foucault's (1968) genealogical critique and Rorty's idea of disclosing critique (1992) are different critique on the basis of different standards and they are to be evaluated with regard to its own context. This is to remember that one must derive the standard for each social practice from that practice itself because the internal standards are the best to evaluate the society and since Anton Chekhov was a member of previous serf and Muhammed Basheer a member of Muslim community their standards are internal and so is immanent critique by their writings. Immanent critique in its historical context was understood by Hegel, Marx and Frankfurt School is supposed to be an approach that derived from actual social practices of a society but it kept on improving its standards as it's how the normative commitments gain higher levels of standards. Immanent critique is a form of social critique that evaluate empirical behavior and constitutional social practices and explicit self understanding of the members according to standards that are internal to themselves. By doing so, immanent critique aims at transformation of social practices that encompass both actions and self understandings (Stahl 2013). The standards that derived in such situations are the result of internal interactions of social institution itself.

The way Anton Chekhov would explain the pitiful life of peasant in a village and filthy surroundings in which people of *Shakalin Island* (Chekhov 1893) live are some way contradictory to the good life conceptualized at the time of Chekhov and these standards are helping him to evaluate the situation he would talk about. In case Vaikom Muhammed Basheer some standards are derived from the larger society itself regarding the universal moral principles of equality, elimination of hunger and poverty etc. this is also added with standards that the author had imagined through the characters. When the love story between people from different religion possible in his story and Saramma in the story *Love Letter* (Basheer 1943) desires for a society that is without dowry and dignified life to all women, these are values that the author imagines

through the protagonist though these are not propagated in larger society even though these are values that are applaudable.

Emancipatory imagination is very much related to embodied imagination (Bosnak 2003) which is actually using the tools of dreams and memories, and in case of writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer the role of memory is very important. All most all the stories of these authors were written in the first person narrative and the experiences and early life memories of authors with regard to experiences of poverty and hunger as both authors went through difficult times of financial crisis as in case of Anton Chekhov it was after the loss of business of his father and when his family left for Moscow leaving young Chekhov as a hostage after his father went bankrupt (Adler 1992). In case of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer it was after he left home to join in independence movement and got disillusioned with Gandhian methods of freedom fight, immediately after independence of the nation in the early years of Muhammed Basheer's career also he had to go through a lot of difficulties to establish himself as a writer. As though it was not enough, the ill health that haunted Anton Chekhov to which he lost his life too was his troubled memories that recur in his stories where either his protagonist or someone close to him/her suffer from ill health/mental disorder or suicidal tendencies. The same is true in the case of Basheer as his protagonists are influenced by his own experiences of mental break down and time he spent in asylum. These authors took their experiences to publically talk about issues to reach out to more people while even today mental illness and mental health are hush topics for many.

Imagination can be the desires and aspirations members of society posses which are envisioning a better tomorrow (Wulf 2015). Gender feminism is similar such branch of study that aims to bring change in the societal institutions. As an academic branch of research it was developed a long time after Anton Chekhov and in the later stage of Basheer's writings but themes and characters related to the gender problematic and problems in the existing social order regarding the unequal power equations which further result in the oppression of women. Studies on labor market also gives us many examples of gender discrimination in the form of sex segregated jobs, and promotion

discrimination etc. the root cause of all these are culturally defined feminine traits and the way role of women is imagined in a society. Culture studies also could give a lot of cultural practices in media and other institutions that reinforce gender identities. Above all these state structures and policies have reinforced the subordination of women and various forms of gender inequality. This is true with regard to any section of the society who are at the bottom of the pyramid. Any form of inequality and domination are not because of the 'natural' difference but are generated by social structures and imagination plays a very important role to play in this. Imagination leads us to social justice and normative theory. Then we realize that any emancipatory theory is meaningless without the backing of theory of justice. In this context the writers used democratic and egalitarian understanding of justice. This theory involves social justice and political justice. In socially just society all the members who constitute a society would have equal access to necessary materials and social access to live a flourishing life. By giving the descriptions of what is not there in nineteenth century Russian society Anton Chekhov also gives a possibility of what it could give for the better life to its citizen in that sense his writings are emancipatory too.

Emancipatory imagination is deeply indebted to the concept of political justice. Access can also be equated with freedom which is the choice/power to make choices over one's own life. Democracy is the power to participate in the effective control of collective choices that affect not just one's life but also all the other members of the society as a whole. Democratic egalitarian political justice aims at enabling equal powers to people to make political choices. And if these political choices are along the lines of social lines there would be lesser chances of friction and this is bound to be the success of social imageries such as emancipatory imaginations. Egalitarian understanding of freedom recognizes the central ideas of individual life and autonomy this acknowledgement is what is given in the short stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. The characters are well aware of their lower strata position and yet they desires for betterment in Basheer's stories it's evident as the characters are even planning to be the part of revolution in the stories to change the system in the story *The Elephant Scooper and Golden Cross* (Basheer 1953). The

stories are giving the narrative of a section of society where the lives mattered less to the larger society and yet play very important role in the society as they act as the foundations of society. Writers want to chance or emancipate the life of such sections of society who were never given a chance to express their opinion. In fact it is possible that they never had any opinion due to the restrictions they underwent in participating in the decision making in the larger society also decisions of their own lives. In this way it's the process of constructing identity (Nagel 1994) on their ethnic as well as class basis. This very identity existed before but short stories helped in aggregating these identities and recreated them by bringing their distinguishing features together and upholding the difference that they have from larger society. In this way these short stories also acted as means of awareness creations too. Awareness among themselves and their position in the society is the first step in bringing up any movement in a society.

Emancipatory imagination as a concept is thus to be considered under the category of 'intangible power' in the definition of Umberto Eco (Eco 1984). The power of such an idea may not seem significant during or immediately after the works are published but they remain in the literature and minds of people for a long time and gets add on to the cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). It's a concept in the lines of Marx's understanding of economic capital; it says that an individual is defined by her/his embodied, objectified and institutionalized assets in addition to their economic wealth and social class. This often is intangible that people can't count on the addition of it to the culture as such. Certain forms of cultural practices are valued over others and it affect the social mobility of various sections of the society especially the people who are at the periphery of the society. It's how the stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer becomes significant in altering such a practice that existed and redefined the concept of cultural capita; itself by giving the unheard people a chance to speak out their minds. That definitely had become a new addition to the cultural capital of not just Russian literature in case of Anton Chekhov and Malyalam literature in case of Basheer.

According to Ferdinand De Saussure (1916) linguistics and structuralism are connected. One sign could mean a lot of things in a particular cultural context. The way in which Anna Sergeevna in *The Lady with the Dog* (Chekhov 1899) act and behaves and Kunjipathumma behaves in *Ma Grandpa Had an Elephant* (Basheer 1951) are particular for the reason they represent women of their time, courageous to experiment their desires but are polite and expected to talk low. Their respective societies give them restrictions on their mobility, dreams and definitions of good life and pious women are relaxed or rebelled at the end of the story to give a new way they could conduct themselves. It's how the emancipation of women are possible as it is not normative that the authors have given rules but intends to give a small suggestion or better living out of the clutches of society's definitions. This is only example of women and their life but there is a lot of other references to other sections of society too who were not given an alternative before and stories are ready to question and challenge the ways in which things are taking place in the society .

As emancipatory imagination can be considered as a theory of transformation it follows the four components such as theory of social reproduction, theory of gaps and contradictions, theory of underlying dynamics and unintended social change, and theory of collective actors, strategies and struggles (Wright 2010). Theory of social reproduction explains how the structure and institution that generate oppression in the society exists over long period of time with active mechanism of social reproduction. The reason why such oppressive social structures remain in practice for a longer period of time is due to the existence of variety of interconnected social mechanisms on social structure which block any form of resistance against it. In order to transform those institutions writers must develop a scientific understanding of how this reproduction occurs. In various stories the protagonists of Anton Chekhov either go for a self questioning mode of constructing and deconstructing reality and source of inequality or suffer, or this is brought up in a conversation among various characters. The lone hero of *The Bet* (Chekhov 1889) who was an advocate by profession in the beginning of the story got into such a conversation with the rich banker regarding socially relevant question of significance of capital punishment. In the later part of the story time and

again he goes into lone conversations to see the usefulness of his decision to get into that bet and at the end he writes a letter to the banker who was impoverished by then regarding the insignificance of money and pride yet not regretting his earlier decision.

In the same way characters in Vaikom Muhammed Basheer also gets into socially relevant heated debates on topics that even touches the political developments in other countries as well. The conversation among the prisoners in the story *Tiger* (Basheer 1945) is not just their dislike towards a dog that was being fed and taken care of by the police officer while the under trails were tortured and was not given food, but it signifies how inequality is began and institutionalized by the same authority who are to be responsible for the larger welfare of the citizen. *The Seed of a Story* (Basheer 1945) is a one act play is about the life of a struggling writer who is a very popular writer but finds it difficult to survive due to the lack of financial stability. These stories sound autobiographical and very true due to its simple narrative style close to reality. The conversation further engages the reader to think about these difficulties that they were never thrown to.

The theory of gaps and contradictions within the process of reproduction is the event in which the scientific theories do not always brings about transformation and in such instances the change must be imagined first as in the case of through stories and popular cultures (Adorno 1970). Even after such attempts it is possible that people will not attempt to change an already existing structure for the mere reason that it survived for a long time. Emancipatory social science as a form of science is not just philosophical critique. The search for spaces of emancipatory transformation is a central part of this theory and such discovery is depended on the knowledge of author. It is to say that the exact stream in which the changes are anticipated and such results are made is completely is the success of authors. The writing of Anton Chekhov took place in the late nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century first revolution in Russia took place in which working class played a very important role. The consolidation of working class through the stories of Anton Chekhov would have been an unintended result of these stories as they were not meant to make a revolution at the time they were written. The stories of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer wrote about

freedom movement and universal values like humanism were touched many spheres of life. The reality of Muslim life was depicted through these stories were consolidating the idea of what is this group not just as a religious minority but as a distinct cultural folk (Akbar and Ishaque 1978). This have had contributed in imagination of this section. This is later influenced the way in which Muslim lives were depicted in popular medias and the political activities of Muslims in post independent Kerala.

Theory of underlying dynamics aims at long term projects of social transformations and observes opportunities that develop over time that would help in such developments. According to classical Marxism there is a factor of trajectory of unintended social change that is beyond the goals of existing structure of social relations. There exist significant gap in the emancipatory social science so the project of emancipatory transformation must be considered a long term horizon because creating a democratically egalitarian society can't be achieved in the immediate future both Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer knew this factor and they never attempted prompt change through their stories nor did they wanted a violent means to change.

The theory of collective actors, strategies and struggles are the real path for the emancipatory imagination to achieve the social transformation. This is the stage when the real need to take advantage of opportunities and collectively contend obstacles to achieve the direction of social emancipation. According to Steven Lukes (1995) the word emancipation was originally connected to the struggle against slavery. Emancipation for a slave meant his freedom against bondage. Idea of emancipation was connected to liberal notions of freedom which accept individuality and personal liberty as a presupposition. But Both Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer falls in the socialist ideas of thought, which gives primary importance to justice and liberty comes second to them. In the twentieth and twenty first century emancipation is more or less equated to left ideologies a term that refer to vision of eliminating all forms of oppression. It's possible to believe that contemporary capitalism generate harms but it is not an injustice so there are many varieties of liberties possible than a single narration of liberty or emancipation an ideology would propose. Philosophers considering social

justice equate it to welfare, flourishing and emancipation. Flourishing is related to Amartya Sen's capabilities and basic functioning (Sen 1982). According to this a society must be judged on the basis of how much it is able to provide capabilities to all members constituting that society than the income it generates, because, emancipation as a concept is not to be measured in tangible terms.

In the book *Women and Human development* Martha Nussbaum also uses this capability approach to redefine the feminism and mobility of third world women. According to her emancipation is not just bringing western standards to the patriarchal third world nations but also giving opportunities to women to decide what is best for them. This is a common point in Anton Chekhov and Basheer as they restrict themselves from prescribing what is good for these sections of society but let the characters decide what they want to do. Anton Chekhov is very particular in this matter that he constrains himself from even talking through the characters in most stories rather he ends the story at a juncture where the reader can decide the rest according to his/her will. These are literary tools that are being used to send a message rather than giving a normative solution to the problems of the situation. The authors want the characters to achieve emancipation through the stories but not to repeat the same mistake other philosophers or authors did by putting their words in the mouth of characters to speak a truth what they believe is real.

Immanent critique was begun by Hegel as a discourse about society and this is fundamental to critical theory. Hegel argues that we should investigate forms of knowledge using their own presuppositions. Application of the internal conceptual standards of justification of some form of knowledge to itself as an object can have the result of this object this is same in the case of social rules of justification of some form of institutionalized practices too. This internal dynamics of form of knowledge is called 'experience' by Hegel (1807). This point where the experience start playing a role in social critique is the juncture this study had tried to extend to new concept called emancipatory imagination. The experience of authors in their lives is also food for thought to readers and different themes to writers. Most stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer are autobiographical in nature and personal experiences

of the authors have had given ample themes for their stories. The wide range of travelling taken up by both the writers helped them to meet new people and put a canvas to different lives. Their understanding about life is never to a small section of society they belonged to but a large population regardless of the distance. Anton Chekhov had travelled widely from Crimea to the peripheries of Siberia while Muhammed Basheer travelled all through India on freedom movement, on a run to defy the warrant of colonial government and as far as Arabian Peninsula and today's Pakistan. The writings to an extent travelogues and also ethnography. In the case of Anton Chekhov the book he wrote on *Shakalin Island* (1893) is one such example as it was complete description of life in an area that was not just beyond the imaginations of Russian people but to an extent was not in the rule book for a long time too. The underdevelopment in this area was given full depth in this writing at the same time Anton Chekhov didn't forget to write about the scenic beauty of the area too.

Emancipatory imagination is a part of imminent critique in the case of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer because their writings are coming under the category of approach of social issues not with a preconceived and normative standard. The principles and values that exist in the society can serve as a valid basis for social critique since they had originated in the society itself so is called immanent critique. As Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer are writing about the social structures and institutions within society and their standards are derived within society this is can be considered as a part of immanent critique. It is as though the most minimal standards that John Rawls explained in his theory of Justice (1971). Rawls says there should be a right standard of choice even if the individuals are disconnected from any specific community. Normative critique must draw from the unrealized normative potentials that are reconstructed from existing social practices. People engage in social critique when they evaluate and contempt certain features of a society it's what is been done by both authors through their stories. Social critique is limited to social practices, institutions, customs and believes and collective actions (Stahl 2013). People critique and point out that society fails to live up to the standards that majority

of the society thinks is the best for everyone and is in parallel with the universal principles of humanism and peace.

Through short stories and literary writings if one is trying to study social critique especially using a new concept namely emancipatory imagination the first tool to use would be hermeneutic approach. It's not restricted to an internal critique if we start from a self understanding of a community as in the case of study Russian society of Anton Chekhov and Basheer's Kerala society. The process of interpretation is central and author's membership in a particular community or a section of society never stopped them from viewing the larger society with utmost care, it's this careful observation these two authors possessed in their stories that drew pictorial images in the minds of readers that remained for a longer period of time. According to Michael Walzer (1944) social critique must be understood as a continuation and extension of ordinary everyday complaints by persons who share a common understanding of morality. The characters in these stories are first of all members of the society and they talk for themselves and pour light on the concerns and difficulties of their life. It's the perspective the member of the society have on their own life or that of the other members of society. This is important that the authors too belonged to the class and group they wrote about because this factor helped them to understand and expose the internal contradictions in the social institutions better. This is also important as normative standards always served to legitimize power relationships internal tensions allowed the Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer to use these normative standards against their ideological purpose and to employ them to transform society (Walzer 1987).

Charles Taylor (1992) believed that process of interpretation allowed the critique to reject the dominant values. Being the member of a community allows the authors the extra benefit of knowing all the dynamics of social institutions and interpretation and re-interpretation becomes possible in this context. This allows the writers to better able to object to any particular practice in the society. For instance the lived experience of poor living in the early life of Anton Chekhov allows the author to go into the narrow details of such lives and flows in the social institution that pushes

the poor to live even worse lives. The first hand experience as a member of Muslim minority community in the post independent Kerala and life of illiterate poor women of his community was for the first time well explained through Basheerian stories. The language they talked itself was not the same Malayalam used in literary circles but a colloquial variety of Malayalam in the Malabar though most part of his early life he spent in southern Kerala in Thalayolaparabu in Vaikom district. On the lines of emancipatory writing most political philosophers believes that writer is justified if s/he is able to convince the audience of the new interpretation thus effectively rules out the possibility of community going back to the irrational practices as of before. This is possible only when there is explicit self understanding among the members and the one who write about them. That is when the person sees the social reality as it is discovered by social scientist, at this point of time the boundaries between the literary authors and social interpreters in Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer narrows down to nothing and their writings become sources for social interpretations. A practice theoretic approach is thus committed to this social ontology that presupposes norms to be imminent in social interactions on a day today basis and a normative epistemology is included through social scientific elements sometimes to an extend of playing completely oppose role to purely interpretative methodology.

Jurgen Habermas gives us the theory of practice theoretic (1963) this approach aims at questioning normatively. Habermas was against the pure hermeneutic model of social critique for its potential conservatism. According to him mere interpretation and recovery of social norms would end up reproducing distortions in the society as society is a coherence of inter-subjective relations of a society. He brought the idea that rather than uncovering the normative potentials the social critique must bring the self understanding of participants. In *Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1981) he throws light on communicative action on social practices. The characters of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer are vocal in their stories of this reason. In the story *Vanka* (Chekhov 1886), Ivan Zhukov the unhappy orphan seems silent throughout the story yet his miseries are loud from the image Anton Chekhov makes in our heads. He is not complaining about the miseries in the story but writing a letter to

his old grandfather in the hope he would take him out of all difficulties. This letter is the hope he has for the future a future where he will not be tortured by his master, this story line may sound very sad and depressing but the act of writing a letter for betterment makes it emancipatory. *Sleepy* (Chekhov 1888) is another story that talks about struggle, class and desperation of human life. *Varka* (Chekhov 1886) in the story is finding it difficult to live a peaceful life due to works that she got to do at home as a child domestic help and nanny. It's not a very happy ending story but her desperation for sleep and longing in the story is the struggle any working class person goes through at that point of time and writing about them it pointing towards the transformation it needs in the system.

While emancipatory imagination is a boundary less set of idea and action it is relevant in the times of pervasive and apparently oppressive phenomenon of globalization for its connection to geographic space, economies and cultures and fragmentation of consciousness that go unnoticed (Aloysius 2013) . As irresistible way of globalization advances the eruption of new identities increases too, thus the identities that were in the process of creation or gaining its vocal abilities spreads into new spheres, because modernity is restructuring of primordial relations rather than creation of it afresh. Homogenization and heteroganzation or unification and fragmentisation are not contradictory but complementary (Aloysius 2013). When we try to see the roots of such identities and cultures becoming more and more visible in public it is this very phenomenon. All these were once in the mind of an individual writer who imagined such a possibility of people coming together and working together to save themselves from the exploitation that they underwent for a long time. Even the concept of nation state previously meta national and later gaining importance of sub national both are perceived and are imaginary visions someday. These were once imaginative in conceptualizing such identities are possible to be the part of larger society regardless of the indignities they faced at that point of time as in the case of two societies considered Russia and Kerala respectively. This is because at the time of these writings these class of society was socially excluded and was nowhere to see in the larger spectrum of literature. Literature on social exclusion is mainly consisted of writings on poverty as

that was the prime concern of their lives. It also covers a wide range of social and economic problems. The idea of social exclusion as an academic branch was not in vogue at the time of these stories but the characters in these writings were at the receiving end of social exclusion and depicted in the most realistic sense as the writers themselves had the first hand experience of it.

The historical background of development of critical perspectives in general and emancipatory imagination in particular can be tracked to study of languages, discourse and communication. The list of people to be acknowledged in this regard goes from Aristotle, and then to philosophers of enlightenment then to Marx and more recently to Frankfurt School as in Adorno and Benjamin and Jurgen Habermas plays a primary role and also Gramsci and Stuart Hall. Exemplary role played by Feminist Scholarship in Critical theory to language and communication is notable too (Thorne 1983). This approach mainly deals with language, text and discourse structures. Critical linguistics and Social semiotics first developed in UK and Australia. This was further developed through the analysis of text and image for sophisticated socio political analysis (Chilton 1985). Critical discourse analysis deal mainly with discourse dimensions of power abuse, injustice and inequality. This is the fundamental reason why this study and its focal concept emancipatory imagination are categorized under critical discourse analysis. It is primarily interested in pressing social issues and hopes to better the societal conditions accordingly. This theory is chosen for its function and relevance and realization of socio-political goals. Social problems are naturally complex and it requires multi disciplinary approach to understand and evolve a solution to it. Fundamental understanding of social problems using emancipatory imagination can not ignore theoretical issues. But this theoretical endeavor is the analysis of complex relationship between dominance and discourse through a new lens of literature and imagination which is emancipatory in nature. Discourse analysis goes beyond the immediate and pressing issues of the day. Its structural understanding presupposes more general insights as the writers were not political theoreticians/ philosophers but literary figures who wrote on topics that varied from sociology to political themes. The idea is better understood if we could start the story from little far back as the origination

of concepts and ideas. Characterization of ideas of poverty as lack of income is an old one but still is popular. But concepts like social exclusion and emancipation can't be defined just in terms of absence or presence of a social or physical factor. It grows in the society and goes beyond the level of fixing at an individual level. This is why critical theories like emancipatory social science give the understanding in a broader sense through the lived experience of larger community itself.

People may have passive or active access to communicative events especially literature and this is the reason it kept away various sections of society (Sen 2004). The people in the peripheries are kept there, using the power and influence and discourse analysis explain this without any bias, so emancipatory social science becomes only means to survive for such sections of society by getting a presence in literature first and then asserting their roles later to different other spheres of society like economy, politics and popular culture in long term. Surprising parallelism between social power and discourse access is that more the discourse genre more is the influence on powerful social groups. For each group the discourse access may spell out a discourse access profile. Such access provide affluent groups to increase their reach to more spheres and altering such social interactions are possible only with critical approaches like discourse analysis. On the other hand ordinary people may have limited access and it is shrunken even more and more and becomes passive. Modest form of counter power exists in some communication forms as in emancipatory sciences. Power and dominance are institutionalized to enhance their effectively and power and dominance are measured in terms of their control over discourse. Implication of this correlation is not merely discourse control as a form of social action control but control over minds of other people and management of social representation. This is done through the emancipatory concepts such as emancipatory imaginations because it is on the basis of text and context and is associated with more influence on the imaginations of people (Dijk 2012)

Various forms of hard power military, police and judiciary exercise power in mind management this influence knowledge, belief and attitudes which we conceptualize in forms of social cognitions. Socially shared representations of societal

arrangements, mental operations and thinking inference are imprinted in the minds of people and this influence the imaginations of people (Taylor 1991). So such imaginations are healthy for a society if it is including all the sections in a democratic manner, but if it is exclusive in nature the counter narrative to it is necessary in order to prevent an authoritative government in making. Emancipatory social sciences represent such counter narratives and are not very old as elite culture existed from time immemorial. Communication channels determine forms of action and interactions are monitored by social cognition so people become accosted to their inherited values and will not be in a position to challenge their oppressors (Horkheimer 1937). This must have been a difficulty Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer felt as they were bringing a new set of ideas that would have sounded revolutionary at that time in their respective societies. So the structure and operation of softer forms of social cognition had a difficult path in the initial stages. The task for these writers was not just writing stories but making people believe they were real and such stories are not different from their own lives so is not possible to bring about changes that they talked about. Emancipatory imagination as a branch of study would take a long time in keeping up the pace to influence as they got a harder task to change the norms and values of the society which is not easy. Attitudes and values are socially shared and has meaning only in the context and knowing this context is important for the writer and reader. Writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer is relevant for today's time for this reason that it is challenging the reproduction of power and dominance in the society. Emancipatory imagination is such a counter narrative not just to challenge the hegemony but also for showing the audacity to experiment such an idea for the first time in their respective literatures in that particular socio political context.

Why Is Emancipatory Imagination Significant

Emancipatory writings are search for alternatives. It pushes for human flourishing, necessary material, social means and equal access to them. Human flourishing is a multi dimensional concept. Emancipatory is getting away from anything that would

hinder the human flourishing such as hunger, material deprivation, ill health, and social isolation, “a just society is one in which all people have unconditional access to the necessary means to flourish in this restrictive sense of satisfaction of needs for basic human functioning” (Nussbaum 2000). This is an idea of justice that was theorized after these stories were written but the main ideas are common among these writers. Just society was the hope that was implicitly given in the short stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer regardless of the difference in the historical point in which they wrote. The cultural and temporal differences mattered less as the indent behind these stories were not just amusing readers but giving a new perspectives about the themes and characters. Since the authors themselves belonged to the class and sections of characters the conversations among the characters seemed original and in that context it was for the first time a Muslim writer in Kerala writing about the stories of his own community as well as Anton Chekhov’s stories with his own experiences during childhood and experimentations with ill health and wide travels he undertook to meet new people in his search for new themes for his stories. The underlying factor of all these stories remained the betterment of life of people whom he wrote about. This was not associated with any political purposes but a self conscious step these two authors who took in the beginning of their careers.

People are capable of developing their talents to realize their individual potentials (Sen 2004). It requires the communities to provide them with opportunities for active participation in civic affairs and cultural activities. The aim of emancipatory imagination is not to work for a utopia that there remains no inequality at all, it is not possible, some amount of inequality is consistent with the functioning of society but emancipatory imagination aims at equal access to necessary means to live flourishing lives. Social justice which is the aim of emancipatory imagination is not just the class inequalities but inequalities based on gender, race, physical disabilities and any other illogical classifications of discriminations in the society. This is exactly is the reason most main characters of both Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer are unconventional heroes and heroines who actually doesn’t possess any heroism but are normal human beings. The characters depicted in Anton Chekhov’s stories mainly

suffer from ill health and poverty which was the consistent companion for toiling masses of his time. Basheer's characters were women in general and poor in particular and vulnerable sections such as prostitutes and uneducated and unemployed. All these sections were less attractive to be heroes of a story according to authors till their times. The women of Sakhalin Island were one of its first descriptions of impoverished womanhood not just physically due to ill health and impoverishment but also emotionally due to their troubled life. On the face of it these women were considered as rude by most people but after reading Anton Chekhov it's sure that the perception could change as the reasons behind such behavior are the unfortunate circumstances they live in. Reader would think twice before calling the people who live there as rude culprits and their dependents. The pitiful human life in such a far away island to the literary spheres of Russia would have felt innovative because though they were under the same rules and regulations the people hardly were connected to each other neither physically nor emotionally.

Public sphere is a central unit in the modern societies and writers shape a lot of public opinions (Fraser 1996). Opinions of the writers are vent to the felt indignities of large sections of people. If these writers weren't writing about these sections it would have taken although more difficult for this section to voice their opinion. Jurgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere* (Habermas 1962) deals with the development of public opinion and emergence of new concept of public opinion. Dispersed publication and small group exchanges also impact public opinion. Public sphere can exist only if it's imagined so. Imagination is to be supported by objective conditions both internal and external. Modern public sphere is print capitalism and the role a writer could play in this is unbelievably impactful. Print capitalism becomes possible in the right cultural context. Thus public sphere is a mutation of social imagery and is crucial to the development of modern society. There is a 'topical common space' that Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer shares with respect to the themes they wrote about. It was not the pity in the minds of readers that the authors indented to bring but generating an opinion that was in favor of sections of society in these stories. In that case they can be called as 'meta-topical

common space'. These authors had helped in 'inventing people' as a new collective agency (Morgan 1988). The articulation of social life in their stories is first imagined it's not just the political structural order but also the civil society. Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer had 'invented' these sections of society because their existence was not acknowledged before in such massive way and were ignored in the literary sphere as a whole. They existed only when others needed them and what exactly is the life they lived wasn't the concern of earlier stories by other authors. By giving the lime light on these very sections of the society it was giving voice to this voiceless section. It was giving agency to a large section of society who were little acknowledged because of their deprivations which in fact is depriving this section again and the readers were not also given an opportunity to think of them as a theme or main character of a story in mainstream literature. This widening of literature on the basis of theme can be considered as a first step towards the democratization in the literary sphere with respect to representation of larger groups and making them visible more frequently.

For instances the way the thin in the story *Fat and the Thin* (Chekhov 1883) behaved in the first and the second half is not just different but contradictory and clerk in the story *Death of a clerk* (Chekhov 1883) seems foolish and senseless but it actually gives us the nuanced relation that existed in nineteenth century Russia among the strictly hierarchical bureaucracy. The Fat and the Colonel seemed to behave normal and pleasant at first later gets irritated which adds to the humor in the stories, but it gives the clear references to the easy and privileged lives of rich in the higher levels of bureaucracy and uniform services. In the stories *World Famous Nose* (Basheer 1954) and *Voices* (Basheer 1944) gives humorous descriptions about the life of poor and sarcasm on government and politics. This would seem a funny description regarding the everyday life of people but would at the same time is an insightful descriptions about the political culture of Kerala at the time the story was written. These stories would not be indented to play any political agenda or not come under political writings of their time but literary works. But these works are insightful treasure to the political development if we read them with the political history of the time in mind. As Russia

and India was going through politically charged situations of Change of Monarchs and their rules, Crimean War and defeat and anti colonial rule, post-independent democratization respectively.

Why Is Writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer Called Emancipatory Imagination

Sociological imagination is a distinct sensibility and set of questions and basic principles of addressing those (Mills 2004). This sensibility in literature could expand into larger spheres as in involving ideas like humanism and universal love in the stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. They had written widely on these topics and their stories are distinct in their sensibility towards the toiling masses and questions of improving their living conditions. The stories written on them may not directly bring solutions to their problems the theme is expressive of the desire for the betterment. These authors wrote on particular community and increased the imaginative horizon of a reader to accommodate these sections of the society in the minds of larger society who often forgotten the very existence of this sections. These writings are emancipatory because they are hopeful in finding a solution though solutions are not given in the stories explicitly.

Disrespect, discrimination and social exclusion based on status attributes can be a serious hindrance to flourishing life (Wright 2010). All these further increased the deprivation due to the economic inequality that emerged with them. The egalitarian concept of emancipatory imagination is very much related to the concept given by Nancy Fraser with respect to political recognition and material distribution (Fraser 2000). Recognition is the social practice through which people communicate mutual respect and validate each other as moral equals within a society. Through their stories Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer gives us a picture of society where all the types of people exist and exploited are given a voice to raise their concerns and exploiters may be at the winning edge but are defined as a dictatorial and bad light which is an implicit way of upholding justice and urge for a just society. The life of common man was never observed or thought of so closely and deeply like in these

stories, before that the readers are forced to take the side of toiling masses at the end of the story. Stories make the conversation possible between rich and the poor and privileged and underprivileged which in real world is not possible mostly. Through their stories authors have indented to bring the possibility of a society where people could flourish by developing their capacities.

The way in which Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer is bringing only social arena for egalitarianism is interesting. Access to necessary social and material means to live flourishing lives is a global principle for humanity. It's unjust that a person born in a particular community wouldn't get the access to means of flourishing lives. Most discussions of social justice within bounded social entities are either nation state or political unit. But it often faces challenges from the social units within and these practical constraints don't allow the core principles to go ahead (Wright 2010). This is when the societal impact of writers is most deeply felt with their ideas such as emancipatory imagination. Since this concept is a frame to conceptualize the life of people who are the members of a society their roots are always connected to society no matter their allegiance to other units such as political units or nation states these remain the part and parcel of their society or community at first. Emancipatory imagination is regarding the life of people who are basically members of the society the need and means to better their state of affairs. It talks about institutional arrangements which in practice that satisfy the criterion for just society. The philosophical defense of the ideal of equal access to the conditions to live a flourishing life would require the material access as well the social support a member in the society would need (Fraser 2000).

The Muslim life in larger Kerala literary spheres would sound clueless before Vaikom Muhammed Basheer's writing, not because Muslims were absent in this society but because their lives remained 'other' in the larger society in general and literary realm in particular (Fabian 2000). The life of toiling masses included that of struggling writers, unemployed youth, peasants, anti colonial political activist, women of all sections who were one or the other way deprived in the society. Vaikom Muhammed Basheer shamelessly talked about the topics such as male prostitution,

physical and emotional needs of human beings and went to the extent of criticizing the life in prisons and how injustice is reinforced through judiciary etc. He had created a new panorama of topics that the society wanted to believe never existed. It was not the characters and themes that made waves in the literary circles of mainstream Malayalam writing but also the tools and colloquial language use which went against all conventions of society. The Majeed in *Childhood Friend* (Basheer 1944) lacks any extra human powers while he is an average man who goes on to become a physically disabled person and shows the incapacity of a poor man to be able to fulfill his commitments to the precarious family economically and to his love. At the end of the story he mechanically washes the dishes in a hotel after reading the letter from his mother regarding the death of his childhood friend. The sorry state of affairs of life is not the focus of the story yet the reader gets to experience the physical deprivation, hunger and poverty each character goes through.

Foucault's *Madness* (1961) and Basheer's connections with it in literature and Anton Chekhov's recurring theme of illness and suicide are comparable concepts that goes against the conventional themes in most literature. These are unconventional for the reason that it happens in the society yet are not given space in literature to be read or discussed in the literary circles. These topics recur in the stories and are accepted as a part of society which is the first step in diagnosing the problem in the social structure. Since diagnosing is the first step towards any emancipatory writing, for Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer it becomes important to see suicides and hunger/poverty as a social phenomenon rather than an isolated individual event. Acknowledging them as social phenomenon is the basic courtesy that other authors lack and how these works comes under the definitions of emancipatory imagination. Foucault (1972) uses the language of phenomenology to describe an evolving experience/concept as mad and as 'other' is in parallel with the way the characters in Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer were 'othered'. These themes and characters pushed to the peripheries and went through the process of 'othering' by not letting lime-light fall on them. The characters were acknowledged to be the part of

social structure and their issues were given full attention regardless of their insignificance (Crehen 2002).

Both Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer were nature lovers and nature remained a very important theme in their stories. In real life too Chekhov had the reputation of gardener and one who maintained orchard and kept a close look at vegetation. Basheer on the other hand began planting saplings wherever possible even in prison compounds where he was a political prisoner as a part of freedom movement of India during colonial period (Achuthan 2002). Anton Chekhov was one of the first authors to notice and include it in his writing the temperature difference due to the cutting down of trees and effect of anthropogenic activities on flora and fauna such as seagull. Basheer is the first one to acknowledge the claim of other beings on nature and to call them inheritors of nature. In his stories he even went to the extent of beginning conversations with animals and pets around him.

Both the author's lived experience of poverty and hunger is another most important factor that comes in these stories as a part of experience. They do not see poverty as an individual event but as a social event in which entire society is responsible for. This understanding and the way they thought it is important to write about them were the first step towards social criticism. Core idea of Hegel (1929) social criticism is internal evaluation and self application of norms while Marx (1888) understands of immanent critique is according to the criterion of whether or not they are characterized by unresolved internal contradictions. Social critiques must uncover such contradictions as it's is unrealistic to believe self description of a practice because every time it may not show the internal contradictions. So it becomes the task of authors to write about the contradictions if they aim at bringing a social transformation in long-term through their social critique (Cote and Levine 2002).

Performance centered on imagination in the stories of Muhammed Basheer is not very different from this as his characters are either from his immediate family and surrounding or the people he met in the long travels he undertook. Most stories are autobiographical and a wonderful mix of imagination and experience. The characters sounded genuine in his stories because most of them existed in flesh and blood in real

like for example in the story *Pathumma's Goat* (Basheer 1959) the Pathumma is Basheer's sister and most women in that story are either from his family or neighbors. Characters mostly speak their concerns that are new to the readers as this section of Muslim community was not being given such important characters that they could voice their opinions before these stories. In the story *The Love Letter* (Basheer 1943) the hero Kesavan Nair begins the story with a proclamation that there is only moonlight in the head of a woman, and as the story progresses he gets impressed with the intellect and smart acts of Saramma the heroin. The sentence about moonlight is a popular notion how women are considered as less intellectual and mostly foolish by most people in a society. In the book *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir 1972) Simone de Beauvoir seems to challenge this very notion. Male, female, masculinity and femininity are not used in an egalitarian sense throughout history it was used in which women are less than man, woman is one who is not man in which the measuring standard is man himself to define what is woman and so is considered as a second sex, though this study was conducted in western society and book was written in French the ideas that it discusses are very relevant to our societies as well. The stereotypes like this associated with women, disabled anyone who seems to be vulnerable attracted the attention of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer and he enjoyed giving them voice that crumbled the hypocritical notions of morality that existed in the society. One such example is the way he explained about the male prostitution that existed in the army camps during the Second World War and the serenity of love of a prostitute to a man. He also crumbled the notions of beauty and sanity by shamelessly explaining about nudity in a natural way that requires no disclaimers and physical desires of men and women (Ashraff 1996).

These stories represented emerging consciousness of working class of Russia in second half of nineteenth century and Muslim community in Kerala in the post independent era and anti colonial period immediately before it. This emerging consciousness represented a rivalry between the powerful structures of society in such a way these stories were capable of making waves that were first in the journey of making any society a more democratic one by acknowledging the existence of all the

sections in the society regardless of their meager number or insignificant contribution to economy as they lacked the ownership of means of production or any cultural capital (Marx 1880). Emancipatory imagination involves neuropsychology in analyzing the characters and the way characters conduct themselves in these stories. The images that involved in these are not just members of a society but represent the intrinsic importance and instrumental consequence of social relations in which they are being pushed to the peripheries of society. Being excluded from the larger society itself is a deprivation. Not able to be associated with the larger society and participate in the social interactions to the fullest impoverishes the social life of an individual and community. According to Max Weber the modern idea of rationalization is the emancipation of various spheres of human life from the area of sacred, this was written at a time when religion was used to justify the unjust practices in society in the same way modern societies use various ideologies to exploit various classes for others (Walcott 1990). Criticism from literature about the ways and means of such exploitation was not the first through these authors yet they stand distinct in this due to the massive scale in which they wrote. Sociological imagination was a replacement of theological imagination that grew with modernity. Theological imagination was unquestionable and blind while sociological imagination was critical inclusive and there was always a possibility of change and improvement. This is the reason stories written by Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer in the most indifferent way towards the problems of the society created uneasiness among all the sections as they questioned the hegemony silently mostly yet were very loud.

There are a lot of social processes that an individual's life is involved in so an individual ordinary person finds it difficult to cope with the personal struggles and control the structural transformations that are needed for the emancipation of their lives. Writer's task is to give an understanding of social process in which an individual is a part of and to give alternatives to those situations. These stories gave them summation, assessments and orientations (Mills 2000). The main goal of such writings is to envision such indifference and uneasiness. Theology which was the most popular genre of writing interpreted individual failure and success through categories of sin and grace

while social imaginations tried to see individual biographies through social change and social conditioning. Sociology was born to improve society and critical theories it brought were to help members of a society to lead a purposeful life in a society. The writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer were in that direction as they were attempting to explain the life of people to change the face of society by exposing indignities of it through their stories.

Life could have been better for these writers if they were choosing to write pleasing stories about comfortable themes and topics but they chose to otherwise. So, social imagination in general and emancipatory imagination in particular are works of social scientists who wish to mitigate the wrongful practices and free oppressive humanity. Emancipatory writings are the beginnings of reform movements in a society and if it is done through short stories as of the case study it has a wider audience. Such writings give independence of knowledge and recognition of the past that people began to forget. Giving voices to such forgotten historiographies and stories is what these two authors did through their writings which had started a new vogue in the larger literary circles. As these writings were not coming under the dogmatic writings of social science or literature readers as well the literary critiques welcomed these writings at that point of time and due to the relevance of those writings even today there are read as in the past. There is an objective knowledge of social reality (Milbank 1990) which pushes to overcome the present day's paradigm such is the case of emancipatory imagination too. This allows the readers and characters to go beyond the present day to aspire for a society that might sound a difficult to achieve but possible solution for their problems and the aspirational nature of these writings are not a variation of literature itself but also a new perspective for society at large so fulfills the criterion to be emancipatory too.

The stories written by Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer were not aimed at political activism for sure but were definitely creating a section that just weren't shadows anymore. The goal of identity formation could be anything but the byproduct of it is creation of agency (Cote and Levine 2014). This is true in the case of these short stories as they were giving agency to the working/ toiling masses in

nineteenth century Russia and Muslim community in post independent Kerala state in Indian Republic. Writing their stories gave those identities and an agency of their own if not physical resources to hold on to act in their lives but at a conscience level they were to be independent. Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer played the role as a narrator the authors took the readers through the most important theories and studies of identity formation without explicitly talking about it. Identity mattered in the lives of people and these were conceptualized in the emancipatory imaginations of these authors in their respective societies then.

Emancipatory social science in general and emancipatory imagination in particular aims at viable alternatives. The credible theory of alternatives to the existing institutions and social structures would eliminate or significantly mitigate the harms and injustices in the society (Wright 2010). Social alternatives can be evaluated in terms of desirability, viability and achievability. Desirability is the exploration of alternatives and it exists in the domain of utopian social theory and in normative political philosophy. Just society without exploring problems of sustainable and robust institutions could be used to carry out just principles (Rawls 1971). According to this argument what constitute a just society is a desirable alternative to the present world that requires viable institutions to actualize those principles. According to John Rawls 'liberty principle' is prior to 'difference principle'. This indicates that absolute priorities are satisfied before difference principle is considered. In the real world such accurate practice of principles of political philosophy is not possible and mostly liberty principle is unstable to be applied in such absolute manners. Some violation of liberty principle is necessary.

As all these indents to engineer social changes pre utopian thinking about alternatives add credibility to challenge existing institutions (Fanon 1952). Viable alternatives propose for transforming existing social structures with the hope to generate sustainable, robust and emancipatory consequences that motivates the proposal. These are attempts to realize socialist principles and justice in particular as emancipatory imagination aims at mitigating oppression of lower sections of society and bringing a just society. The most important hindrance any emancipatory theory

would have to face is from institutions of power and privileges. At the same time it's also difficult to make the people believe that another world is possible because people are born to societies that are already made and any possibility beyond it is difficult. It's hard to imagine some better workable alternatives for the larger masses of people because it is hard to imagine how to successfully challenge existing institutions of power and privilege to create the alternatives. So it would have been difficult for Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer to imagine an alternative and propagate it through their stories.

Conclusion

Identity and culture are basic building blocks to any society (Achabe 1988). Through the construction of identity and reconstructions of culture one would address the problematic of boundaries and meanings of who am I? This is the fundamental block of political justice and remains bounded in the societal values and cultural context. Though short stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer had not agreed to the societal values and definitions of culture which were norms for the privileged sections of the society it was the first of such efforts to undergo to define these sections. May be these stories just paved the way for further asserting of identities that was taken up by many social and political activists.

The task of emancipatory imagination is bringing about a theory of social transformation. Emancipatory writing is a journey from present to the possible future. The writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer does the same as in they diagnose the problems in the society we live in through giving the pitiful life of people, they critique society and government and explains to the reader why there is a need to change the system we live in. The use of certain utopia in the stories about the just society that might come about is the alternatives that they propose. Thus these stories act as theory of transformation as it is a path to get from here to there. The stories are envisioning changes that are possible within the prescribed notions of good life in their respective cultural context. According to Umberto Eco (2004) the language and indent of any writing is a sign/ code and sign is a sensory perceptible material

object, act or event which indicate, denote or represent another object. Here the intent of the stories is the betterment of life of people which is not explicitly expressed as none of the stories calls for a bloody revolution or radical change. In the words of Umberto Eco (2004) literary tradition is a part of intangible power that survived a long time, he goes on to say power that networks of text that humanity has produced not for practical ends but for its own sake for humanity's own enjoyment and pleasure are also sources of intangible powers. So the stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer are part of such intangible powers and possess the emancipatory hallow.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Despite the difference in socio political cultural contexts and times in which the stories were written by Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer the concept emancipatory imagination that is being expressed is similar. This chapter is divided under three sections that is part one consists of the conclusionary remarks and findings that had gained during the journey of this research. Second part is the contexts that lead to the development of these stories and the ways in which these writing stand out with regard to other authors of its respective times. Third part consists of the possibility of future research and areas that are seen fallen short of, in this study.

There were about ten stories each from these two authors that were considered of these authors chosen on the basis of themes discussed in these stories and character formation. The stories of Anton Chekhov that are selected for this research includes *Fat and the Thin* (1883), *Death of a Government Clerk* (1883), *Chameleon* (1884), *Vanka* (1887), *Sleepy* (1888), *The Bet* (1889), *The Steppe* (1888), *Ward No.6* (1892), *Shakalin Island* (1895), *Seagull* (1895), *Peasants* (1897), *Lady with the Dog* (1899), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1903). The stories of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer are *The Love Letter* (1943), *Childhood Companion* (1944), *The Birthday* (1945), *Story Seed* (1945), *The Voices* (1947), *Me Granddad 'ad an elephant* (1951), *The Cardsharper's Daughter* (1951), *The prostitute of the Poor* (1952), *The World Renowned Nose* (1954), *The Hunger* (1954), and *Pathumma's Goat* 1959.

This research is rooted in the critical theories to understand the writings of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer and also the times in which these stories were written. Emancipatory imagination is the concept that is used to explain the themes and characters of these stories. Emancipatory imagination as a defining scheme pours light on the stories to show why these stories were written in the way they did and what was the impact of such writing in literature. In simple words emancipatory

imagination is a tool to understand the intention of a writer towards his stories and the message he would like to spread through it. Emancipatory imagination is the emancipatory function of certain writings that had brought about the change in the perspective towards a section of society that was at the peripheries of not just in society but also in literature. It's an attempt to provide voices to the voiceless and through this the literature sphere had broaden and democratized and that itself was a big leap for other writers and readers too. By choosing to write about these themes and characters there is a consolidation of identity in the minds of people who could relate to the characters and this in course of history had its impact on socio political developments of Russia and Kerala societies. The stories were written at a time when these societies were going through politically loaded circumstances that is changes in the monarchical policies and years immediately before the first revolution in Russia and anti colonial and decades that followed the independence as in the case of India. Regardless of the difference in time, geographical space and socio cultural context the essence of emancipatory imagination in the writings of remained in Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer remained the same.

Literature is a window to understand the life of people and to understand the nuances associated with their social locations. It's is true that over years the dominant cultures in the society works in a way that it 'shows its position' to each groups of society and people in the peripheries are kept there and never allowed to come into limelight. To define and redefine prevalent values in the society one requires creative imagination which is unconventional, emancipatory imagination is such an effect in depicting sections of societies to view a different perception on their lives and critically approaching the conduct of society itself. Emancipatory imagination is a lens to understand the practice of the society. The stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer had started giving insights into the lives of people from the bottom of the pyramid. The notions of emancipatory imaginations and its possibilities of betterment gradually infiltrated into the minds of people and transformed social imaginations. Any branch of thought is emancipatory when it eliminates oppressions and creates situations of human flourishing. These stories envision a better future and

the study had involved the theories of political and social justice and also critical social theories. Discourse analysis and linguistic criticism are other tools used to establish the theoretical background of this study. 'Sthalam/place' stories of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer are a very good example of bringing about the possibility of change or the alternatives that are possible in the societies. At the same time creating an understanding of absence of such a justice at the reach of people was awareness creation among the working class milieu of nineteenth century Russia. Both the stories did this by creating a craving among the people for social justice and flourishing life.

These writings are emancipatory for the choice of characters and themes. By writing about insignificant people that in itself count a struggle for equality because it asserted their identities in the mainstream literature and also it was an 'asserting of space' in the imaginations of readers. One who read these stories are likely to broaden their canvas of world to untold stories of lesser heroes who are the main protagonists. Themes are also unique and they may seem personal stories about are political topics and problematic questions they discusses as the class and gender problematic. These stories had consolidated the identities of people who were nameless for the larger part of history of land. This identity consolidation helps in assertion of identity by oppressed sections of the society and helps in their struggle to make better society that guarantees them equality and justice. Both these writers are known for their unconventional narration style and colloquial language. It goes to an extent when Vaikom Muhammed Basheer calls himself as 'humble historian' and stories he write becomes histories and these is no other explicit example for the instant histories that are made by agendas of government. Stories of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer parallel each other in terms of themes and characters. Their themes were not considered as writable by other authors. Subaltern and critical theories give away importance of hegemonic understanding of history and society. These writings gave limelight to people who never got attention in literature before. By doing so it was an attempt to give more representation to people who existed in the peripheries and literature to become more inclusive and democratic. Most important factors that set these stories apart are 'for whom' these stories were written and 'on whom' stories were written and in the very

‘way it is written’. Another notable factor is the unimaginable ease and simplicity in which these stories are discussing politically relevant themes.

There is a task for the emancipatory writers in social science it goes like this systematic diagnosis and critique of the world, envisioning viable alternatives and understanding obstacles, possibilities and dilemmas of transformation. In all these Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer also fulfill all these parameters to be an emancipatory engagement with literature. These authors had identified the ways in which existing social institutions and social structures systematically impose harm on them and they are very much evident in their stories. One must derive the standards of each social practice from the practice itself because the internal standards are the best to evaluate the social institutions. In the context of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer they were writing about the people of their own community and it was the real task for them as there was hardly any mainstream author who had written about the people in the peripheries in a way they did because those themes remained ‘other’ for them so these stories were trend setters as well as alternative narratives which in both ways emancipatory imagination in nature. Emancipatory imagination which is the focus of this study qualifies to be imminent critique for the reason that like its pioneers Hegel, Marx and Frankfurt school understood it as a tool to that derived from the actual social practices of the society and always aims at transforming social practices and encompass action and self understanding (Stahl 2013). The theory of gaps and contradictions within the process of reproduction is the event in which the scientific theories do not always brings about transformation and in such instances the change must be imagined first; through stories and popular cultures. This transformation in popular culture is very much evident in Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer as many stories are adapted to other forms of reforming arts such as theatre and films in mainstream later. Even after such attempts it is possible that people will not attempt to change an already existing structure for the mere reason that it survived for a long time as the writers wrote these stories almost in hundred years gap and one fifty years from present in the of Anton Chekhov and almost half a century as in the case of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. Emancipatory social science as a form of science is not

just philosophical critique on the practices of society but alternative moral standards that were given to them. The 'search for spaces' of emancipatory transformation is a central part of this theory and such discovery is depended on the knowledge of author. Theory that is connected to significant political events would underline the impact of these authors in the society.

Every imagination is socially situated and social existence determines their conscience (Marx and Engels 1859). And regardless of the difference in time and socio cultural context the concept of emancipatory imagination had developed in these stories represent a parallel and it indicate the intentions of the authors in social transformations of their times. There is always a current of happenings around her/him that affects the works of an author and s/he is never completely separated from it and these authors remained in their social realities to experience it first and then write about it. This attitude of writers is evident from their autobiographical narratives and travelogue like writings for which they had underwent long journeys. Chekhov was a grandson of a serf and serfdom was abolished when he was just one year old yet the older social order played a central role in many of his writings as his experiences acted as an individual self experience and social performative reality. Chekhov's writings reflected the turbulent time his homeland went through due to the changes undertaken by the Tsar Monarchy and also the politically loaded time that preceded the first revolution in Russia. In the same way the time in which Vaikom Muhammed Basheer wrote was reflected in his stories. It was the height of anti-colonial and independent movement in India the turbulences of the times are clearly shown in many stories and we could track the political journey of Basheer from reading the stories keeping chronology in mind then it is seen that from Gandhian ideologies there was a shift towards a revolutionary socialism and later to a politically inactive but philosophically thought provoking works.

According to Umberto Eco literary texts are fields of meanings and texts are most active between mind, society and life (Eco 1979) which would seem so true in the case of Anton Chekhov and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer which can be seen in their stories not because they seem writing about society and social institutions but also in a

way many sections of the society gets to relate to it and remains a canvas to lot more who never had such experiences. There is a unique factor that allows these stories to stand out is the feature that most these stories are reflections of their times and also these are writers who are ahead of their times. They had a perspective that is constructive and critical and it had allowed them to write stories in the lines of emancipatory imagination in critiquing society in the most direct way and get away from the ramifications due to the use of humor in them. The idea of emancipatory imagination is the way Walter Benjamin understood the idea of social progress that a complex and difficult because they bring about nuanced related to the alternatives and possibilities. Nothing in the society is separated from one another yet they are reflected in these stories just for the sake of letting the readers to realize the same possibilities and also to approach the diversity in the society without bias.

The themes they deal with would seem trivial at first hardly suitable for the story or a novel in normal cases in literature. Most themes were found from the lives of poor and toiling masses was a common ground between both authors. They gave attention to both sides of life contradictions that often is unnoticed. Such conflicts are also ignites the chain of humor which directly consumed by common folks of their respective societies. Choice of themes/subject 'not' genius with regard to any parameters according to the prevailing conventions in literature. The topics are ordinary people and extraordinary things happening to them or ordinary things explained in an extraordinary narrative style was the tool used by them. After choosing banal themes authors narrated the things in an inflated tone, rhetoric is drawn from discourse of national and international politics and in case of Basheer it's directly from the Marxist methodologies as it was popular in Kerala then though he never used any other conventions of literature otherwise. The lived realities of women's lives are mirrored in these stories like never before. Politics, religion and society are prescribed and ordered by man centric rules and logics which are 'normal in a society which in most cases is operated in an unequal way too. In family, workplace, street, slum and every place women are unimportant bodies, and at a time when these stories were written women mostly led a prey life and was lifelessness of a consumable good that's is exactly why

these authors are important as they gave a very important role to women and said their stories through them. This is how Chekhov and Basheer gave voice to voiceless through their unconventional themes and characters (Spivak 2008).

In the words of Max Horkheimer 'establishing of a relationship between simple perception and conceptual structure of our knowing is theoretical explanation (Horkheimer 1969).' Through the stories Anton Chekhov and Basheer had coded the relationship between perception and structure of knowledge/ commonsense in the society through their stories. Their characters and themes are so reflective of the society that it completely fits in the imaginations and knowledge systems of the people. Culture prevailed in a society act as an important factor in creating imageries in the minds of people. And dominant cultures generally contribute in the further marginalization of deprives sections of the society and is true in the cases of Russia and India as shown in the stories of Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer respectively.

The writings of Anton Chekov and Vaikom Muhammed are examples of how the yet to be accepted writers could create an alternative in history and in literature. The inner meanings of their works are indicating the struggling lives of many and difficulties explained with wit and humor which was methodologically and the narrative styles was the beginning of a new vogue in their respective literatures and literature worldwide. In the case of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer he gave up the life of a rich merchant and it points towards requirement of change as necessary. It should not be seen as a personal change but also the change is needed in community in the changing point of history. The stories of Anton Chekhov is nothing but he change that he would want to see in his society by throwing the harsh realities to the people through characters like fat, thin, government clerk, police, woman with the dog the very way which their names are given later while they are reduced to identities is also interesting. This is also exposing a part of history that had to be given up. When a character of these stories are dying or committing suicide it's not just an entry in the death register but to register in the history too by means of these stories. Deaths and diseases are recurring themes in these stories and they are a symptomatic tool to understand society. The grammar mistakes and colloquial uses in these stories are an indication of factors

that distinguish normal events in the stories from the real histories that are explained. These mistakes are the real underlining factors that differentiate these writings from the conventional writings in the mainstream literature till then. There were a lot of criticisms in accepting their stories in first place in the larger literature but the language of literature was changed with their writing later on. The change in the horizon of literature was evident in their stories too. The story such as *Voices* (Basheer 1947) explains the incredible foundations of mainstream culture and heritage which are hypocritical mostly. One could as a naive question that why these stories so full of miseries it only becomes reflections of the society that way.

These stories are creations of two authors who continued to write while pursuing other occupations as well. This itself is a political statement of a writer who choose to write but not associating any divinity to authors. It's also is a process of equating all occupations to the same status. When the signs of a society are changing it is reflected in literatures through stories like these and objective correlations used by authors play a very important role. When an author tries to defy the conventions of literature it's not just the horizons of literature that is affected but also of society. The writings and characters become the tools to resist the conventions that were since a long time. When the stories of people from the peripheries are written and celebrated it tells the society at large that they too have a right to live with dignity and are capable of articulating their lives in their interest not for anyone else. When we try to study these stories it is to understand these communities and the context of these stories. Basheerian stories goes to the extent of redefining Quran and how is Islam different from the people who really believed it is in the context of Kerala and the change that is necessary to community and people in the changed times. Basheer's ideological obsession is also there in his ecological perspectives and attempts to make this world more amicable with all its living beings.

The better tomorrow is the backdrop of most stories which indicate the emancipatory part in them. The tool that used in these stories is socialist realism. Socialist realism in these stories is woven the mix of today and tomorrow. A better tomorrow is an alternative for today's struggles for these sections of society and

emancipatory manifestation. These writings picture deeper events in the society and in a way is democratization of experience of all sections. When troubles of bottom stories or periphery stories are given chances to appear in the mainstream literature, they become writable too. It gives the message that every experience is important and valuable. This in a way is questioning the class experience and their personal experiences gets immersed to societal experience of a community itself. So these class problems are thrown at the faces of moral righteousness thus root into the realignment of language. The minimal words and length of stories are the powerful messages that are to be given in these short stories, which is an epic dimension because some stories as short as few lines in case of Anton Chekhov and Basheer's first novel is of only seventy six pages.

The themes and characters in the stories of Anton Chekhov and Muhammed Basheer are on the marginalized sections of the society who receive a demeaning stereotypical depictions in the media, literature, harassment and disparagement in everyday life, exclusion and marginalization in public sphere; these harms these sections further (Fraser 1996). Overcoming such stereotypes require changing institutionalized cultural norms and contribution of these two authors are in this very juncture. Through their stories they began a new vogue of politics of recognition of invisible people which replaced the norms of socio economic misdistribution and cultural misrecognition that remained till then. This in long run can result into an economic structure that generates gender specific forms of distributive justice keeping in mind the social exploitation, economic marginalization and deprivation they undergo on day today basis.

This chapter tries to give broader ideas on gaps that came across in pursuing this research and future possibilities that could be taken up by other researchers in this field. Future possibilities try to brief about the contribution of the researcher to the subject methodologically and philosophically as well. The important gaps in this study are two one is the unavailability of Russian stories and works translated to Indian languages that forced the researcher to depend directly on English; it is to remember that no translation is a correct depiction of the original work. Second gap is the

conceptualization of these writings into emancipatory and most emancipatory category came under the Marxist ideologies that had generated one or the other modes of political events that are marked in the history but there is no such explicit political events that had followed these works. Though it is understood that the anti colonial movements in Kerala got influences from Basheerian stories and politically changes in Russia of nineteenth century got influences from Anton Chekhov there are no acknowledgements regarding them in the larger political history of respective societies. At the same time it is to be noted that the very idea that is conceptualized in the form of emancipatory imagination could sound like a paradox or oxymoron for the reason it represents two different realms. Emancipatory is the realm of reality and material while imagination is the realm of abstract and unreal which in itself is contradicting.

The contribution of the research in this research is beginning from this very contradiction because it is setting a wheel in motion of new public sphere that is more representative and also including the characters and themes of these authors who are at the peripheries of societies and given limelight to speak out their minds. This is emancipatory not just the community of people who are talked about about also to the readers whose horizon had expanded to accommodate a lot more people. By setting such a wheel in motion authors had done a politics of inclusivity in the imaginations of readers and this impact was so strong that the characters remain in literary circles even today. There is a future possibility of this research in other academic studies of this sort as this research had brought about a new methodological understanding to social science research. The study employed insights from literary criticisms, phenomenology, semiotics, discourse analysis, close textual analysis, hermeneutics and political philosophies such as various critical theories such as immanent criticism, emancipatory social discourses, theories of gender studies, and cultural studies. Such interdisciplinary theoretical background was demanded by the concept of emancipatory imagination.

There was a process of locating the researcher self in the research during the course of study as a member of the society that was being talked about in the case of Basheer's works at the same time distancing from it as the study demanded a non

partisan objective query, which allowed the researcher to question her own understandings about the themes and contexts.

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