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Editor's Note

The Investigator is an International Peer-Reviewed Multidisciplinary Journal published quarterly (March, June, September and December), launched under the auspices of the academic community *Association for Cultural & Scientific Research* (ACSR). Keeping the panoramic scopes of research as a vibrant path, *The Investigator* intends to reflect on the skilled minds attitudinally conjuring from humanities to other disciplines. The journal explores the currents of criticism and unleashes divergent thinking. It welcomes original, scholarly unpublished papers from the researchers, faculty members, students and the diverse aspirants writing in English. It is a peer reviewed journal that brings the scholarship of academicians and practitioners around the world. *The Investigator* hopes and wishes to provide a self-assuring means to you for your further accomplishments.

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Subalternity and Gender Politics in Popular Malayalam Cinema

The study examines the complex interplay between cinema, society, and cultural identity, focusing on Malayalam cinema. It highlights how films serve as powerful communicative tools that shape and reflect social values, including issues of caste, class, and gender. Malayalam cinema, particularly from the 1980s, has both challenged and reinforced societal norms, depicting subaltern groups through stereotypical lenses. The study critiques the limited representation of Dalits and the LGBTQ community while acknowledging recent shifts towards more nuanced portrayals. It underscores cinema's role in both perpetuating and challenging cultural constructs, with modern films beginning to break away from traditional narratives, offering more authentic and empowered representations of marginalized groups.

Key Words: *Cultural identity, Stereotypes, Representation, Gender roles, Patriarchy*

'Film, as a text, can say more than one supposes; they can always say something new, precisely because signs are the starting point of a process of interpretation which leads to an infinite series of progressive consequences and are open to multiple interpretations.'

Every social discourse has contributed to the installation of cultural values in society. In the establishment and transmission of distinct cultural values, art, and literary genres play a critical role. Cinema is primarily a visual-sound medium of entertainment and a significant art form in modern culture. It was invented in the twentieth century. Digital media re-energizes the appeal of visual culture in sustaining cultural realities, implying a shift from a verbal to a pictorial approach to bringing the social field into reality. Social scientists consider films to be a powerful medium of communication. The cinema stands out in our culture as one of the most powerful vehicles of propaganda, thanks to its incredible masquerade, as well as the prestige and honour bestowed upon it by the general public. The cinema serves as an alternative public arena, allowing people from all walks of life to express and establish their identities. People emulate, fantasise about, and compare themselves to the characters on screen. The cinema's visual narrative portrays people's choices, lives, and identities.

Regional cinemas have played an important role in imagining, shaping, and embodying cultural and social identities, and they have served as ideological state apparatus organs in forging a sense of belonging, constructing common identities, and acculturating men and women to function within symbolic boundaries. As a result, regional cinemas have played an important role in the establishment of social formations with well-defined structures and social interactions. Malayalam film has grown to

become Kerala's most significant cultural media. The engagement with Kerala's socio-political realms has inevitably moulded Malayalam cinema's aesthetical and structural foundations, and it is altering its face in response to the audience's shifting socio-cultural ideals and aspirations. Malayalam cinema has garnered considerable attention as an art form and a form of representation in recent critical contexts, with questions arising from diverse domains of knowledge about how women, the lower classes, and nature are depicted in films. By the 1980s, Malayalam film had developed a compelling cinematic narrative that conversed to the public's social and aesthetic imagination. Along with shifting societal attitudes, Malayalam film in the 1980s introduced a culture of "revivalism," which established a social atmosphere of tolerance among viewers for the importance of a traditional past to excuse deceitful, exploitative, and alienating behaviours in the present. The easiest approach to explain this is to concentrate on Malayalam cinema's "overindulgence" in depicting caste, class, and patriarchy.

Subaltern studies can be a useful critical tool and approach for analysing literary and visual mediums, as well as for demarcating the subaltern experience in cultural texts and the "real" world. The concept of the subaltern is linked to questions of dominance and power, democracy and citizenship, resistance and transformation. Subalternity, according to Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, is a position "where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the construction of a recognizable base of activity." Slaves, peasants, religious groups, women, different ethnicities, and the proletariat were all utilised as subaltern social categories by Antonio Gramsci who used the term more symbolically and politically to describe and analyse the political and historical dynamics of subjugated social strata.

Although Malayalam film industry has attempted to address the worry of Dalits, they have been stereotyped from various perspectives and were diminished to being sidekicks and villains or incompetent workers having no character. They stayed as instruments to worship the main hero and to help the protagonist to bring out his heroism and are the poor helpless victims who always help the hero to display his heroism. When it comes to the representation of subalterns in mainstream cinema, there is a flood of stereotypical imagery, and films that do take on the mission of depicting the underprivileged often end up redeploying stereotypes by dismissing the subaltern as "uncultured." In a series of neo-feudal, hegemonic, and hypermasculine films like *Druvam*, *Advaitham*, *Aryan*, *Devasuram* and others, casteism and patriarchy, which had been latent until this period, were reclaimed with an insidious affection, to be delineated in a set of neo-feudal, hegemonic, and hypermasculine films. The emblem of the 'benevolent and just feudal rulers' was constantly produced in these films, which centred on the systematic erasure of imprints of fights fought against caste, feudal and patriarchal oppressions from Malayalee cultural memory- such films also tend to build an ideological milieu rooted in traditionalism and conservatism while maintaining a relationship with capitalist modernity's fantasies. Contemporary

popular Malayalam cinema employs a variety of visual and narrative strategies to re-establish conventional cultural concepts of stereotyped subaltern castes through indirect means, such as obfuscating the protagonists' caste identities while highlighting certain legitimised signs and conventions. The portrayal of blacks was done in a mocking manner and through the portrayal of bad villain roles, of which Malayalam film has a plethora of examples. Static representations of tribals—and the otherness of their communities—have also been replicated, founded in a particular idea of the subaltern body. Popular Malayalam films, whether directed by a 'megastar,' 'superstar,' or 'popular star,' deal with the issue of subalternity or marginality in a complex way.

Cinema has a symbiotic link with society, and as a result, the masculinity and patriarchy displayed in society are mirrored in the movies. The social, cultural, and political implications of a society's value notions regarding masculinity and femininity are critical, and Malayalam films play an essential part in this regard. Rather than physiological gender dependency, societal values dictate gender status. Each group has its own set of laws and behaviours, as well as gender ideal models that can be developed through art, especially movies. Representation and gender are cultural constructs, and the ideological function of power is embedded inside them. Since its inception, Malayalam film has made only sporadic attempts to reflect, portray, and express the LGBTQ population that exists invisibly inside the educated Kerala society. Malayalam film responded to gender and sexuality discourse by depicting an unashamed preference for heterosexual practises. Because cinematic narrative sustains and normalises heterosexuality, it plays a crucial part in identity creation, and film makers expedite this process through the 'process of Othering the homosexuals.' Due to a lack of representation or misrepresentation, queer voices are suppressed, and queerness is side lined as a narrative element in dominant cultural discourses. Women are meant to be submissive, gentle, whining, and wailing wrecks who depend on 'the man' to direct them and wait for him to protect and defend them. Cinema effectively conceals the misogyny inherent in myths and creates an invisible web around the women, building and confining her. Despite having a higher literacy rate, the labour atmosphere in Kerala is largely grounded and driven by misogyny, and men tend to treat women as property that they own. Of course, contemporary new wave cinema deviates from previous narrative patterns. The subjects were firmly grounded in Malayalee reality, society, and mentality, and they had a fresh look and feel that contrasted with the tired rhythms of superstar storylines, with bolder and more powerful female characters that represented true femininity and defied stereotypes. As a result, there are visible changes that signal the end of the old and the beginning of the new.

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Synergizing Science and Culture: A Holistic Approach to Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Achieving a sustainable future requires innovative solutions across various sectors. Entrepreneurship, with its inherent focus on creativity and problem-solving, plays a vital role in this endeavour. However, traditional business models often prioritize short-term profit over long-term environmental and social well-being. This conceptual study argues for an interdisciplinary approach to sustainable entrepreneurship, integrating cultural and scientific perspectives. By examining cultural values and incorporating scientific advancements, entrepreneurs can develop more robust and culturally relevant solutions for a sustainable future.

Keywords: *Cultural heritage, environmental sustainability, interdisciplinary approaches, scientific innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship.*

Introduction

The concept of sustainable development, encompassing environmental, social, and economic well-being, has become an imperative for businesses in the present century. A recent report by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) found that 70% of global CEOs believe that integrating sustainability into their core business strategy is crucial for long-term success (World Business Council, 2023). Traditional business practices that prioritize short-term profit maximization are increasingly recognized as unsustainable, with a growing consumer backlash against environmentally irresponsible practices. NielsenIQ, revealed that 83% of global consumers are willing to pay a premium for sustainable brands (Global Sustainability Report 2023,). This shift in consumer behaviour is fueling a sustainability fury among businesses, pushing them to innovate and adopt environmentally and socially responsible practices. Entrepreneurship, with its capacity for innovation and adaptability, offers a promising avenue for addressing these challenges. Effective sustainable entrepreneurship necessitates moving beyond a purely business-oriented approach. This paper proposes an interdisciplinary approach that integrates cultural and scientific perspectives into sustainable entrepreneurship practices.

Literature Review

Studies highlight the importance of integrating cultural and scientific perspectives in sustainable entrepreneurship to address complex global challenges. Traditional business models often fall short by prioritizing short-term profits over long-term sustainability, but an interdisciplinary approach can yield more robust solutions. (Hofstede, 1980) indicates the cultural dimensions theory and recent (Bruton et al.,2010) emphasize how understanding local cultural contexts can enhance the relevance and acceptance of sustainable practices. Advancements in science and technology, such as those in renewable energy and biotechnology, are pivotal in fostering innovation within sustainable ventures (Hockerts, 2010, Shwetzzer,2022) propose a holistic and dynamic framework for understanding entrepreneurial ecosystems that merges aspects of entrepreneurial activity, value creation, and institutional inferences, recognizing the heterogeneity of EEs and avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. (Hadorn, 2007) argue for the integration of diverse knowledge systems to develop comprehensive sustainability solutions, supported by knowledge management strategies as explored by recent bibliometric studies. Case studies, such as the grameen bank fusion of local cultural practices with innovative financial models (Yunus, 2007) and the solar sister initiatives blend of solar technology with entrepreneurial training for women in Africa (Eder,2015) demonstrate the effectiveness of this interdisciplinary approach. Integrating cultural values with scientific advancements enables entrepreneurs to create more effective and culturally relevant solutions, promoting broader acceptance and implementation of sustainable practices. Sustainable entrepreneurs are characterized by altruism, innovativeness, balancing values, perceived capabilities, probity, and self-compassion, which further underscores the multidimensional nature of sustainable entrepreneurship.

Objectives

1. To explore effective integration strategies for cultural and scientific perspectives in sustainable entrepreneurship.
2. To develop a conceptual framework for facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration in sustainable ventures.

Conceptual methodology

This study employs a comprehensive conceptual methodology to explore the integration of cultural and scientific perspectives in sustainable entrepreneurship. It includes a literature review to establish a theoretical foundation, examining current knowledge on sustainable entrepreneurship, cultural integration, and scientific innovation. A comparative analysis of successful case studies will provide

practical insights into effective interdisciplinary practices, challenges, and outcomes. Based on these findings, a conceptual framework will be developed to guide interdisciplinary collaboration and the implementation of sustainable business practices. This approach aims to offer actionable recommendations for entrepreneurs and policymakers.

Scope and relevance

This study explores the integration of cultural and scientific perspectives in sustainable entrepreneurship, focusing on methods for combining these insights to enhance business practices. It involves analysing case studies of successful interdisciplinary ventures and developing a conceptual framework to guide collaboration among cultural experts, scientists, and entrepreneurs. The relevance lies in advancing academic understanding of sustainable entrepreneurship through interdisciplinary approaches, providing practical strategies for entrepreneurs to innovate and address global challenges, and offering policymakers actionable recommendations to foster sustainability and support green infrastructure.

Defining sustainable entrepreneurship:

Sustainable entrepreneurship refers to the practice of starting, managing, and growing a business that considers the environmental, social, and economic impacts of its activities (Hopkins, 2008). It involves creating and implementing innovative solutions that address societal and environmental challenges while generating economic value (Giva,2021). Sustainable entrepreneurs aim to achieve a "triple bottom line" of economic prosperity, environmental responsibility, and social equity.

Importance of interdisciplinary approaches

Traditional business practices often lack the holistic perspective needed for true sustainability. Interdisciplinary approaches, integrating knowledge from various fields, become crucial for success. Cultural understanding plays a pivotal role in shaping how individuals perceive and interact with the environment, thereby influencing consumer behaviour and business practices. Understanding cultural nuances is vital for developing sustainable ventures that resonate with different communities (Hofstede, 2011). Scientific innovation is another key element, offering tools for measuring and mitigating environmental and social impacts. By integrating scientific knowledge, businesses can enhance resource efficiency, conduct thorough impact assessments, and develop clean technologies for sustainable solutions (Tukker, 2006). Social responsibility is fundamental in sustainable entrepreneurship. The social sciences help integrate ethical considerations and address issues such as fair labour practices, community development, and social inclusion into business models (Dean, 2007). This holistic approach ensures that business practices are not only economically viable but also socially equitable and environmentally sustainable.

Theoretical frameworks

Entrepreneurship theories offer various perspectives on how entrepreneurial activities are initiated, developed, and sustained. Schumpeterian innovation theory asserts that entrepreneurs drive economic development by introducing innovative combinations of resources, leading to market disruption and creative destruction. The resource-based view (RBV) highlights how unique, valuable, and non-substitutable resources enable entrepreneurs to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. Effectuation theory emphasizes starting with available means and focusing on control rather than prediction, promoting adaptability in entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship is centred on creating social value through innovative solutions to societal challenges, balancing economic returns with social and environmental impacts. Sustainability theories address how businesses can operate in ways that ensure long-term environmental, social, and economic health. Triple bottom line (TBL) emphasizes balancing profit, people, and planet, urging businesses to achieve economic success while ensuring positive social and environmental outcomes. Stakeholder theory argues that businesses should create value for all stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and the environment, aligning with sustainable entrepreneurship by considering broader societal impacts. Ecological modernization theory suggests that technological innovation and economic growth can be aligned with environmental protection, advocating for the integration of environmental considerations into economic development and leveraging technology for sustainable outcomes.

Integrating theories like the quadruple helix model which extends the triple helix model by adding civil society to the collaboration mix of academia, industry, and government, fostering inclusive and participatory innovation. New growth theory emphasizes leveraging knowledge, technology, and human capital to drive sustainable economic development. Institutional theory explores how norms, regulations, and cultural structures shape organizational behaviour, guiding sustainable entrepreneurship through these contexts. Innovation system theory highlights the importance of systemic collaboration among various actors to effectively create and spread sustainable technologies and practices.

Integrating cultural and scientific perspectives

This theoretical framework underscores the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to sustainable entrepreneurship. By combining cultural insights with scientific advancements and integrating key theories, entrepreneurs can develop robust, innovative, and culturally relevant solutions for a sustainable future. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives but also contributes to a more inclusive and equitable world.

Role of cultural heritage and traditions in shaping entrepreneurial ventures

Cultural heritage and traditions significantly influence entrepreneurial ventures by embedding unique values, practices, and knowledge into business operations. Entrepreneurs who integrate cultural heritage into their business models can create a strong identity and differentiation in the market (Klamer, 2016). Traditional craftsmanship, local materials, and indigenous knowledge can be leveraged to develop products and services that resonate with cultural narratives and preserve heritage. For example, businesses that promote traditional crafts or cuisine not only sustain cultural heritage but also attract niche markets that value authenticity and tradition (Zhao, 2019).

Leveraging cultural heritage for entrepreneurial success

Consumers increasingly value authenticity and cultural heritage, which entrepreneurs can leverage by incorporating traditional craftsmanship, local materials, and indigenous knowledge into their products (McElroy, 2020). Businesses promoting traditional crafts or cuisine contribute to cultural preservation and attract niche markets seeking authenticity, as demonstrated by Artesania Latina's fusion of traditional weaving with contemporary fashion (Latina, 2024). Multinational corporations like Unilever utilize cultural diversity for developing culturally relevant and sustainable products (Tulder, 2018). Start-ups and social enterprises support diverse entrepreneurs who drive innovative solutions to social and environmental challenges (Bornstein, 2007). Platforms like Open IDEO engage global communities to co-create culturally adaptable solutions to sustainability issues (IDEO, 2020). Integrating cultural heritage and diversity into entrepreneurial practices enhances innovation and ensures that businesses are both culturally relevant and socially inclusive.

Case studies of culturally driven sustainable businesses

Indigenous tourism enterprises in Canada, like Tundra North Tours and the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, offer culturally immersive experiences rooted in indigenous traditions, promoting sustainable tourism and environmental respect (Notzke, 2006). Fair trade coffee cooperatives in Latin America, such as the Asociacion de Pequeños Productores de Talamanca (APPTA) in Costa Rica, blend cultural practices with traditional farming methods, fostering biodiversity and ensuring fair wages (Raynolds, 2007). In India, Fabindia collaborates with rural artisans to create handicrafts that reflect the cultural heritage, supporting fair wages and preserving traditional techniques (Verma, 2015). Maori-owned ventures in New Zealand, like "Ko au te Whenua - We are the Land," offer innovative indigenous tourism experiences that combine cultural storytelling with sustainable practices (Whenua, 2024). House of Wandering Silk in India up-cycles discarded sarees into fashionable clothing, promoting environmental consciousness and empowering female artisans while preserving traditional textile crafts.

Impact of cultural diversity on innovation and sustainability

Cultural diversity plays a crucial role in fostering innovation and driving sustainable solutions. By bringing together a variety of perspectives, ideas, and problem-solving approaches, diverse teams are more likely to generate creative solutions and inclusive products that cater to different cultural preferences and needs (Hunt, 2019). Fostering innovation through diversity highlights the impact of leveraging cultural variety in driving sustainable solutions. PepsiCo utilizes the cultural diversity within its teams to develop food products that cater to a wide range of tastes and dietary needs, thus expanding market reach and promoting inclusive innovation (PepsiCo, 2023). Similarly, platforms like "Lokal Geniuses" harness the expertise of a global network of local experts to create solutions that are culturally contextualized and address specific environmental challenges (Geniuses, 2024). Integrating cultural heritage and diversity into entrepreneurial practices not only fosters innovation but also enhances social inclusion and sustainability in today's interconnected world.

Scientific perspectives: driving sustainable entrepreneurship

Scientific research and innovation are the cornerstones of successful sustainable entrepreneurship. This section explores their importance, showcases inspiring case studies, and highlights the transformative power of technology in achieving a sustainable future.

Importance of scientific research and innovation

Scientific research plays a crucial role in sustainable entrepreneurship by offering data-driven approaches to identifying and solving environmental and social challenges, leading to the development of innovative technologies and processes that optimize resource use and minimize impact (Rennings, 2000). Methodologies such as Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) enable entrepreneurs to assess the environmental and social impacts of their ventures, guiding them toward more sustainable practices (Tillman, 2004). Advances in renewable energy, biotechnology, and material science drive these innovations, while scientific research also helps identify risks and develop mitigation strategies, enhancing business sustainability and resilience (Gehman, 2015; Crocker, 2020). Integrating scientific research into business strategies fosters the development of competitive, innovative products and services (Wheeler, 2023s).

Case studies of science based sustainable businesses

Beyond Meat (USA) develops plant-based meat alternatives to mitigate the environmental impact of traditional meat production, focusing on replicating meat's taste and texture using plant-based

ingredients (Meat, 2024). Cote d'Azur (France) employs advanced desalination technology powered by renewable energy to address water scarcity, blending scientific expertise with entrepreneurial vision (Azur, 2024)]. BioVolt (USA) uses microbial fuel cells to convert wastewater into clean energy, leveraging research on bio-electro chemical systems for renewable energy and wastewater treatment (BioVolt, 2024). AquaFresco (USA) has created a water recycling system that purifies and reuses up to 95% of laundry water, significantly reducing water consumption and environmental impact (AquaFresco, 2024). Algiknit (USA) produces sustainable textiles from kelp, integrating marine biology with material science to create eco-friendly fibres (Algiknit, 2024).

Role of technology and scientific advancements in promoting sustainability

Technology plays a pivotal role in accelerating the transition to a sustainable future. Scientific advancements significantly contribute to sustainability in various domains. Technologies like precision agriculture and smart irrigation systems enhance resource efficiency by optimizing water use and minimizing waste. Advances in solar, wind, and geothermal energy technologies are making renewable energy sources cleaner and more affordable. Innovations in material recycling and up-cycling promote a circular economy, reducing waste and conserving resources. Block chain technology supports sustainable consumption by providing transparency in supply chains, allowing consumers to make informed choices (Gungor, 2011). Smart grids improve the efficiency and reliability of electricity distribution, facilitating better integration of renewable energy sources and reducing energy waste. Green chemistry developments enable the creation of environmentally friendly chemicals, reducing manufacturing impacts, while environmental monitoring technologies, such as remote sensing and IoT systems provide real-time data to inform sustainable practices (Li, 2013). Integrating these scientific insights and technological advancements is essential for driving sustainable entrepreneurship and addressing global challenges effectively.

Science and innovation in entrepreneurship

Sustainable entrepreneurship thrives on the synergy between scientific research and innovation. This dynamic duo equips entrepreneurs with the knowledge and tools needed to tackle environmental and social challenges, ultimately paving the way for a more sustainable future. Scientific research equips entrepreneurs with a data-driven approach to pinpointing environmental and social challenges, allowing for targeted solutions that address root causes rather than just mitigating effects (Rennings, 2000). By translating this knowledge into action through innovation, entrepreneurs can develop new technologies and processes that enhance resource efficiency and minimize environmental impact. Methodologies like Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) offer frameworks for evaluating environmental and social impacts

throughout a product lifecycle, enabling informed decision-making and continuous improvement and advancements in fields such as renewable energy, biotechnology, and material science serve as catalysts for innovation, leading to cleaner production methods and new approaches to sustainability.

Interdisciplinary integration in sustainable entrepreneurship

Integrating cultural and scientific perspectives in entrepreneurship offers numerous advantages. Combining cultural insights with scientific research enables entrepreneurs to create solutions that are both innovative and contextually relevant. For example, the incorporation of indigenous knowledge with modern environmental science can lead to sustainable practices that respect local traditions while addressing contemporary challenges (Berkes, 2018). This interdisciplinary approach not only enhances the cultural relevance of entrepreneurial solutions but also promotes inclusivity and social acceptance, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful adoption and long-term impact (Gupta, 2016).

Framework for interdisciplinary collaboration in sustainable business practices

To facilitate effective interdisciplinary collaboration, a structured framework is essential. Such a framework should include mechanisms for integrating diverse knowledge systems, fostering communication between stakeholders, and aligning goals across disciplines. The Quadruple Helix Model, which includes academia, industry, government, and civil society, provides a useful structure for this purpose (Campbell, 2009). It promotes co-creation and knowledge sharing among these stakeholders, enabling the development of innovative solutions that are scientifically sound and culturally attuned. Frameworks like the New Growth Theory highlight the importance of leveraging knowledge and technology to drive sustainable economic development, emphasizing the role of interdisciplinary collaboration in achieving long-term growth (Romer, 1990).

Challenges and opportunities in implementing interdisciplinary approaches

Implementing interdisciplinary approaches comes with its own set of challenges and opportunities. One significant challenge is aligning different disciplinary perspectives, which can sometimes lead to conflicts in priorities or methodologies (Klein, 2013). Integrating cultural perspectives into scientific research can be complex, requiring sensitivity to cultural norms and practices while maintaining scientific rigor (Sillitoe, 2007). However, these challenges present opportunities for growth and innovation. By addressing these issues, businesses can develop more holistic and inclusive solutions that better meet the needs of diverse communities. Interdisciplinary approaches can open up new

avenues for funding and collaboration, as they often attract interest from a wider range of stakeholders and support agencies (Pohl, 2010).

Lessons learned from the case studies

Lessons learned from the case studies include the critical role of effective collaboration among scientists, entrepreneurs, and cultural experts to ensure solutions are comprehensive and impactful. Evidence-based decision making through scientific methodologies, such as Life Cycle Assessment ensures that innovations are both sustainable and culturally relevant. Leveraging core competencies through interdisciplinary partnerships allows for addressing knowledge gaps and achieving more robust solutions. Focusing on the long-term impact of ventures ensures that they benefit both the environment and society over time.

Recommendations for entrepreneurs include embracing interdisciplinary approaches, investing in research to understand and minimize environmental impacts, adapting solutions to local cultural contexts, and starting with pilot projects before scaling. Policymakers should incentivize collaborative efforts through grants and tax incentives, invest in green infrastructure, promote sustainable consumption through educational programs, and recognize innovative practices with awards.

Conclusion

This conceptual study highlights the significant impact of integrating cultural and scientific perspectives in fostering sustainable entrepreneurship. Key insights reveal that combining cultural heritage with scientific innovation enhances entrepreneurial ventures' authenticity, relevance, and effectiveness, leading to more sustainable and socially responsible business practices. Successful case studies demonstrate that interdisciplinary collaboration results in innovative solutions that address environmental and social challenges while promoting cultural preservation and community well-being.

Future research should delve deeper into the specific mechanisms through which cultural and scientific integration can be optimized, exploring new interdisciplinary frameworks and methodologies. Practical applications of these insights should be tested across diverse sectors and geographies to validate their effectiveness and adaptability. Entrepreneurs, researchers, and policymakers are urged to embrace interdisciplinary approaches, fostering collaboration between cultural experts, scientists, and business leaders. By working together, they can develop innovative, sustainable solutions that address global challenges, promote cultural preservation, and create lasting positive impacts on communities and ecosystems. This call to action underscores the necessity of interdisciplinary integration for achieving a truly sustainable and equitable future.

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Portuguese Intervention and the Attempts of Latinisation among the St. Thomas Christians of 16th-17th century Malabar

The Portuguese attempts at Latinisation among the St. Thomas Christians of the 16th-17th century Malabar has manifold causations and implications in determining the relations between the two and shaping the state of the Syrian Christian Communities. Looking through the lens of the Age of Explorations and the quest for Gold, Glory, and God, this essay tries to argue that the underlying reasons for the Portuguese Latinisation efforts were also linked to the empire's mercantile and political zeal, with Latinising the 'Nestorian Heretics' acting merely as a proxy. This is further analysed in the context of occurrences in the contemporary West and under the framework of the theory of Catholic Orientalism.

Key words: *Syrian Catholics, Latinisation, Heresy, Catholic Orientalism.*

The Portuguese arrival on the Malabar coast of the Indian subcontinent, in their multifaceted voyages in the quest for 'Gold, Glory and God'¹ had resulted in profound interactions and interventions in the native church community of *St. Thomas Christians*. The St. Thomas Christians or the *Nasranis*² are a community of ancient Christians of South India who traditionally trace their religious roots to the evangelistic activities of the apostle St. Thomas in the first century CE. Over time, these primarily mercantile voyages took on a Christianizing shift that changed the nature of interactions between them. This essay attempts to trace the influence of Portuguese voyages for mercantile and missionary activities, the Portuguese's interventive actions on the customs and practises of the St. Thomas Christians, the attempts of Latinisation through their missionary activities, the interventions by the Goan Archbishop Alexis de Meneses, the Synod of Diamper, and the counter resistance by the St. Thomas-Christians, that culminated in the Coonan Cross Oath and the split of the church, as well as the concept

¹ The idea of Portuguese voyages being presented as the quest for Gold, Glory, and God comes from C.R. Boxer *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion*.

² Synonym for St. Thomas Christians of Kerala.

of *Catholic Orientalism*.³ The essay also draws attention to the works of scholars like C.R. Boxer, Ines G Zupanov, Angela Barreto Xavier, Dr Pius Malekandathil, Paul Pallath, Scaria Zacharia, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Mathias Mundadan, Anand Lali Seenaa, Webb Keane, Xavier Koodapuzha, Dias Mario Antony and others.

The latter half of the 15th century was famous for great voyages and witnessed the beginning of European colonial expansion, of which Spain and Portugal were pioneers. It was the zeal of Portugal to propagate the Christian religion, fight against 'Muslim infidels', and engage in trade. It was further legitimised by the permission granted to them by the Papal Bulls of 1456⁴ and 1493.⁵ Portuguese attempts to create their own imperial identity and establish their position in the hierarchy of empires occurred simultaneously with their ventures into the Indian Ocean. Their quest for Gold, Glory and God to the Indian subcontinent, encouraged by Prince Henry the Navigator, was given a new phase with the arrival of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in 1498. It was further carried forward by the expeditions of Pedro Alvares Cabral which eventually went up to establishing a trade monopoly in spices like pepper, particularly from local kingdoms such as the pepper kingdom of Vadakkumkoor. In short, the central aspect of Portuguese enterprise in India was mercantilism, the contacts of which were dictated by attempts at mobilising the mercantile wealth.

Adding to this, we can further infer from their simultaneous claims that being a "Christian power" was integral to their Portuguese sea-borne mercantilist identity in the 16th century. The system of *Padrão Real* enhanced this.⁶ Portuguese literary sources of the 16th century describe rulers like Dom Manuel and Dom João III envisioning the establishment of a Universal Christian Empire, leading historians later

³ The term 'Catholic Orientalism' was coined by Ines G Zupanov and Angela Barreto Xavier, and they describe it as the search for, acquisition of, and dissemination of, inside knowledge about Asia and Asians, by Catholics, from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. But their understanding and use of the term Orientalism differ from those of Edward Said, who invented and popularised the concept. To Said Orientalism signified more the accumulation of distorted Western "representations" of the Orient, than the gathering of objective knowledge about it. But Xavier and Zupanov lay little stress on this distinction, simply describing the knowledge they have traced and identified, in all its profusion and variety, and explaining where the records may now be found. All in all, Catholic Orientalism produced an extraordinarily rich and diverse body of knowledge—but it was knowledge deeply fragmented and hard to access.

⁴ In 1456 through the famous papal bull, Pope Callistus III, gave the right to Portugal as 'the right to domain and commercial monopoly in the lands discovered and yet to be discovered'

⁵ In another Papal bull in 1493, Pope Alexander VI tried a settlement between Portugal and Spain as the western coast of Atlantic Ocean was assigned to Spain and the eastern coast and the land assigned to Portugal

⁶ *Padrão Real* was a system of royal patronage, where the king of Portugal was given patronage over the dioceses and religious orders in the territories controlled by the Portuguese. *Padrão* system served as a tool in the hands of the Portuguese state to further not only God's glory but also that of Portugal.

to describe this period as one of growing conservatism and religious orthodoxy. However, the ideological leanings of these monarchs were not the real stimulus behind Estado's "empire-making" in the "East." Eventually, the Papal bull pronounced by Pope Alexander, which underlined the absolute necessity of the catholic church for salvation and hence Christianising, marked a shift from the merely political to a more religious policy pursued by Portugal. This also brought a new phase of intervention to the History of St. Thomas Christians of Malabar.

By the end of the fifteenth century, when the Portuguese arrived on the coast of Malabar, the St. Thomas Christians or Nasranis had developed strong ties with the Churches of West Asia along with their use of Syriac liturgy. Neither did the "Christians and Spices" in sixteenth-century Malabar necessarily mean two different things to the Portuguese who intended the spice trade. As it became apparent to the Portuguese that the St. Thomas Christians had very few things in common with the Catholicism of the Portuguese and that they might be impeding Portuguese control over the spice trade,⁷ they pursued several attempts to penetrate and interfere in the affairs of the St. Thomas Christians and eliminate their divergent practices and elements. The relations of protection in exchange for produce in the early 16th century soon gave way to the missionaries disciplining the 'heretical' nasranis in the late 16th century.

The contacts of the Portuguese with the nasranis of Kerala can be said to have displayed different trends. The Estado da India justified its rule partly through the argument of religious superiority and conversion. The complexities and multi-layered processes propelling the consciously cultivated imagery of religious conservatism can be better understood by analysing Estado's forays in Malabar than elsewhere. Curiously, Malabar's 'cultural' encounters were primarily between the Latin and the Thomas Christians, unlike those in Goa and other coastal places. The rhetorical justification was centred on correcting 'Nestorian heresy'⁸ through an application of the decisions taken at the Council of Trent.⁹ Instead of

⁷ In 1325, Odoric of Pordenone, a Franciscan friar and missionary explorer who travelled through India, wrote that 'all the world's pepper was being produced and shipped' to other countries came from Quilon (Kollam).

⁸ Nestorius is regarded as one of the principal heretics in Christology, and the heresy traditionally linked with his name, Nestoriansim, was formally condemned at the church councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451). Nestorianism, as it was understood at the time, so insisted upon the full humanity of Christ's human nature that it was believed to divide him into two persons, one human and the other divine. Whereas orthodox Christology holds that Christ has two natures, divine and human, ineffably united in one person, or hypostasis, Nestorianism therefore denies the reality of the Incarnation and represents Christ as a God-inspired man rather than as Godmade-man.

⁹ Council of Trent, 19th ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church, held in three parts from 1545 to 1563. Prompted by the Reformation, the Council of Trent responded emphatically to the issues at hand and enacted the formal Roman Catholic reply to the doctrinal challenges of the Protestants. It thus represents the official adjudication of many questions about which there had been continuing ambiguity throughout the early church and the Middle Ages. The council was highly important for its sweeping decrees on self-reform and for its dogmatic definitions that clarified virtually every doctrine contested by the Protestants. Despite internal strife

indulging in littoral conversions¹⁰, the salaried officials of the Estado drawn from the Society of Jesus, the Augustinians, the Franciscans etc in the 1560s and 70s worked towards 'disciplining' the Christian community. Missionaries by the mid-16th century were increasingly used as agents to extend the 'sponging fingers of the Estado'.¹¹

According to Ines G. Zupanov, it was the encounter with the "ancient" Indian Christians, also called St. Thomas or Syrian Christians, who were often branded as "heretic" and non-Catholic, but were undisputedly Christian, that the Jesuit missionaries were forced to rethink their apostolic methods and adopt the accommodationist method of conversion. This controversial method of purification from within, employed in the Jesuit overseas missions among the "heathens", has therefore been first thought out and tested in their mission among the St. Thomas Christians in the late sixteenth century. It is in this context that Roberto Nobili argued that the non-Christians brought to Christianity should be allowed to practise their "old" social customs. Angela Barreto Xavier and Županov who study Catholic Orientalism, also argue that it was the systematic foundation of religious and linguistic works of translations laid out by the Catholic missionary enterprise that led to the development of the comparative study of religions and linguistics under the British in the later years.

In addition to the Portuguese mercantilist ambitions, these developments also have to be located within the history of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Europe. According to Luis Filipe Thomas, it was mainly the paranoid atmosphere generated by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation that shaped the Portuguese attitude towards the St. Thomas Christians during the period. The Portuguese might have also feared that the Malabar Christians, who were following diverse rituals and social practices, could spread these 'errors' among the Christians who were converted by the Portuguese, especially in the coastal areas. These led them to convene various Provincial Councils of Goa and the Synod of Diamper in the sixteenth century with the primary motive of 'reforming' the Indian Christians based on the canons and teachings of the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Consequently, the use of 'heresy' as a means of disciplining the St. Thomas Christians must be understood within the context of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. On the other hand, it also gave the Portuguese sufficient justification

and two lengthy interruptions, the council was a key part of the Counter-Reformation and played a vital role in revitalising the Roman Catholic Church.

¹⁰ The word Littoral Conversion refers to the religious conversion particularly pertaining to a sea or a shore, here, used to mean the Portuguese religious conversion into Christianity in the coasts, undertaken by voyages.

¹¹ The Estado da India ('State of India') was an administrative apparatus established in 1505 to govern the empire and its trade network from its capital at Portuguese Goa in India where the viceroy of the Indies was resident

to intervene in the affairs of this native Christian community, all the while ensuring support in Catholic Europe for the Lusitanian ventures to change the affairs of the St. Thomas Christians according to their political-commercial designs.

The Portuguese empire also aspired to establish the Portuguese language in the colonies along with Christianity. For this, Portuguese was "classicized" by establishing its familial relationship to Latin, the language of the Church. By the same logic, native languages were depicted as inferior, unrelated to Latin. Since the liturgical language used in the Roman Catholic Church in Europe at the time was Latin, the process eventually came to be called Latinization.

The Portuguese adopted several methods to impose Latin customs on St. Thomas Christians to bring them under their ecclesiastical control. Following the erection of the diocese of Goa in 1533, the Portuguese devised a systematic plan of action with regard to the Church of St Thomas Christians. They sought to sever the hierarchical relationship with the Chaldean¹² Church¹ and its patriarch by impeding the arrival of eastern bishops, invalidating their orders, suppressing the law of Thomas, the eastern rites, the Syriac language and their autonomous status and bringing them under Portuguese patronage and the Roman Catholic fold. These were reiterated in the Provincial councils of Goa in 1575 and upon realising that it was impossible to replace Syriac with Latin immediately, as they believed it was the language of the Lord, bequeathed to them by St. Thomas, they ordered the translation of the Latin liturgical books into Syriac for the time being. These councils in realising the role of the Eastern Archdeacon tried impeding and later invalidating all the Holy Orders conferred Mar Abraham and even went to the extent of asking him to re-ordain all his priests and other clerics, utilising the Roman Pontifical, translated into Syriac, as the prior ordination according to the Chaldean rites seemed unacceptable to them.

The Portuguese ambitions were fuelled by the Padroado Real which essentially turned the Lusitanian Catholic Church into an arm of the Empire. It is in this context that a person like Archbishop Alexis Dom Menezes could very easily shift between his religious and stately responsibilities, often both being the same. Alexis de Menezes, who was sworn in as the arch-bishop of Goa in 1595, played a vital role in the Latinisation of St. Thomas Christians. He succeeded in it to a greater extent, including the convening of the synod of Diamper in 1599. As soon as he received the news of the death of Mar Abraham, the Eastern Church bishop of Nasranis, he proceeded to Malabar. He realised that it was the right time to undertake his dream of Latinizing the Nasranis. Keeping in mind his three primary motives

¹² Chaldean rite, also called East Syrian Rite, system of liturgical practices historically associated with the Assyrian Church (the so-called Nestorian Church) and also used by the patriarchate of Babylon of the Chaldeans where it is called the East. Found principally in Iraq, Iran, and Syria, it is also the original rite of the Christians of St. Thomas (Malabar Christians) in India.

of nominating a Latin bishop in the archdiocese of Angamaly. replacing the Syriac language with Latin and thereafter reducing Angamaly to a suffragan of Goa, he tried and succeeded in winning the support of the local people there. As stated by Paul Pallath, he began winning local support by stirring the population at Vaipikotta, where he had presumably the least resistance. He also termed the Patriarch of Babylon as a heretic, ordained priests in large numbers as they would be loyal to those who ordain them, as well as visited and extended friendship to the Cochin ruler. He even performed the Roman rites of washing feet on Maundy Thursday at Kadathuruthy and thereby presented himself as a very humble figure in front of the people, in comparison to their bishops, and thereby forcing even the then Arch Deacon George to submit to him. With this, he decided to convene a Synod at Diamper (Udayamperoor).

Thus, the long-drawn process of colonial 'cultural' assertion over the nasrani community reached its culmination in the Diamper Synod with its attempts at imposing a Lusitanian identity on the nasrani community. The convening of the synod of Diamper, which has been described as one of the darkest days in the history of the relations between the Catholics and the Eastern Church, began on 20th June 1599 and was attended by around 813 Syrians including 133 priests. In the week of the Synod, the Syrian Church was forced to submit itself to the Roman Pope and accept the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as latinize by renouncing the Nestorian Heresy, relationships with the Chaldean (eastern) Patriarch, and the Syriac language except in worship and liturgy. It also condemned the law of Thomas, so dear to the Eastern Christians in India, as a "manifest error and heresy" and forced them to pronounce the profession of faith. In the nine sessions of the synod wide-ranging doctrinal and canonical decrees were made with the intention of transforming completely the religious, ecclesial, sacramental and sociocultural life of St Thomas Christians in accordance with the Latin rite and Western culture. The longstanding strategy of the Portuguese to westernise St Thomas Christians reached its culmination in the Synod of Diamper In fact, the synod sought to bring St Thomas Christians' liturgy and sacramental discipline into complete compliance with the Roman Portuguese tradition. The Synod of Diamper also made possible the extension of the power of His Majesty the King of Portugal, "the only Christian king and Lord in the Indies", over the St Thomas Christians.

In spite of these sustained efforts of the Portuguese to latinize and reduce the St. Thomas Christians and bring them under the Roman Pontiff¹³ through the Synod of Diamper, these attempts were met with open and covert forms of resistance by the St. Thomas Christians. St. Thomas Christians fought to ensure that their traditions were preserved Although they did protest against mixed marriages and other

¹³ The word "pontiff", though now most often used in relation to a pope, technically refers to any Catholic bishop. The phrase "Roman Pontiff" is therefore not tautological, but means "Bishop of Rome". In the same way, a Pontifical Mass is a mass celebrated by a bishop, not necessarily a pope.

practices, it was largely in the form of discourtesy and absence, that is by abstaining themselves from the sacraments and other official church meetings and functions convened by the Portuguese Bishops and thus being discourteous.

The Portuguese impediment to their Arch Deacons, especially in the case of Bishop Ahathalla¹⁴, infuriated them. In order to maintain their age-old traditions and customs, the St. Thomas Christians continued to resist the Portuguese and the Padroado under their Archdeacon, which eventually resulted in an open revolt against the Portuguese in 1653 through the Coonan Cross Oath¹⁵ and subsequent fragmentation of the community into Catholics and non- Catholics. From the content of the Coonan Cross Oath itself it is evident that the oath was not in any way against the Pope or the Church of Rome, but against Archbishop Garcia and the Jesuits who, as the St Thomas Christians honestly believed, defied the Pope's orders and became "schismatics" by deporting a Catholic patriarch to Portugal whom the Pope had sent to govern the Malabar Church.

The coming of the Portuguese and their attempts of Latinization had a profound impact on the St. Thomas Christians. The mercantile relationships between the Portuguese and the Nasranis turned hostile by the late sixteenth century, particularly in the context of Latinizing their religious community. Due to various processes of Latinization that escalated into the synod of Diamper and culminated in the Coonan Cross Oath, the church of St. Thomas had become divided in the latter phase of Portuguese missionary activities. Even though the process of Latinisation was true as a matter of subjection to Rome and the Pope, it was also interlinked with the mercantile and political ambitions of the empire, wherein the church acted as an arm of it. Latinizing the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar remained for the most part a fantasy and was thwarted by the Nasranis' open and covert resistance.

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¹⁴ Ahatallah (1590 – c. 1655) was a Syrian bishop chiefly known for his trip to India in 1652. His mysterious appearance in, and disappearance from Portuguese India caused a great uproar there, and resulted directly in a revolt by St Thomas Christians against Portuguese rule and the establishment of an independent Malankara Church.

¹⁵ Coonan Cross Oath was known as the Great Oath of Bent Cross, the Leaning Cross Oath or the Oath of the Slanting Cross, taken on 3 January 1653 in Mattancherry, was a public avowal by members of the St Thomas Christians of the Malabar region in India, that they would not submit to the Jesuits and Latin Catholic hierarchy, nor accept Portuguese dominance (Padroado) in ecclesiastical and secular life.

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Exploring the Importance and Scope of Tribes' Traditional Knowledge in Contemporary Knowledge Systems

Viksit Bharat is the aim of the government of India to attain inclusive development in all aspects and to ensure equitable distribution of all benefits among its citizens. Before moving on to the interlink of human capital to Viksit Bharat, at first, we should understand the economic aspect of human capital formation. Tribes are the original inhabitants of any nation. A nation to be efficiently build up have hidden and revealed contributions of tribes. Purposefully or not the contributions of tribes were not appreciated but now a days tribes and tribal development gets utmost consideration. Their possibilities are given encouragement. Through this study the researcher tries to reveal the skills of human capital among tribes as a motivating force, for the so -called Viksit Bharat, based on the evidences upon cases revealed earlier. These evidences might provide an insight to the efficiency and an eye opener for the authorities for a shift from initiatives for tribes to initiatives from tribes, which might be historical. Viksit Bharat aims to achieve development on 4 facets namely economic growth, environmental sustainability, social progress, and good governance based on 4 pillars namely youth, poor, women, farmers. The paper focuses on the impact what if we consider tribes as an aggregate or a macro variable of these pillars and focus to attain development goals. It gives a broader definition to Viksit Bharat, as it aims to achieve inclusive social and economic development.

Key words: *tribal development, Viksit Bharat, Human capital*

Introduction:

"Equality may be a fiction but nonetheless one must accept it as a governing principle. "

Dr B.R Ambedkar

The older concept of social division prevalent in India was based on class, caste, religion, or gender, but a kind of distinction which is not addressed much in mainstream social life was the broader yet unfair

division of tribe population to the general social population, where the term 'inclusiveness' breaks and loses its significance. For a nation to attain an inclusive economic development to take place, the priority should be in providing inclusive opportunities before its citizens. Those original inhabitants had a lot to contribute either in the form of resources or in the form of ethnicity or cultural norms. Now in the era of Viksit Bharat, here arises the time to address and eliminate the distinction among citizens, as the aim of Viksit Bharat is to attain sustainable inclusive development where the national cake is distributed equally to all, when India becomes a developed nation by 2047, on the 100th year of its independence.

Literature review:

P J Shyju (2016) revolves around the scope of developing tourism in the backward district of Kerala, Wayanad known for its diversity in scenic beauty and culture. Study focuses on some historic sites and its protection by mingling tourism, heritage, and governance.

Sivaraman M.A (2014) gives a clear picture of the medicinal plant varieties in Western Ghats region in Kerala. The ability of modern medical practices is popular however efficiency of Kani, Paniya tribes and major other tribes are mentioned in the study.

Anju and Kumar (2024) studied the availability of about various plant species, about 111 species which are usually used by traditional tribal healers among specific tribes in Kerala. The authors are concerned of preserving and understanding indigenous knowledge of traditional healers. Studies were conducted on traditional healing practices. Existing studies are related to the traditional methods, medicines, and practices. However much recognition to cases of tribes as a human capital, an appreciation to their contribution have not made. Here arises the significance of this article which focussed on case discussions of tribes as a contributory force rather than mere seekers of government aid.

Objectives:

- 1) To assess the trends in tribal healing practices.
- 2) To analyse earlier cases of human capital generation among tribes.

Methodology:

Study uses secondary sources like articles in journals, newspapers. Study uses online data sources, a review over related literature.

Limitations & Scope of future study:

Much studies have not been done in accordance with quoting human capital generation among tribes, despite the less availability of needed resources, in this era of e- resources it is possible to retrieve any

dated old articles. Efforts can be made to uplift tribes not by merely providing funds but by efficiently utilising their ability for resource transformation.

Tribes are well known for their traditional healing practices. They make use of known and unknown plants to cure poisoning and urinary problems, skin diseases, jaundice syphilis, blood purification, headache, hair fall, dandruff, cholesterol, and sleeplessness which requires costly treatment among general population in the current scenario. Their practice may be a mix of Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani (Sivaraman, 2014). Tribes with at most knowledge on traditional healing practices include kurichiyar, Kani, Mannan and Paniya.

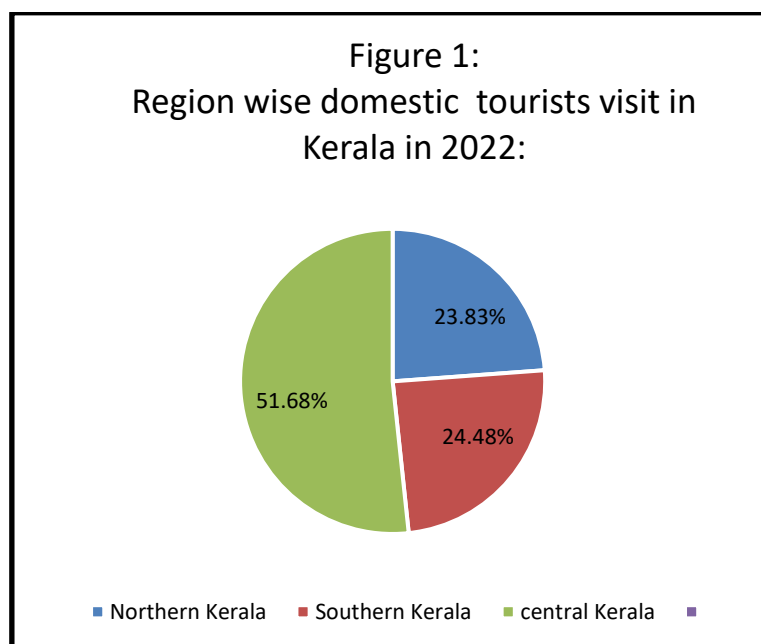
Traditional healers cure -1) Lifestyle diseases.

2) Skin & allergic cases.

3) Cuts, pains, infections.

Traditional practices offer a change in living habits, life styles and health practices followed by people rather than offering number of medicines. Control over food habits, engaging life style in accordance to nature, a control on sugar and high calorie meals followed by physical engagements maintains a good mental fitness and a state of happiness a stress-free mind which helps us to be out of diseases.

Despite unequal distribution of tribes across districts, almost all tribes have traditional experts, which might promote tribal medical tourism as a part of domestic tourism development. The scope widens when we realise two facts. Fact number one, the distribution of tribes are across Kerala even though the population is unequal; fact number two is, Kerala is always a tourism paradise for people.



(Source -Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala)

As per the Geo Saison acclaim on Kerala tourism, it is the 'Mecca of most holistic health system' (economic review, 2023). Since the number of medical tourists are increasing day by day, what if we provide cost friendly traditional healing, a mix of Ayurveda and Siddha, a traditional living style during the phase of treatment might attract much more tourists both domestic and international which might be a breakthrough in Kerala tourism and might be a contributory force to our economy too.

A case study:

No one knows much about Lakshmi Kutty, a Kani tribe member who remembers more than 500 varieties of medicine until prime minister Narendra Modi spoke about the contributions she made to the medical field in 'Mann ki Baat' radio program. The Padmashri recipient (2018) practices traditional medicine for over 50 years, a teacher in Kerala folklore academy, who now gives lectures on traditional healing and practices across various institutions in Southern States.

Due to some superstitious beliefs many tribal healers do not share their healing secrets and practices to the next generation. Efforts should be made to collect such valuable knowledge which might be a breakthrough to the medical practices in contemporary world. The honour she received is a reminder for us to foster indigenous knowledge systems.

Scientists at Jawaharlal Nehru tropical botanic garden and research institute (JNTBGRI) uses the traditional knowledge of Kani tribe to develop a compound drug named 'Jeevani' known for its immunity enhancing, liver protective and DNA properties where the basic ingredient is 'Arogya Pacha' (The Hindu, 2015, October 3).

Commonly used plant species and their medicinal purposes:

Sl no:	Plant name in local language	Disease cured
1	Adalodakam	Respiratory diseases.
2	Cheroola	Kidney stone.
3	Brahmi	Allergic problems.
4	Sathavari	Gynaec uses, increase breast milk.
5	Veppu	Post chicken pox treatment.
6	Thazhuthama	Anaemia.
7	Papaya	Digestion, stomach pain and related issues.
8	Nitya Kalyani	Gastro intestinal diseases.
9	Maramanjil	Skin problems.
10	Manjal	Snake or insect bites.
11	Karuka	Eye diseases.
12	Thengin pookkula	Gynaec issue.
13	Nilappala	Respiratory diseases.
14	Muyalchevi	Snake bite, fever.
15	Puliyarila	Urinary tract infections.
16	Kizharnelli	Protect kidney, liver, stomach.
17	Panikkoorkka	Treats cough and cold.
18	Maravazha	Rheumatism.
19	Njeringil	Urinary tract infections.
20	Chukku	Stomach upset.
21	Pezhu	Fast healing of wounds.
22	Manivalli	Kidney disorder and painful urination.
23	Thottalvadi	Fast healing.
24	Savamnari	Treats internal tumour and bleeding.
25	Garuda pacha	Anti poison.

Case studies of infrastructure development and the contributions of legendary chieftain:

Every nation with a soul to provide development benefits to its citizens aim on developing the necessary infrastructural facilities to its citizens. If infrastructural needs are met initiatives for development acquire a faster path.

Considering Kerala both as an economic destination or as a tourist destination, the first and foremost thought that arise in our mind is its scenic natural beauty. It is a large reservoir of raw materials, if we think economically and a Paradise of different geographical locations from the perspective of a traveller. Means of transportation and electricity are important necessities for each citizen. Thinking about Kerala tourism, Idukki and Wayanad districts are mostly demanded by nature lovers. Here we discuss the two significant contributions made by tribe chiefs in Kerala, which plays a significant role in shaping Kerala, its economy and are still top list in tourist destination, forever an income generating source, a very valuable contribution, that might not be possible, if tribes with at most knowledge on geography of a region were there for an aid.

Case studies -:

Case 1: Karinthandan - the man behind Wayanad pass.

The role of tribes in Wayanad has historical significance. (Shyju, 2016) during the war of Pazhassi raja to the east India company, the role of kurichyar tribes and their efforts in guerrilla warfare were praised. The Paniya tribes in Wayanad have the lowest literacy rate, 49.5% (census report, 2011). The meaning of educational deprivation seeks another kind of definition among tribes. They are illiterate for the general population; however, they are aware of the geographical specificity, flora, and fauna, even the slightest element which might affect environment. This aggregate knowledge on locational specificity leads to the construction of Wayanad pass.

What if the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama did not discover a naval route via Indian ocean, to India, it might not be possible to explore the port features of Indian state Gujarat, it might be unable to build economic relations across many nations it might even affect EXIM relations. The valuable contribution of this sense in Wayanad was made where, the Paniya chieftain Karinthandan found the ideal solution to set up transportation facility, the so called Wayanad pass now. His success is valuable when it is said that the British engineers failed multiple times in developing an ideal plan for a land route. It is Paniya tribes' knowledge on forest and resources which then created history. Wayanad pass now provides easy way for transaction of goods and services across districts and states. It is the gateway for tourists to various locations in northern parts of Kerala. Moreover, it ensures the exchange of spices like Cardamom, coffee, and Tea.

Case 2: Kolumban - The brain behind site of Idukki arch dam.

No one will think of the scope of developing a dam seeing a waterfall or a flowing river. For every tourist or natives, a flowing water is a river and falling water is a water fall, no one cares of further initiatives there. Here arises the importance of Chemban Kolumban, chief of Urali tribe who reported

to the superintendent of Malankara estate W.J John who was impressed by the sight of water flow between two mountains. He suggested the site suitable for a dam. A visionary man, with at most knowledge about locational features of his area, Chemban vellayan Kolumban, might be unaware that he was setting up a milestone which changed the development face of forest area like Idukki. What was his contribution or where has it ended up?

At 168.91 metres, one of the highest arch dams in Asia, across Periyar hills kuravan and kurathi in Idukki, largest source of electricity generation in Kerala one among the most visited dam site in Kerala, a tourist destination, and a large reservoir of water in Idukki. Canadian idea of constructing a dam, initiatives of government of India and government of Kerala, were all had an initial push, an idea given by Kolumban, a legendary contribution which changed the whole situation of Idukki.

Another fact to be considered or read in association with the above legendary shorts are that the sculptures of Karinthandan at Wayanad and that of Kolumban memorial park, his statue in Idukki are now a major tourist destination for travellers.

Recommendations:

1. Much efforts are required to explore the scenic beauty of tribal settlements.
2. If required successful development models from foreign nations and certainly those within Kerala like the project 'En Ooru' in Wayand can be accepted for models.
3. Upliftment of tribal areas must be done in such a way that the economic growth is ensured for tribes.
4. Much tourism promotion activities are required to promote medical tourism in settlements which might prove to be a great success.
5. Government must develop nodal agencies especially to ensure coordination at the lower level, so that the projects established might become inclusive, a kind of decentralised projects are required.
6. Traditional healing cannot be accepted as a complete cure mechanism however efforts must be made to acknowledge the personalities and develop a research base on the same which might create history.

Conclusion:

To be a human capital requires little effort and skill but to become a successful human capital requires efficiency attained overtime. Skills should require adequate platforms to be performed well. Indigenous people are known to have skills both as a medical practitioner and successful economists or somehow a developed human capital. However, they are not accepted by the mainstream dominating characters

and thus face ignorance. They are to be encouraged and their skills are to be showcased in this era, when we aim on Viksit Bharat as well.

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Re-fashioning the Feminine Self: A Gynocritical Study of Sr. Jesme's *Amen: An Autobiography of a Nun*

*Self-referential writings have helped women to gain a sense of self and identity both in social and literary contexts. With the emergence of gynocriticism, propounded by Elaine Showalter, a new way of looking at women's writings gained ascendancy. A re-visioning of what had been written by women was given impetus and efforts were made to understand women's writings in a new light. This paper is an analysis of Sr. Jesme's, *Amen: The Autobiography of Nun* through the lens of gynocriticism, in an attempt to reveal the existence of a female subculture and how the act of writing of the personal becomes political.*

Key Words: *Gynocriticism, female subculture, Autobiography of Nun*

Historically speaking, attention to autobiographical narratives, whether in the East or the West, was primarily given to those authored by males, while the life writings of women were disregarded and neglected. It was believed that women did not have a true sense of the self and though women made attempts to express their individuality by writing autobiographically for centuries, these writings were not considered to be of much importance, being deemed not suitable for academic deliberation, criticism or the literary canon. Thus, a demarcation between men and women, existed not only within societies, but also within the literary academia as well.

As of recent years however, the significance of women's life writings has changed considerably within and outside the academic circle both in the West as well as the East. The evolution of feminism during the 1970s initiated a renewed interest in women's autobiographical writings, with many critics focused on pioneering a woman-centred reading these works. Till then, women's life narratives were approached with the concepts and techniques used to read and analyse male autobiographies, as this was the approach accepted at the time. No parallel method had been developed up to that point, to read and analyse women's life narratives. However, with the advent of feminism, critics insisted on a need to re-examine the life writings done by women and to understand and how women have been able to gain linguistic empowerment and how these writing have enabled them to foster their resistant urges through self-expression. J. Devika has noted the power lying dormant in self-referential writings, stating that,

"Autobiography, as a genre of writing, has formed an important site of feminist engagement with dominant theories of the self" (Devika 1675).

Though, the place of women in Indian history was one of silence and suppression, women from all different backgrounds, gradually decided to end their silence and began to pen their experiences about being a woman in Indian society. In the later part of the twentieth century, with many women donning professional roles, women began to write about their experiences in the public domain. The twentieth century woman no longer only wrote about her domestic experiences, but began to convey what she experienced as a woman in her sphere of work as well as in society. Women were no longer passive and submissive observers, but became tellers of their story.

In the context of Kerala, recent times have brought to us a number of daring and sensational autobiographies by women who ventured to tell that which hitherto had remained untold. This includes such works as, *The Autobiography of a Sex Worker* by Nalini Jameela, *My Story* by Kamala Das and *Mother Forest: The Unfinished Story* by C.K. Janu. These works hold a lot of relevance especially in the context of feminist movements that are till date taking place across the globe. In these writings we find the experiences of real women who have struggled on a daily basis to keep their footing in a patriarchal society that constantly strives to silence them. By writing their selves, these women choose to live unapologetically in a world that constantly demands their apology for being themselves. These writings that transgress the margins and venture into the prohibited have proved to be effective agencies of resistance. Many women have taken up autobiographical writings as an act of resistance, thereby transgressing margins and attaining liberation from hegemonic confinements, resulting in stories not merely personal in nature, but rather, highly political.

The term gynocriticism was coined by Elaine Showalter in her essay "Towards a Feminist Poetics". This approach provides a female framework to analyse the literature written by women and focuses on the experiences of women, highlighting the female struggle for identity and the social construct of gender. It brings under question the dominant male models and theories that were hitherto used to examine works written by women; gynocriticism in autobiography attempts to document such experiences of women. On analysing the autobiographical writings of women, it becomes obvious that what had been frowned upon as personal and trivial was in actuality highly political and significant. Gynocritical writings focus on female experiences, fostering the female's struggle for self-realization, leading to the establishment and assertion of a female identity. Examining a work through the lens of gynocriticism is an act of revisioning, which Adrienne Rich defines as, "The act of looking back, of

seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction-is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (18).

A work as controversial and revolutionary as Sister Jesme’s *Amen: The Autobiography of a Nun* is relevant to this approach as it is such experiences which gynocriticism attempts to trace and document. It is the story of a real woman facing real oppressions and her attempts to resist the suppression and injustice she and others around her face. Gynocriticism not only allows an examination and analysis of women’s identities and experiences and how they are represented in literature, but also provides a platform for muted voices to speak about social inequalities, discrimination and injustice and to transgress the boundaries and restrictions placed on them by society.

This transgression is very evident in Sr. Jesme’s *Amen: The Autobiography of a Nun*. The Church, with its specified norms and hierarchy, is a very dominating and restricting presence in any society. As such, the Church within a patriarchal society can only be doubly oppressive for women. When a woman has joined a convent and vows to forever remain a bride of Christ, she is expected to remain within the confines that the Church has set, without ever questioning any of its practices. Sr. Jesme, however, chooses to do otherwise, and decides to move from a life of enclosure to a life of exposure. Her move from the personal to the public is made not only physically, but is re-enacted when she writes her autobiography in which she recounts her experiences as a nun within a system she finds to be, corrupt and exploitative. She proves through the writing of her autobiography that a woman need not remain within the gender construct assigned to her by the society, but can, if she chooses and wishes to, come out of these restrictive constraints. By writing herself into the public sphere she empowers herself as well as others who may read her story. Through such a gynocritical metamorphosis she allows herself to be shifted from the periphery to the centre.

Sr. Jesme felt that it was her duty to narrate her story and bring into the open, the atrocities within the religious fold. Women were only expected to tell certain of their personal experiences and it was believed women only had personal experiences. Though they were personal experiences, Sr. Jesme realized that the telling of them would have a political significance as well. Leigh Gilmore has stated in *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women’s Self Representation*, “Autobiographies are a mode of revolution through which women write more from the place of object into the subjectivity of self-representational agency” (12). When a woman makes her personal experience public, she is empowering herself. Carolyn G. Heilburn has noted in this context,

Women of accomplishment in unconsciously writing their future lived lives, or, more recently, in trying honestly to deal in written form with lived past lives, have had to confront power and control.

Because this has been declared unwomanly, and because many women would prefer (or think they would prefer) a world without evident power or control, women have been deprived of the narratives, or the texts, plots, or examples, by which they might assume power over-take control of-their own lives. (16-17) She also notes, only in the last third of the twentieth century have women broken through to a realization of the narratives that have been controlling their lives. Women poets of one generation-those born between 1923 and 1932-can now be seen to have transformed the autobiographies of women's lives, to have expressed, and suffered for expressing, what women had not earlier been allowed to say. (60)

Women revised the content and purposes of autobiography by incorporating hitherto unspoken female experiences by telling their own stories.

Sr. Jesme may be the first nun to have ventured to reveal the hypocrisy and exploitation within the Church. Her autobiography reveals the plight of a woman who because of her gender belongs to the subculture and who because of her vocation is relegated to the margins of that subculture. As a woman and a nun, she stands alienated in all aspects from the mainstream. The work may be considered as a significant text that serves as an important source material for the study of the patriarchal framework that existed in the society as well as in the Church.

Sr. Jesme, born in Thrissur, Kerala as Meamy Raphael in 1956, had whole-heartedly devoted her life to the service of God when she joined the Congregation of Mother of Carmel in 1974. However, her experiences within the Church and from the authorities left her disillusioned and dismayed, forcing her to leave the Congregation in 2008. This decision was taken as the result of the injustices she experienced and witnessed within the Church. She entered into the divine service thinking it to be one of purity and godliness but was finally brought to the understanding that it was one of corruption and worldliness.

She begins her autobiography by giving us a glimpse into her childhood and teen years. She gives us a detailed account of her happy and carefree life at home, her studies, her desire to excel and her final decision to join the convent, in the initial pages of the book. The author notes how some relatives looked critically at her life-decision to become a nun, "Close relatives come to know of my decision and respond with shock, sympathetic comments, accusing arrows, and the like. She is very selfish running away from the troubles of life" (19). She is looked upon as being selfish though she has chosen of service to God, because she, a girl, has dared to decide her path in life. This is a typical patriarchal notion, that a girl should not decide things on her own. The final decision should rest on the male members of the family. So, at the very outset of the narrative itself, Sr Jesme is critical of the patriarchal tendencies prevalent in society.

Sr. Jesme is overjoyed when she is accepted as an Aspirant, a pre-candidate for becoming a nun. Her joy is further heightened by the fact that she can simultaneously continue her studies for the degree course at Daya College, Palakkad. We see her starting her journey for the service of God with exuberance and devotion only to be followed by details of humiliation, sexual harassment and mental torture from the place where she thought she could attain a sense of fulfilment and contentment. She is devastated when she realizes the convent life, she had envisioned, was very different from the reality she had to face. However, she did not allow these experiences to destroy her sense of self

She soon realized that the world within the convent was not very different from the world without. Here also there existed a hegemony that fostered discrimination and double standards. Though she resided within a convent consisting of all women, she understood that there was no space for equality and impartiality, but rather, it was a space into which all the evil aspects of patriarchy had seeped. She brings to light the very important issue of the status of women within the Catholic Church. She points out how nuns are treated differently from priests, particularly in the matter of the vow of poverty. In spite of this very evident disparity and discrimination, the nuns chose to remain silent as these women within the convent had internalized the patriarchy into which they had been born.

Through the work Sr. Jesme has achieved two things. Firstly, the autobiography gave her a chance to speak openly about her experiences as a nun and the oppression she had to face on account of questioning the authorities for their wrongdoings. Secondly, the work has provided her with a public platform through which she has turned the personal into political by disclosing the oppressive elements at work within the Church, especially in the case of women. What is impressive about her work is that she was not selective and cautious, but rather spoke openly of every injustice and misconduct that she witnessed within the confines of the religious establishment. Feminism and feminist criticism are essentially acts of resistance and protest against the patriarchal norms and values existent in society and literature respectively. Sr. Jesme when she writes her autobiography, especially highlighting the injustices faced by her in a patriarchal order is involved in an act of rebellion. She is writing according to her requirements and not the patriarchal notions. She desists the tendency to be controlled and restricted in how she thinks, reacts and writes. When a woman writes freely of her experiences and voices her dissent and disapproval of circumstances and situations a gynocritical approach is initiated. She is involved in the act of defining herself by creating images, symbols and phrases through which she finds suitable to express herself and her experiences. She is knowingly or unknowingly opening up spaces for other women to speak and express themselves.

She provides us with detailed descriptions of humiliation, sexual repression/sexual exploitation of nuns by priests, the systemic corruption prevalent within the confines of the convent, specially referring to

the suspicious deaths of Sr. Abhaya and Sr. Anupa Mary. Sr. Jesme decides that she must escape when the religious authorities attempt to declare her insane, when she openly questions some of the discriminatory, coercive and corrupt practices she becomes aware of. She successfully conveys the brutality of the life within a convent by using such words as iron curtain, stinking corners, closed walls, chained souls etc, all hinting at the severity of their confinement. Sadly, not even the other nuns acknowledged the corruption rampant within its walls, but rather, looked upon her as a heretic who dared question the decisions of the Church authorities. She writes of this, “Throughout my life in the convent, I was misunderstood by the other sisters, namely the Superiors. My questioning their decision and actions in the light of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus always irritated them” (2-3). The patriarchal society did not consider Sr. Jesme’s knowledge, understanding and interpretation of the Bible as worthy of acceptance as she was a woman. She was not meant to question but merely to obey. Sr. Jesme’s work can be considered a milestone in this aspect as she has spoken of experiences which till now were muted. She from the point of view and experiences of a nun, speaks of the particular kind of injustices she had to undergo as a woman in a patriarchal society and even worse as a nun within a highly patriarchal Church setup.

Sr. Jesme makes a bold and radical statement when she writes, “I admit that St. Paul is the most spiritual of Apostles, but his anti-woman attitude is lamentable. This tradition of belittling woman has continued till date” (111). With this statement, she is specifically referring to the discrimination that exists in the way priests and nuns are treated. Priests, on account of being men, have more freedom and rights. It is acceptable for them to travel as they wish, go for movies in laymen’s attire, attend weddings and even drink liquor. Along with this, priests enjoy a financial security that nuns can never dream of. Even more pathetically, the ordination of priests is considered to be a sacrament, whereas women becoming nuns is not considered so. Thus, Sr. Jesme realizes that though she has a self-awareness regarding her existence, this existence is quite limited with regard to living space, as this space has been predetermined and predestined by social norms. Angelyn Mitchell has rightfully observed that “Patriarchy’s social conditioning, [discussed since the time of Aristotle,] creates codes of social behavior to ensure the suppression of feminine desires” (60). She recalls an incident when during a refresher course in Hyderabad, she had gone along with her course mates to watch a film. She remembers that one of her mates, a Malayalee male, had been extremely upset that she had come to the theatre in her habit and deemed it an act of disrespect to her vocation. Here, Sr. Jesme stresses that women and nuns should enjoy the same freedom and consideration that men and priests do as well. She is critical of the double standards and hypocrisy that exist in society as well as in the Church.

The narrator does not refrain from speaking about the undesirable encounter she had with a priest during a trip to Bangalore to attend a Refresher Course. While in Bangalore she goes to the residence of a priest to take rest and then continue her journey, according to the arrangements made by the Mother Provincial. However, there she has a horrid experience where the priest blatantly talks to her about desires and physical love, and of priests and Bishops who sleep with women, some even fathering children in secrecy. He even goes as far as to hug and grope her, afterwards undressing in front of her and showing her "... a milky liquid oozing from there and lectures me on the "thousands of lives" it has" (88). Finally, she reluctantly gives into his persuasion and also undresses in front of him. This instance reveals how women are constantly under the gaze of men and even within the spiritual fold they are vulnerable and prone to be mistreated and violated. The words of Simone de Beauvoire seem pertinent here, "In truth woman has not been socially emancipated through man's need, sexual desire and the desire for offspring, which makes the male dependent for satisfaction upon the female" (12). Here the men, though priests, who have taken the vow of celibacy, feel that it is their prerogative to sexually exploit women, even if those women are nuns. "In our convent life, we least expect molestation of this type. Are we not safe even within the Four Walls of Seclusion?" (88), asks Sr. Jesme on recounting this harrowing experience in her autobiography. This narrative is a daring step on the part of Sr. Jesme as she is speaking of her first-hand experience and she knows well that she too will come under scrutiny and criticism for the happenings described here. She holds true to the words of Helene Cixous in this instance,

Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies- for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement. (875)

Though, Sr Jesme was conscious that this narrative could mean erasure for her from the religious fold, she was confident that the narrative would give her more authenticity as a woman.

Sr. Jesme observes how society, secular or religious, considers women as being constantly dependent on men. Women have no existence of their own. During the initial days of preparation to become a nun, the young girls have to attend a vocation retreat. Sister Jesme writes of this, "There the preacher, a priest, describes to us the two ways of life- married and religious-after which we may decide" (19). It's ironical that an unmarried man should be giving such advice and options to women. Here again, the senior nuns have no voice and are not deemed fit to speak about such things to women. Sr. Jesme goes on to write, "Those who have chosen the religious life are asked to live in a boarding, adjacent to a convent. You are assigned duties like teaching, or serving in a hospital, by the authorities" (19). This life of a nun is very similar to marriage, as a woman is expected to leave her home and family and be

of service to others elsewhere. The words of Simone de Beauvoir as stated in *The Second Sex* is relevant here as well, when she writes, “The destiny that society traditionally offers women is marriage” (480). Women are in a constant state of deprivation: she is deprived of desires, rights, position, and a voice. The history of women has been one of mistreatment and inferiority. For men, a “...woman integrated as slave or vassal into the family group dominated by fathers and brothers, has always been given in marriage to males by other males” (Beauvoir 481). Women, for men are mere items to be bartered, used and handled as they desire.

Sr. Jesme admits openly that though she is a nun she does not believe that women should be suppressed and silenced. “I have been an advocate of women’s equality and freedom, something which has always upset the convent authorities” (117). She describes how she was invited by I. Gopinathan for the release of the book, *The Autobiography of a Sex Worker*. Though she is unwilling initially, he asks her to take it as a challenge and she accepts. However, she is of course filled with apprehension and when she shares her concerns with her friend Deedi Damodaran, she too puts forward a challenge asking if she is not ready to share stage with a politician, notoriously then involved in a sex-scandal, who will be presiding over the function. Sr. Jesme is strengthened by this exhortation and decides to attend the function. Though she is prepared to attend the function she has also decided to put forward the question as to who really wants a woman to remain in sex work; is it not the need of a male chauvinistic society? Yet, when the day draws near, she is prohibited, from attending the book release, by Mother Provincial who thinks it a disgrace for a nun to release a book about a prostitute. Sr. Jesme however recalls that Jesus himself had spent time with sinners like the tax collectors and harlots. Sr. Jesme remarks of this, “I am amazed at how differently they and I have understood the Bible” (119).

Sr. Jesme writes of her initiatives in serving as the coordinator of the Film Club at the college. She sees it as an opportunity to introduce students to good films as she considers films to be a good medium to spread spirituality and religion among the youth. She is within no time referred to as the “cine-nun”, which she considers a positive epithet rather than an insult. Thus, she boldly involves herself in a field that was considered taboo for nuns. She along with her students watch, discuss and analyse many films through which she tries to pass on uplifting and constructive messages to them. Even in many of her prayers, Sr. Jesme includes themes and lines from films which she thought fitting. In her autobiography she has actually devoted a number of pages to writing about different movies she found to be significant. Thus, Sr. Jesme writes openly and freely about many things that she as a nun according to society should not write about or even involve in.

Towards the end of the autobiography, she writes of her experiences of being labelled as insane for speaking up against the atrocities within the church and against church authorities. This is very crucial

to a gynocritical understanding of the work as it is to be noted that a patriarchal society often has to be dealt with through hysteric discourse by those who wish not to conform. Sr. Jesme's radical decision to resist coincides with her "hysterical behaviour" that enables her to demand her right to existence. The narrator's perceived hysteria gives voice to the muted. Juliet Mitchel in *Madmen and Medusas, Reclaiming Hysteria* has noted in relation to women writers,

The woman novelist must be hysteric. Hysteric is the woman's simultaneous acceptance and refusal of the organization and sexuality under patriarchal capitalism. It is simultaneous what a woman can do both to be feminine and to refuse femininity, within patriarchal discourse, and I think that is exactly what the novel is; I do not believe that there is such a thing as a female writing, a woman voice. (290) Thus, what the Church and society deem as insanity or madness, is in fact, only a woman's desperate attempt to reclaim her lost identity and to speak on behalf of women who have been silenced.

However, in spite of Sr. Jesme's resistance of the church and its atrocities, she till date remains a staunch believer and devotee of Christ. She considers herself as wedded to her guardian and groom Jesus Christ to whose service she has devoted her entire life. Throughout the whole of the work the words and expressions she employs only further affix and re-establish her love of Jesus and her unfaltering devotion to Him. She is both a feminist at heart, and a sincere devotee of Christ. In her love of Christ and her devotion to God she remains under the sway of patriarchal notions, in a subjective manner. Yet, she upholds the view that in the worldly realm, women need not submit to or bow before her male counterpart. She does not allow her devotion to Christ to affect her feminist ideologies. She is confident that she can balance the two, her sincere efforts to speak on behalf of and empower women and her sincere devotion to God. Hers is a rare and unique feminism that finds its foundation and stability in Christ Himself and her love of fellow beings.

Sr. Jesme's *Amen: The Autobiography of Nun* with its bold revelations and criticisms can undoubtedly be categorised as a gynocritical self-writing. Elaine Showalter has stated that, "The problem of autonomy that the woman novelist faces is, to name the extremes, whether to sacrifice personal development ... to a collective cultural task, or whether to sacrifice authenticity and self-exploration and accept the dominant culture's definition of what is important to understand and describe" (318). Thus, *Amen: The Autobiography of Nun* is not merely an analysis of the anti-feminist elements at work in society, but a powerful resistance of these elements as the narrator writes herself into existence on her own terms.

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History of Plantations in Kanjirapally

This study traces the evolution of plantations in Kanjirapally, Kerala, focusing on the historical development of rubber, cardamom, coffee, and pepper cultivation and their socio-economic impacts. It explores how the arrival of European powers, including the Portuguese, Dutch, and British, significantly influenced the establishment and growth of these plantations. The study examines the introduction of rubber and other cash crops, highlighting the shift from traditional agriculture to a plantation economy. Additionally, it assesses the socio-cultural changes resulting from these developments, including shifts in local traditions, labor dynamics, and community structure. By investigating these aspects, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Kanjirapally's transformation from a historical trade center to a key agricultural hub, revealing the intricate interplay between colonial influence, economic growth, and cultural evolution in the region.

Keywords: *Malanad, Kanjiram, Koyyins, Kannannur Chetties, Thekkumkoor, Padappadi*

Introduction

Kanjirapally, located in the heart of Kottayam district, Kerala, India, is a town rich in culture, history, and has a harmonious fusion of tradition and modernity. The vibrant streets, adorned with lush greenery, reveal Kanjirapally as more than a mere geographical location—it is a living canvas embodying the essence of Kerala. With a history spanning centuries, the town echoes a bygone era, intertwined with the cultural fabric of the region. Serving as a repository of traditions passed down through generations, Kanjirapally's architecture, a blend of old and new structures, stands as a testament to its historical evolution.

Kanjirapally is recognized for its religious diversity, featuring harmoniously coexisting temples, churches, and mosques. This peaceful coexistence mirrors the town's commitment to communal harmony and tolerance. The annual festivals held at these religious sites contribute vibrant hues to the town's landscape, drawing large numbers of both locals and visitors.

A prominent landmark in Kanjirapally is St. Dominic's Cathedral, an imposing structure that not only functions as a place of worship but also exhibits remarkable architecture. The cathedral's grandeur symbolizes the significant Christian influence in the area. Education holds a central role in the town's identity, with numerous schools and colleges enriching its intellectual vibrancy. The town's commitment

to education has resulted in the emergence of individuals who have excelled in various fields, making substantial contributions to Kanjirapally's growth and development.

The natural beauty enveloping Kanjirapally is a captivating aspect. Lush landscapes and tranquil backwaters form a picturesque backdrop, making it an ideal retreat from urban life. Proximity to the Western Ghats enhances its allure, providing opportunities for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers. Known for warm hospitality, the people of Kanjirapally embody traditional values deeply ingrained in their way of life. Visitors are warmly welcomed, and the town's markets buzz with the lively energy of locals engaged in vibrant conversations and commerce.

Background of the study

Kanjirapally, a town in Kerala's Kottayam district, is renowned for its rich historical, cultural, and economic heritage. Positioned at the foothills of the Western Ghats, it has been a crucial trade junction historically linking eastern and western commercial centres. Known as "the Queen of *Malanad*" and "the Gateway of Malanad," Kanjirapally's strategic location has significantly shaped its development over centuries. Kanjirapally's name likely originates from the *Kanjiram* tree, once abundant in the area. Its favorable location made it a key trade junction from ancient times. The earliest known settlers were the *Koyyins*, a tribal community who established themselves in Chotti within Parathodu Panchayat. Around 1000 A.D., the Pandiyan prince extended his rule into Kerala, including Pandalam, which significantly influenced the town's growth. By AD 1150, Tamil traders, notably the *Kannannur Chetties* (Pottankulam, 2011: 589) from Chettinad, settled in Kanjirapally. These traders were instrumental in the exchange of various goods, including spices like pepper, ginger, and coconut, which were vital to the trade economy (Madukakuzhy, 1999:14). Kanjirapally became a prominent commercial centre in the kingdom of *Thekkumkoor*, with its capital at Vennimala. The town was strategically located along key trade routes. One route passed eastward through Peermade's forests and mountain ranges, while another, more critical route, ran southeast through the spice-rich forests and crossed the Pamba River at Nilakal. These routes were vital for the movement of large quantities of goods. Kanjirapally played a significant role in the spice trade and was also noted for its gold mining, enhancing its economic importance.

Kanjirapally's cultural landscape evolved with the arrival of various groups. The town's historical and cultural heritage reflects diverse influences. P. R. Shankarappillai notes that Kanjirapally was once known as Kananappally (Namboothiri, 2014:211). In ancient times, the region, including Kanjirapally, was under the rule of the Leela Vinodini Koyiyanmar, whose influence extended into neighbouring areas. A notable historical conflict occurred along the Kanjirapally-Tambalakkad Road,

known as “*Padappadi*”, (Namboothiri,2014:212) highlighting tensions between local royal families and martial artists from Malabar.

The town's religious landscape is marked by significant temples and mosques. The temple of Madhurameenakshi, constructed following divine visions, showcases Pallava-style sculptures. The Vadakke Ganapathi Kovil (Namboothiri,2014:212) temple was built with the support of the king of Thekkumkoor for Shiva worshippers from Kumarakom. The Ravuthars, horsemen from Madurai who settled in Kanjirapally in AD 1370, contributed to the town's development by farming and trading. They were given land to establish the Nine Mosque (Nainaar Palli). Additionally, Christian settlers from forest tribes cleared land and engaged in agriculture, leading to the establishment of the old church of Kanjirapally and other churches in the Nitya Marthoman church area. To manage trade, the king of Thekkumkoor established a market overseen by supervisors Meera and Shameera. This market facilitated the trade of forest produce like honey, elephant tusks, and cardamom. The market's establishment was crucial for economic growth and helped manage trade congestion. The king's support, including market establishment and religious patronage, was instrumental in Kanjirapally's prosperity. The town continues to honor the king's contributions, reflecting his impact on its historical and cultural legacy.

Today, Kanjirapally hosts various public offices, including the Taluk Office and District Educational Office. It has local institutions such as a Junior College, an English Medium School, and a private museum managed by the Janatha Arts Club. The Abhaya Bhavan provides care for the elderly, and a public market serves the community. The town's diverse cultural and religious heritage, coupled with its picturesque location amidst the Western Ghats, highlights its narrative of adaptation and resilience. Kanjirapally's history reflects its transformation from a crucial trade hub to a thriving modern town, continuing to blend its rich past with contemporary developments.

Kanjirapally, once a significant part of the Chera Empire, evolved through various historical phases and economic shifts. Known for its strategic location and rich heritage, Kanjirapally's history is marked by dynastic changes, migration, and economic development.

Kanjirapally and Nilackal were integral to the Chera Empire until its decline in the 12th century. As the Chera Empire fragmented, smaller kingdoms such as *Vadakumkoor*, *Thekumkur*, *Kayamkulam*, and *Kizhmalanad* emerged in Kerala. Kanjirapally fell under the *Thekumkur* dynasty, which controlled significant areas including *Meenachil*, *Changanachery*, *Aranmula*, and *Devikulam-Peermedu*. *Thekumkur* Kings maintained palaces in strategic locations, including Kanjirapally, where the palace was situated in what is now the CMC convent compound. The decline of *Thekumkur* following

Marthandavarma of Travancore's conquest in the 18th century led to the disuse of the palace and the decline of the trade center at Nellamalapeta.

Nilackal, a prominent trade center known for attracting traders from Rome, Judea, and Finland, was visited by St. Thomas in the 1st century. St. Thomas's arrival marked the spread of Christianity, with many conversions and baptisms. By the 14th century, threats from bandits and internal conflicts prompted the migration of Nilackal's residents to nearby areas including Chengannoor, Mallappally, Vaypoor, Kanjirapally, Puthupally, and Aruvithara.

During bandit attacks on Nilackal, Valiyaveetil Thommie and his relatives risked their lives to save a statue of Holy Mary, moving it to Pazhurthadam near Kanjirapally. Thommie's descendants significantly influenced Kanjirapally's development. His sons established prominent family branches, contributing to the region's growth. These families played a pivotal role in Kanjirapally's rubber industry, with significant ventures in rubber processing, including a latex factory established in 1945 and Kollamkulam Rubber Industries founded in 1980. Key figures like Mr. K.E. Mathew Kadamapuzha also made notable contributions, such as developing a cardamom and coffee plantation. Families migrating from ancient Christian centres like Kuruvalangadu and Nilackal, including Kalathur, Plakkattu, and Erthayil, also contributed to Kanjirapally's growth. The region's economic foundation was laid through trade and agriculture, focusing on commodities like pepper, ginger, and coconut. The strategic location of Kanjirapally facilitated its prominence in the pepper trade.

Impact of European arrival

The arrival of Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English merchants marked significant changes in Kanjirapally's economic landscape. The Portuguese initially controlled the spice trade routes in the 16th and 17th centuries, but their dominance ended with the Dutch capture in 1663. The Dutch implemented their trade mechanisms, benefiting Kanjirapally's market, which thrived due to its location near the Manimala River, aiding transportation. Kanjirapally's historical and economic evolution highlights its strategic importance and diverse cultural influences. From its early role in the Chera Empire to its emergence as a key trade hub, the town has been shaped by migrations, dynastic shifts, and economic developments. The introduction of rubber significantly impacted its trade dynamics, contributing to its growth. Kanjirapally's rich heritage and evolving economic landscape underscore its transformation into a vibrant center of trade and culture.

Kanjirapally, a region in Kerala, India, has a rich history in plantation agriculture, significantly shaped during the colonial era by British settlers who introduced cash crops like rubber, tea, coffee, and spices.

This transformation turned Kanjirapally into a major agricultural hub due to its favorable climate, abundant rainfall, and fertile soil.

Rubber and Cash Crops:

The establishment of rubber plantations was central to Kanjirapally's economic development. The region became a significant producer of rubber, contributing substantially to Kerala's output, especially during the mid-20th century rubber boom. The expansion of tea and coffee estates also bolstered the local economy and enhanced the scenic beauty of the area. Kanjirapally's history with spices like cardamom dates back to ancient times. Cardamom, known as the "Queen of Spices," was cultivated extensively from the early 19th century. The region's fertile soil, suitable altitude, and climate in the Western Ghats provided ideal conditions for its growth. The cultivation process involved clearing land, planting seeds, and managing shade requirements with the help of local communities. Cardamom cultivation became a major cash crop, generating significant revenue and contributing to local and international markets. The well-managed plantations also played a role in biodiversity conservation.

Coffee cultivation began in Kanjirapally in the late 19th century, driven by the region's favourable climate and economic opportunities. The establishment of coffee plantations involved clearing land, preparing soil, and planting coffee seeds. Similar to cardamom, integrating shade trees was crucial for maintaining coffee quality and promoting sustainable farming. Coffee plantations provided an additional source of income and had a substantial impact on the local economy and social dynamics.

When we look at the contributions of J J Murphy, or James Joseph Murphy, was an Irish planter, who had significantly impacted Kanjirapally's agricultural history, particularly in rubber cultivation. Arriving in India in the early 20th century, Murphy pioneered rubber plantations in the region, introducing advanced techniques in planting, tapping, and processing. His innovations boosted local revenue, created employment, and strengthened Kanjirapally's position in the rubber market. Murphy's commitment to sustainable practices, including agroforestry, soil conservation, and biodiversity preservation, set new standards in plantation management. Murphy's legacy endures in Kanjirapally's prominent rubber industry. His vision and sustainable practices influenced future generations of planters, contributing to the resilience and sustainability of Kanjirapally's plantation economy. His contributions have shaped the region's agricultural and economic landscape, leaving a lasting impact on its development.

Kanjirapally, located in Kerala, India, has a storied history shaped significantly by plantation agriculture, particularly during the colonial era. Its favourable climate, rich soil, and strategic location

contributed to its transformation into a major agricultural hub with a focus on rubber, coffee, and cardamom.

The establishment of rubber plantations in Kanjirapally began in the early 20th century, driven by the British colonial administration's recognition of the economic potential of *Hevea brasiliensis*, the rubber tree. The region's well-drained soil and humid conditions proved ideal for rubber cultivation. The process involved clearing land, preparing soil, and planting seedlings. Local farmers, guided by agricultural experts and British administrators, quickly adopted this new crop. Rubber plantations not only generated substantial revenue from latex but also created employment opportunities, reshaping the economic and social fabric of Kanjirapally. The landscape transformed as rubber trees replaced natural vegetation, and the industry played a role in soil conservation and water retention, reflecting sustainable cultivation practices.

Colonial influence on plantations

The British colonial era profoundly impacted Kanjirapally's agricultural landscape. Besides rubber, the British introduced and promoted the cultivation of cardamom and coffee. Cardamom, known as the "Queen of Spices," was introduced with techniques emphasizing shade-grown methods to enhance yield and quality. This contributed to Kanjirapally's prominence as a spice-growing region. Coffee cultivation began in the late 19th century, supported by British technical expertise and favorable climatic conditions. The integration of shade trees, a practice borrowed from cardamom cultivation, was crucial for coffee growth. These developments aligned with colonial economic goals and transformed the region's agricultural practices. Over the past 300 years, Kanjirapally has evolved from a region with virgin forests to a key agricultural and trade centre, influenced by immigrant communities, including Christians and Muslims. The introduction of large rubber plantations played a significant role in its prosperity. However, recent economic downturns and declining demand for natural rubber have affected the region. Kanjirapally, now a taluk headquarters, has evolved from its expansive past. Tourist spots like Melaruvi, Pichapally Medu, and the Manimalayar-Chittar confluence highlight the region's natural beauty. Despite current economic challenges, Kanjirapally's rich agricultural and historical legacy remains a testament to its transformative journey through plantation history. Kanjirapally, a region in Kerala, India, boasts a rich agricultural legacy shaped significantly by its plantations. Its tropical climate, ample rainfall, and fertile soil create ideal conditions for cultivating a variety of cash crops, including rubber, tea, cardamom, and coffee.

Conclusion

Historically, Kanjirapally was a major trade centre during the time of the Thekkumkore dynasty, benefiting from its strategic location near important trade routes and waterways. This prominence as a commercial hub continued under colonial rule, which introduced organized plantation systems for various crops. The systematic approach of these plantations transformed traditional agricultural practices and was driven by European market demands.

The plantations in Kanjirapally have been crucial for economic growth, generating employment opportunities and attracting a labor force that significantly impacted the local population and cultural fabric. Workers' migration to the region influenced local traditions, customs, and community dynamics, contributing to Kanjirapally's unique identity.

The export of plantation crops, especially rubber, has elevated Kanjirapally's global market presence and established a robust international trade network. The town's products gained international recognition, further enhancing its economic standing.

In essence, Kanjirapally exemplifies Kerala's cultural richness, historical depth, and natural beauty. Its blend of tradition and modernity, coupled with the warmth of its people, makes it a unique and inviting destination in God's Own Country. The project, completed within a limited timeframe, provides a foundation for further exploration of Kanjirapally's diverse facets.

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The role of Onam festival in shaping the identity of Keralites

Tiruvonam or simply Onam is the national festival of Keralites all over the world. This festival is regarded as the return of mythological king Mahabali who reigned Kerala during the time immemorial period. The period where Mahabali reigned is considered as the golden era of Kerala and every Malayali longing to go back to that era where egalitarian political economy existed. This Utopian structure is the foundation of Onam and which makes it more attractive than other festivals of Kerala. Onam falls in the month Chingam, which is the first month of Malayalam calendar and the celebration last for ten days. To make the festival attractive various cultural events are organized, everyone irrespective of religion and caste participates in this event. Majority of the myths of Onam are based on Mahabali and Vamana the fifth incarnation of lord Vishnu. According to the Marxist narratives Onam started as a harvest festival and later transformed into a temple centered event. There are other dimensions too such as Mahabali is considered as a subaltern hero who was later suppressed by the Aryan migrants, but there are counter narrative to this approach. So in order to understand the various narratives behind the origin Onam it is necessary to check all the myths, legends and historical records associated with it. This article is trying to investigating the evolution of Onam as a cultural event and how it shaped the identity of Keralites

Key words: *Onam myths, historical documents, feudalism, different perspective of the festival, Onam in modern age*

Introduction

The basis of every festival is the myths and historical facts that associated with it. The popular myth is the story of *Mahabali* and *Vamana*. According to this story *Mahabali* the generous king was defeated by *Vamana* and send to the netherworld. However before that *Vamana* granted a boon to *Mahabali* that he can visit his subjects once in a year and the day he visiting the subjects later turned into Onam festival. When critically approaching the story of *Mahabali* and *Vamana* one can easily attribute the characteristics Marxist theme of class struggle into it. Here *Mahabali* representing the Prag communist idea where inequality is absent and *Vamana* representing the characteristics of feudalism. Hence the

story pointing towards the transformation of the society where common man lost their freedom and become the subjects of tyranny. But this is not the only myth for Onam, there are some other myths like this one. The annual visit of *Parsurama* the sixth avatar of lord *Vishnu* and various tribal stories related to Onam are examples of it (Logan, 1887). So the Onam festival is developed by the contribution of various factors. However to know the beginning of Onam it is important to check the historical documents. The first recorded evidence of Onam is in *Maturaikkanci* which is one of the poem in Sangam literature (Aiyengar, 1950). This particular work is detailing about the presence of the festival in Madurai the capital of Pandyas now located in Tamilnadu. The interesting fact is that there is no Mahabali and it explains Onam as the birthday of Tirumal which is another name of lord *Vishnu*. In Kerala the documents like Tiruvalla copper plates detailing about Onam but according to this document it is a temple centered festival. So when going through the myths and documents the variations are evident in Onam. However this festival have presence in Kerala even there are evidence of Onam celebration in Sangam age. Therefore it is important to analyse the development of Onam into a national festival of Kerala.

The myths and facts

The story of *Mahabali* and *Vamana* is described in various Hindu scriptures such as Sathapatha Brahaman, Ramayana, Mahabharata and various other puranas. The crux of the legend is that the Asura king Mahabali who usurped Indra the king of Devas and become the lord of three worlds. The governance of the Asura king was very just and generous and the subjects are very happy about it. Apart from this he decided to conduct various rituals and prayers to become powerful. By fear of hearing this Devas pleaded lord *Vishnu* for help and for the purpose he took *Vamana* incarnation. When the rituals are about to finish *Vamana* approached *Mahabali* and asked three steps of land. Besides *Sukracharyas* arguments *Mahabali* agreed to give it. After that *Vamana* become a giant and measured Earth and Heaven. There isn't anything for the third step so in order to fulfill the promise the Asura king offered his head, and *Vamana* sent him to the netherworld. However *Vamana* granted a boon to *Mahabali* that he can visit his subjects once in a year. This annual return of the Asura king is now remembered as

Onam in Kerala¹⁶. This is the popular narrative about the festival right now. When critically evaluating this story there are some pieces are missing . The exact version of the story says that the Asura king will become the next king of heaven and even some versions says that *Vishnu* become a doorkeeper of *Mahabali* in netherworld. The story of Mahabali have some reflections of his ancestors. Before he becoming the king of three worlds, his father and grandfather who are *Virochana* and *Prahlada* too succeeded in defeating the Devas. But they too was defeated by trickery. The similarity is both are defeated by using a Brahmin disguise like that of *Vamana* and the only exception is that in Mahabali`s story it was *Vishnu* who took the Brahmin disguise whereas in the story of his ancestors it was Indra who took Brahmin form. So it is clear that the story is indirectly pointing the Brahmin supremacy. The people were quite happy under the regime of *Mahabali* so it sounds like a Prag communist system where inequality is absent. The surrender of *Mahabali* to *Vamana* shows the transformation of society into new one which pointing towards the development of the feudalism. There are certain customs of Onam which representing exactly the feudalist structure one of them is *Onakazcha*¹⁷. It is a tradition of tenant bringing presents for the landlord during Onam and who in turn would give *Onakkodi* to the tenant which means new clothes. It is important to analayis another myths related to Onam to understand the nature of the festival. The Malabar manual telling a different version of story, there it is *Parasurama* the sixth incarnation of *Vishnu* who is the visiting during the period Onam. However this version doesn`t have any other references, but still it have a feudal nature because according to several other myths it is *Parasurama* who created Kerala for the Namabuthiri brahmins¹⁸ . So it can connect with the migration of brahmins to Kerala and established a new feudal social system based on brahminical hegemony .In order to substantiate the feudalist nature it is important to discuss the Tribal myths of Onam. There are two important myths related the festival among the Adiya community of Wayand. According to the first myth the Adiya community was once ruled by an egalitarian chieftain Mavelimantram, it was their golden era, then three lords came to their village. The chief welcomed and treated them well, but they had another plans, when they got the chance they killed the chieftain and established a new system based on the structure of caste¹⁹. The second one details that , once the two lords of heaven were traveling they saw termites moving large in numbers . When they inquired about the reason , the Termites told that they are on a travel to visit the king *Maveli* who reside in the netherworld. Because of the curiosity the lords disguised as Termites and went to the netherworld. There

¹⁶ Ritty A. Lukose(2009). *Liberalization`s Children Gender, Youth, and Consumer Citizenship in Globalizing India*. Duke University Press. pp.164,182-183

¹⁷ *His life, his story*. (2012, may 17). The New India Express. <https://www.newindiaexpress.com>

¹⁸ Logan, William(1887). *Malabar Manual*. AES publications. P.162

¹⁹ Kalidasan, Vinod, Kottayil(2015). A king lost and found Revisiting the popular and the tribal myths of Mahabali from Kerala. *Studies in South Asia Film & Media*, 7 (1,2), p.111

the lords were welcomed gladly by *Maveli*, but because of the greediness they stole the immense wealth of *Maveli*²⁰. Here both the myths representing a subaltern leader who lost to the representatives of the upper class structure. Moreover the character who lost have interesting similarities with the Puranic Asura king *Mahabali*. It is important to check the various historical records to know the beginning and evolution of this festival. The first historical record which giving the details about Onam is *Maturaikancci*, which is one among the songs of *Pathupattu*, moreover it is one of the important source of Sangam period of Tamilakam (Aiyengar, 1950). As per this song it the birth day of *Mayon* or *Tirumal*, who is none other than *Vishnu*, besides there isn't any mention of *Mahabali*. Yet another important factor is that it is celebrated in *Madurai* the capital of ancient *Pandya* kingdom by the king *Nedumcheliyan Pandiyan*. Now days apart from the *Kanyakumari* district Onam is not celebrated in *Tamilnadu*²¹. The *Thiruvattuvayi* and *Thiruvalla* copper plates are the earliest records of Onam festival in *Kerala*. This *Thiruvalla* copper plate mentions about the meal that given to *Brahmins* during Onam²². The *Tiru Pallanadu* and other *Pathikams* are the next sources that details about this particular festival (Aiyengar, 1950). There is evidence that The *Synod of Diamper* prohibited *Christians* to participate in Onam because the *Synod* considered Onam as festival related with *Hindu* temples. However there is evidence that the *Christians* of *Kerala* never took this call seriously. *A Voyage to the East Indies* is one of the important foreign source that describes about the various customs and practices over the period of Onam. While analyzing various facts and evidences from the sources it is found that this particular festival have its origin in *Sangham* period and later connected with *Vaishnava* tradition moreover there isn't any details of *Asura* king *Mahabali*.

The *Hindu* mythology and its festivals are connected with the battle of *Deva* and *Asura*, *Holi*, *Diwali* are the examples of such festivals and Onam is not an exception from this methodology. But here Onam is now transformed into a popular festival and *Mahabali* the *Asura* king become more popular than lord *Vishnu*. The reason for this change is the identification of this king as the leader of the suppressed people. Many thinkers contributed in developing the idea of *Mavelinadu* as the representation of a glorified past. For the purpose they used the *Marxian* terminologies such as the conflict of the class and historical materialism. This motif changed the narrative of the battle of good and evil into a destruction of a period where inequality is absent. Moreover the tribal representations of Onam also contributed in making this narrative successful.

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ *Onam celebrated with fervour*. (2015, august 29). *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com>

²² *Suresh, K, M*(2003). The temple dependents of early medieval *Kerala*- A case study of *Srivallabha* temple in central *Travancore*. *Indian History Congress*, 64, p.506

Onam is a nostalgic day for the people of Kerala which bringing the memories of good old days. It is now become the most important festival of Kerala and during the period a diverse range of cultural activities are conducted. While there are changes in the customs and practices in the course of time such as in old days it was a temple centered festival but at present the various organization are conducting activities related to Onam. This changes made the festival into a people centered activity rather than a ritualistic practice. The reason for such transformation was the declaration Onam as the national festival of Kerala in 1961 and also it become one of the important factor of making a Malayali identity. The government of made many activities to promote the season of Onam as period of tourist destination in Kerala , thousands of domestic and foreign tourists visits Kerala as a part of this festival. By comparing with other festival seasons, it is the period where market and traders making large profit and it eventually helping to enriching the Kerala economy

Conclusion

Onam have changes in the course of time, which is started as temple centered festival and now become the national festival of Kerala. While analyzing the various myths and facts, the beginning of this festival is related to the birthday of lord *Vishnu*. The same Asura and Deva dualism is the base of Onam festival but unlike many other Asuras the character of *Mahabali* is different. Here the Asura king is represented as more benevolent and just ruler and that is why Mahabali`s importance increased and lord Vishnu`s decreased as the period progressed. Besides the tribal myths Onam portrayed the Asura king as the leader of the indigenous people and he was suppressed by later Aryan migrants , this new deconstructionism of the myth also contributed in making Mahabali more popular. The idea of class struggle is another thematic representation that evident in this festival, it shows the progress of society primitive communism to feudalism where the society lost the idea of egalitarianism. At present Onam is the day where people return to their roots and celebrating with their family and friends . It I also an important unifying factor of Keralites who are settled in all over the world. The government of Kerala also promoting various activities related to Onam for making an identity of Keralites other than the caste, class and religion. So this festival will continue as long as there are Keralites.

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Preserving the Sacred Groves of Kerala: From Serpent Worship to Land Privatization

Kerala, a state in southern India, is home to a unique and ancient tradition of sacred groves known as the 'Kavu'. These forested sanctuaries are revered for their spiritual significance, biodiversity, and role in local communities' cultural and religious practices. This archaeological journal article explores the rich history, cultural meaning, and modern-day threats to the preservation of these sacred ecological havens.

Keywords: *Environment, sacred groves, serpent worship, land privatization*

Introduction and Background

Kerala, narrow strip of land hemmed in between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, is a coastal state located on the south-western tip of India. It lies between 8° 18' and 12° 48' North latitude and between 74°52' and 77° 24' East longitude (Menon, 2017). Sacred groves, locally known as “kaavu”, are small forest patches protected and conserved based on religious beliefs. The sacred groves of Kerala are closely associated with the ancient practice of serpent worship, the "Naga Gods". This ancient religious system reveres snakes as powerful and heavenly beings that protect the natural environment. In order to create a symbiotic relationship between sacred sites and the surrounding ecosystems, 'kavus' were regularly built around shrines and temples dedicated to these serpent deities. Nāga worship has been mentioned in ancient texts, including the Vedas, Sutras, and epics.

The earliest evidence of serpent worship in India comes from the archaeological excavation at Chirand, a Neolithic site in Bihar. Among the various terracotta figurines found at Chirand, a significant discovery was a terracotta snake figurine. This serpent figurine is considered the earliest representation of the serpent cult, dating back to the early part of the 3rd millennium B.C (Pradhan, 2001). Over time, this spiritual heritage became intricately woven into India's and Kerala's cultural fabric, shaping how local people viewed and interacted with the environment.

In this article, the longevity of sacred groves in Kerala is considered to be a fascinating phenomenon that invites investigation. Fear of divine retribution associated with serpent worship can discourage people from exploiting or altering these spaces. Communities consider these groves to be abodes of deities, especially serpent deities (Nagadevata). "Is the mix of danger, spirituality, and harmony the only explanation for the longevity of sacred groves?" Small-scale sacred groves, often owned by families or local communities, serve as markers or boundaries. These groves may have been strategically

maintained by families to stake claim to their land. By dedicating groves to serpent deities, families could strategically establish ownership rights and protect their land from encroachment. This research was developed on the hypothesis that sacred groves functioned as a hidden tool in land privatization, particularly of small-scale groves owned by families.

Results and Discussion

The findings in this article are mainly based on literature research. The sacred groves of Kerala, known as 'Kavus', hold immense cultural, ecological and spiritual significance to the local communities. These forested landscapes serve as reservoirs of biodiversity, providing shelter to a large array of flora and fauna, including many rare and endangered species. The 'kavus' often contain ancient and towering trees, some of which are believed to be hundreds of years old, and play a crucial role in maintaining the delicate ecological balance of the region.

Beyond their ecological significance, these sacred groves are deeply intertwined with the religious and cultural identity of the Kerala people. 'Kavus' are revered as the abodes of Nagadevata, the Serpent goddess, and the sites of various rituals, festivals and community gatherings that celebrate the symbiotic relationship between humans and the natural world (Devika, 2024). These sacred places are seen as liminal zones where the mundane and the divine coexist, fostering a deep sense of reverence and stewardship among the local people.

Significance of Sacred groves

Ecological significance

Sacred groves act as biodiversity hotspots, providing critical habitats for a wide variety of flora and fauna, including many rare and endangered taxa. They play a critical role in maintaining the region's delicate ecological balance, regulating water flow, preventing soil erosion, and supporting the overall health of the local environment.

Cultural and spiritual significance

The sacred groves are the abodes of the Naga deity, the serpent goddess, and the sites of various rituals, festivals and community gatherings that celebrate the symbiotic relationship between humans and the natural world. These sacred places are seen as liminal zones where the mundane and the divine coexist, fostering a deep sense of reverence and stewardship among the local people.

Historical and archaeological importance

The sacred groves of Kerala are home to ancient and towering trees and serve as repositories of valuable archaeological and historical information about the region's past. These forest sanctuaries have played a crucial role in the cultural and religious traditions of Kerala for centuries, and their preservation is essential to sustain the state's rich heritage.

Fear associated with sacred groves

Fear weaves a mysterious thread through the ancient tradition of serpent worship in Kerala's sacred groves. Serpents, revered as hooded deities, oscillate between benevolence and malevolence. A minor error could incur their wrath, leading to dire consequences. The fear of divine punishment loomed large: leprosy, ophthalmia, and childlessness were believed to be the result of harming snakes. Killing a serpent was considered a sin, and its repercussions could affect progeny, eyesight, or cause skin diseases (Enviscreec, 2014). A 'kavu' is an ecozone marked culturally through sacralization. The process of sacralization reflects the Indigeneity's innate urge to conquer their fears through reverence (Mohan and Alex, 2021).

A deep-rooted belief held that the consequences of such sins would be transmitted across generations. Families feared curses affecting their lineage, emphasizing the need to avoid harming these semi-gods. To counter any curse or offense, prescribed rituals emerged. From the 12th century, "Sarppam thullal" (snake dance) became part of snake worship. Families performed rituals like "Noorum palum" (offering food to deities), "pulluvanpattu", and "kalamezhuthupattu" to appease the serpent gods (Devika, 2024). Any misfortune that affected the family was associated to a human misdemeanor that triggered the deity's wrath. Therefore, this system ethically guided the human conduct and misconduct was nullified through penance. Sarppakavu manifested a sacrificial space wherein the casteist propitiated the serpent deities to ward off the evil (Mohan and Alex, 2021). In summary, fear intertwines with reverence, shaping the delicate balance between humans and serpents in Kerala's sacred groves.

Threats to the Sacred Groves

Despite their immense cultural and ecological importance, the sacred groves of Kerala face several threats that jeopardize their long-term conservation. One of the primary threats is widespread encroachment and conversion of groves for agricultural, residential and industrial development. As the demand for land in Kerala continues to increase, many sacred groves have been cleared or destroyed to make way for human settlements, roads and other infrastructure projects. Another growing concern is the impact of climate change on groves. Changes in temperature, rainfall patterns, and the frequency of extreme weather events have led to the decline of forest ecosystems, with many trees and plant species struggling to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Furthermore, the introduction of invasive

species and unsustainable harvesting of resources from sacred groves have exacerbated threats to their ecological integrity.

Land privatization and its impact

One of the biggest threats to the conservation of sacred groves in Kerala is the ongoing process of land privatization. As the state underwent economic development and urbanization, many protected lands were converted into private property, often with little regard for their cultural and ecological significance. This led to the fragmentation and destruction of sacred groves as private landowners cut or modified the land to suit their own interests rather than protect the integrity of the forest areas.

Privatization of 'Kavus' has disrupted the traditional management and maintenance practices of local communities who have historically been the custodians of these sacred groves. With the loss of communal ownership and control, the sense of collective responsibility and spiritual connection to 'kavu' has eroded, making it more challenging to maintain the traditional rituals, festivals and conservation activities that have sustained this ecosystem for generations.

Fragmentation

The conversion of 'Kavus' into private property has led to fragmentation and destruction of sacred trees, compromising their ecological integrity.

Disruptive Steward

Privatization of 'Kavus' has disrupted the traditional management and maintenance practices of local communities, eroding their sense of collective responsibility and spiritual connection to these sacred spaces.

A threat to conservation

The loss of communal ownership and control of sacred groves has made it more challenging to maintain the traditional rituals, festivals and conservation efforts that have sustained this ecosystem for generations.

Role of authority and ownership over 'kavus'

Sacred groves or 'kavus' are mainly managed or protected by the Devaswom Board (Government of Kerala), local communities, and family (individual or joint). In Kerala, the families tending the sacred groves mainly belong to three castes namely Brahmins, Nairs and Ezhavas. Sacred groves tended and

maintained by families mainly worshiped Naga gods. Changes in the socio-economic conditions of these families affected the status of sacred groves. Families facing economic hardships may prioritize immediate needs over grove conservation and the economic distress can lead to selling grove land for development or agriculture. They relocate the deity to some other temples and use the groves for private purposes. Practices like “ozhippikkal” to relocate the deity has become a way of institutionalizing the usurping of land allotted to sacred groves by ancestors for personal needs (Sreelekha and Joy, 2021). Families with stable incomes can allocate resources for maintaining groves, including tree planting, preventing encroachment, and organizing rituals. Financially secure families may invest in restoration projects, ensuring the groves’ longevity. However, the modifications and expansions done by these families also alter the nature of sacred groves.

Conservation efforts and challenges

According to the survey conducted by the Institution of Forestry Kerala, it was observed that “in the beginning of the 19th century, there were more than 30,000 groves in Kerala” (Institution of Foresters Kerala, 2019). However, they have also pointed out that “a recent survey revealed that only less than 1000 sacred groves exist, and most of them are less than 10 m² in extent” (Institution of Foresters Kerala, 2019). In response to increasing threats to sacred lands in Kerala, government agencies, non-profit organizations and local communities have undertaken various conservation activities. One of the key initiatives is the establishment of the Sacred Groves Conservation Program by the Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department, which aims to identify, map and conserve the remaining sacred groves through legislative measures and community-based management strategies (Institution of Foresters Kerala, 2019). However, conservation of sacred groves faces significant challenges, including limited funding, bureaucratic obstacles, and constant pressure from development and land use. The lack of comprehensive legal protection for sacred groves and the complexity of land tenure patterns has further complicated efforts to protect these precious natural and cultural resources.

Community participation in conservation

Conservation of sacred groves in Kerala is inextricably linked to the active involvement and maintenance of local communities. For centuries, the people living adjacent to these sacred sites have cared for and protected the sacred groves, with traditional customs, taboos, and rituals serving as the primary mechanisms for their protection. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of community-based approaches to the conservation and restoration of sacred groves. Many non-profit organizations and government agencies work with local communities to develop and implement collaborative conservation strategies such as establishing community-managed forest

reserves, revitalizing traditional ecological knowledge, and formalizing indigenous management practices. These community-led initiatives have not only helped preserve the ecological integrity of the 'kavu' groves, but also strengthened the cultural and spiritual connection between the local people and the natural environment. By empowering communities to take an active role in the stewardship of these sacred sites, conservation efforts are likely to be more sustainable and effective in the long run.

Non-profit organizations and government agencies are working with local communities to develop and implement collaborative conservation strategies, such as community-managed forest reserves and the revitalization of traditional ecological knowledge. By empowering communities to take an active role in the stewardship of the sacred groves, the preservation efforts have the potential to be more sustainable and effective in the long run. Community-led initiatives have helped to reinforce the cultural and spiritual connection between the local population and the natural environment of the sacred groves.

Conclusions and Future Research

The sacred groves of Kerala, popularly known as Kavus, form a profound and irreplaceable part of the state's natural and cultural heritage. Steeped in the ancient tradition of Naga worship, these forest sanctuaries serve as vital reservoirs of biodiversity, repositories of historical and archaeological significance, and sacred places deeply woven into the fabric of Kerala society. People visit them for prayers, meditation, and seeking blessings. Sacred groves are repositories of ancient customs, rituals, and beliefs. They have been preserved by generations, acting as living museums of cultural heritage. Their untouched ecosystems provide refuge for flora and fauna. By safeguarding these groves, communities indirectly contribute to biodiversity conservation. They prevent deforestation and habitat loss.

However, sacred groves face myriad threats such as land conversion, climate change, invasive species, and unsustainable resource extraction. The ongoing process of land privatization has exacerbated the challenges, disrupting the traditional management practices of local communities and jeopardizing the long-term conservation of these precious natural and cultural resources. Due to weakening of traditional religious belief systems, sacred groves are facing big threats and the surviving groves are extremely reduced in number and area today. The preservation of sacred groves in Kerala owes much to the ownership and stewardship by families over generations. Although family ownership has historically protected the sacred groves, today's landscape reflects a subtle tension between tradition and modernity that challenges the continuity of the plantations.

Despite these daunting challenges, the future of Kerala's sacred groves is promising. The concerted efforts of government agencies, non-profit organizations, and local communities have yielded tangible

results through the establishment of conservation programs, the implementation of restoration projects, and the empowerment of communities to take an active role in the management of 'kavus'. By continuing to raise awareness, strengthen legal protections and foster collaborative, community-based approaches to conservation, Kerala's sacred groves will be preserved for generations to come, ensuring the lasting legacy of this unique and irreplaceable natural and cultural aspect of the state's heritage.

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Martial Prowess and Christian Identity in Early Modern Kerala

Christianity in Kerala traces its origin from as far as the first century A.D and grew as a response to the culture of Kerala. Christians of Kerala was known as St Thomas Christians as they are the descendants of the Christians converted by the St Thomas the Apostle. They were excellent in the fields of trade, commerce, education and culture during the early modern period. They were also well accomplished soldiers, which is documented in many Portuguese records but not known widely. Their martial heritage is equally wonderful as their heritage in religion and culture. This paper is an effort to give a few glimpses of this aspect and to sketch the military role of St Thomas Christians in early modern period.

Introduction

Kerala has a longer history of Christianity and ancestry than the European Christians. According to traditions Christianity in Kerala was started with the arrival of St Thomas in 52 AD at Cranganore. He converted many native people into Christianity and established seven churches in different parts of Kerala. Later he moved to Coromandal and there he was martyred by a fanatic Brahmin at Little Mount in Madras and his body was brought to Mylapore and buried there in 72 AD. As St Thomas had introduced Christianity in Kerala, the Christians of this area came to be known as St Thomas Christians. Around 4th century AD and in 9th century AD Christians from West Asia, mainly from East Syria migrated to Kerala and joined the then existing Kerala Church. These Syrian Christians exerted very great influence on the faith and worship of the native Christian community of Kerala. Native Christians adopted the liturgy of immigrant Christians from Syria which is in Syriac language and accepted the bishops from Eastern Orthodox Church in Antioch in Syria.

History of Christians in Kerala during the pre-Portuguese period is vague because of the lack of historical documents. The early history is reconstructed from the documents of Portuguese period of sixteenth century. These documents suggests that the Christian community in

medieval Kerala enjoyed high status and privileges and they were a wealthy community. They were traders, agriculturists and soldiers. In social hierarchy of caste ridden Kerala society, Christians were equal to Nairs, who were just below the Brahmins the superior caste. The descendants of Syrian Christians dominated the trade, especially overseas trade, due to their West Asian contacts while the native Christians settled in the hinterlands doing agriculture mainly spice cultivation. This spice producing native Christians in the hinterlands and the trading West Asian Christians in the port cities were linked by mercantile chains.ⁱ This network of spice production and overseas trade continued until the arrival of the Europeans. The religious observance and customs of the community was very much similar to that of upper-class Hindus up to the coming of Portuguese to Kerala. Later Portuguese introduced Latinisation of Kerala Christians which led to great confusions and chaos and even split in Christian community.

The main Christian settlements during the early modern period was mainly in the kingdoms of Cochin, Vadakkumkur and Thekkumkur as these Rajas patronized trade and commerce.ⁱⁱ There is no unanimous opinion among scholars regarding the number of Christians in Kerala during this period. In 1645 Fr. Francis Barreto S.J. wrote that the St. Thomas Christians numbered about 150,000.ⁱⁱⁱ They contributed in the growth of prosperity of the kingdoms with their hard work and dedications as traders and agriculturists. The contributions of St Thomas Christians in the field of trade and agriculture are widely acknowledged but their military role is not much given importance by scholars though it is documented in many of Portuguese documents. It is to be noted that the martial heritage is equally glorious as their religious and cultural heritage

Christian Military during Medieval Period

St Thomas Christians of Kerala from medieval period took part in military services. Some of the decrees of the Synod of Diamper of the 16th century are the reliable documents which throw a flood of light on the martial status of the traditional Kerala Christians.^{iv} It is documented that the Synod prevents the Christians of Kerala from worshipping non-Christian gods and goddesses in kalari or gymnasium and insist that they should not get trained themselves in martial arts under Hindu instructors. From this it is clear that St Thomas Christians got training in Kalaries or gymnasium and they were professional soldiers.

These Christians were recruited in Kings army. The more the number of Christians a native prince had in his dominions, the more he was feared by his neighbors, as the Christians were

said to be very faithful and trustworthy. Many writers have also attested this fact. Nicolas Pimenta S.J wrote at the close of the sixteenth century that “the Thomas Christians could place in an array 30,000 armed men at any time.^v In 16th century Bishop Jacob (1503-1549) wrote a letter to Portuguese King in which he referred that whole Christians were under him and if he wanted, he could easily assemble 25000 Christian soldiers for him. Portuguese historian Gouvea says: “Because the Christians of St Thomas are the best warriors, more courageous and handier with the musket, in the whole of Malabar”^{vi} Majority of the men in the army of King of Cochin were Christians. Gouvea had recorded that there were 5000 Christian soldiers for Cochin Raja and if these soldiers were dismissed the Raja will be weak. Francis Day says that the Christians during the medieval period were highly esteemed because of their heroic tradition as soldiers.^{vii}

The Archdeacon, the chief of Christians in Kerala, was always accompanied by a number of priests and well-trained Christian soldiers. The Christian men including the priest of the community always went about armed. Antonio Gouvea states that “they go about with swords and shields and some with guns and lances; in the bazaars, they wear long robes, white or blue, a proper and decent dress, which is usual with men of the age”.^{viii} The majority was, however content to carry a sword in their right hand and a shield in their left. The Christians directly depended on the kings or his ministers and not on provincial Governors.

Kalari or Gymnasium

Almost all the male members of the Christian community were trained for military services. Christians paid equal importance to intellectual as well as physical education of a growing child. When a Christian child become proficient in the alphabet and basic lessons of traditional teaching, he was sent to the physical training centers situated in the village.^{ix} Almost every village in Kerala had a kalari maintained by hereditary instructors for military training of the Nayar and Christian youths of the village. There are many references relating to the military training of Christians. They were to take military training from the age of 8 to the age of 25. Expert masseurs massaged them after profuse application of gingelly oil to make their bodies perform super feats of acrobatics. These students acquired proficiency in the use of sword and shield, bow and arrow, and the lance. The training of left-handed youths was confined to bow and arrows. Their food was mostly vegetarian and rather frugal. “In the use of food, they are very temperate, their principal meal consisting of boiled rice, with salt, milk, ginger and a few other simple ingredients made into wholesome condiments (curry). On particular occasions and

when entertaining their friends, they indulge in the use of sugar, butter and salt fish: and these are considered great delicacies.... They seldom take animal food.... They are equally remarkable for sobriety, none but lowest of them taking wine, ardent spirits or fermented liquor. Those who have any regard for their character, seldom think of tasting anything stronger than water or milk.”^x Gouvea says that even though the Christians ate meat very rarely, they were robust, fat and strong men and the best soldiers on the battle field in all Malabar.^{xi} After training for a long period they left the gymnasium only after their masters were satisfied with their skill and proficiency. Even after this they attended the gymnasium for a fortnight or a month every year for keeping themselves fit all the time.^{xii} After training in kalari every young man presented the customary nuzzer to the King; and received his sword from him. Then he becomes the member of the ‘protector guild’ bound to fight and die whenever called upon to do so by his chief. These full-fledged warriors enjoyed the privilege of carrying their swords whenever they went out. The hereditary instructors were called Panikkar, Kurup, Kurukkal or Kalari Asan and were treated with great respect. Whenever the pupil and the master met, whether on the public road or elsewhere, the former lowering his shield, leaned against his legs, put his sword under his arm and saluted in the fashion of the country by putting his palms together.^{xiii} After the Synod of Diamper, Christians had their own Panikkars or military instructors. Most of the Christian settlements had their own kalaris run mostly by Christian panikkars and in places where there was no Christian kalari they had to join the kalaris run by Nairs. Gouvea says that some Christian Panikars had eight to nine thousand disciples, both Christians and Nairs, getting trained as fighting force for the local rulers.

Christians and Nayars, upper caste in the Hindu society were treated equal in the society. Nayars also served as soldiers in the king's army. Gasper Correia says that “as the respectable men of the society were called Nayars, the Christians were also called Nayars”. According to Gundert, Nayar means soldiers of all castes, and Travancore, Cannanore, Calicut and Cochin are said to have 350,000 Nayars.^{xiv} Christians were also called Nayars in the meaning of soldiers and even now there are Christians bearing the surname Pannikkar.

Ayudhapurra (house of arms) in churches – a remnant of military heritage

The St. Thomas Christians used to go to their churches along with their swords, shields and lances in their hands, as Antonio de Gouvea mentions in *Jornada*. Eventually weapon houses (Ayudhapurakal) were constructed in front of the churches for the purpose of keeping of swords, guns and lances during the time of church service, whose remnants are now visible in

front of the churches of Ramapuram, Pala and Cherpunkal. When they entered the church, they deposited all their arms in Ayudhapura. The Portuguese missionaries were surprised at this; and one of them says that he was astonished that no sooner than the services were over, all these different weapons disappeared, none of them missing its owner; such was the discipline and order which were part of their life.

During Portuguese period

When the Portuguese came to Kerala there were many Christians who were the best soldiers of the time. They had a spirit of independence and self-reliance, besides a kind of autonomy under the petty Rajas of Kerala. The importance and the power of a native prince were in direct proportion to the number of his Christian soldiers whose military power and loyalty were highly valued. According to Mores the Christians were the finest soldiers in the whole Malabar, being the very best shots, and so were matchless in the chase. They were reputed to be dour in the face of the enemy.^{xv} They were fine guns man and so well trained in shooting and they rarely missed the aim. Br. Leopold says that the Christians were not permanent soldiers in the army but whenever there was a war they fought as mercenaries.^{xvi} In order to guard their factories and forts and to carry on the incessant wars the Portuguese recruited many Christians whose courage and valour they greatly admired. During the war between Zamorin and Raja of Kochi in 1503 the Christian soldiers of Raja of Cochin numbered 700 of them fought for him valiantly at Vaypeen.^{xvii}

The rulers of Vadakkenkur and Cochin banked very much upon the Christian fighting force for their wars of defence and expansion. In 1546 the king of Vadakkenkur offered the Portuguese about 2000 soldiers for the purpose of helping them to lift the Ottoman siege on Diu. Later in 1600 the king of Cochin also offered St. Thomas Christian soldiers to the Portuguese for the project of conquering Ceylon, though the project was not materialized for other reasons.

St. Thomas Christians even had Chaverpada (suicidal squad). It is recorded that about 2000 Christian soldiers organized themselves into an *amouchi* or suicidal squad to prevent the Portuguese from arresting their bishop Mar Joseph in 1550s. *Amouchi* were the people mostly non-Christians who under take in virtue of an oath to defend against injury, persons or places entrusted to them even with their own life. Every church keeps its own *ammouchi*.

Native Christians also served in overseas for Portuguese. According to *Ethiopia Oriental*, in the Portuguese campaign of Goa, on 16th February 1510 there were two hundred native

Christian soldiers in the Portuguese army. *Lendas Da India* states that there were seven hundred native Christian soldiers in Portuguese army in the war at Ormuz in 1515.^{xviii} In 1516 Lopez Soares, the Portuguese Governor of Cochin sent an army to Eden against the Sultan in which there were 800 native Christians and a captain named Diago Pereira.^{xix} In 1518 two hundred native Christians with their captain had fought in the Portuguese campaign of Colombo.^{xx} In 1530 during the time of Nuno De Cunha as the Viceroy the Portuguese army which comprised 800 Christian soldiers armed with swords, spears, bow and arrows went to Goa and other places. After the Synod of Diamper, Archbishop Menezes on his return to Goa in 1599 took two Christian captains and their army with him. On reaching Goa they were given two ships and in a battle at Kunhale (Kottakkal) they fought very bravely. They fought in the front line of the army flying the flag of their Patron Saint.^{xxi}

During the Dutch Period

The Portuguese had finally made their exit after their colonial domination of nearly 150 years, after the fall of Portuguese fort in Cochin into the hands of the Dutch in 1663. The Christian militia continued during the time of Dutch. According to Baldeus, when the Dutch conquered the Cranganore fort on 15th February 1662, around 200 Christian soldiers were killed. These Christians were recruited to protect the fort by the Portuguese. Fr Paulinus states that the Christians of Verapoly in 1794 were obliged to wear arms and fight for the Dutch governor whenever he wanted and this was in accordance with a promise made by their parish priest. During the time of Dutch rule the Christians in the area of Cochin were called Lascorins. It has been used in the sense “Native Army”.^{xxii} During the time of Portuguese and the Dutch, Christians of Kerala played a decisive role in the military services of their army.

Christians were appointed to the post of trust and honour both in military and civil administration because of the meritorious and loyal services rendered by them, and were rewarded with tax free lands and high titles. However, later when all the smaller principalities of central Kerala were amalgamated into Travancorean state during the period between 1742 and 1752 and with the creation of a standing army under Marthanda Varma, the importance of Christians as a fighting force for the regional political players declined considerably. Political and Military power was centralized in Trivandrum in southern part of Kerala, where the St Thomas Christians had neither strength nor influence. They were confined to central and north Travancore and to the Cochin state. The Syrians had lost much in power and influence with the disbanding of their soldiers, disappearance of their patrons and the discard of their privileges.

With the coming of British the administrative system changed. The system of mercenary service was put an end. The carrying of arms in public was prohibited. However, Christians continued to carry a pen knife always. The old weapons were kept as heirlooms in several families until recently.

The period between ninth and eighteenth centuries witnessed the increasing involvement of the Christians into the political, social and cultural processes of the region, engaging themselves in military jobs while majority of them were traders and agriculturists. A native prince was respected or feared by his neighbours, according to the number of Christian soldiers in his dominions. In spite of their warlike appearance, their disposition was very peaceable, and murders were rarely heard of among them. They had a high social status as well as the honour of being described as truthful and responsible citizens of the country.

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Aranmula Chronicles: Unraveling the Enduring Heritage

Aranmula represents the apex of Kerala's heritage. Located in South Central Kerala, it is in a region where the agrarian culture continues to exist. With a highly sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyle, a culture evolved here through generations. The UNESCO has declared Aranmula as a global heritage village.^{xxiii} It has also been included in the Cultural Tourism Programme, a joint initiative of the Union Ministry of Tourism and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was one among the 32 Brahmin settlements of Kerala. Aranmula Sree Partha Sarathy Temple is one of India's most venerated 108 Vaishnava Temples. The famous Aranmula Kannadi, the metal mirrors are made in this village by the traditional artisans. The British Museum in London has a 45cm tall Aranmula metal mirror in its collection. The Aranmula Boat Festival is connected with the annual Onam festival in Kerala. Several important freedom fighters, social reformers, and literary persons lived in Aranmula.

Keywords: Aranmula, Chronicles, Heritage, Kerala

Introduction

Aranmula, nestled in the verdant landscapes of Kerala, emerges as a mosaic of cultural heritage, historical significance, and unique artisanal traditions. Situated in the midlands of Kerala, Aranmula's rich tapestry intertwines tales of ancient settlements, illustrious temples, distinctive art forms, and socio-cultural nuances that have endured through millennia.

Historical and Cultural Significance

Aranmula's history dates back to the Sangam Age, where it was known as part of the Marutam Tinai, highlighting its fertile lands and strategic location. The settlement gained prominence as one of Kerala's 32 Brahmin settlements, notable for its resilient Brahmin community who historically defended their homes. Legends intertwine with history at every turn, such as the mythological origins of the Aranmula Partha Sarathy Temple. According to local lore, Lord Krishna's idol, revered as Partha Sarathy, was brought here by Arjuna himself, symbolizing valor and devotion.

Aranmula Partha Sarathy Temple is a pinnacle of Vaishnava worship, counted among India's revered 108 Vaishnava temples. The temple's architecture, adorned with intricate murals and capped by distinctive towers, draws pilgrims and scholars alike. Its cultural importance extends beyond religious boundaries, with the temple precincts fostering traditional art forms and literary expressions like Vanchippattu and Sadyappattu.

One of Aranmula's most renowned artisanal marvels is the Aranmula Kannadi, a unique metal mirror. Crafted from a secret alloy of copper and tin, meticulously polished to achieve its distinctive reflection, this mirror is not just an object of beauty but a symbol of craftsmanship handed down through generations. Protected by a geographical indication tag, it holds a special

place in Kerala's cultural heritage and rituals, featured prominently in auspicious ceremonies like Vishukkani.

Unique festivals and artistic traditions punctuate Aranmula's vibrant cultural calendar. The Aranmula Boat Race, or Uthratthathi Boat Race, is a spectacle that blends sport with spirituality, celebrating the temple's anniversary with colorful snake boat pageantry. The festival also showcases traditional art forms like Padayani, Velakali, and Arjuna Nritham, each rooted in local mythology and historical narratives.

The Vijnana Kala Vedi of Aranmula was set up in 1977 by Ms. Louba Schild of France with assistance from UNESCO and the Governments of India and Kerala^{xxiv}. Vasthu Vidya Gurukulam is a state-run institution attached to the Cultural Affairs Ministry for promotion of traditional architecture and mural painting. The period from 12th century to 18th century may be evaluated as the golden age of mural paintings.^{xxv}

Aranmula Valla Sadya is an elaborate vegetarian meal with as many as 45 dishes. The Vallasadya is conducted on the Ashtamirohini day. Lord Krishna, is believed to come to take offerings from the people. The legend is that in Vallasadya all dishes asked for must be given to the people in order to please the lord. During the Colonial period, government issued Rs. Five Hundred for the smooth functioning of Aranmula Boat Race.^{xxvi}

Literary and Social Contributions

Beyond its temples and festivals, Aranmula has nurtured illustrious personalities who have shaped Kerala's social and literary landscapes. Freedom fighters like Barrister George Joseph, K. Kumar, T. Titus, Chittedathu Sankupillai, and social reformers such as Karumban Daivathan left indelible marks through their advocacy for social justice and educational reform. Their legacy resonates in the region's cultural ethos, embodying the spirit of resilience and progressivism.

Some important events related to Aranmula are the following:

Kozhencherry Speech of C. Kesavan

During the period of Nivarthana Agitation in 1932, the government prohibited the activities of Joint Political Congress. But ignoring the prohibition by Sir.C.P., C. Kesavan made a speech at Kozhencherry criticising the government and Diwan on May 13, 1935. He was arrested and was given 2 years imprisonment.

Pullad Riot

Pullad Riot of 1920's happened due to the attempts of some Dalit leaders like Ayyankali, Karumban Daivathan etc. to start education for the Dalits of Pullad.

Contemporary Scenario of Aranmula

The proposed Aranmula International Airport has sparked considerable debate and divided opinions in Kerala. Advocates of the project highlight its potential to fulfill the long-standing aspiration of millions in Pathanamthitta district, particularly those contributing significantly to the nation's economy through foreign remittances. They argue that the airport would facilitate easier travel for these individuals and potentially boost economic development in the region.

Moreover, the vision for the airport extends beyond aviation infrastructure. Plans include the establishment of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), a state-of-the-art multi-specialty hospital, a comprehensive shopping mall, a luxurious hotel, and an international school within the airport complex. These additions are seen as catalysts for creating jobs, attracting investments, and enhancing overall socio-economic growth in the area.

Proponents emphasize that the Aranmula International Airport project is not merely about aviation accessibility but also about creating a vibrant economic hub that could potentially transform the district's landscape and contribute significantly to Kerala's overall development trajectory.

However, amidst these aspirations, the project has encountered opposition from various quarters, raising concerns over environmental impact, displacement of local communities, and the overall sustainability of such extensive development plans. The airport's controversy underscores the delicate balance between economic progress and environmental conservation, prompting rigorous debates and calls for thorough assessments of its potential impacts.

The main arguments against the Aranmula airport are:

The indiscriminate reclamation of paddy fields and blocking of the tributary of Pampa River would endanger valuable plant species, fish and microorganisms.

- Such large-scale conversion of paddy fields would adversely affect the food chain and accelerate the depletion of fish resources and other flora and fauna in the Pampa River.
- Also, biodiversity loss and water shortage would be caused by the razing of hills nearby.
- The biggest concern for people would be the eviction of people.

Conclusion

Based on the study, several noteworthy observations can be made:

1. Aranmula exemplifies transforming from a theocratic feudal system to a capitalist economy, showcasing significant developmental shifts over time.
2. The study indicates a notable absence of caste-based segregation in occupational roles within Aranmula, suggesting a departure from traditional job-related casteism.
3. The agricultural sector in Aranmula has evidently diminished in significance, signaling a shift in economic priorities and activities within the community.
4. There is discernible evidence of an influx of foreign capital into Aranmula, highlighting its integration into global economic networks and potentially influencing local economic dynamics.

These conclusions underscore the dynamic socio-economic changes occurring within Aranmula, reflecting broader trends of modernization and globalization impacting traditional community structures and economic practices.

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