

CHANGING GENRES: THE FRAME OF MALAYALAM WOMEN  
PROSE WRITING

Dissertation Submitted to  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

NEELU RAJANI GEORGE

Centre of Linguistics and English  
School of Language, Literature and  
Culture Studies  
Jawahar Lal Nehru University  
New Delhi – 110 067  
India  
2000

CENTRE OF LINGUISTICS & ENGLISH  
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES

जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI - 110067 INDIA

27<sup>th</sup> July, 2000

## CERTIFICATE

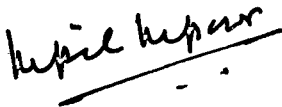
This is to certify that the Dissertation Changing Genres : The Frame of Malayalam Women Prose Writing which is being submitted by Neelu Rajani George for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy is her original work and it has not been submitted previously for the award of any degree of this or any other university.

We recommend that this Dissertation may be placed before the examiners for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy.

Signature of the Student



Supervisor



Prof. Kapil Kapoor

Chairperson



Prof. R.S. Gupta

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have always wondered how I would thank those who helped me if I ever were to write a note of acknowledgement. I now realize that thanking people for this invaluable help is no mean task, making me aware of the sad fact that however much is written, more will remain unsaid.

My words fall far short of their ability to express my gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Kapil Kapoor. My debt of gratitude to Sir will remain unpaid but it will never be forgotten. Prof. Kapoor's guidance and support saw me through my difficult phases and without whom this dissertation never would have been. The search for material in the Kerala University Library proved fruitful because of Smt. Padmini Kutty whose help is remembered with gratitude and affection. I thank cousin Kochumon for helping me with my proof reading. I could write an entire page on the help my cousins Vinu and Susan have given me but Vinu's modesty takes strong objection to flowery homilies and I desist from offending him. Bijay, without whose help at every stage I would still have been writing my first chapter who stayed up working for me while I slept, is thanked most sincerely from the bottom of my heart. My acknowledgement would remain incomplete if I do not mention Santa. Santa's help as he would say "beggars all description". I wish to thank all my friends who have helped me in one way or another for their prayers and their good wishes.

Finally, I would like to thank the Grovers, at Document Solution for staying up late through the night at that proverbial last hour to let my dissertation see the light of day.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE NO.</b>
I. Introduction	1 – 5
II. Sketching History	6 – 19
III. Women's Verse	20 – 36
IV. Moving On : From Verse To Prose	37 – 58
V. Conclusion	59 – 61
VI. Bibliography	62 – 69
VII. Appendix	70

# **INTRODUCTION**

Initiating an action requires patience and deliberation making the action arduous. The present study is about actions - the actions of creativity, cognition and a combination of the two which culminated in the act of writing. The actions deliberated in this study are singular to a group that functioned in conditions that were under no circumstances optimal. It is not difficult to discern that the group that is being alluded to here is women. Women functioning as writers were concerned about adjunct actions and their responses that their actions elicited from man in his individual and combined capacities as author and reader. This study attempts to reconstruct and analyse the modalities of the writing of prose in its incipience by the women of Kerala, the primogenial spark of which was set off in the last decades of the nineteenth century. From a flat form the utility of which was reduced to inscribing grants and gifts, and in records of the state, prose started taking shape, dimensions were added to its monodimensional plane and became one the most popular forms of literary engagement in Kerala.

That woman is anchored in space - station of her body predetermines the application of her imagination. Spatializing feminine literature Catherine R. Stimpson says that if a woman "has been published, she is more welcome in 'empty fields' than in prestigious ones"<sup>1</sup>. If feminine narratives have to be positioned, it is usually the circumferential space that she is allocated. Her space, is on the perimeters of literature that has been occupied by respectable writers i.e. men. Feminine literature has defied stratification by challenging labels and challenging the allocation of spaces. Women living in Kerala in the last decades of nineteenth century created within restricted cultural and political spaces, her creativity was therefore not a monolithic structure,

---

<sup>1</sup> Catherine R. Stimpson, Where The Meanings are?(NewYork : Methuen, 1988),p.84

time, space and gender politics combined in denuding and resculpting her creativity. The idea of researching the genesis of prose writing by women in Malayalam was first construed while reading a book on the literary history of Malayalam in which Lalithambika Antarjanam was conferred with the honour of being the first woman writer of prose in Malayalam. (Her first collection of short stories Aadyathe Kathakal (The First Stories) was published in 1937.) Remaining mute about the precedence of prose writing by women effectually elevates Lalithambika Antarjanam to this honour by eliminating the possibility of her being preceded. That women started writing prose only in 1937 is well nigh an impossibility, because it appears uncharacteristic of a state with a percentage of female literacy higher than the national average,<sup>1</sup> to remain unaccommodating to new genres, in addition to indicating imaginative bankruptcy.

The first step taken towards learning more about the enterprise of prose writing by the women of Kerala was to talk to a few people, which unfortunately remained barren. There appeared to be a consensus on Lalithambika Antarjanam's status as precursor of prose writing among the women of Kerala. Most texts of history yielded no information relevant to that which I was seeking (prose writing by women prior to 1937). My salvation came in the form of the Malayala Sahitya Sarvaswam (1987) by C. Narayanan Potti which furnished me with information on the paradigmatic shift that occurred in the feminine writings of Kerala. At the commencement of the transition from verse to prose, women had a heightened consciousness of trespassing into unauthorised territory. This acute self-consciousness drove her to seek refuge in magazines published for women as magazines were a rehabilitative recourse. Women wrote profusely to the magazines and a large number

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1.

unmentioned. Several interpretations can be given to the internment of this sizeable body of writing by women. Although the 'non-existence' of this corpus can be read in a million different ways, my attempt has been to remain neutral and not to favour any one reading over the other, the success of my endeavour remains to be seen in the chapters that follow.

The first chapter 'Sketching History' encapsulates the history of the introduction of modern education in Kerala. The literary renaissance in Kerala has been attributed to Western education,

“which broke the intellectual isolation of the Indian mind and brought it into contact with Western Science, Literature and History. The result of this was a great mental expansion similar to that which European nations experienced at the arrival of classical learning in the fifteenth century and sixteenth century. A new world of idea revealed itself to the wondering rays of our young students in schools and colleges. In place of the extravagant mythical geography, legendary history and pseudo science with which they had been acquainted, came sober and correct ideas about the configuration of the earth, the rise and fall of nations and the unalterable laws of nature”<sup>2</sup>.

Hence reconstituting the educational structure which facilitated a generic change in Malayalam literature is imperative for comprehending the present study in its entirety.

Women in Kerala reified their literary fecundity through verse, as was the trend of those times. The chapter 'Womens' Verse' tries to spell out the tenets of versification that the Kerala women followed. This chapter sketches the literary scape of Kerala prior to the import of the new form. It delineates the genderized division of literature and the factors that governed this division. It rationalizes the deferred

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in History of Freedom Movement in India, Vol. 1 from D. S. Sharma, Hinduism Through the Ages, p. 71



in prose, by women in Kerala.

The last chapter, 'Moving On: From Verse to Prose' studies the magazines Sharada, Lakshmi Bhayi and Mahila in detail and to a lesser extent, Bhasha Poshini, Rasika Ranjini and Vidya Vinodini. The chapter attempts to study the narratives of women for whom prose writing in its inchoate state was a technique to be experimented with for aesthetic reasons, consequencing a study of the discourses they entered into and eclectic nature of their composition. Long after men had established their credibility as novelists and their competence of adopting prose to engage their readers, women remained immured in the relative safety of writing articles in magazines for women, endeavouring to prove their ability to handle prose in a domain ascribed to men and being intimidated by their presence.

"According to Heidegger , each age is occupied with one thing and one thing alone. Sexual difference is probably that issue in our own age which could be our salvation on an intellectual level"<sup>1</sup>. An internalisation of feminist concern may therefore render this study tendentious towards feminism defeating the attempt to remain neutral. The present study aims to be an objective study of the unacknowledged pioneers of prose writing in Kerala- those to whom history has failed to pay respect and time has forgotten. The history of Malayalam literature will remain incomplete, until it mentions the voices which set the example for other women to follow. History has to be reconstructed incorporating the unheard voices of the women who acted midwives to their successors, for history to be complete. The present study

---

1. L. Irigray 'Sexual Difference' in P. Waugh (ed.) Revolutions of the Word (London: Arnold, 1997), p. 170

pays its respects to the women who held aloft the torch of prose writing lighting the way and easing the passage of those who followed them.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

# **SKETCHING HISTORY**

In Sāṅkhya philosophy, the Citta is that apparatus of the mind, which is perforated with external experiences<sup>1</sup>. Literature, like the Citta is a receptacle of experiences and is moulded by these encounters with its environment. Sociological and historical factors determine the debates that the literati of a period engage in. This chapter is an attempt to understand the formative influences of society and culture on the prose writing of women in Kerala, which necessitates a study of the history of Kerala and other determinants which sculptured literary works by women.

The first Church Mission Society (CMS) missionary to set foot in Kerala on the 8th of May, 1916 was the harbinger of a movement that changed the literary history of Kerala. Shortly after, the first missionary school was set up in Alleppey - the first of many that were set up as the century progressed. The schools run by missionaries was to alter the course of Malayalam literature because the epistemology was different from that of the local schools. The change of methodology was to suit a purpose that was totally divergent from that the system of education, (followed by the Malayalees), was geared to. In the indigenous system of education there were two type of institutions- the 'mutts' and meant exclusively for the Brahmins (called Nambudiris ) and ' ezhuthupallis' for other high caste Hindus and Syrian Christians<sup>2</sup>.

The practice of centuries of initiating a child into education between the ages of 5 and 6 was continued in Kerala till well after the advent of Christian missionaries. In the local ezhuthupallis a child was taught reading, writing and Arithmetic at the

---

<sup>1</sup> See H. Zimmer, Philosophies of India, J. Campbell (ed.) (New York:Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, 1964), p. 321.

<sup>2</sup> R.J. Hepzi Joy, History and Development of Education of Women in Kerala (unpublished, 1993), p. 80.

beginning. Astrology, Poetics, Drama, Sophistry, Grammar and Ayurveda were also taught, according to Fr. Paul Manavalan<sup>1</sup>. Thomas' inventory, of subjects taught in schools, differ from the former in that it includes martial arts as well<sup>2</sup>. Thomas in his book says that girls from Syrian Christian families continued going to schools till they were about 13 years of age<sup>3</sup>. However, girls from Nair taravads stopped their schooling when they were about seven or after the solemnisation of the tali-tying ceremony<sup>4</sup> whichever was earlier. Nambudiri Brahmins home- schooled their girls. Thomas and Manavalan have failed to mark the trajectory that education took by remaining silent about the structure of the course. When all formal education stopped at the upper age limit of 13 for girls, one concludes that the girls were deprived of any systematic knowledge of subjects other than what they were taught at the elementary level. Girls were taught lessons from a skeletal syllabus while the boys benefitted from being imparted a more complex combination of subjects as they grew older.

Apart from the subjects, only the basic level of which was open to girls, they were given lessons in moral edicts and music as well. In her predetermined positioned as keeper of tradition and values, it was imperative that woman had a comprehensive knowledge of what society deemed her to uphold. To equip her for the foreordained role was the duty of her guardians. Music was an ineluctable qualification for girls. In a highly partisan account of the contribution of Christians to Malayalam literature, Malayala Sahityavum Christyanikalum, (1989) Thomas records

---

<sup>1</sup> P. Manavalan, Kerala Samskaravum Chrysthava Missionarimarum (Cochin: D.C. Books, 1980) , p.58

<sup>2</sup> P.J. Thomas, Malayala Sahityavum Christinikulam ( Kottayam:D.C. Books, 1989), p.83

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 85

<sup>4</sup> Tali-tying ceremony: or the Talikettu Kalyanam is performed before a girl attains puberty. This was merely a ceremony where a boy ties a tali around the girls' but neither was bound to marry each other.

that having imbibed lessons in music and stories from their mothers, after their education was terminated, Syrian Christian girls became paragons of virtue<sup>1</sup>. As with the Hindus, music had (and still has) religious import for the Christians as well. The Syrian Christian order of worship mimicked the rhythm- the tempo maintained by the Hindu priest during worship. Music was a prerequisite for preserving the tempo. Hymns being an integral part of the liturgy also called for an acquisition of musical skills. Besides hymns, Syrian Christians also sang songs which had historical and cultural bearing. Early Christians sang songs on the arrival of St. Thomas and his stay in India and the arrival of the Syrians. Songs were sung at the weddings, before and after the ceremony about rearing a virtuous Christian family and living as devout Christians. The emphasis on moral education for girls, was not only to make them successful nurses of values (as of health) and re-produce themselves in their daughters but also to act as a chastising agent on themselves.

Pedagogy in India has essentially been a male enterprise. Being so, if men refused to teach female students the latter would have to forego the benefits of education according to Thomas<sup>2</sup>. The Christian missionaries democratised education by making it universally available to all those who were desirous of it. Thomas Norton was the first Church Mission Society (CMS) missionary to arrive in Kerala. Despite having landed in Cochin, it was at Alleppey Norton settled and established his school on the advise of Col. Munro. In 1817 a year after his arrival he started a school with forty children at the Alleppey Mission Compound. Mrs. Norton instituted a school

---

<sup>1</sup> P.J. Thomas, Malayala Sahityavum Christyanikalum: ( Kottayam D.C. Books, 1989),3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, p. 85

<sup>2</sup> P. Thomas, Indian Women Through the Ages (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964),p. 308

for girls soon after and by 1829, she had eighteen students under her tutelage. By 1830, Norton had had initiated one English school, five Malayalam Boys' Schools and one school for girls. Schools run by missionaries mushroomed all over Kerala and the number of students attending these schools steadily increased with every passing year, making J.P.Panicker remark, " To the Christian missionaries goes the abiding honour of having taken the first tangible step towards the introduction and diffusion of western learning "1 (A Short History of Kerala, 1970). In 1817, Dawson set up an English school at Cranganore and another at Mattancherry. Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Fenn, both wives of missionaries jointly started a school for Syrian Christian and high caste Hindu girls in the Baker's bungalow at Kottayam in 1818. By 1840, there were thirty-six girls at the school. Augusta Blandford of the Zenana Mission Society (C.E.Z.M.S), which aimed at taking education to zenanas, founded the Fort School for Girls in Trivandrum in 1864. She started out by teaching high caste Hindu girls. The missionary societies that made Kerala the field of their activity were the Christian Mission Society (C.M.S.), the Zenana Mission Society ( C.E.Z.M.S. ) and the Basel Mission Society begun by Dr. Gundert in Malabar. The first two societies were based in England while the third one was in Switzerland. The London Mission Society also operated in Kerala but they concentrated on the southern part of Travancore which later became part of Tamil Nadu.

The inroads made in the education of women can be said to be the single handed effort of the missionaries more so, the wives of the missionaries; who took it upon themselves to educate women of Kerala, especially, the higher caste women of Kerala. The missionary endeavours to draw pupils to their schools involved

---

<sup>1</sup> Cited in K.V. Eapen, Study of the Contribution of the Christian Mission Society to the progress of

innovative ways of campaigning for their purpose. To gain mass appeal for their project of educating women, the missionaries published several articles in magazines and newspapers. In 1831, they published a pamphlet in Tamil, titled, " On the Advantages of Female Education "<sup>1</sup>. This pamphlet exhorted parents to send their girls to school. The C.M.S. Missionaries espoused (1) opening of day schools for girls, (2) establishment of boarding schools for girls, and (3) domestic instruction in the families of the middle and higher classes, to propagate education among women. Worthy of mention here are the Parochial schools that were annexed to Syrian Christian Churches. These appendages came about as an effect of an interdiction that forbade Syrian Christians from attending schools run by Anglican missionaries. Students were given secular and scriptural lessons in these schools. The Anglican missionaries established a school at Kottayam in 1821 for those students who had excelled in academies at these Parochial schools. The Grammar School as it was called instructed students in English, Malayalam and Sanskrit.

Girls under the tutelage of Mrs. Norton were taught spinning, needlework, reading and writing of Malayalam and lessons in the Christian scriptures. Students who performed well in these subjects were taught English. In the Girls' schools at Cochin (opened by Ridsdales), girls learnt the New Testament and English, they were reported to speak English as if they were English children<sup>2</sup>. The boys' school set up the Nortons followed a more inclusive syllabus where English, Malayalam, Tamil

---

Education in Kerala (unpublished, 1979), p. 2

<sup>1</sup> See R.J.Hepzi Joy, History and Development of Education of Women in Kerala (unpublished, 1993), p.95

<sup>2</sup> See K.V. Eapen, , Study of the Contribution of the Christian Mission Society to the progress of Education in Kerala (unpublished, 1979), p. 334



and Arithmetic were taught. Bible studies were carried on scrupulously in these schools. The missionaries segregated the students into several classes, which were graded according to the aptitude of the students in each grade, and the syllabus was framed to match the gradation based on aptitude. The pattern of gradation draws attention to itself. English in these schools was a subject one strived to learn, only the native who had proved herself worthy of higher education would be admitted into the elite academic circle which learnt English. The subjects that a student had to prove her merit were needlework, spinning and the knowledge of her mother tongue. The first two were necessary appendages to good housekeeping the third was the only real test of the faculties of the child. The assumption was that the ontogenesis of a student advanced greatly once she started learning English. Teachers taught students in both English and ( Malayalam and Tamil in the southern parts of erstwhile Travancore ), the vernacular being the more popular language of instruction. All English missionaries had to pass tests (in England ) in the language(s) of the region which should be the domain of their activity.

Eapen quotes the Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Record as describing the aim of a Girls' school as follows: " to educate girls who may be trained as teachers, to bring up Christian girls in such a way that (sic) may become useful housewives and mothers and that they have a great spiritual influence on the community"<sup>1</sup>. It would be a naive interpretation of the above statement to interpret it to mean that only Christian girls were to be agencies of spiritual influence on the community. Not to antagonize the autochthons by making public their designs of

---

<sup>1</sup> K.V. Eapen, Study of the Contribution of the Christian Mission Society to the progress of Education in Kerala (unpublished, 1979) pp. 316-17

proselytisation was of prime importance to the missionaries. Few though the number of Hindu girls were, attending these schools, attempts were not spared to bring them into the Christian fold as a query by the board funding missionaries activities proves:

" How far is the present curriculum adapted to promote (a) the development of the Indian people as citizens, (b) the advance of the Christian community, (c) the present contribution of the young to the religion of the Church ?"<sup>1</sup>. The spirit of T.B.Macaulay's ( now well known ) minute was imbibed to the letter: "We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of population"<sup>2</sup>.

The missionaries had elaborate plans to further the movement that they had begun in education. A complete infiltration of the native psyche asked for an instrument that would propagate their agenda in a manner that was completely convincing to the natives. The seminaries for women were the moulds for these instruments. The more proficient among Mrs. Norton's students were enrolled in a girl's seminary. The syllabus was upgraded with respect to their new status as those to be trained to spread the Word. Three subjects were considered indispensable in a syllabus framed for girls, these were carried over from primary school to the seminary - the subjects were English, Needlework and Cathecism. Two subjects that gained entry into the new syllabus were Mathematics and History. A school for training

---

<sup>1</sup> R.J. Hepzi Joy, History and Development of Education of Women in Kerala (unpublished, 1993), p. 117

teachers called the Teachers' Training School, and believed to be the first (there were several schools which had been established for the purpose of creating teachers but this was probably the first to call itself by the name mentioned above) was begun in Kottayam in 1848 by Mrs. Johnson, the wife of a C.M.S. missionary. The object of A.H. Lash's Buchanan Institution was to train Christian girls as teachers. This institution had three sections- the Vernacular Middle School, the English Middle School and the Teachers' Training School - under its patronage. Training girls to be teachers was to have its monetary advantages as well. Less expensive than bringing qualified teachers from abroad was fashioning the docile subjects as tools for promoting western education. In a situation where to bring a greater number of girls under the influence of Christianity to induce them to convert themselves was targeted, a weapon more perfect than a subject advocating for the replacement of the native system with that of the rulers' was hard to come by. The end being this, the means was to set up seminaries and teachers' training schools for local girls.

The Portuguese missionaries were the first to set up printing presses in Kerala at Cochin and Vaipicotta however the types used bore the Tamil and not the Malayalam alphabet. Malayalam was first printed in Bombay in 1811 at the Courier Press, in the translation of the four Gospels from the Bible. The C.M.S. missionary Benjamin Bailey was the pioneer of Malayalam printing in Kerala and he established the first Malayalam press at Kottayam. Bailey changed the early rectangular script of Malayalam into the round script. The modern Arya eruttu was introduced by Tunjattu Ezhuttachahan it carries graphic symbols for all sounds occurring in Sanskrit. Following the institution of the printing press dissemination of missionary propaganda

---

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from S.C. Ghosh, *The History of education in Modern India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1995), pp. 32-33

became inexpensive and more effective. Supplanting the new system for the old, consequently, had become an easy task. By, 1840, 3000 copies of the Anglican liturgy in Malayalam had been printed in the C.M.S. Press (as it was called) and 1841 saw the publication of the Bible including both the Old and the New Testaments. Even though the Government established a press in Trivandrum in 1811, more was published at the C.M.S. Press.

Needless to say, most of the literature that came from the C.M.S. Press was of a religious character. Even those that were overtly secular, had religious undertones. Magazines and newspapers were printed at the Press. Books on grammar and dictionaries to help the missionaries and English officers were compiled and published by the C.M.S. Press. The publication of newspapers brought in its wake a burgeoning of journalism and newspapers. The first Malayalam newspaper was the 'Paschima Taraka' established in 1864 . The 'Kerala Mitram' begun in 1881 owned by a Gujarati Devji Bhimji and edited by a Christian K.I. Varghese Mapillai was the first secular paper in Malayalam (this proves the profits, the newspaper industry brought to the investor). The oldest surviving newspaper is the 'Nasrani Deepika' begun by Father Nidhiry. In 1893, after some failed attempts by other newspapers, all ten newspapers that were being published in Travancore were owned by Christians<sup>1</sup>. The first magazine wholly dedicated to literature was the Vidya Vilasini that began publication from Trivandrum in March, 1881. It was under the patronage and with the support of Vishkam Thirunal Rama Varma, Diwan Rama Iyengar and Valiya Koyil Thamburan that this magazine began publication. It claimed to be 'An Illustrated Malayalam Journal Published every month'<sup>2</sup>. The last decade of the nineteenth

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Jeffrey, The Decline of Nair Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847 - 1908 (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1994), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, p. 113

<sup>2</sup> C. Narayana Potti in K.M. George (ed.) Malayalam Sahitya Sarvaswam (Trichur:

century and the first of the twentieth century saw the commencement of several magazines on literature, a few magazines for women and only one economic journal called Lakshmi Vilasam.

The Royal Family of Travancore fostered the novel system of education enthusiastically. Territorial aggrandizement by the British rewarded them with the vassalship of Cochin in 1791 and the subsidiary alliance of Travancore in 1795. The province of Malabar was made a subdivision of the Madras Presidency in 1800. There was little space for the Royal Families of Cochin and Travancore to exercise their free will or to antagonise the missionaries who were brought to India in the interest of the Empire. The situation demanded the benevolence of the Royal Families to the cause of the missionaries. Col. Munro the Resident Diwan of Travancore piloted several reforms in the state. Missionaries were given<sup>1</sup> lands and wood free of cost for the erection of churches and the promotion of education among the Syrian Christians. A year after Col. Munro retired from the office of Diwan, the regency of Gouri Parvati Bai began (1815 - 1825), however, Col. Munro "continued to guide the administration of the state till he laid down office as resident in 1818"<sup>1</sup>. The ascension of Swati Tirunal in 1829, helped the missionaries to carry their programme with alacrity. Swati Tirunal established an English school in Trivandrum in 1834, this was changed to become the Raja's Free School in 1836. English education had become a state policy with the commencement of the school in 1834. District schools that were to be feeder schools to this central institution were opened simultaneously. Utram Tirunal Marthanda Varma (1847- 1860) further endorsed Swati Tirunal's policy of progressing English education by setting up a school for girls in 1859. His successor

---

Kerala Sahitya Academi, 1987), p.734.

<sup>1</sup> A.S. Menon, A Survey of Kerala (Kottayam: Sahitya Pravartaka Co-operative Society, 1967),

Ayilyam Tirunal whose reign spanned from 1860 to 1880 instituted grants-in-aid of education with the help of which elementary education made great progress. A director of public education was appointed to co-ordinate all the educational activities and a code for education was introduced during the reign of Shri Mulam Tirunal Rama Varma from 1885- 1924. The Maharajas being votaries of the English language and literature encouraged all activities of the missionaries and gave grants to hospitals run by missionaries, in addition to the grants given to education. The great thrust given to education precipitated the project for the education of women as well.

One of the measures of the success of an establishment is the number of people who subscribe to it, subscription is contingent upon human nature. Societal conventions are often matrices of moulding the social transactions of those who belong to any society. The case in point being that of the introduction of western (English) education in the state and imparting it to the women of the state, a look at what governed the enrolment of girls in school run by missionaries or by the Government will be helpful. Thomas remarks that education in India was purely a private enterprise completely devoid of state intervention during the early years of British settlement in India<sup>1</sup>. In the Indian society where women were twice removed from outer world-once by their gender and then by their caste, access to education was well-nigh impossible. In addition, education was never considered necessary for those who existed only on the fringes of a man's reality. Despite being a matrilineal society, the attitude towards women in Kerala harmonized to a large extent with that of the rest of India. Formal education was virtually denied to the women of Kerala, too.

---

p.320

<sup>1</sup> P. Thomas, Indian Women Through the Ages (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964),p. 308

"Courtesans whose business in life is to dance in the temples and at public ceremonies and the prostitutes are the only women who were allowed to read, sing and dance. It would be thought a disgrace to respectful woman to learn to read; and even if she had learnt she would be ashamed to own it"<sup>1</sup>, observed Dubious in his book, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies. Familiarity with letters being one of the wiles for allurements no family wished it for its girls. Contributing to the hostile reception of education for women was the proselytising zeal of the missionaries who were the first to systematise education for women. Non-Christians were in dread of losing their children to the alien religion if sent to a school where the Bible was an integral part of the syllabus. Caste has always been instrumental in creating the male identity in India whereas female identity has relied on the male identity for creation. Woman was divested of all caste markers and her only claim to a caste was her father or her husband. Education for her of a neuter caste entailed a dispossession of his own caste which was too dear a price in a society where caste was (and still is) the cornerstone of identity. Barriers of caste made it impossible for high caste Hindus to share spaces with low caste Hindus which the missionaries circumvented by establishing exclusive schools where children of only any one caste would be taught. Robin Jeffrey states that most women of the Nair society and a sizeable number in other high castes were empowered with traditional literacy<sup>2</sup>. Traditional literacy should be understood as a knowledge of those subjects taught in the ezhuthupallis-reading and writing of Malayalam, singing and a smattering of the religious texts. The knowledge of religious texts accrued considerably with age. "Bishop Friar Jordanus

---

<sup>1</sup> Cited in R.J. Hepzi Joy, History and Development of Education of Women in Kerala (unpublished, 1993), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> R. Jeffrey, The Decline of the Nair Dominance (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers 1994), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, p. 68.

who visited India and stayed in Kerala between 1323 and 1330 A.D. in his Mirabilica Descripta (The Wonders of the East) says: " In this India (India the Greater-*ie.*, Malabar) never do (even) the legitimate sons of great kings, or princes, or barons inherit the goods of their parents, but only the sons of their, sisters; for they say that they have no surety that these are their own sons, because wives and mistresses may conceive and generate by someone else, but it is not so with the sister, for whatever man may be the father they are certain that the offspring is from the womb of their sister and is consequently thus truly of their blood"<sup>1</sup>. The Friar is referring to the polyandrous custom idiosyncratic of the Nair community which determined the passage and the right of ownership of property and was called the marumakathayam. Lineage was posited and continued through the Nair woman, as the ordained generator and the only person capable of bequeathing a familial identity to her progeny, she was on a higher pedestal compared to women in the rest of India (the Kshatriyas in Kerala were also matrilineal). Matrilinearity did not however, always invest the woman with the authority of a matriarch. The oldest son of the family (*i.e.* the oldest brother), titled the karnavar was the head of the family. The karnavar was endowed with absolute authority over his siblings and their children. Monetary assets were disbursed at the karnavars' discretion, reducing the heirs of the family to dependence on the karnavar for all monetary aid. The marital customs singular to Kerala permitted only the first-born son in a Nambudiri family to enter into an alliance (marital) with a Nambudiri woman, the other sons had to marry from lower castes *i.e.* enter into a sambandham with women from lower castes. Paternal duties were not exigent to a sambandham. The Nambudiri who had entered into a

---

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Sengupta, Women in Indian Folklore: Linguistic and Religious study, A Short Survey of their Social Status and Position(Calcutta: Indian Publications, 1969), p. 237.



sambandham with a Nair woman almost always renewed his relationship (and carried out the duties of a partner) only nocturnally. Children born of the union hence, were the sole responsibility of the mother who bore them. Hypergamy bestowed on a family distinction and frequently, wealth. The karnavars were therefore, eager to push their female ward(s) into sambandham(s) with Nambudiris.

Christian missionaries aimed at indoctrination of customs of the colonisers. The missionaries endeavoured to impose the familial structure of the West onto the existing structure and ushered in the concept of illegitimacy, which had a damning effect on the native constructs of family and parentage. The new order of values was pernicious to the karnavars as their authority on property came to question. The karnavars imputed the missionaries with subverting the ideological system that prevailed prior to the arrival of the missionaries and were antipathetic towards educating girls of their families, which inculcated values that imprecated their position as heads of families. The agencies constituting the approach to education of women by the missionaries being those mentioned in the preceding pages, recognising that the ambience was not conducive to education of women is not difficult. The attempt in this chapter has been to encapsulate the history of English education in Kerala and the societal conditions that prevailed during the time the missionaries began their project of educating the native women of Kerala.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**WOMEN'S VERSE**

"Tradition is that which concerns time, not content"

J.F. Lyotard, 'Just Gaming'<sup>1</sup>

Trapped within an order in which time is cyclic, women conceptualize time as a sequence, which intermittently repeats itself. In 'Women's Time', Julia Kristeva expounds, that in addition to positing time as cyclic, women notate time as monumental, a time outside the time of linear history i.e., "time as project, teleology, departure, progression and arrival".<sup>2</sup> Monumental time is "the time of another history, thus another time,... which englobes... supranational, sociocultural entities".<sup>3</sup> The relation of time vis-a-vis a woman's corporeal self being cyclic, an a priori knowledge is but a consequence of her physical reality. Atavistic actions also make the concept of time nebulous for women. Conventions which are bequeathed from one generation to another moves the agency of transfer outside the periphery of a time that follows an uninterrupted horological process. When woman is commissioned to impart conventions, (tradition), she internalises the discrepancies that occur in such a transfer.

Temporality - the temporal dimension, is a mandatory discourse in all theories of signification and continues to engage critics and theoreticians. An exegesis of the temporal aspect being vital to the study of literature, one cannot

---

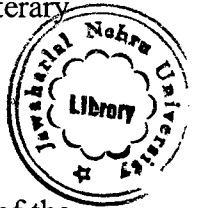
<sup>1</sup> Cited in H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London : Routledge, 1994), p.57.

<sup>2</sup> T. Moi in Toril Moi (ed.) *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford Basil Blackwell, 1986).p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p. 189.

7A86  
~~ACC92~~

sidestep the concept when the focus is on a paradigmatic shift. Change occurs not only because of time but also through time. Time causes mutation of social patterns, which affect literature. Literature carries within itself seeds of change. Thus literature attains new dimensions because of time. Since literature frequently uses history as a cartographic device for itself, a positioning of the present study against the relief of history was attempted in the previous chapter. Literature and the act of writing combine in, warping an authors' sense of time. Keeping prose writing as the origin, this chapter shall move backwards on the temporal axis to analyse how transformations happened in the writing by women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, what preceded the change from verse to prose and how effective the preceding motions were in being effects to the transformation of literary enterprises of the women of Kerala.



Thomas takes notice of the passages that extol women in the scriptures of the Hindus, which he suspects to be the work of the Tantrics who surreptitiously believed in the superiority of the female principle which according to the Tantrics was the underlying force of all active virtues, the male principle on the other hand remained inert.<sup>1</sup> If the doctrine of a cult demanded even if covertly reverence to woman, the possibility of such a cult being subservient to some degree to women or women wielding considerable authority over such a cult cannot be negated. Consequently, one infers that women may have had a hand in writing the passages

<sup>1</sup> P. Thomas, Indian Women Through the Ages (Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 276.

DISS

O, 32:9 (Y, 15)<sup>N</sup>  
 Po:

TH-  
 8692

Thomas alludes to. One cannot therefore credit the British with having tapped the literary instincts of the women of India for the very first time. (Credit is due to them for publicising women's writing, for making women's writing more visible).

Taking a leap in time, only the literary activity of the women of Kerala from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards will be focussed upon, which will also verify the progress made by women, the measure of competence in their capacity as writers in the years that spanned between the Tantrics and the nineteenth century. The act of writing is actuated by a level of literacy in the writers. An orthographic representation necessitates an elementary knowledge of the script used for transcription of the cognitive process. The Malayalam language was reified to be a testimonial to the distinctions of caste when it was categorized into uccabhasha and niccabhasha.<sup>1</sup> Uccabhasha not only had a lexicon of Sanskrit but also Sanskrit with inflections in Malayalam. Niccabhasha was an admixture of Tamil and Malayalam and as can be understood from the etymology of the word, it was the language of the lower castes. Language transforms itself into an instrument of cultural domination when one variant of the language (in question) gains ascendancy over the other variants. Sanskrit, the language of the 'cultured' elevated uccabhasha, the language used by the upper castes, to its status as an index of erudition and scholarship sanctioning uccabhasha the standard variant. (The missionaries occupied the interstice between uccabhasha and niccabhasha - a space

---

<sup>1</sup> P.J. Thomas, Malayala Sahityayum Christiyankalum (Kottayam : D.C. Books, 1989), 3rd edition, p.107.

created by the Edicts of the Synod of Diamper and the language used by the people with whom they interacted). The Synod of Diamper created a different dialect altogether whereas the Anglican missionaries used the language differently.

Sanskrit and the uccabhasha adopted mutually sustaining roles in a dialectical relationship where the use of one legitimised the other. The relationship it must be said was lopsided, as Sanskrit functioned as the normative. The pendency of spoken Malayalam on Sanskrit as it's warrant for cultural superiority by force of consequence made the written form of Malayalam doubly dependent on Sanskrit. Writers of Malayalam literary pieces closely emulated the Sanskrit model, the merit of the former judged by the degree of its' similarity to the latter. Merit and propinquity bearing a relationship of direct proportionality to each other. The Hindu scriptures aided the percolation of Sanskrit all over India amongst the privileged few to whom access to the Scriptures was not denied. Albeit as the representative corpus of the literati of India, the privileged few framed the rules and Kerala (as with the rest of India) too modeled her works on Sanskrit - verse being the preferred genre of Sanskrit compositions, verse became the designated form of Indian literature till the English imported and popularized the prose form in the act of disseminating English education in India. Literature that was made or to be made visible was the prerogative of those versed in Sanskrit and those compositions that did not conform to the standard Sanskrit - or was not 'high' literature was summarily dismissed from the elite gaze.

The object of the study restrains me from being expansively discursive. Hence, Malayalam literature beginning from the mid 19th century in a few decades prior to the transition from verse to prose shall be surveyed to lay the ground work for the research; on compositions that succeeded the works of the mid nineteenth century, the emphasis, needless to say will be on women's writing during this period.

Documented evidence dates one of the earliest women writers in the Malayalam language to 1760. Manorama Thamburatti (1760-1828) wrote Muktakas in Sanskrit, which were poems of a single stanza.<sup>1</sup> All that remains of her work now is a collection of epistolic love poems that were exchanged with Karthika Thirunal.<sup>2</sup> Records state Uma Devi Thamburatti (1796-1835) was well-versed in Sanskrit and has composed several oblationary songs and poems in Sanskrit and Manipravalam – an immixture of Sanskrit and Malayalam. Amongst her compositions is a Thullalkatha, 'Vishnu Maya Charitam'. Thullal is a theatrical performance of puranic stories usually infused "with the colour and temper of the poet's mind",<sup>3</sup> the text which the artist performs is the Thullal Katha. Makayiram Thirunal Thamburatti's (1831-1886) profile reads a lot like Uma Devi Thamburatti's, the former having composed several oblatory songs and a Thullal Katha. Between the middle of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century one finds a bevy of poets, all of whose works resemble each other to a considerable extent.

<sup>1</sup> K. Chaitanya, A History of Malayalam Literature (New Delhi : Orient Longman, 1971), p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> C. Narayanan Potti, K.M. George (ed.) Malayala Sahitya Sarvaswam (Trichur : Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1987), p. 180.

The homogeneity that appears in the works of the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century women writers of verse in Malayalam is worthy of note. A citation of some prominent writers of the period mentioned above will elucidate the point further. Kuttikunju Thankachi (1820-1904) who composed several Muktakas, and devotional songs, three Aata Kathas - compositions written for the performance of Kathakali (an indigenous libretto of sorts) was among the first of the women writers of Kerala in the nineteenth century.

Besides being the author of several pieces in the religions strain Ikkuvamma Thamburatti born in 1844 wrote a Kilipattu, a popular style of versification, in which the poem is believed to be a recitation, by a bird, of which the poet is merely a chronicler. Ikkuvamma Thamburatti's work was titled 'Ashtami Rohini Mahatmyam'. In Malayala Bhasha Charitram (History of the Malayalam Language) (1956) Pillai outlines Ikkuvamma Thottekattu's (1865-1916) profile in superlative terms. Besides being "the wife of a First Class Magistrate at Trisshur, this gem among women should be emulated. It is with great joy that I present her history. Her works are Rasakrida kurathipattu, Sanmargopadesham, Thullal Pattu and Purana Shravana Mahatmyam Kilipattu, all of which have been published".<sup>1</sup> Kurathipattu -

---

<sup>3</sup> K.R. Pisharoti, 'South Indian Theatre' in H.H. Wilson et. al. (eds.) The Theatre of the Hindus (Delhi : Indological Book House Year of Publication unknown), p. 176.

<sup>1</sup> P. Govinda Pillai, Malayala Bhasha Charitram (Kottayam : Sahita Sahakarana Sangham Ltd, : 1956), p. 501. (Translation mine)



was the musical text for a, “popular ... dance representation ... *Korattiyattam* or Gipsy Dance”<sup>1</sup>

Her magnanimous biographer has precluded her most controversial work 'Subhadra Arjunam', (a play) while elevating Ikkuvamma to her position of prominence. A later historian who has included the play in Ikkuvamma's list of accomplishments also mentions the flak she drew on account of her play. The controversy was regarding its authorship - not only was the authorship of the play assigned to other writers, Ikkuvamma was also accused of plagiarism. However, Ikkuvamma remained undaunted, she stood her ground and defended her play to the end.<sup>2</sup> "The construction of narrative wholes in historiography involves more than logic, but aesthetics as well"<sup>3</sup>. Jerzy Topolski's observation is adduced by the partialities of the two different historians. Pillai, probably in his zeal to exalt Ikkuvamma as a 'gem among women' sacrificed objectivity. The woman embroiled in controversy deserves denunciation but the magnanimity of the historian lies in his patronising attitude towards the woman. Her literary merit is in jeopardy of being devalued if the historian exposes her to the danger of objectivity. (Even today, for a man to overlook a woman's flaws in character is the ultimate act of kindness). Potti, the later historian in his encyclopaedic entry on Ikkuvamma

---

<sup>1</sup> K.R. Pisharoti, 'South Indian Theatre' in H.H. Hilson et. al. (eds). The Theatre of the Hindus (Delhi : Indological Book House, Year of Publication unknown) p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> C. Narayanan Potti in K.M. George (ed.) Malayala Sahitya Sarvaswam (Trichur : Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1987) p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> J. Topolski, 'The Role of Logic and Aesthetics in Constructing Narrative Wholes in Historiography' in History and Theory 38, 2 1999, p. 198.

attempts at objectivity rendering to posterity a service through a relatively objective document on Ikkuvamma's works.

The schematic symmetry the writers display is worth probing. The women who wrote were all upper caste Hindus, wrote in Sanskrit or alternately in the language of praxis in the social milieu to which they belonged - uccabhasha; and on religious themes. Considering the fact that women followed patterns traced out by men, the derivative that women wrote in Sanskrit or in uccabhasha in close conformity to the standards set by male writers is a facile conclusion. The deflection in the poetic temper was caused by the Venmani School of Poetry. Ayyappa Panikker, in the anthology Modern Indian literature, in his poem on modern Malayalam literature writes, "During the mid nineteenth century the poetic scene in Malayalam was dominated by two schools of poets known as the Venmani School and the Kodungalloor School. Their use of pure Malayalam in preference to the conventional Sanskritized poetic diction was something of an innovation at the time, although it failed to strike deep roots immediately..... they wrote about the life they saw around them, bringing in touches of realism"<sup>1</sup> Chaitanya's record of the Venmani poets in A History of Malayalam Literature describe them as humanistic. The Venmani poets shifted their focus, from Puranic legends to erotogenic themes. Sanskrit was used in moderation, only as much as was used by the man on the street in his daily transactions. It should be borne in mind that for the poets who were an

---

<sup>1</sup> A Panikker, 'Modern Malayalam Literature' in K.M. George (ed.) Modern Indian Literature, vol. 1 (New Delhi : Sahiya Akademi, 1992) p. 235.

elite group of upper caste (largely Brahmin) Hindus : the man on the street was not an outsider but an insider while he was without the esoteric circle of poets hence, the diction though not purely Sanskrit was not entirely purged of Sanskrit either. The Venmani group was led by Venmani Achen Nambudiri (1817- 91) and Venmani Mahan Nambudiri (1844-93) and the Kodungalloor School by Kunjikuttan Thamburan (1865-1913). The kinetics of sequestering Sanskrit from Malayalam had begun albeit, selectively and sluggishly. Juxtaposing the work of the two sexes showcases the contrariety between the two, notwithstanding the simultaneity of their creative ventures. The literary output of most of the writers mentioned above would have emerged within two as three years of each other yet, while the women tenaciously held onto the old model in their choice of language the men had initiated a process of change. Humanism was launched but failed to gain momentum among women writers. As a group women were not authorized to patronise any nascent movement or any movement whatsoever that needed a catalytic agent. Women had to follow lines chalked out for them by men if they were to be recognized for their work. Any deviation from the norm would deprive them of their power to write by usurping the acceptance that had been awarded to them. Flexibility of standards was the prerogative of the male inditer, an innovative thought or action earned him rewards of imitation by other writers as well as credit for the innovation of a new ideal, desserts a woman could not claim until the change of the country.

Uniformity was maintained at the level of content besides existing at the level of language. A large volume of compositions, by women was religious in nature,

where religion retreated, songs for dances performed exclusively by and for women took over. The latter was composed in Malayalam almost entirely purged of Sanskrit; bereft of the legitimacy to mobilise acceptance for an all Malayalam brand of poetry the women were cheated of their recognition due to them for having introduced a novel strain in Malayalam literature. The female body is always convoluted to the male edict; the male edict having nominated the female body as the warehouse of (redundant) tradition, the woman has no escape from her-self. Her body becomes the space for the propagation of the male edict. A woman's literary pursuits are therefore often marked by their religio-didactic overtones. Religion with its pivotal position in India bore heavily upon women to continue in their role of subservience to men. The role based division of power to be assiduously maintained necessitated a blind acceptance of the rules laid down by men; this was achieved through the poetry of women most of which was devotional. Woman was the sequential re-producer of the ethos of subservience.

Domains were demarcated and categorized as male and female domains. Women had to write within cloistered literacy spaces where their choice of subject was determined by cartography of literature configured by the male hand. The minimal space prescribed for women by thrusting upon them the burden of religion gave women little space for experiment. The first dissent against genre registered by Ikkuvamma in the play, 'Subhadra Arjunum' was categorically shunned by the representative literati of Kerala. Poetry for men was a vocation which for women it was an indulgence. Poetry was an activity she occupied herself with during leisure

hours after attending to the call of duty domesticity demanded. Hence, men who patronized women generally did so condescendingly and not out of cognizance of the true merit of their creations. A precondition for such recognition was an absolute respect for the peripheries of women's territory as drawn by men. Ironically the Venmani poets wrote, "their more erudite works wholly in Sanskrit' using only the lighter forms when they wrote in Malayalam".<sup>1</sup> Not only were the forms 'light' if what Chaitanya means by light is brevity (the Mukataka being the most popular form) narrative poems when attempted, like the short poems used journeys or descriptions of festivals as subjects.<sup>2</sup> Sanskrit poetry returned after an interval of a few decades. A prelude to the movement was Kerala Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran's 'Mayura Sandesam' (1894) based on Kalidasa's 'Meghdutam'. However, the first of the Mahakavyas (which were to be popular between 1902 and the end of World War I)<sup>3</sup> was 'Ramachandra Vilasam' (1902) by Azhakath. The men engaged in poetry were debating diction and content of Malayalam poetry-qualificational determinants that uphold the institution of poetry, efficiently sidelining the women to dabble in literary persiflage (devotional poems, lyrics for songs, which were texts for dances). This was the reverse side of the literary scene in Kerala in the middle of the nineteenth century- preceding the transition from verse to prose, I shall now delineate the conditioning of the Indian-Malayalee mind by the British for the reception of new forms through their system of education.

---

<sup>1</sup> K. Chaitanya, A History of Malayalam Literature (New Delhi : Orient Longman, 1971) p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid; p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid; p.186.

The native system of education started from the premise that a woman's mind is a fickle instrument<sup>1</sup>, which demanded constant chaperoning. Where the female gaze was monitored and followed by the male, it was he who set her scopical limits giving little occasion for free play of the female vision hence, independent visual perception and cognition. What followed was a two-fold privation: -

- 1) a delimitation of boundaries on the spatial plane,
- 2) straitening her vision of the written word. The male tutor virtually immobilized his female student's individual strain of thought by constraining her familiarity with written work to what the tutor presumed would chasten the female mind which independent of external chastising agents was incapable of restraint possessing a proclivity to depravity by setting ocular limits so that she would view objects that would not corrupt the moral guardian's easily affected morality.

The entire issue of education was administered differently by the British. English was made indispensable, "... by the almost total absence of a vernacular literature and the consequent impossibility of obtaining a tolerable education from

---

<sup>1</sup> "It is the nature of women to seduce men in this (world) for that reason the wise are never unguarded in (the company of females). For women are able to lead astray in (this) world not only a fool, but even a learned man, and (to make) him a slave of desire and anger" in II: 213-214, p. 69  
 "In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead, to her sons; a woman must never be independent." V. 148. p. 95. G.Buhler(trans) The Laws of Manu (Delhi : Motilal Banarasidass, 1964) Reprint.

that source only".<sup>1</sup> For the British education was to be a means to an end - Anglicization of the native populace so as to create a nation loyal to the Empire. The Indian concept of education with its inherent religious import was supplanted by utilitarian ideals of education as a commodity with exchange value. In a give to take relationship, to be educated in the British system virtually assured one of employment in the Government service in exchange for the abrogation of one's intrinsic element and all that it signifies. The arrangement guaranteed rewards attendant to loyalty to the British establishment more or less a carrot and stick approach. On account of the hegemony of the British, English Studies, "embodied... the high culture"<sup>2</sup> of 'polite society'.

Sangari characterizes the policy of British for women as one where the policy makers strongly felt that, "... it is the heart of the women which requires improvement . And so it is the morally ennobling texts of English culture that middle class women are to turn to." The British were postulating woman's proclivity to licentiousness, which undoubtedly had to be harnessed. The English template was fixed onto the Indian mind with Procrustean rigour. The issues the British had to contend with were what and how to teach and by whom the women were to be taught, an outline of which has been sketched in the previous chapter. Sangari draws on the Calcutta model for her study, in the introduction to Recasting women; Essays

---

<sup>1</sup> Cited in S.Tharu, 'Government, Binding and Unbinding : Alienation and the Teaching of Literature', in S.Tharu (ed.) Subject to Change Teaching Literature in the Nineties (New Delhi : Orient Longman, 1998) p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> K. Sangari in K. Sangari and S. Vaid (eds.) Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History (New Delhi : Kali for Women, 1989) p. 13.

in Colonial History which cannot be extrapolated in toto onto Kerala. Calcutta as the capital of British India till 1911 was the crucible for Britain's political and sociological experiments and the percolation English was swifter and fairly more even than in Kerala. The unique matrilineal system and practices of cohabitation in league with caste laws and the relatively late entry of the English language into the (school) curriculum protracted the dissemination of English in Kerala.

What has to be apprehended here is that English affected a bifurcated impact on the women of Kerala. English education not only brought her out of her spatial and social confines but also gave her a literary genre that could be experimented with. English education got off to a slow start albeit the patronage by the Royal Family gave it the needed impetus ushering social upheaval. The English were aspiring to create. The English projected the image of being messianic saviours of Hindu India, by bringing stability and civilization to the Hindu<sup>1</sup>. This phenomenon of civilizing the native was causative of alienating the Indian from his soul (separation between matter and mind) the body was alienated from its self as well. The Indian body was trapped in a geopolitical entity that was possessed by the British while the soul aspired to independence and the brown body was sartorially colonized by the British. The body functionally continued being Indian to the British, inspite of the Indian's English attire and the willy-nilly accommodation of

---

<sup>1</sup> Lata Mani says in 'Contentious Traditions : The Debate on Sati in Colonial India': the idea was that Britain rescued Hindu India from Islamic tyranny' in K. Sangari & S. Vaid (eds.) Recasting Women :Essays in Colonial History (New Delhi : Kali for Women, 1989), p.112.



English customs. Assimilation into the British mainstream was occluded by the British themselves successfully transforming, the Indian body as the other to its self. Although some women had begun wearing petticoats and blouses by the middle of the nineteenth century, women as a representative group were slower in transcending sartorial boundaries. English education and rules of caste played their individual roles in bringing about a revolution in the attire of the women of Kerala. The women of the lower castes were forbidden from clothing themselves above the waist. The Nair women had to uncover their chests in presence of men belonging to higher castes till the middle of the nineteenth century. Syrian Christian and Muslim women were exempt from this interdiction. When lower caste Shanar-women who had been converted to Christianity started shielding their bodies from the public gaze their Hindu counterparts duplicated the practice with dire consequences. "In July 1859 all restrictions on the dress of Shanar women were removed by a royal proclamation".<sup>1</sup> Robin Jeffrey comments, "But it was status not decency, that Shanars sought... In the wake of the breast cloth disturbances. 3,000 Shanars joined the mission, for them, the lessons and advantages were obvious."<sup>2</sup> The missions were succeeding in their campaigns as the number of newly converted Christians multiplied in their ranks for the advantages. The policy of pitting the advantages against the disadvantages (of not joining the missions) was a schematic motion in the larger designs of colonising a nation.

---

<sup>1</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, Social and Cultural History of Kerala (New Delhi : Sterling, 1979), p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> R. Jeffrey, The Decline of Nair Dominance in Society and Politics in Travancore 1847 – 1908. (New Delhi : Manohar Publishers, 1994) 2nd edition p. 68.

The use of garments that covered the upper half of the body was causal of the obliteration of a tactile caste marker amongst women. The dissolution of spatial and social boundaries changed women's position within her prescribed domain, woman's relations changed more vis-a-vis her community, and less vis-a-vis the State. Community qua society acquired greater significance for woman Society was coming alive for her. Conversely, for man as part of the decision making body and architect of the social structure the extrinsic force was sabotaging his positional authority. The dynamics of the shift from verse to prose within the intaglio of the society in Kerala rationalizes the literary undertaking of women in the mid nineteenth century. The reasons can be categorized as :

1. Prose was a form that was alien to the endemic literacy patterns.<sup>1</sup>
2. Men wrote in verse
3. Women gained access to English education long after men were being taught in the British system of education
4. Certain forms and themes had been circumscribed for women and boundaries were not transgressed by women.

Qualitatively and temporally the chasm between the writing of men and women was wide. The disjunction between the creative enterprises of the two sexes becomes starkly visible when analogues are drawn. The first extant novel in Malayalam *Indulekha* (1889) by O.Chandu Menon was complemented by a work of

the same potential by women decades after Indulekha was published. For men the transition from verse to prose was a relatively an untrammelled journey. Literary forms were being experimented with by a society in flux (where only men were granted power of experimentation). The existent social system weighed upon the new breed of Macaulay's hybrids as being dystopic. The missionary ventures were undoubtedly catalytic in heralding the new form as a viable genre of creativity. Men were animated into literary action by the new genre but amongst women the response was tepid. Parturition has never been an easy task for women, giving birth to a new form was equally difficult. Women were stepping into 'manned territory', the step had to be taken with care and caution hence, their preliminary trials in prose reflect trepidation and incertitude.

---

<sup>1</sup> Meenakshi Mukherjee elaborates on the change from the indigenous literary genre to the exogenous genre in Realism & Reality (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1985).

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**MOVING ON : FROM**  
**VERSE TO PROSE**

“Story-telling is not presenting ... privatised form of experience but...asserting a communicational bond between the teller and the told within a context that is historical, social and political as well as intertextual”.

Linda Hutcheon, 'Telling stories: Fiction and History' <sup>1</sup>

Fluidity of boundaries necessitates the flexibility of both the enclosed and the encloser; in the field of literature, the strictures are given a degree of permeability when those to whom certain genres are foreclosed are permitted within broader enclosures, to experiment with those very same genres to which they had been denied access. The switch from verse to prose amongst the women writers of Kerala was eventuated by the modulating effect of the British presence in India and on the Indian society. The writers frequently acknowledge the influence of the British in giving greater visibility to their literary endeavours in the nascent form verifying the affectual quality of the coloniser (in changing literature by and for the women of Kerala ). Charles Grant in 1797 suggested a “healing principle”<sup>2</sup> for effective governance- the suppression of native religions by Christianity through the dissemination of the science and literature of Europe- "a key which would ... open a new world of ideas...( and would be) the true cure of darkness (to). The Hindus(who) err because they are ignorant”<sup>3</sup>. This was the underlying principle

---

<sup>1</sup> L. Hutcheon, 'Telling Stories: Fiction and History' in Peter Brooker. (ed. ) *Modernism/Postmodernism* (Essex: Longman, 1992), p. 233

<sup>2</sup> . Charles. Grant, 'Observation on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, Particularly in the Respect of Morals And on the Means of Imposing It', in S.C. Ghosh, *The History of Education in Modern India*( New Delhi; Orient Longman Ltd., 1995), pp.13-14

<sup>3</sup> Ibid ,pp. 13-14.

of the educational policy of the British in India, which remained essentially unchanged for as long as they wielded power over the Indian subcontinent.

A vicarious vision of England and a step towards Anglicisation were jointly achieved by those aspiring Englishness when the universities at Madras, Bombay and Calcutta were established in 1857, on the model of the universities in England, by the Acts of Incorporation passed by Lord Canning. England was brought closer to home for those who lacked the resources to finance a trip to England. It was therefore but a circumstantial occurrence that several of the late nineteenth century writers drew heavily from their lives at the universities, to furnish their compositions. The University was the step next to the Matriculation Exams – a Matriculate with a little bit of luck and fortune would be steering himself to the university as a matter of course. Admission to the university was (of course) conditional to the marks that the student had secured in the Matriculation Exam. The journey to the metropolis expanded the persons' plane of vision giving him the wealth of experience decidedly an advantage to one who sought to establish his credibility as the practitioner of a form well established and of repute in England, even though it was a relatively new import in India. The movement begun in 1857 reached its crescendo when the first few novels in Malayalam were published between the years 1888 and 1910. Juxtapositional comparison shows up the shackled status of women in the late nineteenth century. At the time when men were travelling far from their homes in search of status and scholarship; women were still being confined to the recesses of their homes even within which female presence was proscribed in spaces for fear of pollution and to maintain the sanctity of the space. Laura Kipnis observes,

"...visibility is a complex system of permission and prohibition of presence and absence..."<sup>1</sup>. Limited interactional activity without the confines of female domains tethered a woman's knowledge of the outer space. She could write on imagined outer spaces-spaces that were removed from the world of reality or space as had been described to her by men who had shifted their spatial co-ordinates. This could be a reason for the first few literary efforts of women writers in Malayalam prose being tales of utopian lands or fantastical stories. If however we are to move to more concrete agents of a woman's choice of subject we see that a great portion of the literature that she had read was in the realm of the fantastic like Puranic legends and mythical stories.

The binary division of English into perceptible reality and English as a twice removed reality engendered qualitative changes between the works of literary creativity written by men and women. Encounters with English as a systemic part of organised education stopped at an early stage for women after which they were denied the benefits of organised education. However, men enhanced their knowledge of the English language and literature with every advancement they made in education which had been expanded to incorporate university education thus enlarging a mans' ontological limits. At school, text books in English were largely introductory texts-readers initiating a student in to the elementary knowledge of a foreign language, primers otherwise of hardly any literary consequence. Sri Ayilyam Thirunal Maharaja of Travancore and his dewan Madhava Rao instituted the Text Book Committee, during the Maharajas reign between 1861 and 1875. The Maharajas endeavour was to upgrade and create uniformity of syllabus in all

---

<sup>1</sup> L. Kipnis, 'Feminism: The political conscience of post-mordernism?' in Peter Brooker (ed.)

schools in Travancore. Of the books published by the Text Book Committee Mahacharita Sangraham by Kerala Varma Valiya Koyil Thampuran, “an anthology of fourteen essays based on Munder's Treasury of Biographies was the best, in 1880 Kerala Varma's translated work Akbar was published by Committee”<sup>1</sup> ( the book which was translated from English which was itself translated from the original work in Dutch). The constitution of the Text Book Committee affected the organisation of the previously haphazard syllabi taught in schools. Nevertheless the books retained the philological distance from English as the books were in Malayalam inducing the situational handicap in women of learning English through Malayalam. The text books however, were not texts of lasting literary, value, corresponding to the original works in English from which they had been translated. The text book consisted of biographies, stories for moral education and fairy tales –which were targeted at a receptive student body for inculcating (Anglican) virtues. Comprehending the text was relatively easy for the Indian students who had a heritage of Puranic tales and legends – both stories belonged to another time and place, quite outside the time and place of the reader. Meenakshi Mukherjee observes, "In the medieval age, different countries could borrow stories from each other. The prototypes of some of the Canterbury tales have been traced to the *Panchatantra*." <sup>2</sup>

---

Modernism/Postmodernism (Essex: Longman, 1992), p.205

<sup>1</sup> See P.K. Parameswara Nair, E.M.J Nair (trans) History of Malayalam Literature, (Trichur : Sahitya Akademi, 1967) p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> M.Mukherjee, Twice Born Fiction : Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English (New Delhi:Heinemann,1971), p.18



The textbook equipped the women with convenient examples for replication in her native language-Malayalam. Limited by her slender knowledge of original English texts, translated text books furnished women a double advantage, she had a handy model that was easy to copy neither did the pattern necessitate deviation from her duty of moral didacticism ensuring smooth passage in to the enclosures of prose writing Vidya Vinodini , a literary magazine that started publication in 1887 carried merely two articles by a woman, both of which were by T.C Kalyaniamma in an issue of its 1902 edition-the articles were 'Thadil Prabha Enna Raja Kanyaka' (Princess Thadil Prabha ) and 'Raja Pankajam'(The Royal Lotus) both fairy tales. Vidya Vilasini the first literary magazine in Malayalam began in 1881 March , Bhasha Poshini and several other magazines did not have a gender specific scheme for publication. The magazines were not oriented towards an exclusively female readership endorsing the genderisation of publications-what was not meant for women alone was not meant for women at all. These magazines circulated articles by men which were on sports and games, economics, politics, phenomena of little interest and less consequence in the life of a woman in Kerala in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

Tharu and Lalita observe that the early twentieth century commonly considered as the dull phase of the women's movement was a time when women's journalism had attained a high point.<sup>1</sup> Going on to say:

“Journal literature was forging new bonds with nationalism. As we noticed earlier, from the 1880's well into the early decades of the

---

1 S. Tharu and K.Lalita (eds.) Women Writing in India 600 B.C to the Present (Delhi :Oxford University Press, 1991), p.xviii

twentieth century, journals edited by women or meant for female readership had provided a supportive base for women's writing and had kept alive and developed the issues raised in reform movements. These writings broadened the scope of the women's question as it had been posed in the reform movement, infused it with new feminist strains and even subverted its original commitments."<sup>2</sup>

"Bhartendu Harischandra was the first to raise women's issues in the Hindi region ... he brought out a Hindi journal for women called Bala Bodhini in 1874. Rameshwari Nehru established the Prayag Mahila Samiti in 1909 and began a serious journal for women called Stree Darpan."<sup>1</sup> " Out of the numerous women's journals the three important ones were Grihalakshmi Stree Darpan and Chand. All three were published from Allahabad which was also the center for middle class nationalist movement.

Grihalakshmi was edited by a man and a woman, Stree Darpan was edited only by a woman, and Chand had only male editors though the manager was a woman".<sup>1</sup> Not one of the employees of Kerala Suguna Bodhini, the first magazine in Malayalam for women, was a woman. The magazine which began publication in 1887 June from Trivandrum was managed by M.C. Narayana Pillai and K. Chidambara Vadyar. Among the first few magazines published exclusively for women were Sharada in 1904 from Trivandrum, Bhasha Sharada by R.Velu Pillai in 1915 from Punalur, Mahila Ratnam by K.M

---

<sup>2</sup> ibid. p.176

<sup>1</sup> V.B.Talwar, Manisha Chaudhry et al. (trans.) 'Feminist Consciousness in Women's Journals in 1910-20' in K.Sangari and S.Vaid (eds.) Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), p.207

Kunjulakshmi Amma in 1915 from Trivandrum, Lakshmi Bhayi by Vellaykkal Narayana Menon from Trichur, Mahila by B. Bhageerathi Amma from Trivandrum. Despite the profusion of magazines for women in Kerala surprisingly Tharu and Lalita seem to have overlooked the publications in their work, Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present. Paradoxically Tharu and Lalita are guilty of that which they accuse the literary clique of doing:

“Quite a few of the writers from the period were frequent and popular contributors to the women's journals and we have taken pains to include their writing. They received little attention from mainstream critics or readers and have over the years been totally forgotten ...And as for the myth that the women's question died out after its spectacular flowering in the second half of the nineteenth century these writers offer evidence that women hung on to ideas of freedom and justice and infused them with their aspirations even as they responded to the call of the nation”<sup>1</sup>.

Tharu and Lalita have undoubtedly done a remarkable job in compiling womens writings in India from 600 B.C. to the present, albeit statements discordant with the verity of facts appear in the compilation. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the time Tharu and Lalita denote as the high point of women's journalistic activities was the time when a crusade for independence had begun, snowballing as it moved through the country gaining momentum and adherents India's struggle for independence consequenced bursts of literary and political activity However not all issues raised in magazines for women gravitated towards the freedom struggle. Journalistic activity among and for women in the North did raise the issue of independence but the magazines did not encompass broad visions of freedom and justice. Womanhood and femininity

---

<sup>1</sup> S.Tharu and K.Lalita (eds.), Women Writing in India: 600B.C. to the Present, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 168-69

were of greater topical significance and intensively written about in these magazines. Talwar records Radharani Lahiri's statement justifying the importance of feminine virtues which concerned even those in the forefront of the reform movements, "of all the subjects that women might learn housework is the most important ... whatever knowledge she may acquire she cannot claim any reputation unless she is proficient in housework"<sup>1</sup>.

The aeteological study of prose- writing by women in Kerala perforce includes a survey of magazines published in Kerala between the last decades of the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth centuries. If points in time were to be marked out as referential indices in the history of Malayalam literature the year 1889 would be a point of reference. 1881 was the year the first literary magazine was published in Kerala and 1889 saw the first extant novel in Malayalam, Indulekha by O. Chandu Menon. Both publications were received well by readers and their individual potentialities explored and a retentive hold established as is attested by enormous volumes of magazines and books that were to follow the pattern set by these publications. Prose had been opened up to the Malayalam literary coterie as a feasible and pliant alternative in literature. Reconstituting the framework of the generic change in writing by women calls for a survey of the contribution of women to magazines, as these were later to be expanded by the women of Kerala. The magazines that have been surveyed in the present study are Sharada, Rasika Ranjini, Lakshmi Bhayi, Bhasha Poshini, Vidya Vinodini and Mahila. Of these magazines Sharada, Lakshmi Bhayi and Mahila were published exclusively for

---

<sup>1</sup> V.B.Talwar, Manisha Chaudhry et al. (trans.) 'Feminist Consciousness in Women's Journals in 1910-20' in K.Sangari and S.Vaid (eds.) Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), p.247

women therefore it is in these that the voice of women is most clearly heard on account of the relative protection that these magazines offered women writers. The magazines were reductively minimalized as women's magazines hence limiting the number of male readers or of aggressively censorious eyes. The paradigmatic shift did issue a fundamental change in Malayalam literature. However, the deviation from the norm, by the women was amicably accepted by their male counterparts, because woman had not departed from her roles of mother, wife and moral inculcator. Statements of purpose of the different magazines make it amply clear that the magazines did not aim at political upheaval. In the twelfth volume of Vidya Vinodini published in 1902 "the abstract of contents"<sup>1</sup>, is as follows: "The Vidya Vinodini New Year deals with the extended scope of the 'Journal' relating to politics, advocating a uniform system of improved administration in Native States... also inculcating in general sentiments of true loyalty and patriotism"<sup>2</sup>.

The abstract of contents is followed by:

"Our special notification ...no other power can ever be expected to guarantee even the blessing now enjoyed by the people: that whatever faults may be in the British administration we are to console ourselves thinking that they are more the result of ignorance and misunderstanding than otherwise and ...it becomes our bounden duty to point them out in a sympathetic spirit instead of doing so in a carping manner ... The present Governor has taught us one lesson ... how to speak pleasantly on an unpleasant occasion. We are not to forget this when criticizing any unpopular measures of government"<sup>3</sup>.

Although the magazine was in Malayalam it is significant that these declarations were made in English. Clearly, the magazine did not wish to antagonize the British

---

<sup>1</sup> Vidya Vinodini, 12, 1902, p. 4

<sup>2</sup> Vidya Vinodini, 12, 1902. p. 4

<sup>3</sup> Vidya Vinodini, 12, 1902, p. 5

government. The articles in Vidya Vinodini were on science, games and issues that were of contemporary relevance. The magazine was to be a politically neutral, conscious enlightener. The readers of the magazine were principally all men and the magazine did not purport to incite them to violence. The struggle for freedom was attenuated in Kerala during the period in question. It was as Robin Jeffrey observes, "The militancy of the National Congress; which had become so pronounced in British India...left Travancore relatively untouched. Because Travancore was princely state, Congress leaders regarded it as beyond the scope of their activities"<sup>1</sup>. Male readers of the magazine were predominantly elite neoteric proteges who had greatly benefited from British education and in more ways than one the British presence was salutary to these men. In collateral magazines for women the non-co-operation movement and the like was a travesty of a cause.

"Since the non-co-operation movement is afflicting Kerala also, Lakshmi Bhayi endeavours to dissuade women from infecting themselves and to make ladies of the women of Kerala. Malayalee women will attain glory and prestige if they serve their husbands and run their households dutifully since it is there that co-operation and patience should be practised. Therefore, we believe that our honoured patrons both, men and women will shield themselves from the disease of non co-operation and similar diseases"<sup>1</sup>

pleads the editor in the eighteenth volume of Lakshmi Bhayi in March, 1923. Sharada in its first edition in 1904, the year it began publication announces itself as being, "[Sharada is] a magazine especially to be read by women. The magazine deals with all that will be needful to a woman in simple and smooth flowing language to be read by all women who

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847- 1908* (New Delhi: Manohar Distributors and Publishers, 1994), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, p. 235

know Malayalam. This magazine tries to inculcate in women lasting virtues. Since this magazine has adopted a form new to Malayalam there are bound to be many failings which we humbly request our readers to correct and forgive"<sup>1</sup>.

A year after its inception the manager and the owner of the magazine K. Narayana Menon who made the above declaration writes, "With this edition Sharada completes one year of publication and is entering its second year. This magazine was begun for the welfare of Malayalee women. The twelve previous issues testify to the number of women capable of writing prose in Malayalam before Sharada began this publication, this fact went unrealised. Following the new fashion it is in spinning tales that most women are interested in. Writing short and interesting stories, in the new mode is difficult in Malayalam as we lack the pawns it requires"<sup>2</sup>. Mahila, a magazine that began circulation in 1921 makes a very modest statement in English. "The Mahila [is] an illustrated monthly magazine conducted in the interests of the women of Kerala. Under the kind patronage of H.H. The Junior Rani of Travancore"<sup>3</sup>. The magazine was edited by P. Bhageerethi Amma. Rasika Ranjini, a magazine that had a short run from 1902 - 1906, was owned by Kochi Rama Varma, edited by Kunjikuttan Thumburan and managed by P.S. Rama Nathan Aiyer. The magazine published prints of paintings by European painters and the ornate calligraphy as close an appropriation of the Gothic script as Malayalam letters permit were techniques employed to copy the layout of an English magazine but in all its issues it has just one short story by a woman, 'Bodham Vanna

---

<sup>1</sup> Lakshmi Bhayi, 18, 1923, p. 4 (translation mine)

<sup>1</sup> Sharada, 1,2, 1904, p. 3 (translation mine)

<sup>2</sup> Sharada, 1, 1905, p.1 (translation mine)

Bhutam' (The Ghost with an Aroused Consciousness) a story that decries the western way of life that was in vogue, a translation by an anonymous translator on the rights of a wife, an article on motherhood by R.P., a satire on the love of ornaments by Moorkothu Kumaran and a translation of Annie Besant's essay on the Central Hindu College in Benares. The elite (two Royals and a Brahmin) controlling board which scrutinised articles for publication apparently obviated feminine articles by their non-receptivity to an alternative source of creativity that integrated the feminine discourse in its literary compositions. In the entire corpus of Bhasha Poshini the magazine that was owned by the "Malayala Manorama" the inventory of articles written by women is not longer than Rasika Ranjini's own table of contents of feminine writing. The sparsity of articles by women are representative of the magazines inaccessibility to women. The protracted tenure of the Bhasha Poshini and the short life of the Rasika Ranjini did about the same services to women's writing in Kerala. The number of articles that appeared in the Bhasha Poshini was disproportionately small compared to its age from 1896 to well into the third decade of the twentieth century. Lakshmi Bhayi and Sharada are synecdochial of the beginning of prose writing by the women of Kerala. Mahila the later magazine too is worthy of study as being representative of the inchoate attempts at prose writing by women but its late start gave women time to burnish their writing skills.

The immense popularity of O. Chandu Menon's Indulekha in 1889 decisively diversified literary patterns in Malayalam. Prose was being used as a device to engross literary attentions. O. Chandu Menon's novel eulogized the achievements of a woman

---

<sup>3</sup> Mahila, 1, 1921, p. 4



who displayed the strength of determination perceptibly a product of education. Indulekha qualified as an icon especially for women. This iconal quality of Indulekha was endorsed since she was a fragment of male creativity. The matrilineal system in Kerala gave woman a distinct advantage over her sisters in the rest of India nevertheless the egalitarian power relations between men and women was non-existent. The gravest affronts on dignity were countenanced by the women of the two upper castes in Kerala - the Nairs and Nambudiris. The course of a woman's life was navigated by her maternal uncle the karnavar in a Nair household. An antharjanam, a Nambudiri woman had to suffer the indignity of entering into a polygamous relationship with an elderly Nambudiri as Nambudiri women could only marry Nambudiri men but only the oldest son of a Nambudiri family could marry a Nambudiri woman - the cause of great ire amongst the progressive women of both castes generating articles pregnant with the energy that converts and had converted anger to action. In the twelfth volume of the 1917 edition at Lakshmi Bhayi, G.M. Ammuvengar Amma has written an article on the Nair women of Kerala, a strong invective against the rule of the karnavars in Nair households involving the suppression of a woman's right to education and the convolution of her sexuality to advance the vested interests of the karnavar. Women wrote copiously in Lakshmi Bhayi and other magazines for women against negotiating the female form for familial fame and fortune concurrently negating all claims of the women to conjugal rights and those of her children to filial rights and absolving the men of paternal duties.

Sharada the older of the two magazines surprisingly has more diatribes against the dictatorial karnavar for instance, 'Sthree Swatanthryam' (Independence of Women) is

the editorial article of the first issue of the year 1905. The editorial is an application for unimpeded movement and her right to refuse a polyandrous cohabitation. In an article by K. Madhavi Amma titled 'Nair Vivaham enna Sambandhakriya' (Sambandams that are Nair Weddings) she says, "the sambandham is an institution made for the convenience of the Brahmins"<sup>1</sup>. The scathing attacks mounted against the karnavars were directives to the women to counteract the force of the despotic karnavar. The positional variables that influenced the Nair Regulation Laws are discordant with the interpretation of Tharu and Lalita. "In a series of Nair Regulation Laws, starting in 1868 and continuing into the 1930s, this form of family organization which gave a woman economic power and sexual freedom or in the phrasing of the marriage commission, the right to terminate a union at any time from wantonness or caprice was brought to heel"<sup>2</sup>. Tharu and Lalita have overkilled at the cost of accuracy. Women in the earlier part of the twentieth century with a minimum level of articulation were actively campaigning against the abuse of their bodies; the pawning of their bodies for money and status. Redemption from the moral outrage was envisaged in education to which the preoccupation with education and debunking of the marumakkathayam in articles by women can be attributed. Enunciation by woman was not for a different language or for greater powers in administration. The voice was for awareness of one's rights and duties to one's self, the salient issue was the right over a woman's body. Volumes of articles on the need to educate girls beyond the elementary level were written and published by women. Education and especially

---

<sup>1</sup> Sharada, 1, 2, 1905, p. 8

<sup>2</sup> S. Tharu and K.Lalita (eds.) Women Writing in India 600 B.C to the Present (Delhi :Oxford University Press, 1991), p.159

education in English was an asset for girls whose parents wished them to be married to 'worthy grooms'. T. Ammukutty Amma comments in her article "Nammude Streekalum English Vidyabhyasavum" (English Education and Our Women), "the graces girl should possess now include her knowledge of English"<sup>1</sup>. Paradoxically, equal are the number of articles that caricature zealots of English manners and style. 'Tea parties', conversations in English, 'evening walks' and reading of novels are all humorously represented. There lies a perceptible tension between modernisation and convention in their articles. Writers oscillated between being censorious about the espousal of western ways and pronouncing the urgency of western education (especially for girls). Writers denounced the emulation of western ways of life, of imitation without cognition. It is however true that women writers frequently resorted to English to substantiate and legitimise their arguments. As Meenakshi Mukherjee says, "English is not just any language it was the language of our colonial rulers and continues even now to be the language of power and privilege"<sup>2</sup>. Frequently, one reads translations of English proverbs, quotations from Russell, Shakespeare and other English writers and philosophers, novels and short stories. English lives were held up as examples to be followed. Women experienced the anxiety to be seen and read and to present a visage of scholarship of the English language to ratify their position as writers. In 1904 Appan Thamburan launched the detective novel with his Bhaskara Menon<sup>3</sup>. The detective story was a fortuitous boon for women who wrote in magazines. In the sixth volume of Sharada in 1905 there are four suspense

---

<sup>1</sup> Sharada, 1, 1905, p. 16

<sup>2</sup> M. Mukherjee, 'The Anxiety of Indianness: Our Novels in English' in Economic and Political Weekly, November 10- 17, 1993, p. 2607- 2611.

<sup>3</sup> K. Chaitanya, A History of Malayalam Literature ( New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1977), p. 269

thrillers. The stories were short and kept the reader engaged till the very end. The thriller was ideal for publication in magazine as both brevity and the longevity of the story worked favourably to heighten the thrill. In the latter case the story was serialized for publication, to keep the reader in suspense till the following issue, augmenting sales of the magazine. The model had been set for women ( by men) to follow which they did, religiously. Disguises, elaborate descriptions of train journeys, stalking suspects, all devices used in English thrillers were scrupulously employed in Malayalam stories too.

A concurrent concern of the magazines was to make the women of Kerala efficient house keepers who would dutifully discharge domestic duties. In all the three magazines published and circulated almost exclusively for women and Mahila, Lakshmi Bhayi and Sharada an excessively large number of articles were on motherhood, child care and domestic duties. In Bhasha Poshini and Rasika Ranjini, magazines that did not target only women for it's readership articles on motherhood and good housekeeping had been added for good measure. The articles goaded women to duteousness towards their husbands warranting their exhortions citing examples of women in the United States of America and in the United Kingdom where lives revolved around home and hearth. Articles from English magazines were translated and biographical accounts of Tara Bai, Sarojini Naidu, Toru Dutt and the Princesses of a Royal Family of Travancore were elaborated in these magazines. The Royal Family was greatly venerated and the Junior Maharani was the official patron of Lakshmibhayi. The Royal Families of Travancore and Kochi were champions of literature and it was under their auspices and guidance that several literary enterprises in Kerala were funded and maintained. The list of contents in

one edition of Mahila reads 'Sewing' 'Motherhood', 'Women and Duties to their Husbands', 'Women's Education- Now and Then', which condemns the existent situation of ignorance of Malayalam and Sanskrit and calls it the price paid for learning English, in the year 1921 long after English education had been established in the State. 'Woman and Duties to her Husband', 'Women in America', 'Maternal Love', 'Great Women- Lady Rachael Russell', 'Education that Women Require', 'Duties to one's Husband', 'Hygiene and Care of Children', 'Contentment' is the list of contents in one edition of Sharada. Such lists are endless and overlapping in all three magazines. The writers recommend girls be trained to apotheosize their husbands by keeping them entertained, cooking them good food, reading so as to talk intelligibly to them, managing finances well, taking care of the children and of course, cooking, cleaning, sewing and singing to soothe the husband to relaxation after his long day at work. Excessive dependence on the husband cramped his mobility and was therefore, to be avoided. Illustrative examples of women in America persuaded women to take care of their basic needs and thus, devote greater time and attention to duties demanded by their husbands and children. Woman was to eschew talking with other women - 'gossiping' as it was disparagingly called about ornaments, novels, people and things that may be of interest to a woman alone. All attempts to create an exclusively feminine dialogue were aborted by terming such attempts 'gossip' the ploy, additionally served the magazines in securing male patronage.

The polymorphous character of English in a colonial context further complicated the use of English by the Indian. The multiplicities of the polemic manifested itself in literary activity most conspicuously. The first generation of university graduates with a

reasonable knowledge of the world and of English had matured to fruition and were ready to employ the form in the native language at the end of the nineteenth century. University education transformed the operational function of the English language; an alien language taught in the mother tongue metamorphosed to a tool for the acquisition of powers and a first hand knowledge of the coloniser's literary heritage. English was bifurcated as English literature read in English by the empowered class, caste and sex, and literary work that had been translated in to Malayalam read by the less fortunate who rarely progressed beyond school as was the case with women. As a coefficient of creative writing English considerably changed the writing style of men and women in the late nineteenth century. English literature directly influenced and shaped literature by men while it was only a translation of the original that affectually operated in a woman's word of creativity. Indulekha by O. Chandu Menon was inspired by Disraeli's Henrietta Temple but women took their inspiration from Menon and translations of English authors. Distancing the originals from the readers through a translation was not always conducive to effective emulation.

In the preface to, The Hélène Cixous Reader, Susan Sellers writes, "Cixous suggests that feminine forms will bring into existence alternative forms of relation, perception and expression. It is in this sense that Cixous believes writing is revolutionary ... Feminist writing is: a place (...) which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise that is not obliged to reproduce the system that is writing"<sup>1</sup>. Addressing the issue of feminine prose writing in Kerala shows up the

---

<sup>1</sup> Susan Sellers (ed.), The Hélène Cixous Reader (London: Routledge, 1994), p. xxix

inherent pluralities the enterprise involved. Writing was an action that occupied the interstitial space between the instrumentalisation of the English language and its literature for change and the experimentation with the new form for aesthetic reasons. The discrimination (between the two uses), if at all was partial towards the expenditure of creative energies for the aesthetic object. The cohesion of literary forces effectually changed writing by women after the 1880's. East and West, man and woman had conjoined forces to change Kerala's literary history. Ironically however, in the combination of forces one was directing another as man was directing woman. An exegesis of prose writing by women in Kerala is revelatory in reconstructing the historiography of literature. Before Lalithambika Antaranjanam published her collection of short stories in 1937 there appears in all books of literary history of Malayalam no mention at all of those who preceded her which is complete injustice to those who anticipated her. A relative incognizance or a deliberate callousness to their efforts has been maintained. Why, one wonders, does this have to be so? Is it indifference or ignorance? It could in all possibility be an unfortunate conjunction of both, indifference and ignorance. An analysis of the circumstances of women writings will hopefully hold the key to the revelation.

Women did not write in a vacuum, they wrote under male supervision. In all magazines that have been used for the present study managerial and editorial posts were held by men. Articles written by women were written under duress, the articles had to be accepted by the male editors to whom it was presented. In a progressively difficult series of obturations the woman had to train her voice and tame her script to please the

excruciating gaze and pass through masculine incarcerations and interdictions. However as has been explicated above she was not so ambitious as to seek alternative modes of articulation. Remarkably, a volume of the 1916 edition of Lakshmi Bhayi carried the valedictory address by Mrs. Anna Thomas given at the third annual meeting of the Sthree Samjam at Paravoor, twelve years before the initiation of the National Council of Women in 1925 and thirteen years before the convention of the All India Women's Conference in 1926. Sadly this has not been noted in historical accounts. During the early years of the twentieth century, women in North India were fired by highly charged articles motivating them to fight for independence. In Kerala, as mentioned before, the movement was diluted and hardly any articles written by women were aimed at mobilising an action force amongst women.

The drive was for effective empowerment against illiteracy, child marriage and the vilification of the woman's corporeal self by the karnavar in Nair taravads. This being the dominant issue amongst the writers there was an essential homogenization of creative energies leading to homogenous literary products. Writing in journals was a relatively easy task especially if one wrote short, moralistic passages, sincerely believing and urging that domestic happiness lay in being dutiful to one's husband. Full length stories had not been sanctioned to woman by man but short stories and articles which followed this masculine lead were permitted. As K. Ramakrishna Pillai, editor of Keralan wrote in Sharada, "if a woman cannot write articles of merit, she should write short stories, as it will also earn her money"<sup>1</sup>. In 1912 B. Kalyani Amma wrote the biography of her

---

<sup>1</sup> Sharada, 1, 1905, p. 29



husband, Ramakrishna Pillai, titled Vyazhavata Smaranakal (Memories of Twelve Years.)

"Autobiographies are radical and radial energies originating in the subject centre, an aggressive creative expansion of the self"<sup>2</sup>, according to James Olney in his Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography. Those energies that could not be directed on to herself in a patriarchal context Kalyani Amma directs towards writing about her husband. Neither fiction nor fantasy but a part of her life which had to forego expression. Kalyani Amma writes about her husband and thus integrates her individual experiences with their shared experiences, enunciating a voice that would otherwise remain silenced and unheard.

In the forces that worked in the market the magazine for women was a commodity that sold well and writing in it was a profitable investment. But since there were market forces in consideration the articles sought to placate the customer and the seller-publisher, resulting in articles of moderate merit. The articles subscribed to a class of readers eager to emulate to English customs and manners. And incomplete transformation from the old to the new without sufficiently replacing that which had been displaced was, the predicament of society in Kerala at the turn of the century. The need of the hour was to ascertain one's bearings and keep a hold of tradition and convention and woman was nominated to hold fast to the vestigial remains of convention for it to be passed onto posterity. The sloughing of the old was not desired, an interim state had to be

---

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Anuradha. R, Writing a life: Interweaving strands of Gender, Class and Race in Agnes Smedley's 'Daughter of Earth' (unpublished, 1995), p.16

maintained, the task of which was imposed on women. Being so, her articles reflected the same interregal state in which she was trapped, and only a complete break away from that state and which was achieved by Lalithambika Antarjanam in 1937 could guarantee lasting fame. Lalithambika Antarjanam compiled a collection of her short stories following no model but her own unlike those whom she succeeded. Her predecessors whose fragmented work for which reasons have been elaborately dealt with above, dealt them the relative incognizance with which literary history has endowed them.

# **CONCLUSION**

Concluding a project is immeasurably difficult because at the close of the treatise a clear statement of what has been inferred from the study has to be presented. The task is daunting since progress is never unbridled; each step to further the project is weighed down by deterrents. Furthermore, there is the fear of being redundant and platitudinous. Evading redundancy is not easy, as it requires acuity of thought, a faculty of the mind that is not always at its prime. The ambitions with which the study was begun had to be curtailed due to circumstantial handicaps, one of which was the dearth of materials, requisite to the advance of the present study. Considerable rummaging yielded the magazines on which the present study has been built. The magazines were in varying degrees of decay, some of which crumbled on touch and a host of others were unobtainable. The search for material to work on yielded a composite corpus of articles. A variegated collection of articles to render the age with a name that would be a totem of feminine narratives between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, absence of a single, unitary text considerably problematises period study. Thakazhi Shivashankara Pillai once declared, 'Flaubert, Balzac, de Maupassant, Hugo, Dostoevski, Gogol, Tolstoy influenced me... Even Tagore was not responsible for the development of Malyalam fiction.'<sup>1</sup> Thakazhi's statement could also have been the collective statement of the women who initiated prose writing through journalistic activity towards the end of the nineteenth century, in Kerala. The attempt to reconstitute history or the unseen part of history has been enlightening to the politics of historiography and literature.

It appears on completion of the study that feminine writing in Kerala was unconditionally dictated by the male writers. Working under male supervision

---

<sup>1</sup> K. Natwar Singh (ed.) Tales from Modern India, (New York: Collier Books, 1973), p.198

qualificationaly mutated the writing of women. Percolation of the concept of independence was incomplete and yet to take root firmly in Kerala hence, the 'national experience'<sup>1</sup> was of a different kind. The pan-Indian phenomenon that was experienced was the thread of myth, fable and legend that ran across the country, the treasury which fed feminine writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Alternatively, the British rule was proving beneficial to the people of Kerala, education and jobs were easier to avail of than earlier. Newly acquired ideas of paternity and legitimacy were unsettling the social structure of Kerala. The question of legitimacy being close to men's hearts, when women interpellated the ethicality of the sambandham, they lent their support to the cause of women and sanctioned womens' articles which ventilated their grievances against the system.

The next breakthrough in the aesthetic use of prose came in 1937 with the publication of Lalithambika Antaranjanam's collection of short stories Aadyathe Kathakal. The short story was an apropos choice to launch oneself into thus for masculine demesnes. Short stories neither displayed the aspirations of a novel nor were they fragmented like articles in journals. Women had authenticated their prowess as writers providing Lalithambika Antaranjanam a stable platform from which she could launch herself. Feminine writings were being published across the country, writers like Tarabai Shinde, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati , Lakshmi Bai Tilak and Cornelia Sorabji were known in Kerala and their lives and works were held up as patterns to be followed, compounding the timely launch of Lalithambika Antaranjanam's work. In this study, my humble attempt has been to piece together the fragmented acts of creative writing by the women who eventuated Lalithambika

---

<sup>1</sup> Meenakshi Mukherjee in The Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of The Indian Novel in

Antarjanam's timely launch and to whom history and literature pay little credit. It is my modest hope that I have been able to do some justice to these pioneers.

# **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## BOOKS

1. Bhabha, Homi, K. The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994)
2. Brooker, Peter (ed.) Modernism / Postmodernism (Essex: Longman Group UK Ltd., 1992)
3. Buckland, C.E. Bengal under the Lieutenant Governors (New Delhi: Deep Publishers 1976), vol. II, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition
4. Buhler. G (trans). The Laws of Manu ( Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1964) Reprint
5. Cameron, Deborah, (ed.) The Feminist Critique of Language (London: Routledge, 1990)
6. Chaitanya, Krishna, A History of Malayalam Literature (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1971)
7. Chattopadhyay, Gautam, (ed) Bengal: Early Nineteenth Century Selected Documents (Calcutta: Research India Publications, 1978)
8. Chummar, T.M. Bhasha Gadya Sahitya Charitram (Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Sahakarana Sangam Ltd, 1956)
9. Eagleton, Terry, Literary Theory: An Introduction (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983)
10. George, K.M. (ed.) Modern Indian Literature: An Anthology; Surveys and Poems (vol. 1) (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1992)
11. Ghosh, Suresh Chandra, The History of Education in Modern India 1757-1986 (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd. 1995)
12. Iyer, L.A. Krishna, Kerala and Her People (Palaghat: The Educational Supplies Depot-Publishers, 1961)
13. Jeffrey, Robin, The Decline of Nair Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908 (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1994 ) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.
14. Kareem, C.K. Kerala and Her Culture: An Introduction (Trivandrum; 1971)
15. Kloss, Heinz & McConnell, Grant.D (Gen Eds.), Written Languages of the World: A survey of the Degree and Modes of use (vol:2 ), B.P. Mahapatra et al, (eds.) India- Constitutional Languages, book 1. (Laval: International Centre for Research on Bilingualism, 1989. )



16. Kristeva, Julia, Toril Moi (ed.) The Kristeva Reader (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986)
17. Manavalan, Paul, Kerala Samskaravum Chrysthava Missionarymarum (Cochin: D.C. Books, 1980)
18. Menon, A. Sreedhara, A Survey of Kerala History (Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, 1967)
19. Menon, A.SreeDhara, Social and Cultural History of Kerala (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1979).
20. Menon, K.P. Padmanabha, History of Kerala vol. 1 (Ernakulam: Cochin Govt: Press, 1924)
21. Menon, Shangoony. P. History of Travancore (Madras: Higginbotham and Company, 1878)
22. Moi, Toril, Sexual / Textual Politics (London: Routledge, 1988) 2<sup>nd</sup> publication
23. Mukherjee, Meenakshi, The Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Technique of the Indian Novel in English (New Delhi: Heinemann, 1971)
24. ----- Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985)
25. Nair, P.K. Parameswaran, E.M.J. Venniyoor (trans), History of Malayalam Literature (Trichur:Sahitya Akademi, 1967)
26. Pillai, P. Govinda, Malayala Bhasha Charitram (Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Sahakarana Sangam Ltd, 1956) vols.1 and 2
27. Potti, C. Narayanan, Malayala Sahitya Sarvaswam, K.M. George (ed.), (Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1987)
28. Sangari, Kumkum & Vaid, Suresh, (eds.) Recasting Women: Essays in colonial History (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989)
29. Sellers, Susan, (ed.) The Hélène Cixous Reader (London: Routledge, 1994)
30. Sengupta, S. Women in Indian Folklore: Linguistic and Religious Study; a Short Survey of Their Social Status and Position (Calcutta: Indian Publications, 1969)
31. Singh, Natwar, K.(ed.) Tales from Modern India (New York: Collier Books 1973)

32. Singh, Yogendra, Modernization of Indian Tradition (New Delhi: Rawat Publication, 1996)
33. Sinha, D.P. The Educational Policy of the East India Company in Bengal to 1854 (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1964)
34. Stimpson, Catherine. R. Where the Meanings are (New York: Methuen Inc, 1988)
35. Tharu, Susie & Lalita. K (eds.) Women Writing in India: 600 B.C to the Present. vol.1 ( New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991)
36. Tharu, Susie, (ed) Subject to Change: Teaching Literature in the Nineties(New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1998)
37. Thomas, P. Indian Women Through the Ages (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964)
38. Thomas, P.J. Malayala Sahityavum Christyanikalum (Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1989) 3<sup>rd</sup> edition
39. Waugh, Patricia, Revolutions of the Word (London: Arnold, 1997)
40. Wilson, H. H, Raghavan, V. et al. (eds.) The Theatre of the Hindus (Delhi: Indological Book House, year of publication unknown).
41. Zimmer, Heinrich, Joseph Campbell, (ed.) Philosophies of India (New York: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, 1951)

### **UNPUBLISHED WORKS**

1. Anuradha.R, Writing a life: Interweaving strands of gender, caste and race in Agnes Smedley's, *Daughter of Earth* (unpublished, 1995)
2. Eapen, K.V, Study of the Contribution of Christian Mission Society to the Progress of Education in Kerala , (unpublished, 1979.)
3. Hepzi Joy, R.J. History and Development of Education of Women in Kerala (unpublished , 1993)
4. Pillai, P.V.Velayudhan, A Study of Early Malayalam Prose (unpublished, 1971)
5. Pradeep Kumar, K.G. Total Literacy Campaign in Kerala-A Sociological Survey (unpublished, 1996)
6. Viswanathan, N. The Impact of English on Malayalam Poetry (unpublished, 1974)

## ARTICLES

1. A.B.C.D 'Samarthya Pareeksha,' Bhasha Poshini, 2, 1917
2. Aiyar, L.V. Ramaswamy, 'The Malayalam of the Missionaries', Bulletin of the Rama Varma Research Institute, (Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1973,) Vol. IX, Part I, reprint
3. Ammal, Muthulakshmi, V. ' Sahakarana Thyagam', Lakshmi Bhayi 18, 1923
4. Ammal, T.K. 'Asooya.' Lakshmi Bhayi, 1916.
5. Amminikuthy Kevilamma. K. 'Oru Sambhuashanam' Lakshmi Bhayi, 1930
6. Ammuamma. V. 'Madhuramangalathu Valiya Nair'. Lakshmi Bhayi, 1916.
7. Ammukutty Amma. T. 'Sthree Vidyabhyasam', Sharada 1, 1904
8. Ammukutty Amma. V. 'Indira Devi' Bhasha Poshini, 26, 1922
9. Ammukutty Amma. V. 'Charittryam' Sharada 1, 1904
10. Ammuvenkaramma, G .M. 'Sthaninayar Sthreekal' Lakshmi Bhayi, 1916.
11. Besant, Annie ( trans.) 'Central Hindu College Benares , ' Bhasha Poshini, 25, 1921
12. Bhageerathi Amma Thamburan. 'Anadambaram' Lakshmi Bhayi, 1930
13. Bhageerathi Amma Thamburan. M. 'Thunnal Panni,' Mahila 1, 1921
14. Bhageerathi Amma. B 'Sthree Kalude Bhabhagitwam,' Mahila 1, 1921
15. Bhageerathi Amma. B. 'Eechakal,' Mahila 1, 1921
16. Bhageerathi Amma. B. 'Kanninte Thelicham,' Mahila 1, 1921
17. Bhageerathi Amma. B. 'Vyamam' Sharada 1, 1904
18. Bharathi Amma., T. 'Samudayathodu Sthree Kalude Chumathala' Lakshmi Bhayi, 1930
19. Bhasha Poshini, Book 14 1090 Chingam, Kanni Issue 1,2
20. Bhavani Amma Thottekkathu 'Marana Shaiyakkarikil' Lakshmi Bhayi 33, 1937.
21. Bhayi, 'Vivaha Karyathil' Lakshmi Bhayi 33, 1937
22. Chellamma .M, 'Tara Bhai', Sharada, 2 1905
23. Chellamma. M. 'Samtripti ' Sharada, 2 1905

24. Chellamma. M., 'Krishna Kumari' Sharada, 2 1905
25. Chellamma.S, 'Americayile Sthreekal ' Sharada, 2 1905
26. Chinnamma .K. 'Mahila Mandiram', Mahila 1, 1921
27. Chitra Lekha 'Chitranezhuthu' Sharada 1, 1904
28. Devaki Amma. K. 'Nayanmarude Jathi Vibhagavum Sthree Kalum', Sharada, 2 1905
29. Elayancheri, Kunjiamma 'Ekagrachittavritti,' Lakshmi Bhayi 18, 1923
30. George K.M. ' Western Influence on Indian Literature' in Arabinda Poddar (ed.) Indian Literature: Proceedings of a Seminar (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1972)
31. Gowrikuttiamma. P. 'Aikamathyam,' Lakshmi Bhayi, 1916.
32. Iyengar, Sreenivasa. S. 'Nammude Karyam,' Mahila 1, 1921
33. K. Pathmavathi Amma, 'Parasthree Margam' Sharada 1, 1904
34. Kadam Bari Amma, ' Samudaya Sevayil Sthree Kalude Karthavamgyal,' Mahila 1, 1921
35. Kalthara Karthyanikutty 'Parishkara Pravaham' Lakshmi Bhayi, 25, 1930
36. Kalthara, Karthyanikutty 'Bhoota daya ,' Lakshmi Bhayi 18, 1923
37. Kalyani Amma T.B, 'Sthree Dharmam' Sharada 1, 1904
38. Kalyani Amma T.C., 'Thadil Prabha Enna Raja Kanyaka' Vidya Vinodini 6. 1895
39. Kalyani Amma T.C., Raja Pankajam, Vidya Vinodini 2, 1901
40. Kalyani Amma, T.B. 'Florence Nightingale ' Sharada 1, 1904
41. Kalyani Amma, T.B. 'Mahatikal, Lady Rachael Russell ' Sharada, 2 1905
42. Kalyani Amma, T.B. 'Vasthra Dharanam' Sharada 1, 1904
43. Kalyani Amma, T.C, 'Ananda Bayi Joshi', Sharada 1, 1904
44. Kalyani Kutty, 'Namichu poyi', Sharada 1, 1904
45. Kalyaniamma C.P. 'Ammamaroda Oru Vakku' Lakshmi Bhayi, 1916.
46. Kalyaniamma T.C. ' Easwara Viswasam' Lakshmi Bhayi , 1930
47. Kalyaniamma, T.C. 'Mooda Vishwasam', Sharada, 2 1905
48. Kalyaniamma. B. 'Sthreekalum English Vidyabyasavum Lakshmi Bhayi , 1930
49. Kalyaniamma. T.C. 'Kazhuthayude Katha' Sharada, 2 1905

50. Kalyaniamma. T.S. 'Adhyaksha Prasangam' Lakshmi Bhayi 33, 1937.
51. Karthayani Amma. E. 'Shuchithyavum Aarogyavum' Lakshmi Bhayi,1916.
52. Karthayani Amma. E., 'Narilokam' Lakshmi Bhayi,1916.
53. Karthyaniamma, K.C. 'Sthreekalum Parishkaravum', Lakshmi Bhayi,1916.
54. Karthyanikutty. E, 'Jeevathodesham' Lakshmi Bhayi,1916.
55. Karthyanikutty.P.N. 'Grihakrityam', Lakshmi Bhayi,1916.
56. Kavamma. P. , 'Sthreekal Shradhikkenda Oru Vishayam,' Lakshmi Bhayi,1916.
57. Kerala Verma Thamburan.P, 'Subhadra,' Bhasha Poshini, 14, 1915
58. Knuju Lakshmi Kettilamba- 'Mahakavi Kuttamathu Kunni Yooru Kunjunni Kurup' Bhasha Poshini, 2, 1917
59. Kochukutty Amma.T. 'Indiyale Psacheena Naveena Sthree Vidya Bhyasam,' Mahila 1, 1921
60. Kunjikuttan, K.V. 'Ente Onamathe Katha,' Bhasha Poshini, 26, 1922
61. Kunju Lakshmi. K.M.K 'Guhan Athava Rama Naman' Bhasha Poshini, 2, 1917
62. Kushalakumari.P, 'Keralathile Vidyabhyasathinum Missionarimarude Sambhavana'-in Keralathile Vidyabhyasa Pratisandhi, Prabandhangalndi Samgrahm(Trichur: 1995) pp. 95-96
63. Kuttikunju Thangachi , 'Oru sangeerthanam' Lakshmi Bhayi , 1930
64. Kuttikunju Thangachi, 'Oru sangeerthanam' Lakshmi Bhayi, 25, 1930
65. Lakshmi Amma. K 'C.V.Yude Nayikamar,' Mahila 1, 1921
66. Lakshmi Amma. K. 'Pursha Dharmam', Sharada, 2 1905
67. Lakshmi Amma.V , 'Vasthro Chadanam' Sharada 1, 1904
68. Lakshmi kutty Amma. K, 'Manam Polay Mangalyam' Sharada 1, 1904
69. Lakshmi Kutty Amma. K. 'Oru Tharattupattu', Sharada, 2 1905
70. Lakshmikutty Amma.K. 'Sethu Snamam', Sharada 1, 1904
71. Lakshmikutty Amma.P. 'Kanthimathiyum Kamalabalanum' Sharada, 2 1905
72. Madhavi Amma, 'Parsi Sthree Kal' Sharada 1, 1904
73. Madhavi Amma. K., 'Nayar Vivaham Enna Sam bandha kriya' Sharada, 2 1905
74. Mannadiayar, Chambathil Chinnammu 'Mathrsnecham' Sharada, 2 1905

75. Mathew, K.C. 'Charlsu Maharajavinte Vistharam,' Bhasha Poshini, 14, 1915
76. Mathulla A. 'Utterendyaile Chila Pradhana Drishtyangal,' Bhasha Poshini, 25, 1921
77. Meenakshi Amma. B. 'Damayanti', Sharada 1, 1904
78. Menon. B.K, 'Rogi Shushroosha' Lakshmi Bhayi 33, 1937.
79. Moorkothu Kumaran, 'Aabharana Bhramam,' Bhasha Poshini, 25, 1921
80. Mukherjee, Meenakshi, 'The Anxiety of Indianess, Our Novels in English,' Economic and Political Weekly, vol xxviii, No. 48, 1993 ,pp 2607- 2611
81. Narayana Nambiar K.C 'Mookaamba Sthotram,' Bhasha Poshini, 14, 1915
82. A Nair Sthree 'Thiruvithamkoor Nayar Maruma Kkathaya Bill,' Mahila 1, 1921
83. Narayana Pillai, 'Vijayanagara Charitram' Bhasha Poshini, 26, 1922
84. Narayani Amma. V. 'Sthree Kalku Vendathaya Vidyabhyasam', Sharada, 2 1905
85. Naryani Amma. A . 'Thulasi Baiyiyum Gopala Dasanum' Sharada 1, 1904
86. Njaneyan, 'Mattammyude Upadesham' Rasika Ranjini, 1906
87. P.N, 'Uyarahnatharan Vidyabhyasam Streekalkavashyamo?', Lakshmi Bhayi 18, 1923
88. Pachi Amma. B. 'Sthreekalum Swathentrayvum,' Mahila 1, 1921
89. Padinjare Marathu Komalam Amma, 'Sthree Kalum Parishkaravum', Lakshmi Bhayi, 1930
90. Parvathi Amma.K, 'Parishkaravum Malayalikalum' Sharada, 2 1905
91. Pathmavathi Amma.K, 'Bhartr Shurshroosha' Sharada 1, 1904
92. R.P. 'Mathrtwam Enna Tozhil ' Rasika Ranjini, 1906
93. Raja Raja Varma.V, 'Mahila Mahatmyam,' Mahila 1, 1921
94. Rama Wariyar . K.C. 'Sahitya Ratnamala, Mahabharatham,' Bhasha Poshini, 26, 1922
95. Ramakrishna Pillai.K., 'Sthreekalum Pravathanavum', Sharada, 2 1905
96. Rathnam. M. 'Bodham Vanna Blutam,' Bhasha Poshini, 25, 1921
97. Rugmini Amma C. 'Sthree Dharmam ', Sharada, 2 1905
98. Rugmini Amma. C. 'Sthree Vidyabhyasam', Sharada, 2 1905

99. Rugminiamma. E, 'Kabir', Lakshmi Bhayi, 1916.
100. Rukminiamma, E. 'Oru Apeksha'. Lakshmi Bhayi, 1916.
101. S.V.R. 'Bharyamarude Chila Avakashangal', Rasika Ranjini, 1, 1903
102. Saramma, 'Mathrthwavum Deshacharanagalum', Mahila 1, 1921
103. Saraswati, 'Bharya Bhartr Twam' Sharada, 2 1905
104. A Scholar, 'Mithamayi Jevikuka' Lakshmi Bhayi 33, 1937
105. Sharada, 'Sthreekalum Vaidyavum', Sharada 1, 1904
106. Sharada, 'Dasi' Sharada 1, 1904
107. Sharada, 'Kudumbasowkhyam' Sharada 1, 1904
108. Sharada, 'Veetuvela' Sharada 1, 1904
109. Sharada-'Sthree Swathantryam', Sharada, 2 1905
110. Sheelavathi. A. 'Saraswati Poojayude Aantharartham' Lakshmi Bhayi, 1930
111. Sheshagiri Prabhu, 'Sutradha Prakaranam', Bhasha Poshini, 14, 1915
112. Srinivasa Shastri, 'Purathana India,' Bhasha Poshini, 26, 1922
113. Subramanya Potti C.S. 'Pradar Shanangal,' Bhasha Poshini, 14, 1915
114. Thalasherny, M.K.G. 'Swargam' Bhasha Poshini, 26, 1922
115. Thamburan, V. M. Bhagerathi Amma 'Eashwaran Sahayichu', Lakshmi Bhayi 18, 1923
116. Tharakan, P.K. Michael, 'Keraliyare Saksharar Aakiyathu Aaran? Maharajakanmaro, Missionarimaro Atho Keezhalaro Sthreekalo.' in Keralathile Vidyabhyasa Pratisandhi, Prabandhangalndi Samgrahm(Trichur: 1995) pp.11-12
117. Tharavathu Ammalu Amma 'Sthreekalude Sahitya Vasana, Lakshmi Bhayi, 1930
118. Thomas, Anna, 'Upasamgraha Prasangam', Lakshmi Bhayi, 1916.
119. Topolski, Jerzy, 'The Role of Logic and Aesthetics in Construing Narrative Wholes in Historiography, History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History, 38 : 2 1999
120. Valiya Thaechattu Dekshayani Amma 'Mrganganlude Chila Sambashana Reethikal' Lakshmi Bhayi 18, 1923
121. Varkey A.P 'Ashoka Mauryar,' Bhasha Poshini, 14, 1915

**APPENDIX ONE****FEMALE LITERACY 1875 –1971, FOR SELECTED AREAS (PERCENTAGES).**

	1875	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1981	1941	1951	1961	1971
TRAVANCORE	0.5	-	3.5	3.1	5.0	15.0	13.9	36.0	-	-	-
COCHIN	0.4	-	5.5	4.5	6.1	9.4	18.5	30.6	-	-	-
MALABAR DISTRICT	-	-	3.9	3.0	3.5	4.9	7.5	-	21.0		
INDIA	-	0.4	0.5	0.7	1.1	1.9	2.4	6.9	9.3	12.9	18.7

Source : Census of India, 1981, Series 1.