

**In Search of a Subaltern Politics/ Poetics:
A Case Study of Contemporary Malayalam Dalit Poetry**

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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27.07. 2012

CERTIFICATE

This dissertation titled “**In Search of a Subaltern Politics/ Poetics: A Case Study of contemporary Malayalam Dalit Poetry**” submitted by **Ms. Vani M. Pyarilal**, Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

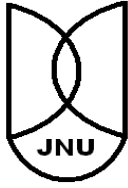
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DECLARATION

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INTRODUCTION

Objective of study

The proposed study attempts to understand the Dalit/Subaltern subjectivity in contemporary Malayalam Dalit poetry by analysing poems from three contemporary Malayalam Dalit poets: M.B. Manoj, S. Joseph and M.R. Renukumar. The study also attempts to address the issue of ‘difference’; that is, whether these poems tend to develop an alternate landscape of imagination through their approach to language, subject matter, style, and history. It also addresses the question of knowing whether this poetry contributes to the politics of resistance and liberation of the Malayalam Dalit/Subaltern.

The context of this research

The sphere in which power relations have extensively been studied, at least in the South Asian context and its literatures, has been colonialism. ‘The empire writes back’ has been a part of the ‘decolonisation process’ of the literary realm. This strategy of ‘writing back’, based on the coloniser/colonised paradigm, has been in vogue in post-colonial writing since the 1960s. It started as an intervention in South Asian historiography, when subaltern studies provided a critique of colonial power from the point of view of the colonised. It is in this context that the term ‘subaltern’ began to be used in the 1970s – indeed; its meaning remained confined to the anti-colonial literature. The term was and is used by different thinkers in different senses and for varying uses. According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern’ (in an interview with de Kock, 1992: 29). Spivak further postulates that the subaltern group, always fits within the framework of the coloniser/colonised binary; one can argue that this therefore limits the analytical scope of the internal tensions within the very term ‘the subaltern’. Such a

position leads to the controversial and complex assumption, through Spivak's question 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988), that the subaltern cannot really speak using her own agency. This, along with the fact that the 'subaltern' is not a substitute, for Spivak, for the 'oppressed' is problematic.

This is because the 'oppressed', for Spivak and the Subaltern Studies group, has usually been conflated with the colonised. Even the figure of the 'Dalit', a term loosely used in the Indian context meaning 'broken' or 'oppressed' and usually reserved for the erstwhile 'Untouchables', has been less under the microscope than has been the category of the 'colonised'. However, such an approach has excluded various systems of home-grown oppression such as caste. Caste is an inherently South Asian system which links ritual purity and pollution to the very identity of an individual. It is continually reinforced through religion. The Marxian framework, steeped in the economics of classes, might not be fully capable of allowing us to understand the intricacies of caste. Furthermore, the Marxian framework analyses and identifies the 'oppressed' only on the basis of class, a category which allows social mobility, therefore as an analytical framework, 'class' becomes inadequate in the casteist social structure of South Asia.

In other words, using 'class' as a category of analysis complicates the understanding of the South Asian 'oppressed' because class is something a person can hope to attain by acquiring social capital whereas caste is something a person is born to and remains bound to. A caste is a specific understanding of one's position in society and a fixed identity. It doesn't mean that one should underestimate the inequalities and intricacies of class division but one has to remember that caste remains 'enacted' as well as reinforced through religion and therefore

emphasised by external factors which intensify the oppression and continue to maintain the fundamentals of social inequality.

Significance of the study

What is meant by ‘Dalit literature’ when we’re looking at Malayalam literature? Dalits have been the subject matter of various types of texts since the nineteenth century. More recently, celebrated poems like *Vaazhakkula* (1937) by Changampuzha, *Kurathi* (1978) by Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan, and *Malankurathi* by O.N.V Kurup attempted to portray the subaltern experience as the ‘imagination of the other’. Novels like *Kocharethi*(1998) and *Mavelimantam*(1994) offered an articulation on this ‘subaltern other’. *Kocharethi*, written by Narayan, brings in an Adivasi’s sensitivity from an insiders’ point of view, and *Mavelimantam*, by K.J. Baby, a non-Adivasi known for his activism along with the Adivasis of Wayanad, a keen sense of the injustices faced by the subaltern other.

The issue of the ‘subaltern’ is looked at through different lenses: writers have understood it as a structural issue that can be solved through conversion to non-brahminical religions and eradicated through its association with political power. They also argued that it was essential that the ‘subaltern’ should develop a political stand of its own by developing its own consciousness and strategies. What makes literature ‘Dalit literature’? Is it the literature written by Dalits or the literature written on Dalits? Or is all literature, whether written by Dalits or for Dalits, ‘Dalit literature’?

The works of three Dalit poets are going to be researched keeping in mind these basic questions on identity and subjectivity. The problem here is identifying a ‘Dalit subjective identity’ in the imagination and expression of works by Dalits and whether this literature is

inherently different from the literature written on Dalits by non-Dalits. Here, the assumption is that the alternate landscape offered by a Dalit imagination is actually the symbolic representation of a self apprehensive of a project leading to 'liberation'. Such an act is a major phase towards deconstructing the already created discourse on the oppressed, an act of rewriting the 'imagined nation' (as understood from Benedict Anderson's point of view) through their imagination.

As mentioned above, the recent uprising of a Dalit intellectual and cultural sphere as well as recent rising visibility of Dalit intellectuals in the cultural sphere has been viewed and analysed by many from a sociological point of view as a political process. Indeed, even in the literary field, the political nature of this new form of writing is very visible. As far as Dalit/subaltern writing in Malayalam literature is concerned, this study can contribute a different perspective on the whole gamut of Dalit writing. It can bring in some basic questions and discussions on 'Dalit Identity'. It can also offer some insights on a substantial position that has been evolved to resist and eradicate the dominative caste system and thereby to develop a more democratic exchange of ideas. Dalit expressions of difference, are neither simply an antithesis to a thesis, nor an attempt to alter the dominant hierarchy in order to institute another. This expression (of difference) is a resistance against the elaborate strategies which have been undertaken by the privileged to erase the presence of literary/social differences from view. This 'elite' mainstreaming literature, desperate to maintain an arrogant homogeneity within Malayalam inspite of the internal conflicts and exploitations prevailing within its literary realm is one which is dramatically challenged by the politics and poetics of this Dalit/Subaltern voice.

Identifying Malayali Dalit/subaltern experiences in the trace of history and other forms of cultural discourses is an interesting exercise that can imagine the social canvas on which the lives of people were inscribed /hidden and deprived.

Malayalam language has a history of writing as far back as 12th century. Eventhough considered as a language evolved from *Tamil* , its written literature of the early period was largely influenced by *Sanskrit* and Hindu spirituality. Thunchath Ramanujanezhuthachan is known as the father of Malayalam language, whose enterprises ‘sanskritised’ Malayalam very much. He was mainly dealing with two Hindu avatars, *Rama* and *Krishna* in his most famous works *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha*. It was the scenario of the 16th century. And this tradition visible from the *Ramacharitamansa*, of the 14th century, which was followed by what is considered to be the first ever poetry in Malayalam was challenged vigorously for the first time by Kunchan Nambiar (18th century) where ‘characters with regional specificities’ (xxv,introduction, 2012) began to appear as a deliberate mode of action. The relevance of such a revolutionary art form developed by Nambiar becomes significant even today where the face of Kathakali (kathakali face) ‘represents’ culture of the State of Kerala in advertisements. For the first time in Malayalam literature,“a carnivalesque literary space which is a hybrid of the crowd, combining a plurality of voices and different power centres” (ibid) was derived from the local languages and dialects of untouchable communities. Being revolutionary in its origin, this form unravelled and mocked the hypocrisies of dominant communities. Unable to follow this tradition, the *aattakathas* and *chambus* were again the results of recreational Hindu spirit of imagination, lacking in real life experiences. For example, poverty was portrayed not as an existential question but a mode that leads to *moksha*!

Thus we can easily mark out the distinction that continuously crept into various artistic performances that were called as classical art. As pointed out earlier, the kathakali

face representing the Keralites or the Kerala culture provides the space for the cultural elite to consume the imaginative cultures. An uppercaste dressing style or food culture is considered as 'Keralanness', by violently homogenizing the Malayali experiences. Thus, classical art forms that need scientific training (*sadhana*) always cherish leisure and pleasure and thereby a whole culture of labour and struggle is alienated and marginalized. There derives the basics of the aesthetic culture that material labour is undignified and lack in aesthetic qualities.

We can point out a very strong dalit/subaltern oral culture with great historiographical potential portraying the experience of the collective. *Chengannuradi, Idanadan paattukal, Krishigeetha, Theyyam/Thira/ Thottam paattukal, Kalam paattu* and *Koythupattu* are some examples. Some of them, for example theyyam, are extremely complex in their existence. It is the celebrative point of a subaltern being where for a particular time the subaltern is given the power of God. It can also be viewed as a safety valve mechanism the society follows to relieve the anguish of the struggling people, to keep the hegemony untouched.

This study deals with the poetics of Dalit experience embodied within the 'openness' of the new genre of Malayalam poetry. Contemporary Malayalam poetry has been emerged from the critique of modernistic sensibility. The perspective of the modern eye appeared into the illusions of the imagined/ ideal word-scape. There was no way to explore one's reality in a poetic sensibility. Because the idea of the poem itself as molded by meta-narratives of the self centeredness. Almost poems are created the poet-self as victim in the society. This otherness, ie the poet and the society were defined as in the contrast struggle; Poets like, S. Joseph and others were depicting that the landscapes which are never addressed in Malayalam poetry. In that new age poetry has articulated verbal distributions through the visual sensibility, so that they are not making illusion of the reality, but at the same time they

have created simplicity of the structure and content. Once Joseph commented on new age poetry that “vakkukal pacchavellam poleyaavanam kavithayil” (the words should be plane water in poetry). In a sense, Dalit experience is also wanted to spread like water in Language, without pre- intention, without the historic legacy of the mainstream literature.

It has to be noted that the first attempt to document the upsurge of Dalit writing in two south Indian languages- Malayalam and Tamil- that began in the 1990s came to light with Susie Tharu’s and K Satyanarayanan’s work “No Alphabet in Sight- New Dalit Writings from South India” (2011). This ‘dossier’ as the editor calls it bring together in English translation the works of over forty intellectuals from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. “The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing” (2012) edited by M Dasan, V Pratibha, Pradeepan Pampirikunnu and C.S. Chandrika also came out during the course of this study. This covers a wide range of Dalit writing from Kerala from 1900 to 2010.

The first chapter of the study deals with the cultural formation of Kerala in order to map the idea of ‘subaltern’ in Malayalam Literature. Chapter two discusses *puthukavitha* and gives a historical account of the poetry from 1990s. It stands as a background to the study in which the ‘contemporary Malayalam Dalit Poetry’ can be placed. The third chapter is an analysis of selected poems of the poets S. Joseph, M.B. Manoj and Renukumar in order to meet the objectives of the study. The outcomes of the study are summarised in the conclusion.

Chapter 1

Mapping the idea of subaltern in Malayalam Literature

1.1 Cultural formation of Kerala

This part is an attempt to map a background to the particular study we are intending here. This will be an enquiry into the formations of the meanings and perceptions of the word ‘subaltern’ in the social and literary spaces of the land. As we are discussing on ‘subaltern’, one of the first and very important question that we face is what is the opposite of subaltern? (If we put it in a very much simple manner) or what there exists other than subaltern? Is it mainstream? If so, how is mainstream different from the subaltern.

The ‘main stream culture’ or as we usually say in other words ‘culture’ is a construction of various socio-political embodiments existing in the society. The mainstream culture that taken in granted for ‘culture’, in keen observation reveals that, it is a biased one. What is circulated as expressing the cultural spirit is something ‘highlighted’.

In the case of Kerala, if we take for example the myths in relation to this land, there is one about the origin of Kerala saying that It was Parasuraman who retrieved this land from the sea with his axe. He threw his axe to the sea and the sea withdrawn from the place where the axe had fallen .And another significant myth is about ‘onam’ which is celebrated as the state festival of Kerala. Onam is celebrated to commemorate the democratic ruler, the Asura King Mahabali’s visit to his land Kerala, once in a year. Mahabali was an Asura king of justice and the devas became jealous of his popularity amongst his subjects. Indra, the king of Devas became so jealous of Mahabali and he comes to Mahabali in disguise of a poor Brahmin asking three steps of land to do his tapass(meditation).Mahabali pledged to satisfy whoever approaches him for any kind of help agrees it. Suddenly, this old Brahmin

transforms in to Vamana of huge size. He measures the whole land and sky with his two steps and asks Mahabali where to place his third step. Mahabali, unable to keep his promise agrees to keep the third step on his own head. Hearing this, Vamana steps on to Mahabali's head and pushes him to hell. And Mahabali asks for a single wish- he wants to visit his subjects once in a year and Vamana agrees to that. People believe that Bali visits his subjects on the Onam day.

We can see other versions of the same story which is also mostly in the oral form¹ but lessly circulated .Leaving apart the sub human characters involved, it is a story of exploitation celebrated with some kind of nostalgic spirit without paying attention to its politics. Same with the idea of *Theyyam* too. *Theyyam*, a ritual of North Malabar , permits the subaltern subject to enact the role of *daivam* on the particular day of celebration. For that specific day the same marginalized subject becomes the most powerful one in the society, irrespective of caste and class. We can read it as an aspect of luring the spirit of resistance , like a safety valve, in order to maintain the hegemony. Because it is for the sake of the rest of the days in the year one day is permitted beyond the imagination. The same kind of politics can be seen with onam too. Wrapped within the complacency of the memory of a golden rule, what is forgotten is that such a world is still needed and we fail in connecting the past with the present in order to change the present.

While Discussing about the emergence of a linguistic cultural identity in Kerala in “Cultural Formation of Kerala” B.Rajeevan says that the consolidation of the plough agricultural village system in Kerala ended up in smashing the basic structure of the old tribal mode of existence though retaining its live relics in social life. Thus a temple centered class class society based on the division of labour of varna and caste came into being.

¹ Ref: M.B Manoj, interview, www.youtube.com

The most notable feature and effect of the shift is the differentiation between manual labour and intellect or intellectual labour. Not only this, the intellect or intellectual labour began to be seen as superior than the other. In this division of labour of the new mode of production, the *Namboodiris* were the most privileged section. With the alienation of intellectual labour from manual labour, they developed an exclusive terrain for literature. The cultural formation of modern Kerala can be seen as the result of interactions of various cultural forms.

The different cultural forms that had been at work in the formation of Kerala culture were that of the primitive tribal societies in Kerala, other south Indian societies and religions like Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. The plough-agricultural village system that emerged out of the disruption of the primitive tribal social system, the formation of feudal society, the reorganization of the feudal system as a regionalized community of culture, the emergence of democratic forces fighting against the feudal-colonial domination, the appearance of organised working class that took up the task of carrying forward the struggle for democracy — these are the different phases with which the conflicting social forces in the process of Kerala history have been connected and through which the cultural life of modern Kerala took shape.²

We can see various social movement getting reflected in the literature. The reformative ideology of Sree Narayana Guru in 1880s and upraise against castiest attitude contributed to the cultural sense of the society. The subaltern subjects who took the path of conversion of religion, mostly in the case of Christianity in the context of Kerala, to escape from ‘casteism’ were going through similar exploitative practices. The bible burning by Poykayil Appachan, a symbolic revolutionary act and appachan’s song like ‘*kaanunniloraksharavum*’ (*No*

² B. Rajeevan, Cultural Formation of Kerala , www.keralahistory.ac.in

alphabets in sight) took an impetus from the conversion. This social atmosphere is reflected in Kumaaranaashan's *Duravastha* and *chandala bhiskhuki*. This being the part of the main stream poetry in Malayalam is considerably significant as it was the age of Venmani movement and all, which encouraged a savarna aesthetical sensibility in literature. So while looking at the Dalit lineage of poetry, we can trace that the beginnings of Dalit sensibility in this period.

Chapter 2

Puthukavitha- A Discourse in Malayalam Poetry

'*Puthukavitha*'³ is an ambiguous term in Malayalam literature as once *puthukavitha* was understood as modernism in Malayalam poetry from 1960s onwards. The term was translated as modern poetry and hence the term *puthukavitha* is used here to refer to mention those writers who deliberately made a rupture from the modernist movement in poetry. It was in 1966 that, '*puthumudrakal*' a compilation of new poetry in Malayalam literature edited by R.Ramachandran come out. *Harishree* (1972) edited by Satchidanandan and *Kalikalakavitha* (1984) by Attoor Ravivarma also mark the Malayalam poetry of that age. And one significant classification we hear even now in Malayalam poetry is in terms of that the age before and after Balachandran Chullikkad . This is something that makes clear the shift in our poetic sensibility.

Aadhunika kavitha or modern poetry was emerging as a discourse through the writings of Ayyappappanikkar, N.N Kakkad, K.G Sankarappilla *et.al* and long narratives was a special feature of their poetry. The fact that there were poetic triads in Malayalam poetry –Ashan, Uloor, Vallathol as part of our poetic tradition reminds us of the poetic parameters we were following and we had in mind regarding poetry. These poets were experimenting with the meter even though they were not completely withdrawing from them. A romanticized dream of revolution and liberation was there sometimes. And it is in this period, poetry gained more importance in its oral form and recitation of poetry by the poets themselves became the symbol of youth in the college campuses. There were experiments regarding the rhythm of the poetry too.

³ '*Puthukavitha*' means new poetry. The term is referring as an aesthetic turn from the modernity in Malayalam Poetry.

It is then we see a shift that prose also becomes poetry. Ayyappapanikkar is known as one who broke this conventional poetic style with the poem ‘kolapathakam’.

“Kam

Thakam

Paathakam

Kolapaathakam

Vazhakkolapathakam”

It was an experiment on the form of the poem that never existed before. This particular shift can be read as the result of exposure and association with world poetry. Ayyappapanikkar was very familiar with world poetry scene at his time. He could make a new sense through his poems and other writings.

2.1 In search of Genetics of ‘Puthukavitha’

On close observation we can recognize that poets like Atoor Ravivarma, Myethil Radhakrishnan and K.A Jayaseelan forming a different sensibility while staying within the purview of modern poetry. Atoor experimented with prose poetries and introduced the aesthetics of the micro, in poems like *sitting*, *walking* etc. Myethil dealt with environmental issues, scientific perspective and bio- aesthetics while developing a unique style of diction⁴. K. A Jayaseelan resisted the sanskritisation of language through poems like ‘*peru nettiyil*’ (name on the forehead), ‘Njaanjool puranam’ and *Aarohanam*.⁵

⁴ Myethilinte Kavithakal, DC Books, 2011

⁵ Jayaseelan, Jayaseelanate kavithakal, current books, Thrissur 2009

At the same time we can see another group of poets expressing somewhat same sense of sensibility-Satchidanandan, K. G Sankarapillai and A.Ayyappan. The point of departure of these two group of poets is that the first group was not sticking with any political ideologies or romanticisation of it while the group of Satchidanandan, K. G Sankarapillai and A.Ayyappan seems to be hopeful or in some way responding to of the future with respect to political activism. Also, A. Ayyappan is the odd one in this group as he is more concentrating on the images. Eventhough we can see responses to the political situation in his poems hence he in this group.

This grouping of the poets with the same sensibility is done here inorder to bring in an interesting trace of puthukavitha in modern poetry. The first set of poets discussed here-Attoor, Myetyhil and Jayaseelan were not read widely when they wrote in the times of modernity. But now, we can see an interlink of them with the new poets.

The poet Anwar Ali observes that the poetry of 1980's to 1990's was 'the poetry of the transition age', the bridge between modern poetry and *puthukavitha*. We can see the poems of Rafeeq Ahammed interacting directly with the trends of modernity .And the *puthukavitha* is not something that repairs the domain of Malayalam poetry as a whole, as a movement, it stands as a major discourse that brings in different perspectives in theme and style in poetry. It can be observed that the *puthukavitha* was imbibing and extending the features of modernist poetry such as breaking the metre, experiments in stylistics, finding out poetry in prose by breaking the conventional definition of poetry itself and getting inclusive in tone from the trivial to the sober.

We can identify these trends in the poems of T.P Rajeevan writing in the 1980's which was at the same time creative of a unique style. The poem '*Rashtrathanthram*' is an example. In this poem, we see the poem looking back to the predecessors and historicizing their poetry.

Another prominent feature of Rajeevan's poetry is the usage of animal imageries like cat, tortoise, fox, earthworm which were not at all present in the mainstream poetic domain.

Lalitham by P.P Ranmachandran is critically evaluated as a poem that does not have the 'burden of modernist lineage'. P Raman's *Kanam*, Veeran kutti's *Ashlesham* etc... add to this. Anwar Ali and Sebastian also come under this school of poetry.

2.2 Parody as a critique

K.R Tony makes a sharp cut from the romantic ideals of revolution that was present in the poetries of 1970's to 1980's which were a direct reflection of the upswing in the Communist movement and the Naxalite movement in Kerala. This particular social scenario was more visible in the poetry, dramas and films of this age than any other art forms. If we take the case of poetry, we can see the martyrs of the age become monuments in poetry. In Balachandran Chullikad's poetry especially in *Maappusakhi oru rasthtreeyathadavukaranu*, we can see such a poetic expression.

Samanila and *Shishtam* by K.R Tony evidently becomes a satire on the failure of the romantic concept of revolution and the act of valorizing it almost as if because of an addiction. 'Pollunna panikkidkkayil ninn' starts with

"I have not written a poem on martyrs

In a land where the dead are respected,

My social consciousness is pathetic!....."

Black humour is the dominant trait of Tony's poetry, it subverts the dreamy images of modernity by using conventional metres in order to get a detached effect. And the satire he uses makes fun of the 'self' and it provides this poetry with the status of anti-poetry and shakes off the imitative styles that were present in his early poetry.

P.P Ramachandran's poem *Lalitham* as simple as the simplest about the simplest revealing and proving that it is not the theoretical or historical baggage that becomes the 'new' poetry.

2.3 Locating the Dalit poetry

If we look at the beginning of Dalit poetry we can see that the trait of the subaltern poetry was incorporated into the texture of then the mainstream poetry. We can see such a poetic sensibility developing in poetry through Kumaranasan in the classical period (*Chandalabikshuki*), Changapuzha (*Ramanan*), Kadammanitta (*Kurathi*), O.N.V (*Malankurathi*), Kureepuzha Sreekumar (*Keezhalan*) linking it to the new poetry. As a separate stream of Dalit poetry, we can trace it from K.K. Govindan, K.K.S.Das, Raghavan Atholi, Sivadas Purameri, G.Sasi Madhuraveli, S.Jodeph, M.B.Manoj, M.R.Renukumar, Vijila, Dhanya, S.Kalesh to Binu M.Pallipad.

Poets like Raghavan Atholi were evoking forgotten memories desires and language while "the younger poets experiment in loose prosaic forms from a seemingly detached and alienated space." (Dasan, Pradibha et al 3).

Here to identify the traits of Dalit poetry as a part of *puthukavitha*, three contemporary poets, S.Joseph, M.B.Manoj and M.R.Renukumar are taken. This study enquires into the developing Dalit subjectivity and the aesthetics of it. These three poets discuss the unseen, the unheard and the untouched/untouchable through their poetry.

Chapter 3

Understanding the insider and his/her imagination:

A Case study of Dalit Poems in Contemporary Malayalam Literature

While looking at the discourse of art, we can see how its boundaries are drawn, and classifications like pure art, folk art, popular art etc envisioned. One basic strand that goes deep into all those discussions regarding the sanctity of art or culture, or, the assigned honorary treatment of some particular forms as the iconography of the land, was derived from the 'imagined nation'. And of course, this imagined nation was the product of the power relationships existing in the society. The canvas on which your work is presented was always important, and was one of the important factors that determine the quality of the work. This canvas was always backed up and is conditioned by the power relationships existing in the society.

So, writing the land (*deshamezhuth*) has a creative potential within, which can retrieve and relate the forgotten angles and forbidden lives- a program of resistance and liberation.

Agamben mentions that "Remembrance restores possibility to the past, making what happened incomplete and completing what never was. Remembrance is neither what happened nor what did not happen but, rather, their potentialization, their becoming possible once again"⁶ As memory is a tool that can constitute the 'nation', or rather can re-create the nation, has a politics as well as poetics. Memory functions in relation to experience, physical or/and mental.

⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: collected essays in philosophy*, Stanford University Press, 1999

‘Writing the nation/land’ becomes a political process when it pulls out the hidden (conveniently forgotten) whether it is the defined territory of literariness of language, literariness of life or literariness of memories. What is usually taken for granted as representations of land- culture, food, language, imagination, nationality-all come under the purview of questioning and debate. And we can see that ‘writing the land’ becomes strongly visible in Malayalam poetry with the emergence of *puthukavitha* (new poetry) in the `1990’s.

How is this modern poetry different from the poetry of seventies, in Malayalam? The idea of new age poetry refers to a change in aesthetic sense- both in its content and form. There are a bunch of poems that hinges to the new age poetry of the 1990s..

3.1) Staying away from the modern charisma

We can see the blossoming of *puthukavitha* by the end of 1980 and the beginning of 1990s.This was not a movement as such in the beginning, but a conscious distance from ‘modernism’ was maintained in this new poetry. There were some common points of reference this poetry expressed which made it different from the ‘modern’. Ideologically speaking, the symmetry of ‘renaissance poetry’ (from the age of Kumaranashan to the times of modernity) was and is ruptured and the concept of ‘ universal humanity’ began to get substituted with the differences in caste/gender/eco that problematised the identity of Malayalam poetry itself.

The narrative techniques employed till the times of the modern was changed. Observing the new poetry in Malayalam, we can see that the accepted standard and centrality of Malayalam language gives way to the slangs expressing local differences in language. Modernity was very intensively tracing out the emotional mindscape of the poetic self. It was a celebration of meta-narratives even in short poems. When we look at the *puthukavitha* we recognise

metaphors and images giving way to narration and visualisation. Thus, a shift in both content and form is evident.

The experiments in poetic language can be seen as an attempt to pollinate the linearity of poetic language with several non linearities. An obvious opening up of the poetic area that was protected by fencing can be seen, the poetic language giving up the ornamentative style and move to the language of daily discourses. Putting it in another way, the language of daily discourses, as well as several other daily lives themselves that were impure, began to enter the poetic space and started exploring their own space.

'*Kanam*'(Weight) the collection of poems by P Raman was seen as and meant to be a deliberate departure from modernity. He wrote that "these poems are neither romantic nor realistic, neither political nor apolitical". It opened up a new kind of sensibility in Malayalam. At the same time *Lalitham* (Simplicity) by P.P Ramachandran, "Malayalakavithaykkoru katth" (A letter to Malayalam poetry) and *Shishtam*(Balance) by K.R Tony emerged as iconic poems that conveyed the change and difference in the poetic tradition.

At the entrance of the literary world, there stands Malayalam poetry wearing kanakachilanka(golden anklet), kaanchana kaanchi(golden waist band) and with a beautiful smile on the redlips as portrayed in "Kavyanartaki"(Changapuzha,). This is a poem iconic of the Malayali's perception of life, literature and culture. We can see different aspects working out here, which makes it a highly political, violent act of silence and silencing. Of course, this is what we perceived and wishes to perceive as literature. Its elite nature is very much evident and it also reveals our (here 'Malayali') 'soft corner' approach to 'beauty'(bhangi) and we will never see somebody going deep into the earth(suggestve of the Mahabali myth).

When we turn to S Joseph, the nature and the land are so transforming to the land that they never narrated in that common/ ideal literary sense of beauty. Here I am looking at those poems to locate the words standing as the words itself within context.

3.2) ‘Some Dark Spaces’ and unwritten words

This is a very nice monologue on the cyclical patterns of nature, which each time provides amazement to those looking towards it, and the poem gives a parallel parable to the biblical story of Eden. Even though based on the ‘father centred’ notion, it opens up to the light lit by those minute constituents of nature at the dark spaces, in the rubber plantations, even when the sun is shining fully .Those dark places become visible when a *uppan* or *olenjali* reaches there. In the poem, the poetic persona’s father sends him to find out the nests of these birds and he goes in search of that. By that time the season of heavy rains had begun.

The poet persona enters the world of nature and becomes a part of it. In a vividly descriptive poem, the poem creates a different landscape of nature that overwhelms our senses. He climbed the hills like a dragon fly and saw the waterfalls that carve the rocks and eat their depth inside. On the lower parts of the forest, he could hear plenty of sounds. Butterflies stuck on his shoulders and he slept under a tree. When he woke up, he heard fruits falling down here and there. But that was the laughing of a forest girl. They made a house on the grassland where the flocks of deer in search of sunshine search shade in the form of sun shine and the elephants in the form of darkness search for sunshine. One day, the girl shows the man a cave in the inner forest .The voice that goes into it was echoing, as was the light too and it was full of water.

Whether these birds and humans come from this?

I asked

Ah...I don’t know

I remember, she replied then.

Another day

I said while lying on her lap

Reached nowhere in search of the birds' address

She then told, there, our two children are

I remember it now.

In a dream

Father called me

Hearing that call

We left the forest

When we reached the land

It was the time of falling leaves.

My house and my father were covered by fallen leaves

Then only I recognised that my house was also situated at a place full of darkness

Far before the lights were out there

There a *uppan* reaches today noon

A *olenjali* in the afternoon

Their cries lights a lamp there

Then I told my children when they grew

I went in search of these birds' origin

Couldn't find

Now, it's your turn to go and find it and be back

When you come back,

It will be the season of falling leaves.

S Joseph's works not only write the unwritten landscapes but also critique the already written poetry. They make us revisit the poetics and poetic deviations. *Vaakkukal*(words) is one of the poem by S. Joseph taken from the poetry collection *Meenakaran*, which narrates five different contexts in which words function with their presence or absence; in its first five stanzas.

It begins with giving out some words like '*theakkan kollan*' or '*kanakumpiveyil*', we will hear in a coastal area (thura) or a village, specific to that area, that can't be substituted with another words, which we may not understand when we hear them for the first time. And in a house where wedding is taking place, we hear plenty of words becoming hullabaloo. And in a house where someone is dead, there is an absence of speech except some regular expressions like 'take that crying baby to the other side' or 'whether the daughter has arrived?'

My brother died at the quarry by a falling rock

As he didn't had ears

A word written in the air with a finger,

Or a thrash without a sound may have saved him

These striking lines nourish our thought that word is life giving or what makes sense of a word.

Words are also life histories, articulated in reminiscence, repetitively told –of a travel from the flooded house to a relative's. The *chedathi* may be nodding to the *ammamma*, the storyteller even after she has slept while hearing the story. Group songs and abuses from the toddy shop, fishermen and carpenters need more words. A boy called Vineesh has written 'The crow tells its name while crying.', the first line that has to be written on the poetry book

that is not yet written. Thus the poem invites us to the different instances of word. The poet is also conscious of the inconsistency of the words, the abstract nature of language/word. He is sure that words may get changed by time, sometimes given up and sometimes gets newly minted. And the poem ends up with an introspective and optimistic tone that is derived out of the struggle to exist:

Words don't have any charm now

The poet a carpenter works with a blunt chisel

And a mason bereft of tools

Work has to be done..

The poet goes in search of work through the jobless land..

A noticeable feature of this poem, as several others of S. Joseph is that it shatters the notion that meaning and literariness is vested with a philosophical language and metaphysical thoughts. Joseph makes patterns of poetry by twisting, twirling and spinning the 'common talk'. It is rooted in life but is not simple documentation and there lies the craftsmanship. And there are spaces left for the reader to pause and find poetry.

3.3) The 'Objects' Speak

Here the object does not stand for something else but speaks for itself. And it is not the generalised perception of the object that matters here. The depiction of the subjective existence of the object puts light on the possibilities of its otherwise existences.

Pengalude Bible (My Sister's Bible) by S. Joseph is the finest example of how the object come to define the content. Speaking of the Bible, it says what makes his sister's Bible. The ration card which has lost its binding, an application form for a loan, the money lender's

(blade is the nickname) card, notices of the festivals at the temple and church, brother's child's photo, the paper on which the instruction to stitch a baby cap is written , a hundred rupee note, S.S.L.C Book(10th certificate)..

What all things are not there; Preface, Old Testament and the new maps and the red cover.

This poem gives an altogether different interpretation of the Bible .It is the ' sacred' book in which everything that ' makes life possible' is kept- whether it be the ration card , the money lender's card or her niece's photo. And there disappears the holy words. A touching and intense depiction of a lower-class & caste woman's life.... On the crossroads of two religions, the sister is still striving for her life and her struggles make form to her Bible.

This interpretation seems really interesting as never is the Bible imagined as consisting of unprinted materials such as the above even though we know the reality. To keep its holiness in our imagination too, we keep away the real things which are there in the Bible.

The poem is noted for its simplicity in using minimal words of common use and this brings about a surprising effect of novelty and is one of the interesting poems by S. Joseph.

'Mridula(mritha)maya utharavukal' A poem by Renukumar, the poem brings into play the talks of a man who sells things in a bus and can be very much compared with the poetic style of My Sister's Bible by S.Joseph. Having some untranslatable characteristics every Malayali who have travelled in Kerala can easily recognise, the poem points to the fear of the 'other'- to not to be touched by a woman who sells fish or not to be touched by the fish basket while travelling in the bus as it stinks. The one who sells buds, safety pin, A&Z publications or STD -ISD pocket diary, and ginger toffee...talks in the poem and that talk is re-versed by the poet towards the end which makes it interesting. The last item the seller utters is *lakshman rekha*- the chalk that keeps away cockroaches, bedbugs, ants and termites. The general

concern of the travellers is not to be touched by those sellers even by mistake and the poet plays with the word *lakshmanrekha*.

3.4) Questions and dialogues on Land and Labour

Labour and labour in land are two significant and ideological presences the *puthukavitha* especially dalit kavitha puts forward. It is revolution, when the poetry meditates to ‘hear the tic of water beneath the stones, deep in land’

‘Piranna Veedu (The house where one is born) This is a beautiful poem by S. Joseph about the house where one is born. Full of life and nature, the house is neither a disturbance nor a noise to the nature

It is there

At the land that seems to be a forest,

Where there is the cuckoo and a squirrel and a cat sit on the branch of a mango tree

On the hillside

By the side of a tamarind

On which the watermelon creeps.

One is awakened to life afresh there- the burner with firewood, mango leaves, tapioca and chilly and the sleep at the chayip.

Awakened by the sound of a falling coconut leaf, by the cry of the pulley like a pig that is caught to be killed, or by mother’s call, which swirls round the hill and reaches wherever he goes, like a telephone line, or by the brother’s coming with a torch of coconut leaves through the darkness I go.

In the open fields

In the open ponds

In the open sky

Life is opened

and

The village is a crow that drenches in the rain

And is a crow that flies in the sun.

To imagine beauty in a crow in rain and sun is something different as we have perceived notions about beauty and both blackness and crow were used in association to ugliness .(And I don't know whether the Malayali consciousness can tolerate a pig's cry in the poetry) As another poet Anwar Ali has noticed, poetry marks sights and sounds. (kazchayudeyum kelviyudeyum adayalamakunnu kavitha). Thus, the sound of a falling coconut leaf and the cry of a pulley becomes music in the poetry and we tune our channels so that we can hear and see the 'unheard'.

(I think it can be noticed as a basic characteristics of new poetry in Malayalam that we break out of our conventional habits of senses ...)

'Idam (Space)' This is a poem by S. Joseph, in the poetry collection

Please don't take away the cracks on the trees from the worms

Please don't take away the sky the bird sees from the crack in the tree.

The poem is concerned about those spaces which we rarely notice or tamper with least attention. It is a painful lament in the age of development that is complexly linked with speed.

Further, it is the smartness of occupying the space or even the cruelty embedded in the logic of the survival of the fittest that prevails. Those who are unfit to the fastness of developments gets easily expelled or attacked-a teashop in the junction, a handmade wall of rocks over which the *chorithanam* (a plant that causes itching) and *panache* (a common plant which has small thorns on the leaves) is spread, on which the small green snakes scribble poetry are all on the verge of 'bulldozers.'

Pappan chettan who sings the *vadakkan paattu* or makes a spoon with coconut shells or repairs the umbrella, or the people who grow bitter gourd or snake gourd or the women who make a mat or a basket , those who work at the rubber band company or the ones who crush the black stones together occupies the poem. Those who are spoken about in the poem have a considerably small space at all, over which they don't have any authorship at all and has to live at the constant fear of losing even that small space.

The poem is a significant take as it lights up some lives who were never seen in poetry .There was the '*Malayappulayan*' who had to surrender the fruit of his labour to the feudal lord at the end of the day and who couldn't face his children who were eager to have the fruit they have grown and wished for. There were other characters in fiction also, the black bodies who work mostly in the paddy fields. And they are lost somewhere on the way. From the fields and land they have worked, they, after decades possess little and have moved to or forced to move to other jobs like crushing the black stone or working in the rubber band factory (of course it is a transition from the age of *karshakathozhilalis*) and are not much in the realm of poetry. These people, as most of such workers live in the outskirts of land called *purampokku*, are in the outskirts of imagination also or seems to be 'invisible'.) Some are still left with mat making or basket making or growing snake gourd or bitter gourd with which it is difficult to meet the ends.

Oro kothilum urukiyolichu

Uravakkayulla prarthanakal(Kannichora),

Kumalacha thazhampukal

Pottiyappol

Kannichorayillatha

Manhittayil thala kumpittirunnu

Oruthulli midippinay

Kaath kallodu cherthu vachu.

Let us see how the subjectivity in different poems derive.

In ‘*Manushyante kaikal manushyante kaikal*’⁷ we come across the urge to build or to present or represent a universal humanitarian concern.

‘Manushyante kaikal,

manushyante kaikal,

kadumpaara pottichudakkunna kaikal,

irumpothu thallithazhampicha kaikal,

ulakkulliloothithazhampicha kaikal,

kalappakkazhuthilthudikkunna kaikal,

kozhukkunna chorilppulakkunna kaikal,

oruppoovil mohamvithakkunna kaikal,

odungatha dandangal koyyunna kaikal,

nilakkatha kanneer thudakkunna kaikal,

karinkalline daivamaakkunna kaikal,

⁷ Balachandran Chullickad , *Pathinettu Kavithakal, DC Books, 1979*

athin munnil dainyam nivedicha kaikal.
Durithangal nilavilikaluyarumaltharayil
Mezhithirikalay viralkaleriyunna kaikal.
Madam kondu pennin mudikkuthu chutti-
Chazhipponte nencham pilarthikkodukkunna kaikal.
Ninathilkkuthirthikkodunkattu chikkum
Mudikkuthu kettikkodukkunna kaikal.
Adheeshathvamennum vilangitta kaikal,
Vishappinte kandham njerikunna kaikal
Vizhuppaya lokam viyarppil kuthirthi
Velukkum varethachalakkunna kaikal,
Malakkotgha bharam chumakkunna kaikal,
Mahasaudhamellam padukkunna kaikal,
Charitrangalellam padakkunna kaikal,
Perumkala chakram thirikkunna kaikal,
Iruttathu pantham pidikkunn akaikal,
Prabhathangal than peredukkunna kaikal
Manushyante kaikal!
Marikkatha kaikal!!(1979)

Oru Koolippanikkarante Chiri-Amavasi (1982, Balachandran Chullikkad) acknowledges the toil of the labourers and even admits that the narrator could not find their histories marked anywhere.(we are getting only a romanticised history of the labourers).The poem starts by addressing the neighbour labourer building the roads. Even though his sentiments are addressed, the interesting fact is that the labourer is a neighbour only. It doesn't mean that a person can't write on a labourer, what I am trying to problematise here is the subjectivities of

the subaltern poetry. In the quoted poem, the hand of a toiling man is accredited, which stands along for a justifiable world. The hands that made the idols of God become *powerless* in front of them. It is the same sentiment that is expressed in Kureppuzha's *Keezhalan* too.

The poem *Vranithalipi* (*Wounded scripts*) is an attempt to mark the ultimate precarious position of the marginalised existence and is an articulation to give life and soul to prepare for the struggle. It is engrossed with the recognition of repression that throbs in each footstep and arises in solidarity with the struggle to smash the shackles. The poem begins:

The truth that

In each footstep

One throbs

Burns my feet.

In each grass leaf one taste

Dries up my tongue.

A saw is getting sharpened inside

While hearing the blazing truths

Seeing the blistering scenes

In the unfathomable depths

A dead body turns to be a ferry

And from the inability of using the dead body as a ferry to save one self, the poem realises or gains the strength to struggle and thus becomes the commitment to the dead and the living and the poem reads.

Ants know

How to run all over the earth

Without getting the feet burned

And the tongues dried up

And carve the wounded scripts of a counter language in the nazhikkalu (milestones)

How to hide the seeds of an urulpottal (.....)in the cave engravings

The poem ‘*Kattakkalangalkkappuram.*’by S Joseph picturises the premises of a painter’s house. And that is something which is not yet picturised in poetry. The painter friend had not drawn historiography of his life. The paintings this poem refers to Jayalal –The rat and its death entering in the same hole, Two red chillies in a plate-

And the nature around see his paintings interact with them and

The bricks in the hot *choola*

Draw a tree with the smoke.

Seeing that,

The sugar canes too

Dip their brushes in white and draw

kaattukozhikal too their pencil legs.

Ottal plants draw the cries of uppan in the wind.⁸

3.5) Oppression and beauty: looking into the perspective of the ‘other’

While looking back to the Malayalam literature syllabus I have gone through in my school, it seems even funny that, from the kuttikkavithakal (poems for children), children are promoted to the wide world of Literature, or even introduced with highly ornamentative poetry. It is actually very much symbolic.

⁸ S.Joseph ,*Uppante Kooval Varakkunnu, DC Books 2009*

Aranjanangal kothiyirakki

Bhoomiyilekk thanu thanu poyi.

Mukalil thelinja

Neelachandraneyo

Athinnudalile meghappachilukalo

Kilippiranthukalo kandilla:

*Manasil kurichittu aazhathinnalavukal*⁹

‘Three poems’ is also a short poem by Renukumar. It has three sections namely house, room and mat. The first implies to the pathetic condition of the house. One has to bow the head and shoulders in order to get into the house. Has to lie down on the floor and keep the ears keen to know its inside and there is no space for a third step. The line ‘there is no space for a third step’ resonates the reference to the myth of Mahabali the Asura king who was expelled to hell by the tricks of Mahavishnu who was jealous over him. Mahavishnu came to Mahabali in disguise of a Brahmin asking three footsteps of land as a .danam..... Mahabali agreed to that and at the time of measuring the land, Vishnu took the form of a tall man, measured the whole land and sky with his two steps and asked for the place to keep the third step. Mahabali , being an innocent king , to keep his promise showed his head to him in order to keep his promise and Vishnu send him to the hell with his third step , allowing him to visit his subjects once in a year .And Malayalis celebrate Onam in the remembrance of Mahabali’s visit to Kerala. Mahabali’s kingdom was in prosperity when Vishnu approached him for the land. In the poem the entire context is reversed. One has to cut down the branches and shrink like a

⁹ MR. Renukumar, *Kannichora*, ,Pachakkuppi, DC Books 2012

zero to get into the house like is the mat too. Either the feet or the head will be always outside.

A poem by Renukumar, narrates the daily life of a 'mindaprani' and the 'mindaprani' is a human being who has to sleep 'with an empty mind' to wake up before the crow. The narration echoes the repetitiveness of the days of the mindaprani. It suggests a seeming alienation from life the woman experiences.

A word generally used sympathetically for an animal that can't say anything, the poem startles us with the absence of an expected animal at the centre. There is a cow in the poem, but its knot is loosened from the centre and the word ironically points to the milk woman, who wakes up before the crow.

Vibhavabhoopadam (Resource Map) a poem by Renukumar, from his anthology *keninilangalil* that can be roughly translated as 'resource map' actually makes us recognise that there are no resources to map out except the continents of wounds that spread like blood. And what is mapped out makes we feel the terrible plight of its absence.

To hear

The cries of the trees that gets uprooted

The flapping of the bird whose eyes had broken...

Clothed by the green palms

After putting the single cloth to get dried in the sun

My friends- the kingfisher, the *neerkkoli* and the *uppan*

The smell of the flower and the thorns of the thazha are my ornaments

The intimate presence of nature is felt in almost all poems that are discussed here. Nature is an omniscient companion to the struggling men, for those who shrink to their solitude with their worries and concerns. And it suggests to the seeming gap between humans that is left out with any bridge.

'Navagatharod' (To the New Comers) The first poem in the poetry collection *Koottanthathayude Ezhupathu Varshangal* by M.B Manoj, can be translated as 'To the Newcomers'. It is a prayer that seeks or invokes the keen attention of a 'new comer'. It remembers the ones who have walked before or even made the current situation of the 'new comer' possible. It goes...

This sight you are seeing for the first time...

The book you have thrown away without reading...

Don't forget that they were forbidden to your forefathers...

And

The path on which you are walking for the first time

The day you are wasting by daydreaming someone

The seat on which you stepped your feet

Is the backbone of the one who bent for you

Pointing to the struggle a new comer may face, the poem encourages the people to be cautious and serious about the position they reach, to remember those who struggled and not to leave the battle without fight. The poem addresses those who are struggling to re-collect the shattered pieces of identity from the ignorance and fear inflicted upon them by severe oppression.

CONCLUSION

This study was rooted in one well known question “Can the Subaltern Speak?.” The dissertation addressed this question by analysing contemporary Malayalam Dalit poetry. More than coming to an easy theoretical conclusion, what this study intended was to read and read into, the poetry of contemporary Dalit poets as well as contemporary and all time Malayalam poets to achieve an understanding of Malayalam poetry in general and Malayalam Dalit poetry in particular in order to map out trajectory the Dalit poetry is taking.

Understanding the Dalit/ Subaltern subjectivity in contemporary Malayalam Dalit poetry by taking examples of Malayalam Dalit poetry, understanding the issue of ‘difference’, tracing out the alternate landscape of imagination they inscribe in the poetic history of Malayalam literature, and understanding the poetics and politics implicit were the objectives of this study. While talking about the politics/poetics it seems important to mention some of the questions this study confronted at the time of its inception and an understanding it had made throughout the process of research.

Generalising the idea of the subaltern, while taking a specimen of three contemporary male poets for contemporary Dalit literature of Malayalam literature, had posed a serious concern about the aspects and perspectives related to gender regarding this particular study and therefore about the discourse of Dalit literature itself. At the inception of this study, the fact that no female poets were included in the primary sources was a genuine concern for the critics and the researcher herself for the study wanted to be gender sensitive while stating ‘understanding the insider and his/her imagination’ as an objective. From the beginning itself, considerable effort was made to identify female poets writing on this issue and female Dalit

poets themselves but very few poets were found. This puts light on the existing scenario of the genre itself. Vijila Chirappadu and Dhanya are developing Dalit female poets. Here I would like to mention a feature of this genre which is a subgenre in *puthukavitha*. It is in its evolving stage, poetry with a Dalit female sensitivity is yet to be published, of course a notable political fact relevant enough to notice about a poetry in a developing phase.

It will be impossible to discuss a literature, its poetics, and politics without looking into the cultural make up of it. And that is what I have dealt with in the first chapter entitled ‘Mapping the idea of Subaltern in Malayalam Literature’. The cultural formation of Kerala and its development as a ‘culturally unique area’ is discussed to back up the study. In this, an analysis and critique of the aspect of ‘subaltern’ and ‘culture’ with respect to the land of Kerala is attempted. The evolution of Malayalam poetry and the aesthetic sense of dominant/mainstream Malayali culture has been critically studied.

The second chapter stands as a connection in between the *puthukavitha* and Dalit poetry in Malayalam. It provides with a bird’s eye view of Malayalam *puthukavitha* that can help to locate the Dalit poetry within it. Even though discussed in detail in the core chapter I would like to reiterate that the new poetry of Dalit sensibility is conscious of the politics it is dealing with through the poetics and otherwise. The conversation with Renukumar regarding the act and art of his poetry and Dalit poetry in general also underlines this observation. This lead me to conclude this study at this point of time by saying that this study has been conducted at a time when its subjectivity is evolving historically which is not a completed process. This being the fact, this study stands as an attempt to historicise the present by linking it to the past. And the present has not ended; the study is a reference point to look at the future and not a conclusion at all. Apart from taking these poets as a group for this

specific study, it has to be mentioned that this grouping is based on and as a specific reference point that can make the study possible and to meet its objectives.

In this process, as a response to the poetry selected for the study, some of the poems were translated by me and are produced here as an appendix to the study. All translations are mine unless and until otherwise mentioned. And one mentionable fact is that as a translator, I enjoyed translating some poems, and also there were some poems, really appealing too, the ones which were beyond the capacity of translation itself. And I am not at all worried that I could not translate the all of them, and am is interested to observe the whole gamut of poems with all the above mentioned features. There are poems which can be understood/ appreciated only by the 'Malayalis' of different areas who know(dialects). This is one significant understanding the study has enabled for me, one that I arrived at through the process of translation apart from close readings and re-search.

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Appendix

Some of the poems translated by me during the process are given below

The Song

Someone lives in the

home by the valley

When the sun fades, we can hear his song going swirling around the hills.

Don't ask that what its meaning is?

Meanings and meaninglessness: that's all

Let's sit on the shade of the tree

How beautiful is the world and nature. Isn't it?

Do you know how many leaves are there in this tree?

Something like that is there in that song too.

Distance

Sat

Very close

No

Far enough for a bird flying backwards
to reach from one's shoulder to the other.

Which Land Which Girl

Whether that girl hides her eyes with her hand
for not to be seen by that tree and the bird on it?
Whether she hides her eyes with hand
not to show the tree she had planted inside and the bird on it
The sun that rising on the other side
Was trying to take away her fingers from there
The sea made her hair fly
But darkness was spreading inside the hidden eyes
Forgetfulness, that can't be retrieved by any memory, was spreading

The River

Did you get shrunken to a few lines as you flowed very widely?
Even the people who don't know how to swim will feel to swim now.
Does the plants that comes up laugh at that
Lines flow inside?
Hey, they are simply moving with the wind
As the water has moved and the sand is visible
We can say that all the hidden things are revealed or
We reversed the river
Children got a ground to play
Poets got papers to get enthusiastic
Those who dig sand from the river are also enthusiastic
Earlier they took sand from the river
Now they took sand from the sand
They may be thinking that there is water beneath
But that will go down and down
Now, only weeds can do something
They write waves (oolam) water
With the green they searched and found from the water

വിഭവഭൂപടം

ചിരട്ടക്കരിയുടെ
കറുപ്പ് ചേർത്ത്
മെഴുകിയ നിലത്ത്
പഴമണത്താൽ പൊതിഞ്ഞ്
പുതകൾ നിരയ്ക്കുന്ന തഴപ്പായ,
എണ്ണപുരട്ടിയ
വാഴപോളയുടെ
അകമിനുപ്പിൽ
ഓട്ടവിളക്കിൻ
നാളത്താലെഴുതി കറുപ്പിച്ച്
പടച്ച കരിമഷി

ഇരിക്കുവാൻ
കുതിർന്ന തിട്ടകൾ
നടക്കുവാൻ
വഴുതുന്ന വരമ്പുകൾ
ചാടുവാൻ
പുതയുന്ന മടകൾ.
ആടുവാൻ
ഞരമ്പുകളെഴുന്ന
കൈയുഞ്ഞാൽ
കേൾക്കുവാൻ
കടപുഴകുന്ന മരങ്ങളുടെ

ചാവിന്റെ കാൽപ്പെരുമാറ്റം
കവച്ചു വെക്കാൻ
തലങ്ങും വിലങ്ങും പിണഞ്ഞ
കൈവരക്കുരുക്കുകൾ
തൊട്ടാൽ പൊള്ളുന്ന
ശിരോലിഖിതങ്ങൾ
ഒഴുകിപ്പരക്കുന്ന
ചോര പോലെ വളരുന്ന
വ്രണിതഭൂഖണ്ഡങ്ങൾ

ഉടുതുണി
ഉണങ്ങുവാനിട്ട്
കൈതകളുടെ
പച്ചയുടുത്തിരിക്കെ
നീലപൊന്മാനും.
നീർക്കോലിയും
ഉപ്പനും കുട്ട്.
പുമണവും തഴമുള്ളും
ആഭരണങ്ങൾ.

വ്രണിതലിപി

ഓരോ
ചവിട്ടടിയിലും
ഒരാൾ
തുടിക്കുന്നുവെന്ന
നേർ
എന്റെ കാലുകളെ
പൊള്ളിക്കുന്നു.
ഓരോ പുല്ലിലും
ഒരാൾ
ചുവയ്ക്കുന്നുവെന്ന
അറിവ്
എന്റെ
നാവിനെ
വറ്റിക്കുന്നു.

എരിയുന്ന
നേരുകൾ
കേൾക്കെ
കരിയുന്ന
കാഴ്ചകൾ
കാണുകെ
ഉള്ളിലൊ-
രപ്പാവങ്ങൾ
മൂർച്ഛ
കൂട്ടുന്നു.

എത്തമല്ലാത്ത
കയങ്ങളിൽ
ചത്തവന്റെ

ദേഹം
ചങ്ങാടമാകുന്നു.
നൈകയി-
ലൊരുമിനൽ
വേരായിറങ്ങുന്നു.
മുഖപട-
മുരുകി-
യൊലിക്കുന്നു.

ഉറുമ്പുകൾ-
ക്കറിയാം
കാലുകൾ
പൊള്ളാതെ
നാവ്
വറ്റാതെ
എങ്ങനെ
ഭൂമി
മുഴുവൻ
പരക്കം
പായാമെന്ന്
എങ്ങനെ
നാഴിക-
ല്ലുകളിൽ
മറുഭാഷയുടെ
വ്രണിതലിപി
കോറി
വെക്കാമെന്ന്
ഗൃഹം
ചിത്രങ്ങളിൽ
ഒരുരുൾ
പൊട്ടലിൻ
വിത്ത്
ഒളിപ്പിച്ച്
വെക്കാമെന്ന്.

മൂന്ന് കവിതകൾ

വീട്

തലകുനിയ്ക്കണം
മുതുകു വളയ്ക്കണം
നിലംപറ്റെ കിടന്ന്
ചെങ്കിടോർക്കണം
അകം അറിയാൻ.
മൂന്നാമത്തെ ചുവടിനിടമില്ല
ഉരമെങ്ങാൻ ഉരസിയാൽ
അടരും മോന്തായം.
മുഖ്യത്രനേര-
മിഴഞ്ഞാണ് അകം കാണുക.

മുറി

ശിഖരങ്ങൾ കോതി
ഉൾവലിഞ്ഞ് പുജ്യമാകണം
അതിന്റെ അകത്താവാനും.

പായ

ഒന്നുകിൽ കാലുകൾ നിലത്ത്
അല്ലെങ്കിൽ തല
പൊളിപൊട്ടിയ പായയിൽ
മുട്ടകളുടെ കടൽ
മുഖ്യത്രകാത-
മിഴഞ്ഞാണ് പായ കാണുക:

6. പിറന്ന വീട്

ചുറ്റുപാടും വനമെന്നു തോന്നുന്ന
 പ്രകൃതിയിൽ
 പുളളിക്കുയിലുമണ്ണാനും
 മുവാണ്ടൻമാറിന്റെ
 കൊമ്പത്തിരിക്കുന്ന പച്ചയും
 എല്ലാമുള്ള പ്രകൃതിയിൽ
 ഒരു ശലഞ്ചെരിവിൽ
 കൃന്മണ്ണ കയറിക്കിടക്കുന്ന പുളിക്കരികിൽ
 പിറന്ന വീടിരിക്കുന്നു.

അഴത്തപ്പറമ്പിലായിട്ടുയരങ്ങൾ പണിയുവാൻ
 വർണ്ണവിട്ട വൃന്ദങ്ങൾക്കൊടുവിൽ പച്ചതെറിപ്പിച്ച്
 നിലിക്കുന്നു ചുണ്ടപ്പന.
 അതിൽനിന്ന് പനത്ത
 പറന്നുവന്നൊരു ചിലപ്പെരിഞ്ഞിട്ടു മടങ്ങുന്ന
 വഴിയല്ലാവഴിയുടെ
 അടിയിലായിരിക്കുന്നു പിറന്ന വീട്.

പിറന്ന വീട്ടിലെത്തുമ്പോൾ
 തുറക്കുന്നു ജീവിതം
 വിറകടുപ്പം മാറിലയും
 പച്ചക്കപ്പയും മുളകും
 ചായ്പിലെ ഉറക്കവും

ചുട്ടുമടൽ വീഴുന്ന ഒച്ചയാലോ
 കിണറിന്റെ കപ്പിയൊരു
 കൊല്ലാൻ പിടിച്ച പന്നിയായിട്ടുരയുന്ന
 കരച്ചിലാലോ

അല്ലെങ്കിലിന്ന് ടെലഫോൺ-
 കമ്പിപോകുന്നമാതിരി
 കുന്നിറങ്ങി വളവായി

ഞാൻ പോകുമിടങ്ങളിൽ
 വന്നെത്തുന്ന അമ്മയുടെ
 വിളിയാലോ
 അല്ലെങ്കിലിന്ന് കറണ്ടിന്റെ
 കമ്പിക്കാലിലെ വെട്ടമായ്
 ഞാൻ പോകുമിരുട്ടുകളിൽ
 വന്നെത്തുന്ന ചാച്ചന്റെ
 അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ചേട്ടന്റെ
 ചുട്ടും പിടിച്ചുള്ള വരവാലോ

തുറക്കുന്നു ജീവിതം.

തുറന്നുവെച്ച പാടങ്ങളിൽ
 തുറന്നുവെച്ച കുളങ്ങളിൽ
 തുറന്നുവെച്ച ആകാശത്ത്
 ജീവിതം തുറക്കുന്നു.

മഴ നനയുന്ന കാക്കയാണ് ഗ്രാമമെന്നു പറയാം
 വെയിലിൽ വെട്ടിപ്പറക്കുന്ന
 കാക്കയാണതെന്നുമാം

ഗ്രാമത്തിലൊരു തോടിന്റെ
 കരയിൽ കയ്യാല കെട്ടിയ
 പറമ്പിന്റെയേറ്റുവുമുയർന്നുള്ള തിട്ടയിൽ

പിറന്ന വീടിരിക്കുന്നു.

മലയാളകവിയുടെ ഒരു കത്ത്

ദൂരനാൾ പൂഴയിൽവെച്ചു കണ്ടു
ഏറെനേരം ഒന്നിച്ചിരുന്നു.

പൂഴയ്ക്ക് ഒരു ജനലുണ്ട്
അതിലൂടെ ഞാൻ പറന്നുപോകും. നീ പറഞ്ഞു,
നിന്നെവിട്ട് ഗ്രാമത്തിലെത്തിയപ്പോഴും പറഞ്ഞതോർത്തു.

പൂഴയ്ക്ക് ജനലുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അത് വീടായിരിക്കണം
പറന്നുപോകണമെന്ന് പറഞ്ഞെങ്കിൽ ജയിലായിരിക്കണം.

പാവങ്ങൾക്കിടയിൽ ഞാൻ കഴിയുന്നു.
അവരുടേതുപോലെയാരു കൂടിലിൽ
കിട്ടുന്നതു തിന്നുന്നു
അകലെനിന്ന് വെള്ളമെടുക്കണം
അപ്പൻ എന്നെ പട്ടി എന്നു വിളിക്കുന്നതു
കേൾക്കണം
അമ്മയുടെ തീട്ടവും മുളളിയും എടുത്തുകളയണം
പാട്ട, ചെരിപ്പ്, കുപ്പി, കടലാസ്
ഇതൊക്കെ പെറുക്കിവില്ക്കുകയാണു പണി
ആളുകൾ എന്നെ പെറുക്കി എന്നു വിളിക്കുന്നു
വണ്ടിയിൽ എന്റെ ചാക്കുകെട്ട് കേറ്റിപ്പു.

എന്നിട്ടും നിന്നെ വിളിച്ചു
നീ വന്നില്ല.

നിന്റെ ആളുകളെ എനിക്കറിയാം
വലിയ കെട്ടിടങ്ങൾപോലെയുള്ളവർ
അവർ നിന്നെ ചതുരങ്ങളിലും വ്യത്നങ്ങളിലും
പുട്ടിയട്ടു.
ഒരു തുള്ളിയിലൂടെ നീ പുറംലോകം കണ്ടു
വീട്ടുപകരണങ്ങളിൽ തട്ടി വീണു.
തുണികളും ചിരികളുമെടുത്തണിഞ്ഞ്

അമ്പലത്തിലേക്കുപോകുംവഴി
നീ കാറിലിരുന്ന് എന്നെ നോക്കിയത് മറക്കത്തില്ല.
എല്ലാം മടുത്തു അല്ലേ?

കാടുകാണാനും ഓലപ്പുരയിലുറങ്ങാനും
ചെളിവെള്ളത്തിൽ നടക്കാനും
പെണ്ണിനു കൊതി തോന്നാം
വെയിലത്ത് അവൾ പൊള്ളും
മഴനനഞ്ഞ് പനിപിടിക്കും.

നിനക്കുവേണ്ടത് സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യമല്ലേ?
ഇവിടെ അതേയുള്ളു
ഇഷ്ടമുള്ളതു പറയാം, ചെയ്യാം.
തോട്ടിൽപ്പോയി കുളിക്കാം
പറമ്പിലെത്തുന്ന കരികിലംപിടകളോടൊപ്പം
ചിലയ്ക്കാം
തിണ്ണയിൽ തഴപ്പായിട്ടിരിക്കാം
അമ്മയും അപ്പനും കൂട്ടുണ്ടാകും
പണി കഴിഞ്ഞ് ഞാൻ ഓടിയോടിവരും
കഞ്ഞിയും മുളപ്പിച്ച പയറും കഴിച്ചുകിടക്കാം
അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ആകാശം നോക്കിയിരിക്കാം
മുങ്ങുകൾ മുളുന്നതുകേട്ടു നീ പേടിക്കെഞ്ഞ്
ഞാൻ അപ്പോൾ നിന്നെ സ്നേഹംകൊണ്ടുമുടും.

പുഴുവിൽനിന്ന് മരപ്പൊത്തുകൾ എടുക്കല്ലേ,
മരപ്പൊത്തിൽനിന്ന് കിളികാണും മാനം എടുക്കല്ലേ!

കാറ്റിൽനിന്ന് അകലങ്ങളെ
അകലങ്ങളിൽനിന്ന്
കക്കനീറ്റുമിടം കഴിഞ്ഞുള്ള
തോടിന്റെ വക്കത്തെ അമ്മവീടിനെ.

ഓരോ വീട്ടിലും ഒരു ഗ്രാമം
അത് എടുക്കല്ലേ!
ഗ്രാമത്തിൽനിന്ന് കളയും വിളയും നിറഞ്ഞ
കുളക്കോഴികളുടെ പാടങ്ങൾ എടുക്കല്ലേ!

കവലയിലെ ചായക്കട എടുക്കല്ലേ!

ഉണ്ടക്കല്ലിൻമീതേ ഉണ്ടക്കല്ലുകൾ വച്ച
ചൊറിയണമോ പനച്ചേനോ പടർന്ന
പച്ചിലപ്പാമ്പുകൾ കവിത കുറിക്കുന്ന
കയ്യാലകൾ എടുക്കല്ലേ!

വടക്കൻപാട്ടു പാടുന്ന,
തവിയുണ്ടാക്കുകയോ കൂട നന്നാക്കുകയോ ചെയ്യുന്ന
പാപ്പൻ ചേട്ടനെയും
ഓട്ടോ ഓടിക്കുകയോ
പാവലോ പടവലമോ വളർത്തുകയോ ചെയ്യുന്ന
ആളുകളെയും
കൊട്ട നെയ്യുകയോ പാനെയ്യുകയോ
റബർബാൻഡ് കമ്പനിയിൽ പോകുകയോ
മിറ്റിലടിക്കുകയോ ചെയ്യുന്ന പെണ്ണുങ്ങളെയും
ന്നും ചെയ്യല്ലേ!

ഇലഞ്ഞി, പയ്യാനി, വട്ട, താന്നി
കപ്പലുമാവ്, തൊട്ടാവാടി
ഒന്നും തൊട്ടുപോകരുത്.

പുള്ളുതളർത്തിയെന്ന കഥയുള്ള ജോസ്
പറവകൾക്കൊപ്പമോ
മുകിലുകൾക്കൊപ്പമോ കഴിഞ്ഞുകൊള്ളട്ടെ.

ഇടക്കാരന്മാർ നടന്നുകൊള്ളട്ടെ.

കളിച്ചുകളിച്ചു മഴയെല്ലാം വെയിലായല്ലോ
പണിയെല്ലാം പോയല്ലോ.

പെങ്ങളുടെ ബൈബിൾ

പെങ്ങളുടെ ബൈബിളിലുള്ളവ:

- കുത്തുവിട്ട രേഷൻകാർഡ്
- കടാറായ്പ്പയ്ക്കുള്ള അപേക്ഷാഫാറം
- ബ്ലേഡുകാരുടെ കാർഡ്
- ആറാട്ടിന്റെയും പെരുനാളിന്റെയും നോട്ടീസുകൾ
- ആങ്ങളുടെ കുട്ടിയുടെ ഹോട്ടേഴ്സ്
- കുട്ടിത്തൊപ്പി തയ്ക്കുന്നവിധം കുറിച്ച കടലാസ്
- ഒരു നൂറുരൂപാ നോട്ട്
- എസ്.എസ്.എൽ.സി. ബുക്ക്

പെങ്ങളുടെ ബൈബിളിലില്ലാത്തവ:

- ആമുഖം
- പഴയനിയമം, പുതിയനിയമം
- ഭൂപടങ്ങൾ
- ചുവന്ന പൂരംചട്ട.

ഏത് ദേശം ഏത് പെൺകുട്ടി

(31) മരവും അതിലെ കിളിയും
തന്നെ കാണാതിരിക്കാനാണോ
ഈ പെൺകുട്ടി കണ്ണുപൊത്തിനിൽക്കുന്നത്?
ഉള്ളിൽനട്ട മരത്തെയും
അതിലെ കിളിയെയും
മറ്റാരും കാണാതിരിക്കാനാണോ
അവൾ കണ്ണുപൊത്തിനിൽക്കുന്നത്?
മറുചെരുവിൽ പൊങ്ങുന്ന സൂര്യൻ
അവളുടെ വിരലുകൾ അകറ്റാൻ
ശ്രമിക്കുന്നുണ്ടായിരുന്നു
കടൽ അവളുടെ മുടി പറപ്പിക്കുന്നുണ്ടായിരുന്നു
അവൾ പൊത്തിയ കണ്ണുകൾക്കുള്ളിൽ
പക്ഷേ ഇരുട്ടുപരക്കുകയായിരുന്നു
ഒരോർമ്മയ്ക്കും വീണ്ടെടുക്കാനാവാത്ത
മറവി പരക്കുകയായിരുന്നു

കട്ടക്കളങ്ങൾക്കപ്പുറം

കട്ടക്കളങ്ങൾക്കപ്പുറം
കരിമ്പുപാടങ്ങൾക്കുമപ്പുറം
കാട്ടുകോഴികൾ പാർക്കും
തോട്ടരികിലെക്കാടും
തോടിൻമീതേ പായും
പാടവരമ്പും പിന്നിട്ടുപോയാൽ
ഒട്ടൽക്കാടുകൾക്കപ്പുറം
ഉപഷാപ്പിനുമപ്പുറം
ചിത്രം വരച്ചുകഴിയുന്ന
കൂട്ടുകാരന്റെ വീടുണ്ട്.

അവനുണ്ടച്ഛനുമമ്മയും
അമ്മാവനും പെങ്ങളും
വകേലൊരു പെങ്ങളാകയാൽ
അവളിടയ്ക്കിടയ്ക്കുവന്ന്
അവന്റെ വീട്ടിൽ പാർക്കുന്നു.

ഒറ്റമരത്തിൽ കയർകെട്ടി
ഊഞ്ഞാലാടുന്ന പെൺകുട്ടിയും
ഒരേ മാളത്തിൽ കേറുന്ന
എലിയുമതിന്റെ മരണവും
പാത്രത്തിൽ വച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന
ചുവന്ന രണ്ടു മുളകുകളും
അവൻ വരച്ച ചിത്രങ്ങൾ
വയനാടൻ ചിത്രങ്ങൾ.

സ്വന്തം ജീവിതചിത്രങ്ങൾ
അവനൊട്ടും വരച്ചില്ല
അവൻ വരച്ചതു കണ്ടിട്ട്
അതിനോടു കൂട്ടുകൂടിട്ട്
ചുളയ്ക്കുവച്ച കട്ടകൾ
പുകകൊണ്ടൊരു മരം വരയ്ക്കുന്നു

കണ്ണിച്ചോര

അരഞ്ഞാണങ്ങൾ
കൊത്തിയിറക്കി
ഭൂമിയിലേക്ക്
താണുതാണുപോയി.

മുകളിൽ തെളിഞ്ഞ
നീലച്ചന്ദനയോ
അതിന്നുടലിലെ
മേഘപ്പാച്ചിലുകളോ
കിളിപ്പിരാന്തുകളോ കണ്ടില്ല;
മനസ്സിൽ കുറിച്ചിട്ടു
ആഴത്തിനളവുകൾ.

ഓരോ കൊത്തിലും
ഉരുകിയൊലിച്ചു
ഉറവയ്ക്കായുള്ള പ്രാർത്ഥനകൾ.

കുമളച്ച തഴമ്പുകൾ
പൊട്ടിയപ്പോൾ
കണ്ണിച്ചോരയില്ലാത്ത
മൺതിട്ടയിൽ
തലകുന്ദിയിരുന്നു.
ഒരുതുളളി മിടിപ്പിനായ്
കാത് കല്ലോടു ചേർത്തുവെച്ചു.

നിഴൽപോലെയുടൽ
മണ്ണിൽ പടർന്നതോടെ

തൂന്നുവാൻ തുടങ്ങി;
ഇരുളിന്റെ സൂചികളുറക്കം.

കിഴക്ക് വെള്ളകീറും മുന്വേ
മേഘങ്ങളിടിച്ചിട്ട്
കിണറിനോടൊപ്പം
മുടിക്കളയണമേ
എന്നൊരു തേങ്ങൽ
അതിനിടയിലും
തലനീട്ടിക്കൊണ്ടിരുന്നു.

വാക്കുകൾ

(1) വാക്കുകളിലോ നാട്ടിൻപുറങ്ങളിലോ ചില വാക്കുകളുണ്ട്
തെക്കൻ കൊല്ലൻ, കാനകുന്ദിയിൽ എന്നിങ്ങനെ.
ഒറ്റക്കേൾവിക്കോ അർത്ഥം പറയാതെയോ
മനസ്സിലാറില്ല.
അവയ്ക്കു പകരം വാക്കുകളില്ല.

വിവാഹവിട്ടിൽ എന്തൊരു ബഹളം!
വിവാഹം വേണ്ടെന്നു വയ്ക്കാൻ പറ്റുമോ?
മരിച്ചു വീട്ടിൽ മിണ്ടാട്ടമില്ല.
എങ്കിലും
അളിയനെ. അറിയിച്ചോ?
ആ കരയുന്ന കുട്ടിയെ അപ്പൂറത്തേക്കു കൊണ്ടുപോ!
മകളു വന്നോ?
എന്നിങ്ങനെ വാക്കുകൾ വേണം.

ചെവി കേൾക്കാത്തതുകൊണ്ടാണ്
മടയിൽ പണിതുകൊണ്ടിരുന്ന
എന്റെ കുടപ്പിറപ്പ് പാവവീണു മരിച്ചത്.
വീരലുകൊണ്ട് വായുവിലെഴുതുന്ന ഒരു വാക്ക്,
മേലു പൊള്ളിക്കുന്ന ഒച്ചയില്ലാത്ത ഒരടി
അവനെ രക്ഷിക്കുമായിരുന്നു.

ഒരമ്മമാര രാവു മുഴുവനും
വെള്ളപ്പൊക്കത്തിൽ മുങ്ങിയ
തോട്ടുകരയിലെ വീട്ടിൽനിന്ന്
ബന്ധുവീട്ടിലേക്കു പോയ കഥ പറഞ്ഞു.
കേട്ടിരുന്ന ചേടത്തി ഉറങ്ങിപ്പോയിട്ടും
മുളിക്കൊണ്ടിരുന്നു

കള്ളുപ്പാപ്പിൽ കുട്ടപ്പാട്ട്, തെറി
മീൻപിടുത്തക്കാർക്ക്, തടിപ്പണിക്കാർക്ക്
ഏറെ വാക്കുകൾ വേണം.