

**The Narrated, Disnarrated and Imagined: A Study of Popular Narratives
from *Keralakarshakan*, 1954-2020**

*A Thesis Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfilment for the
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In

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By

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Parts related to this thesis have been:

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Chapter I

Introduction: The Perennial Narrative of Agricultural Modernization and the Rise of Farm Journalism in Malayalam

*Keralakarshakan*¹ is a farm magazine published by the Farm Information Bureau which comes under the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, the Government of Kerala. The FIB was constituted on 1st January 1969 (Unnikrishnan 187). R. Heli was the first principal information officer of the FIB (188). *Keralakarshakan* was first published by the Travancore-Cochin state's Department of Agriculture. 12 annas were the annual subscription fees of this magazine then. In 1956, the Agriculture Information Service was formed under the Department of Agriculture which took up the responsibility of the publication of *Keralakarshakan*. The state of Kerala was formed on 1st November 1956. When the FIB was formed in 1969, it took up the responsibility of the publication of this magazine (189). In the initial days, the magazine had only 1500 subscribers. It became 35,000 in 1969. Presently, the magazine has more than 1,30,000 subscribers. In the beginning, *Keralakarshakan* was published as a magazine. Then it became fortnightly in 1970 (190). In 2004, it again became a magazine. The magazine provides information on agriculture, methods of agriculture, seasonal information on agriculture and all information related to agriculture (191). From its initial days, the content of the magazine has been written in simple Malayalam which can be comprehended even by the first generation literates of the farming community (192).

¹ There was another journal for farmers with the same title. This was a political journal published under the editorship of the famous peasant activist K. A. Keraleeyan. It was started in 1952 and stopped its publication in 1970. This was not a farm journal basically. It was a political journal that stood for the rights of the farmers and agricultural laborers. Anyway, its title was written as *Kerala Karshakan* (Kunhikrishnan 696).

The project of *Keralakarshakan* can also be viewed as part of an effort to modernize agriculture in Kerala. But this effort did not start with this particular magazine; nor will it end with this magazine. The call for modernizing agriculture can be found in different phases of history in different ways. Several royal inscriptions of the medieval period give hints about the plan to utilize the available agricultural land to its maximum use. In the modern times, it was in the nineteenth century that the state of Travancore started its efforts to maximize production and safeguard the interests of the peasants. The cultivation of tapioca was popularized during the period of 1880-85. More land was acquired for cultivation which included forest land and the land formed by filling up lakes. The first government department for agriculture was formed in 1908 (Sasibhushan 22). During this period, there were 31 lakh acres of agricultural land available in the state of Travancore and Cochin out of which only 25 lakh acres were used for cultivation. The priority of the state government was to make the remaining land available for cultivation (23).

The colonial rulers also tried to avail more land for cultivation. The British rulers started cultivating plantation crops in Kerala in the 1850's (Sugeetha 28). During the British rule, 50,000 acres of land in Kuttanad was made cultivable by constructing a dam under the leadership of an engineer called A. H. Basto. Another dam was constructed in Kothayar River which facilitated cultivation of 30,000 acres of land around its surroundings (Sasibhushan24). Making more land available for cultivation will not be a solution always as land is scarce and the maximum land that can be availed for cultivation has a limit. This will quite naturally lead the administrators to formulate new solutions to the food requirements of the people. Often, the solution is improving the efficiency of cultivation; maximizing the productivity of the land by

implementing new methods of cultivation and introducing new inputs which is what *Keralakarshakan* has been trying to popularize.

The British Government was not genuinely concerned about the development of agriculture in India and the food safety of the Indians; but one of their initiatives proved to be decisive for agricultural research and extension in India. That was the appointment of the Royal Commission on Agriculture to study the problems of agriculture in India. The Royal Commission published their recommendations in 1928. The establishment of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in 1929 was a direct result of the report of the Royal Commission. Even then, the condition of agricultural research and extension were pathetic until independence. In the backdrop of the Bengal Famine, a more productive agricultural economy became one of the first priorities of independent India. To achieve self-reliance in the production of food grains, several steps were taken during the period of 1947-60. This has led to more action in agricultural research and extension (Swaminathan 583). The appearance of farm journals should be seen in this scenario.

Keralakarshakan is the second oldest farm magazine in India (Heli, Personal Interview).² It is also the oldest among the farm journals published today in Kerala. The state is not reputed for its agricultural production though it has earned a reputation for its contribution to the export of spices and the production of cash crops like rubber and areca nut. The state still relies on the import of food grains to meet its food requirements. It is remarkable that a farm magazine is having a fair number of subscribers and has been publishing without fail for the past sixty eight

²*Indian Farming* published by Indian Council of Agricultural Research is the oldest farm magazine in India.

years.³ As of now, the magazine called *Keralakarshakan* has over one lakh thirty thousand subscribers. It is a good number considering the fact that the total population of this small state is just over three and half crores.

Kerala was a non-participant state in the agricultural revolution of the 1960's due to which, there was an exponential increase in the production of food grains. This revolution, officially termed as the Green Revolution, is viewed with respect by its supporters whereas the same has been contested fiercely by its detractors. The Green Revolution was the culmination of a modernization project in the field of agriculture. The nation and the states were moving in this line immediately after the independence. Kerala was no exception to this as the articles of *Keralakarshakan* in its initial days would illustrate. Modernizing the agriculture meant modernizing the farmer. For that, the government needed agricultural extension programmes. Farm magazines do the same function. Farm Magazines published by the governments may be viewed as an attempt by the government to reach the farmers using a mass media.⁴ In the initial days of independence, radio was a more popular medium and the radio broadcasts on agriculture should be studied separately. The farm journal discourse, especially *Keralakarshakan* and its content is the subject of study in this thesis.

The farm journals have been studied by researchers to see whether they are effective in disseminating information to the farmers. In the context of Kerala, Anil Kumar S. has studied

³ In the initial days, the publication of *Keralakarshakan* was not that regular. Some of the FIB staff told me that in those days, this magazine was printed at the government press. In those days, the amount of materials printed at the government press was so huge and sometimes it took two or more months to get it printed. As a result, the publication was also delayed. While going through the archives of *Keralakarshakan*, I could see that the Magazine became fortnightly and then it was published once in every three weeks at one point in time. Presently, it is published once every month.

⁴ It should be noted here that Kerala is not a state where a lot of farm journals are being published. Karnataka and Maharashtra have around forty and sixty farm journals published regularly. A list of farm journals published in Kerala is given in the first chapter.

about the farm journalism in Kerala. His study was done as part of his doctoral thesis which is titled as “A Study of Farm Journalism in Kerala”. In his study, he analyzes whether the farm journals have been effective in communicating relevant information to the farmers. More than studying them as mass media communication or a device for agricultural extension, no one in Malayalam has attempted a study on farm journals or their content in the light of literary or cultural theory. This study is an attempt at that.

When agricultural officials, termed as ‘professional intellectuals’ in this study, communicate with ordinary farmers, their communication takes certain forms. The present study observes that the farm journalists ended up creating different narratives. Accordingly, there is a narrative on successful real life farmers. There is another narrative on new seeds that are better than the traditional varieties. Another narrative could be the one on the enemies of the crops. Thus, a number of narratives could be found in *Keralakarshakan*. In this thesis, the content of *Keralakarshakan* has been viewed as narratives of different types and analyzed. Though the conclusions of this study, however humble they are, may be applicable to the other farm journals in Malayalam; the present study is limited to *Keralakarshakan* alone. The analysis of these narratives leads to the conclusion that these individual narratives end up creating one larger narrative which has been named as the “peasant hero fighting the pest villain to save the crop queen.”

The present research has three objectives. The first objective is to study the articles of *Keralakarshakan* using literary and cultural theories, especially narrative theory. It has become quite common for literature students to study other forms of media like movie and newspapers. But farm journalism has not been taken seriously by students of literature in India and Kerala. Those who did research about farm journalism in India and especially in Kerala were not from

literature backgrounds and their concerns were different. It was never their concern to read farm journals the way a student of literature would do it. Another objective of the study is to theorize the aspect of imagination which is a prominent feature of farm journalism but often not recognized in the first reading of the articles. The third objective of the research is to understand and theorize the intellectual formation and intellectual exchanges in the field of agriculture. A lot of intellectual activities are happening in the field of agricultural research and extension; both in the governmental and in the private sector. Everything cannot be combined in a single research. The present research tries to understand the politics behind the exchanges between the government officials and farmers.

The farm journalists writing in *Keralakarshakan* are basically government officials working in the Farm Information Bureau. The stated aim of this magazine is to provide information to the farmers. Their vision is basically that of the ruling government more or less. Though not stated, they also aim to familiarize the governmental policies and programmes to the farmers. In order to do that, they need to communicate with the farmers. They are part of a larger system which includes all the government officials who communicate with the farmers and demand them to act the way the government wants them to. The case of the private farm journals is different in this respect. That is why those journals have not been included in the present study.

As said above, there is a larger mechanism that acts as the spokespersons of the government and speaks to the farmers. The farm journalists are part of it. Without studying this larger machinery, one cannot understand the farm journalists completely. For that purpose, I had to do a field work and talk to the farmers and government officials. The details of it have been included in the last chapter of this thesis where it can be seen if viewed from a Gramscian view

point that the farmers have what is called as ‘common sense’ and the farm journalists have the support of different systems of philosophy. These two encounter when the officials talk to the farmers or vice versa. In a larger sense, one can see the folk knowledge encountering with what is called as the modern science. So the study is also about the politics of knowledge and in one sense, the study is relevant as it addresses this question.

From the above paragraphs, I hope the relevance of the study is evident. The study is relevant in two ways. First of all, it throws light on the communication process between the government and the farmers by way of a farm journal and understands its dynamics. In the history of Kerala, the knowledge of farming has been central in many ways. The ancient and medieval Kerala had different crops and cultivation methods. The land relations were also different. The Europeans especially the British people changed all these again. Many changes happened after independence also. We know that there is a text titled *Krshi Gita* of unknown authorship written in old Malayalam. The said text gives useful information about cultivation. The intention of the author of this work must be to preserve knowledge for future generations. But the intention of *Keralakarshakan* is not to preserve knowledge; instead its aim is circulation of knowledge and propaganda. When a researcher deals with this text, s/ he should keep in mind the fact that s/ he is dealing not with dead information, but with a text that has the potential to urge the farmers into action. It has to be made clear in this context that industrialization of agriculture was the state’s agenda after its formation. Recently, it has become more pro-organic in the last decade. *Keralakarshakan* reflects this politics. Thus the study of it is relevant in understanding the changing political visions.

Another important dimension of the study is that it also tries to understand the nuances of agricultural extension. Farm journals run by governmental institutions can be viewed as part of

agricultural extension. The present study is relevant since it tries to understand and theorize government's agricultural extension strategies through a written media. The last chapter of the thesis asks some pertinent questions regarding this and comes up with a conclusion. The same chapter also tries to theorize the intellectual formation and exchanges in the field of agriculture.

I had a few questions in my mind while carrying out the research. The first question was related to the aspect of imagination. How does imagination become a prominent feature of the farm journals? What are the aspects of this imagination? These were two questions I had in my mind. I tried to answer them in the first chapter. The second question was related to the narrative structure of the articles of farm journals. What are the different narrative structures commonly found in the articles of *Keralakarshakan* and what do they mean to the farmers? These were some pertinent questions I had in my mind and I have tried to answer them in the fourth chapter. Another question I had in my mind was regarding farm journalists. As a category of intellectuals, how can we place the farm journalist in the spectrum of intellectuals who do research and propagate their theories on agriculture? This was my question about farm journalists. One more important question I had in my mind was about farmers. Are farmers passive receivers of knowledge provided by the government? How do they interact/ react with agricultural officers and other governmental officials? These were my questions regarding the farmers. The last chapter of the thesis deals with all these questions. A bit more can be elaborated on the content of each of these chapters.

The second chapter of the thesis begins with a story from an old issue of *Keralakarshakan*. The story illustrates why farmers should read agricultural journals, especially *Keralakarshakan*. Farm journalism cannot exist without imagining a section of farmers who love to read. These bookish farmers could be the target readers of the journals. The chapter briefly

examines the context in which farm journals evolved in America and Europe. The concept of farm journals was a result of the efforts to bridge the gap between the agricultural scientists and the practicing farmers. The thesis then analyzes the connection between imagination and narration through concrete examples from *Keralakarshakan*. The write-ups of *Keralakarshakan* always narrated the limitations of the present system of agriculture and then moved on to imagine a better way of farming. “From-narration-to-imagination” has been a common pattern found in the articles of *Keralakarshakan*. The first chapter tries to analyze the aspects of this “imagination.” At the same time, it also tries to give some information about the major farm journals in Malayalam including *Keralakarshakan*.

The major difference between the representation of farmers and related aspects in the farm journals and the same in the popular and literary expressions is summarized in four points. Those tendencies are: the absence of a nostalgic feeling for farming; the tendency to repeatedly criticize the traditional way of farming in the earlier days of the magazine; the tendency to look into the future more than looking back to the past; and the tendency to imagine an ideal farmer.

Each of these aspects has been elaborated in the analysis that follows. Through concrete examples from the archives of *Keralakarshakan*, I have argued that the journalists of *Keralakarshakan* were giving their primary focus on the efficacy of production. For example, when coconut farming is discussed, what a writer would talk about is the productivity of the coconut trees in Kerala and it may be posited against the same in another state; for example, Tamil Nadu. The writer may then move on to argue that the farmers of Kerala should learn from the same in Tamil Nadu as their productivity is better. Thus, the focus on productivity makes the writers and their write-ups devoid of any kind of nostalgia for the farmers and farming in Kerala.

Otherwise, coconut cultivation, which is intimately connected to the lives of the Keralites will not be described merely in terms of its productivity.

Citing concrete examples, the other points are also explained in the chapter. For example, in the early decades, *Keralakarshakan* used to present a lot of write ups on new rice varieties developed by the scientists. Certainly, the writers in those times presented them as better than the traditional varieties. There was no sympathy for the traditional varieties. Examples are cited from articles that illustrated what the farmers lack then and how they can improve it in future. This is nothing but imagining a new farmer; an ideal farmer. Since imagination is always about the future, the writers are more future oriented than looking back to the past. The rest of the chapter gives information on the other farm journals in Malayalam. These details show how each of them had different scheme of imagination and how imagination was a common thread between all of them. The details of other farm journals are given with a view to show that farm journals in Malayalam share some common traits.

Later in the thesis, I have argued that this is due to narrative conventions. Otherwise, each of these journals should be different from others. All the private journals should be different from *Keralakarshakan* which is a Government of Kerala's publication. What has been tried in this thesis is to find out the narrative conventions and elements that determine the nature of the write ups in *Keralakarshakan* specifically and in all other journals in general. The chapter concludes by pointing out the connections between imagination and narration.

The third chapter describes how narrative theory can be used in the study of farm journals- especially in the write ups of one farm journal which is the subject of study here namely *Keralakarshakan*. At the onset of the chapter, the term 'narrative' has been defined.

Here, the repetitive nature of certain individual narratives is stressed. Though individual narratives can also be studied on their own merit, the thesis is more interested in studying different types of recurring narratives that has a similar theme and structure. As per the definition given above, their meaning/ message will also be same/ similar. This can be seen in the analysis of the narratives given in the third chapter. In the third chapter, a number of such recurring narratives are identified thematically and their narrative structure explored. Here, in the thesis, the second chapter doesn't try to give a detailed description of all the theories of narratology; it just tries to discuss the theories of three major theorists. These theorists' views can be a point of departure.

The first theorist whose ideas are considered in the second chapter is Aristotle. His views as encapsulated in *Poetics* are discussed in this chapter. Aristotle's comments on tragedy give the readers some ideas about his views on literature in general. Aristotle has made observations on such aspects as plot,⁵ point-of-view,⁶ narrative conventions, etc. Aristotle defined plot as the "arrangement of incidents" and he views character as the embodiment of certain qualities or virtues (Aristotle 24). Aristotle also talks about the two types of first person narration and also narration in the third person (13). Based on Aristotle's comments on tragedy, an attempt is made to draw a parallel between tragedy and the present day's successful farmer narratives.

Aristotle says that great writers write only about the "noble actions" of good men whereas the ordinary writers may write about the actions of ordinary people. Accordingly, tragedy fits into Aristotle's definition of good art as it depicts the lives of the kings and other

⁵ Aristotle makes detailed comments on plot. According to him, plot is the first and most important part of a tragedy. A good part of *Poetics* is spent on describing the qualities of a good plot.

⁶ Aristotle says that "...the poet may imitate by narration in which case he can either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged- or he may present all his characters as living and moving before us (Butcher 13)." Here Aristotle talks about the first person and third person narration.

such men of noble birth in those days. Aristotle brings out a criterion according to which some themes are acceptable and other themes are unacceptable. The same happens with the farm journals when they follow a convention according to which the successful farmers' story is appropriate to be mentioned in the articles whereas it is a taboo to talk about farmers who fail or commit suicide. Thus, the narration, in the farm journals actively involves a selection and elision of themes. The elision part is called as 'disnarration;' the theory of which is mentioned in the last part of the chapter. 'Disnarrate' does not just mean 'to not to narrate' or 'leave out' in which case, the word 'unnarrate' would be enough to indicate the phenomenon. The word 'Disnarration' means that even when something is left out of narration, its presence is made to be felt. This has been explained in the chapter.

The next scholar whose theories are discussed in the chapter is Vladimir Propp. He studied the Russian folk tales by breaking them down and finding their basic units. His concepts of 'theme' and 'motif' are discussed in the chapter. The chapter also analyzes what he meant by 'morphology.' The term 'morphology' is used by linguists and biologists. Basically, Propp wants to lay more emphasis on the structure or form of the folk tales as the linguists do. In Biology as in the case of Linguistics, the term 'morphology' refers to the study of the structure of living beings. Propp also wants to study the folk tales with scientific precision. That is why he borrows from Biology.

Propp wants to understand the 'tale' by studying its structure (13). He wanted to put folk tales of similar structure into different categories. From among these categories, similar categories can be again put under larger categories. Propp was a structuralist and formalist. He opposed the study of folk tales by placing them against their historic context. As a structuralist and formalist, he wanted to study the folk tales like a language. His category of 'functions' is

discussed next in this section. Gerard Genette is the next scholar whose theories have been discussed. The basic narratological terms such as voice, mood, etc. are discussed in this section taking information from his book titled *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. The chapter ends by discussing about disnarration.

The fourth chapter is titled as “The peasant-hero fighting the pest-villains to save the crop queen: an analysis of some of the popular narratives from *Keralakarshakan*, 1954-2020.” The content of *Keralakarshakan* is analyzed by classifying them into two sections in this chapter. The first section is about what is called as the ‘liminal devices’ and this involves the analysis of the cover page and the editorial. By analyzing the major trends of each decade from the 1950’s, the chapter observes that the tendency to give close up images on the cover page is a reflection of the scientific sensibility that attempts to observe the objects of study very closely. The analysis also comes to the conclusion that there is a trend of providing romantic images as far as the cover pages of *Keralakarshakan* are concerned which is uncharacteristic of this magazine. This has been associated with the construction of a ‘Keralakarshakan’ or ‘Kerala farmer.’

Editorials of *Keralakarshakan* have been analyzed next. The analysis stresses on the didactical nature of the editorials. Using the narratological concepts of the ‘implied author’ and ‘implied reader,’ the nature of the editorials is analyzed. The writers of the editorial board are from a science background and they are government officials. The parameters for the writers of the editorials are already set at a governmental level. The target audience is farmers. The writer is termed as the ‘implied author’ due to the fact that it is not the writers as individuals who speak through the editorials. An image of the speaker of the editorials is implied through experience and conventions. Similarly, an image of the reader is also there which is termed as the ‘implied reader.’ It is this reader who is getting suggestions from the implied author. The curious thing

about the implied reader is that the implied reader may not be actual farmers with flesh and blood; instead, they may be a prototype assumed by the implied author.

Citing examples, it has been observed that the editorial board gave contrasting advices in different points in time. For example, in the early decades of *Keralakarshakan*- this means the 1950's and early 60's- when chemical fertilizers were not available, the editorials argued for the use of locally available manure. Then there was the call for chemical fertilizers when this was the trend in the late sixties and seventies. The recent trend is that of organic farming.⁷ Irrespective of the existing trend, the editorials spoke with authority over the subject matter.

The chapter then moves on to analyze the specific narratives from *Keralakarshakan*. By analyzing concrete examples from the magazine, the chapter reaches the conclusion that the articles of this magazine have been popularizing a larger narrative. This larger narrative can be viewed as a heroic narrative. The different steps of this narrative and the agents involved are listed then. Accordingly, the eight stages of this narrative are 1) the farmer starts his/ her mission; 2) the farmer gets help from a helper; 3) the crisis; 4) the solution; 5) the innovation; 6) the farmer establishes himself/ herself; 7) the farmer gets recognition; 8) his/ her legacy is preserved. The narrative of the successful farmer closely adheres to these steps. All other narratives are also related to some of these basic narrative events.⁸ It does not mean that all the stories should necessarily go through each and every step mentioned in this standard model. It only means that this model can explain almost all farmer hero narratives found in *Keralakarshakan*.

⁷ This is because the government of Kerala encourages and popularizes organic farming a lot.

⁸ This analysis and the conclusion are clearly inspired by Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

The agents found in the farmer hero narrative are listed out then. These agents can be seen in many other narratives as well. But they do the same function as in the case of the farmer hero narratives. This is why the farmer hero narrative is seen as the most fundamental narrative in *Keralakarshakan*. The most important agents are 1) the hero- who is undoubtedly the farmer; 2) the villain- the pests, weeds, etc. This includes single cell organisms to elephants; 3) the queen- crops, plants, trees, etc; 4) the helper; 5) magical agents; 6) universal panacea.

The chapter then analyzes a few narratives about different crops and explains how the crops have been portrayed in similar terms as queens in heroic narratives. It is also observed that the detailed description of crops and the way they are cultivated closely resemble the description of the heroine in myths, popular culture and literature. The chapter then moves on to study the discourse on villains. The chapter observes that research on pests and proper use of camera has helped to portray the agents called as villains with unique attributes. The introduction of the villain gives a much glossier image to the hero. Another aspect of the villain's image is that the villains are so many and they have really different and unique attributes. These attributes create an awe-inspiring image of the villains. The farmer hero may even look helpless due to this. This has necessitated the introduction of the magical elements which also belongs to the category of the agents.

The conclusion of the chapter summarizes the arguments of the chapters. *Keralakarshakan* started with a view to popularize scientific knowledge. For that the writers had to communicate effectively. The "how to say" aspect of writing mattered just as the "what to say" aspect. The writers of this journal worked tirelessly and with a great amount of commitment to effectively transmit their knowledge. They created discourses on many aspects related to agriculture; like the discourse on crops; the discourse on pests; the discourse on seasonal work;

etc. Each discourse developed its own unique way of narration and different narrative types were formed. What is curious about *Keralakarshakan* is that these individual narratives can be connected to a larger narrative in which there is a peasant hero fighting with the pest villains to save the crop queen. Now, as is suggested by folklorists, historians, and psychologists; this narrative has its roots in the folk tradition and it is still fresh in the collective unconscious of the folk culture. Thus, even when the farm journals have been preaching to the farmers to substitute their folk tradition and adopt new agricultural techniques, the same writers were adopting folk elements in their narratives. This is the dynamics that determine the overall meaning of the farm journals' narratives.

This dynamics is studied in more detail in the fifth and last chapter. In this chapter, the writers and readers of *Keralakarshakan* and their respective classes are studied. Accordingly, the writers are termed as professional intellectuals. The readers which mean the farmers are also intellectuals in the sense that agricultural work does include some intellectual activities. But the farmers are not professional intellectuals. Most of the writers of *Keralakarshakan* are government servants. Most of them have been involved in some kind of agricultural extension work at some point or other in their official career.

Here, I have observed that the entire class of professional intellectuals including the agricultural officers and farm journalists; have a hybrid nature. They speak in the capacity of the scientific knowledge they possess. At the same time, they have to speak to the farmers in their language. They have to speak in a way that the farmers completely comprehend what they are saying. For that, they have to modify their language. They also adopt elements from the folk culture in order to make their communication more efficient. These intellectuals are straddling between the scientific and folk traditions. It is this hybrid nature that forced them to borrow

elements from the folk culture which determined the overall structure of the articles in *Keralakarshakan*.

The analysis helps to understand the different layers of intellectual activity involved in and about agriculture in modern times. At one end, there are the farmers who have the collective intellectual tradition known as the folk tradition. They know what is known as the traditional knowledge about agriculture. They also derive knowledge from their practical engagement with agriculture. They are encountered by the professional intellectuals like the agricultural officers and farm journalists. They come from a science background with little experience in farming. Since they encounter the farmers directly or indirectly, they assimilate elements of the folk tradition. This may be one reason why the articles of *Keralakarshakan* have the structure of a heroic narrative as the folk tradition has many stories and myths in this pattern. Thus, in this thesis, I have argued that the communication in *Keralakarshakan* is not entirely one-sided. In fact, it is largely two sided.

Another category of intellectuals discussed in the chapter is called as philosophers. This includes those thinkers who present a scheme of agriculture from their experience or research or both. They are different from the professional intellectuals in the sense that they are least hybrid in nature. They tend to defend their scheme of farming against other philosophers.

Analyzing the intellectual activities of the different levels, I have made the observation that the writers of *Keralakarshakan* are not just mechanically transmitting information from one end to the other. They also assimilate elements from the farmers and the structure of the narratives in *Keralakarshakanis* largely influenced by the readers. On the other hand, the farmers do not passively receive the communication made by the professional intellectuals. In fact, they

modify the information they receive to suit their needs. This has been argued with the help of the experience from my field work.

The conclusion points out the limitations of the work as well as the future scope of research in the same area. The thesis has been an attempt to read *Keralakarshakan* from a narrative angle and understand the dynamics of the relationship between its writers and readers. These were the two major objectives of the research. I have attempted to answer a number of questions in this thesis regarding the basic narrative elements and the narrative structure of the articles of *Keralakarshakan*. The sociological dimension of the relationship between the writers and readers was another question that was addressed in the thesis. In a larger sense, this thesis is an attempt to understand why the farm journals- especially *Keralakarshakan*- are very popular among the farmers.

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Chapter II

Imagined Agricultural Communities: Farm Journals in Malayalam and the Narrative of the New Seeds, New Breeds and New Needs.

Raman and Soman were neighbors. Raman was rich and Soman was poor. One day Soman saw a journal titled *Keralakarshakan*. He found an article about Cocoa farming in it. Taking inspiration from this, Soman bought some Cocoa plants from the nearest Cardamom Development Centre.⁹ He took care of the Cocoa plants as if they were his own kids. From the third year onwards, Soman started getting good yield and his income increased steadily. He became a rich farmer. He purchased more land where he planted Cocoa and many other crops. He became a role model for everyone in the village but he gave the credit of his success to *Keralakarshakan*. He would say that, had he not come across this magazine, he would still be the poor old farmer! Soman became a regular subscriber of *Keralakarshakan* and he advised his friends to give subscription to it. Raman got jealous of him and asked his servants to plant Cocoa plants on his land. They planted Cocoa plants but these were not properly taken care of. As a result, his Cocoa cultivation perished. The moral of the story is that the hardworking farmers' yield will be multiplied whereas the poor farmers' investment will be ruined due to the lack of knowledge and commitment (Nayar 13).

The above story titled as 'Somante Katha' (The story of Soman) is taken from an old issue of *Keralakarshakan*- the oldest and most prominent farm journal in Malayalam- published by the Farm Information Bureau,¹⁰ an undertaking of the Department of Agriculture

⁹ Cardamom Development Centre has later become the Spices board and the Spices board has their journal titled Spice India.

¹⁰ Farm Information Bureau (FIB) is a governmental institution responsible for agricultural extension and developmental activities in Kerala. It was established in 1969. It is under the Department of Agriculture, Animal

Development and Farmers Welfare, Government of Kerala. The moral of the story is very clear. Farmers should read books, especially *Keralakarshakan*. The writer uses this imaginary story to illustrate that farming will bring success if done properly and with a certain amount of commitment. On the other hand, it will fail if done carelessly. By reading between and beyond the lines, one would find a number of messages in this story. One of them is that the success or failure of farming depends on the individual qualities of the farmer such as his hard work and commitment; the sociological and political developments in the country have less influence on it. Another message is that the farmer has to subscribe to the farm journals such as *Keralakarshakan* to be a good farmer. He can get “scientific” knowledge from these journals; which is essential in modern day farming. A third message could be that the farmer should try new crops like Cocoa and innovative agricultural techniques. Yet another message could be that there are good farmers and bad farmers! Even though very small in size, this story brings to our notice a number of subjects that the farm journals in Malayalam have been regularly taking up in their write ups.

Farm journals became a popular media in India after independence. A paradigm shift was taking place in the country and all over the globe. This paradigm shift in agriculture is popularly known as the ‘modernization of agriculture’ which saw its culmination in the Green Revolution. It is not surprising that *Keralakarshakan*, the first farm journal in Malayalam became the most popular voice of that paradigm shift in Kerala. The new model of farming propagated by the Green Revolution is often called as the “scientific” farming. One major problem the government of India faced after gaining independence was the low yields and shortage of food grains. Legislations were made in the sixties and seventies regarding the land ceiling in order to reduce

Husbandry and Dairy Development. It should be stated that *Keralakarshakan*, the first farm journal in Kerala started fifteen years before FIB was established.

the concentration of land in a few hands. These changes did not yield the expected results. The government then started looking for alternative strategies. The solution thus found was the “technological break throughs.” “Thus the modernization and development of agriculture on capitalist lines were now aimed through technological changes while the institutional structures remained by and large pre-capitalist (Rao 1).”

The stated aim of the farm journals has been to disseminate “scientific” information related to agriculture. This endeavor naturally initiated a lot of intellectual activity related to farming and the farmer. This chapter analyzes the nature of this intellectual activity; its outcomes – intended as well as unintended; and the broader trends that determined the nature of this intellectual activity. It also analyzes the underlying vision of the journals about the farmers, crops and the farming techniques- both “traditional” and “new.” It has been argued in this chapter that imagination played an important role in the act of refashioning the farmer and farming which is a regular theme the farm journals have been dealing with. This led to the construction of what has been called in this chapter an “imagined agricultural community.” It is observed in this chapter that the needs of a newly formed nation state and the belief in science as a universal panacea for solving the problems of agriculture have contributed immensely to this imagination. Before coming to these points, an overview of the evolution of farm journals is given, taking some examples from the American context which was one of the first countries to publish farm journals.

2.1 Farm Journals: a historical preview with America as a special case

Enquiries of such a nature cannot but be interesting and important, both to the theoretical agriculturist, and to the practical farmer. To the first, they are

necessary in supplying most of the fundamental principles on which the theory of the art depends. To the second, they are useful in affording simple and easy experiments for directing his labors, and for enabling him to pursue a certain and systematic plan of improvement. (Davy 4)

The above passage taken from Humphry Davy's *Elements of Agricultural Chemistry*, which is a mile stone in the history of that discipline, presents the view of the science community in the nineteenth century regarding the progress made by science. It also stresses on the need for making these scientific developments available to the ordinary farmers. Here, the writer argues that scientific developments in the field of agricultural research are of great importance to the theorists as well as the “practical farmer” alike. For the former, it provides a better theoretical outlook whereas; for the latter, it will be useful in the actual farming practice. The passage is significant since it exposes the polarization between the scientist (“theoretical agriculturist”) and the “practical farmer” which has been a long standing binary in this field. It is not surprising that the farm journals in Malayalam have been keeping this binary till day. Measures were taken in Europe and America in order to bridge this gap. Setting up of agricultural colleges and passing certain acts were some of the most obvious measures in the US. There, the acts like Morrill Act, Smith Lever Act, The Hatch Act and the decision to give financial aid to the Land-grant colleges were meant towards this end (Sumner 115). New forms of media like bulletin, films and radio broadcasts were used in order to popularize the major discoveries in the area of agricultural science (116). The emergence of farm journals and radio broadcasts were two of the most striking out comes of this new trend.

The agricultural journals and radio broadcasting in India and in Kerala developed in a similar manner. The Department of Agriculture in the United States broadcasted an hourly

program called *Farm and Home* (116). Surprisingly enough, the most popular agricultural program broadcast both in India and Kerala have the same title! In Malayalam, it is titled as *Vayalum Veedum* meaning “Farm and Home!” The major difference between the farm journals in the West and India is that; in the West, the farm journals emerged at a local level covering the local news and in India and Kerala, the farm journals have not been covering a great deal of local content! Since their initial days, they were published at the national level/ state level without much local content. Anyhow, farm journals, whether in India or in the West, were never meant for publishing the farmer’s knowledge gained through centuries of farming experience; instead they were meant for disseminating what is called as the “scientific” knowledge. The stated aim of the farm journals was the creation of “scientific” temperament among the farmers who can devote more time for gaining bookish knowledge.

In a much similar context, in the nineteenth century America, a commentator observes that the “educated” farmer will drive the “uneducated” and “unthinking” farmer away from the field (Cook 188). The same writer expresses his views more clearly in the following paragraph,

For many years the average farmer has been a man of few resources. His city brother has outwitted him in every department of his business. He has availed himself of no opportunity to secure a scientific education, and still worse, his county paper is the only periodical that ever enters his dwelling. As a result he is ignorant of the most vital laws that underlie farm husbandry in all of its branches and "farms it" in a general "go-as-you-please" style. These facts alone are sufficient to account for the farmer's general reputation as a man totally unfit for any other business. (187)

Before coming into concrete examples of this image of the farmer in the pages of *Keralakarshakan*, it has to be said that the policy makers at the national level did believe that the Indian farmers who follow the traditional methods of farming are inefficient. While commenting on a governmental programme called IAEP implemented in the Nagarjunasagar Left Canal Command Area in Nalgonda District, a commentator observes that, “While the so called lazy, unenterprising, and unresponsive cultivator has transformed himself into one of enterprising, progressive and responsive farmer in the canal area, he remained almost the same in the upland areas (Rao 6).”

Keralakarshakan shares a similar image of the farmer in its initial days of publication. This vernacular journal tried to “enlighten” the farmers by spreading the knowledge about the new developments in the field of agriculture. The target readers of these journals were definitely the farmers with flesh and blood. At the same time, the “ideal farmer” the farm journalists imagined were different from them. In a nut shell, imagination played a major role in the communication process of the farm journals. It was part and parcel of it. This imagination led to the creation of a specific mode of narrative. On the first part of this narrative, the image of a farmer following the “age-old” practices of cultivation was projected; the other part gives references of an ideal farmer. The following excerpts from old issues of *Keralakarshakan* will help understand this narrative better. The first example is taken from an article published in 1955-April month of *Keralakarshakan*. The author whose name is not given in the magazine explains in an article titled “Areca nut cultivation in Kerala,” how poor the farming practices of the farmers in Kerala are. He also gives suggestions to improve this. To quote from the article,

To acquire more land for cultivation is difficult. But the yield of the present areca nut trees can be improved by adopting scientific practices like applying more

fertilizer, proper tilling of the land, etc. Right now, the farmers in Travancore and Kochi do not till their estate from time to time. They also don't apply manure properly. They don't have any irrigation facility in summer. They are paying the price for all these. The profit these farmers make is quite meager. In other states where areca nut farmers do the cultivation scientifically with the proper application of fertilizers and irrigation facility get a higher yield. They get 400 nuts per tree where as in Kerala, it is only 150! The farmers in Mysore, and Southern and Northern Karnataka apply fertilizers properly. In Mysore, cow dung and green manure are used as fertilizers for areca nut trees. They create small beds around the areca nut trees and put the manure there. Some farmers also use oil cakes as manure. In southern Karnataka, farmers plough their estate two times a year. They use cow dung and green manure quite a lot. Good farmers use Ammonium Sulfate, bone meal and oil cakes as manure these days. It is heartening to know that farmers in the Ernadu Taluk of Malabar have started using ash and green manure recently. But still, in most parts of Kerala, the practice of applying fertilizers is yet to be started. Some farmers in the Travancore and Kochi regions even believe that using fertilizers in the areca nut estates is harmful for the areca nut trees. If areca nut cultivation has to be improved, the practice of applying fertilizers, tilling of land and introducing irrigation facility are all needed. (Unknown 4-5)

As the above passage indicates, the present methods followed by the farmers are not "scientific." The ideal farmer would be one who follows the "scientific" and "modern" methods in her/ his farming practices. The image of the ideal farmer is not portrayed concretely though it

is indicated through references; like the reference of the farmers of Southern Karnataka and Mysore. Anyway, the condition for the ideal farmer is laid out concretely in the sense that, for the farmers to be ideal farmers; they should follow the “modern” and scientific “practices.”

The editorial of March 1967 issue which is titled as “Valangaleppatti” urges the farmers to follow more recent trends in farming. It goes like,

If agriculture has to improve, new techniques have to be used. The harvest will not improve with the existing age-old machineries and traditional seeds. As time progresses, new machineries and methods gain currency. Agriculture improves with the help of these new developments. It is certain that agriculture would be stagnant without the help of these new developments.

Agricultural sector in India is fast growing with the latest techniques. The production has been doubled here within the last fifteen years. Chemical inputs, which were skeptically viewed by the farmers, have become very common today. The fact that we face shortage of chemical inputs is a proof of the progress we made in this field. We can be sure that enough chemical inputs will be available within a few years from now. (2)

The third example is taken from the January 16, 1983 issue of *Keralakarshakan*. This is from an article the title of which can be translated as “The Fundamentals of Pest Control and Some Useful Measures” written by P K Viswombharan. The article goes like,

Irrespective of the crop cultivated, the most universal complaint of the farmers is about the pest attack. What is the reason for the proliferation of the pests? It seems that the farmers do not care to think about that! All living beings have their

natural enemies in the nature. When there is population explosion, nature controls it through war, epidemics, earthquake, storm, etc. With the development in science, even this has changed. Anyway, this natural control is applicable to plants as well. Human intervention on nature causes changes in it. The increased pest attack on crops can be attributed to this.

Each living being has its own enemy in nature. If any of these enemies perish due to some reason, the others will proliferate. For example, the killing of rattle snake has caused the increase of rats tenfold. Due to the scarcity of food grains, farmers started cultivating throughout the year. As a result, the pests also started getting food throughout the year. (5)

The reasoning of the writer goes like this. The writer here overlooks the fact that chemical pesticides themselves have created new super pests and that science itself has brought destruction to nature. To quote Rachel Carson commenting on the same issue;

This has happened because insects, in a triumphant vindication of Darwin's principle of the survival of the fittest, have evolved super races immune to the particular insecticide used, hence a deadlier one has always to be developed- and then a deadlier one than that. (8)

But, as one can see, in the article, the entire blame is showered upon the farmers; and science is presented as the solution to all these problems. The farmers are shown as irrationally complaining about the complexities of farming. This example shows how some of the journalists went on to believe that farmers are irrational and that science is the only solution to the problems

of the farmers. This was the case with many of the writers of *Keralakarshakan* for the first three or four decades of that journal.

The imagination of *Keralakarshakan* manifested through its different narratives like- the narrative about more production; high yielding seeds; new chemical inputs; and later on, the importance of organic farming. The following is an evaluation of some of these narratives which will be helpful in knowing more about the farm journals in Malayalam and some of their discourses.

2.2 Narration as imagination

The stated aim of the farm journals is to disseminate “scientific” information to the farmers. There are a lot of research activities going on in the field of agricultural science. But the results of these researches do not reach the farmer in normal case. The farm journals propose to undertake the mission of taking knowledge from the “labs to the fields.” The construction of an imagined agricultural society is the most concrete outcome of this science communication. This imagination posits itself against all other popular representations of the farmer and farming in the mainstream media. Their three features expose the nature of this imagination more clearly than any other aspects. The absence of any kind of genuine nostalgia for the traditional way of farming and a ruthless attack on the same which is visible in the initial decades; a tendency to look into the future as opposed against the past; and the construction of an ideal farmer are the three qualities that make the farm journals unique when pitted against other popular media representations of the farmer and farming. Different farm journals had different ways of imagination according to their outlook and agenda. This will be clear from the following analysis of the different farm journals in Malayalam.

2.3 *Keralakarshakan* and the state-inspired imagination

Keralakarshakan is the farm journal published by the Farm Information Bureau, the governmental agency that links the science and farming communities. The journal is directly associated with the state level imagination about farming. The proposed aim of this journal is to link the science community and the farmers. Though propaganda and dissemination of farm information are its avowed aims, underlying them is a process of imagination. Look at the following passage as a sample,

Growing population demands growth in food production as well. Intensive agriculture is the only solution. Get more crops from the already available land. Convert single crop lands into double crop lands; and convert double crop lands into triple crop lands. The major enemies of this method are the insects. (Varghise 2)

The passage is taken from an old issue of *Keralakarshakan* published in 1975. Such articles are part of a larger discourse about what is lacking in the present and what is to be done for a better future. This narrative pattern is an integral part of the articles in *Keralakarshakan*. The passage reflects the general view among the science community about cultivation. And it was this view that had been predominant among the farm journals till the 2000s and *Keralakarshakan*, being the official voice of the State Government, still retains this to some extent.

Coming back to the same passage, the focus of the writer changes into how agriculture should be in future, an instance of how the narration becomes imagination. The tone of the narration is that what has been practiced traditionally is not enough. A change should happen.

The catalyst of that change can/ should be science. Here the view of the science community and the popular discourse about development coincides. The message of the above passage is very simple. The traditional farming methods cannot meet the needs of the growing population. The ultimate aim of agriculture should be the increase in production. The solutions were intensive agriculture of a single crop, getting more number of harvests from the same land, usage of chemical inputs, etc. The narrative doesn't forget to present some "villains" who can be a threat to the new model of agriculture. Here and in most cases, it is the insects that are presented as the "villains." The insects are farmers' "enemies" and the chemical inputs are their friends.

This had been a standard narrative or a prototype in *Keralakarshakan*. This narrative appears in many ways in the pages of *Keralakarshakan*. Also it is clear how this narrative goes in line with the Green Revolution's logic. But what is relevant here is that this imagination connects the farmer with the larger population. It makes it necessary for the farmer to be a part of the governmental programs. The farmer should no longer be someone limited to his/ her local context. He should produce for the larger community or the nation. Thus, making the local farmer global becomes an inevitable element of the state inspired imagination.

The first attempt at modernizing Indian agriculture was done on an experimental basis in 15 selected districts in 1961. The scheme was called Intensive Agricultural District Programme or IADP. Based on this model, a new policy on agriculture was framed which came to be known as Intensive Agricultural Areas Programme (IAAP) which was implemented from October 1965. The "New Strategy" came into existence in November 1965. It recommended a High Yielding Varieties Programme (HYVP). Though the new variety seeds of wheat, maize, bajra, and jowar seeds gave good results, the imported paddy seeds were not successful (Rao 2).

The thrust upon more production inevitably leads to intensive agriculture which was the goal of the Green Revolution. For this, the farmer needs to change. Any skepticism on the part of the farmer would be viewed as inertness by the proponents of this radical scheme. This line of thinking was dominant even in Kerala, a non-participant state in Green Revolution. So it is not surprising that the passage quoted above makes the observation that the farmers are tempted to return to the traditional mode of cultivation when they encounter insect attack. Though the writer is aware that increase in insect attack is a result of the system of monoculture, the remedy he suggests is the use of chemical pesticides more efficiently. The writer of the above mentioned article in *Keralakarshakan* does not hesitate to give a detailed list of those pesticides (Varghise2-3). The imagination of a new agricultural scheme thus traps the farmer in an endless loop.

It should be noted here that till the nineties, the word “enemy pests” (*shathrukeetangal* in Malayalam) was very common in these farm journals whereas the word “friendly pests” (*mithrakeetangal* in Malayalam) commonly known as “beneficial pests” was not seen. The reason is that the insects were always seen as the enemies of the plants and farmer. This view was changed later due to the continuous efforts of environmentalists. Rachel Carson’s name should be remembered in this context. She was one of the first scholars who foresaw the destructive after effects of insecticides. She calls them “biocides” as it may kill many insects other than the targeted ones. She also traces out the chronology of the pesticides. She says that more than two hundred basic chemicals had been created since the mid 1940’s. They became available to the farmers and laymen in different brand names (Carson 7).

Environmentalists like Carson saw the consequences very easily and they raised criticism. In the case of India, chemicals substances became very popular with the Green Revolution. This popularity and the frequent references to pests as enemies are coupled with

each other. The general trend in India was in favor of using chemical substances in farming; though there was criticism from the beginning. Slowly, observers saw the ill-effects of chemical farming and started raising objections. The farm journalists were sensitive to this and that is why there is more frequent references of “beneficial pests” from the nineties onwards. Around that time, the method of combined pest control became very popular and they were frequently mentioned in *Keralakarshakan*. It was accepted that there are friendly or beneficial pests as well. The farmer should handle them with discretion. Anyway, the chemical inputs were friends and insects were enemies in the imaginary ideal of *Keralakarshakan* up until the eighties.

The tone of advocating chemical fertilizers and pesticides changed considerably since the nineties. The editorial of *Keralakarshakan*, May 25, 1995, presents this issue in a peculiar way. It accepts that the chemical farming is hazardous to the environment. At the same time, it continues that they are essential for increasing the production. The editor’s suggestion is to follow environmentally friendly cropping systems. Hand in hand with that, the farmer has to use more chemical fertilizers to increase the productivity. (“Valaprayogam” 4). It has to be stated here that the view on chemical and organic inputs among the official circles underwent some serious changes by then.

Different governments from time to time emphasized the importance of improving the productivity. More inputs, mostly chemical, were the solution given on a permanent basis. *Keralakarshakan* follows this faithfully and does not hesitate to give information about the right chemicals in their articles. Giving information about a list of fertilizers is not just providing scientific information, it is also promoting them. The articles giving information about the chemical fertilizers and pesticides were endorsing the use of them in the same way the advertisements motivate a person to use a product.

The chemical fertilizer companies have been the most prominent source of advertisement for *Keralakarshakan* till the nineties. The style of these advertisements is also noteworthy. See appendix 1 which is an advertisement given in the back page of *Keralakarshakan* published in the month of February 1966.¹¹ The advertisement, despite being an advertisement, speaks the same language as the articles. The advertisement starts with a statement in extra bold letters that says that Kerala is the land of coconut trees. Most probably such sentences will have a touch of nostalgia if presented in a poem or a movie song. Indeed, there are many nostalgic poems and movie songs with such lines. Kerala has been portrayed and even stereotyped as the land of coconut trees in most of the media, both written and visual. The logo of Kerala tourism also has a coconut tree in it. Poems and movie songs evoke this nostalgic feeling connected with the coconut trees. But for the fertilizer company and its advertisement, what is more important is the poor productivity of the coconut trees in Kerala. Comparing the productivity of coconut trees in Kerala and Philippines, it says that the number of coconuts a farmer gets from a coconut tree in Kerala is 40 where as it is 200 in Philippines. This can be improved by applying fertilizers “scientifically”. This is what the advertisement says.

The productivity of the crops- coconut or others- has been one of the major concerns of the farm journals. The editorial of the *Keralakarshakan* February 10, 1999 addresses the same issue. It says that the productivity of coconut trees in Kerala is 5846 per hectare where as it is 11000 in Tamil Nadu. This is why coconut cultivation is more profitable in Tamil Nadu (“Uthpadanakshamatha” 2). The advice of the editor is to learn from the Tamil farmer. This ruthless pragmatism makes it impossible to have any nostalgia about the traditional way of

¹¹ The same advertisement used to appear almost regularly in *Keralakarshakan* in those days.

cultivation in Kerala where as a poem or movie song would have sung the glories of coconut cultivation in the state.

Countless articles can be found about coconut farming in *Keralakarshakan*. But most of them are about the drawbacks of the present pattern of coconut cultivation in Kerala. They speak about the enemies of coconut trees- mostly insects, the need to apply more fertilizers, and the new breeds of coconuts bereft of any nostalgic element. They don't show any genuine sympathy for the cultural sentiments associated with the coconut trees in the context of Kerala. The language of romanticism gives way to the language of pragmatism.

Same is the case with rice. The write ups on rice are mainly about giving proper care, using new rice varieties available, etc. They are less about the traditional rice cultivation patterns.¹² The following passage shows the change in the traditional view about paddy cultivation.

Today, the new rice seeds that are developed very recently are more productive. The reason is that they have more capacity to absorb Nitrogen. In the traditional varieties, the proportionate amount of Nitrogen used for the production of straw is more. The new varieties convert them to the crop. (Mani 3)

The descriptions of new rice varieties have been a very regular subject in *Keralakarshakan*. The popular perception is that the green revolution has not touched Kerala. This is true when one perceives Green Revolution just as the increase in the production of rice, wheat, pulses and other such crops. Green Revolution was not just a name for the increase in the production of certain crops; nor was it the radical changes in the field of agriculture alone. It was

¹² Even though a number of articles about the traditional rice farming systems like "Pokkali Krishi" can be seen in *Keralakarshakan*, they should be viewed more as exceptions.

also a change in the way agriculture has been perceived traditionally.¹³ The Green Revolution talked about new rice and wheat varieties that give more harvest since they produce more crops at the expense of straw. This logic of achieving more production through new varieties can be seen in *Keralakarshakan* throughout the decades. The logic of Green Revolution did touch Kerala. This logic was imbibed by the science community here without much resistance and it determined the nature of the imaginative process predominant in *Keralakarshakan*. In fact, it became part and parcel of that imagination. A few examples like the above one will be enough to throw more light on this.

One such example is taken from the November 1966 issue of *Keralakarshakan*. This issue has a small write up about a then developed new rice seed called thenan 3. The write up was written by R. T. Ravivarma, one of the doyens of farm journalism in Malayalam. The write up, though small, is eloquent about the success of this rice variety. It talks about a farmer who cultivated this variety on his field. Ravivarma, popularly known as Seeri, says that this rice variety gives three or four fold more produce than the desi varieties like *Kattalan* and *Thavalakkannan*, two desi rice varieties (Ravivarma 24).¹⁴

The fascination for such new varieties has been very evident in *Keralakarshakan* over the decades. It was more so during the sixties when the Green Revolution was taking its first steps. The Green Revolution might not have touched Kerala if we count it merely in terms of the increase in the production of food grains. But the Green Revolution was more than that. The disappearance of local varieties in the march of the hybrid varieties is an outcome of Green Revolution. It is not surprising that environmentalists and advocates of alternative farming have

¹³ For more information on this aspect of Green Revolution, see Vandana Shiva's *The Violence of Green Revolution*.

¹⁴ It should be mentioned here that Seeri's later articles, especially those in *Karshakasree*, another private farm magazine, were about the traditional varieties and their advantages.

started talking about the same *Kattalan* and *Thavalakkannan* after four or five decades. The focus here is not about whether the new varieties are better than the traditional, desi varieties or vice versa; the point here is the nature of the narrative in *Keralakarshakan*. The nostalgia for the traditional or desi gives way to the enthusiasm for the new varieties. Though the content is about an actual episode in the present, it can be taken as a first step towards an imagined future. The new seeds were seen as the seeds for the future. They were the seeds of imagination also.

One can find many similar articles about new rice varieties, since the research centers in Kerala, especially the one in Pattambi, have been producing new varieties. The above example is enough for the present purpose. By nature, the content of *Keralakarshakan* invariably imagines farmer at an ideal level. The farmer's interest to know more about the recent developments and the readiness to abandon certain traditional practices are the prerequisites for an ideal farmer that these journals, especially *Keralakarshakan* imagine. The imaginative process is not restricted to the new seed varieties. It touches many other aspects as well.

The narrative about different diseases and pests is a case in point. They have been an essential part of *Keralakarshakan* from its initial days. There are two major tendencies in connection with the articles on diseases and pests. The first tendency is to give a detailed description about the diseases. The knowledge about the disease is seen as very important here. The underlying assumption is that by knowing them, they can be conquered. The second tendency is to view the disease in an isolated way and not as a consequence of human intervention in nature.

The analysis of a sample write up on Brown Hopper which creates one of the deadliest paddy diseases called Munja¹⁵ will be helpful in understanding more about the narrative on pests and diseases. The article was published in the December 16 issue in 1975 in *Keralakarshakan*. The article talks about the Brown Hopper and gives some information about Hopper burn or more commonly known as the yellowing of the paddy plant. *Munja* is the Malayalam term for the same. The article gives a detailed description about the Brown Hopper insect, its life cycle, different varieties and the way it spreads the disease. Then it talks about the control measures. The writer gives some cultural methods followed by the chemical methods. It has to be noted here that one of the remedies the writer suggests include the use of DDT (Varghese 5-7). Usually, such articles on diseases and pests do not endorse one method of pest control alone. These articles provide all the possible measures like the cultural, the biological, the trap and the chemical method as well.

What is worth noting here is the vision of these articles! The writers were, in fact, scientifically analyzing the diseases and pests; they were also classifying them and providing remedies for the same. As a result, they project the knowledge of them as most important in cultivation. Such articles imagine a farmer who is keen to gain scientific knowledge about the pests and diseases. The ideal farmer these writers envisage should find time to learn more about what s/ he deals with; let it be about crops, pests, diseases, or fertilizers. S/ he should have what is generally called as “scientific” knowledge.” This is the nature of the imagination of the farm journals in general and *Keralakarshakan* in particular. The ideal farmer they imagine is someone who shows a strong will to know; someone who values learning as equally important as plowing.

¹⁵ It is also known as *Munja Veezhcha*, *Eecha Veezhcha*, and *Manjakked* in Malayalam.

This imagination is heavily colored by the institutions run by the state. In the case of *Keralakarshakan*, it can be seen that the fertilizer and chemical companies were the major advertisers until the 90s. One such sample advertisement is given in the appendix. See the appendix 2. The advertisement is taken from the October 1966 issue of *Keralakarshakan*. The advertisement starts by saying that “the worms and insects die as soon as the medicine is applied.” The atmosphere then was vibrant with the slogans raised by the Green Revolution and the caption of the advertisement is proclaiming the same idea about the chemical fertilizers as the advocates of the Green Revolution. This ideology views the insects and worms as the enemies of the farmer and the chemical inputs are viewed as the friends of the farmer. This particular advertisement is of a private company called Sandos; the most frequently advertised company was the FACT or Fertilizer and Chemicals Travancore. The FACT is a public sector undertaking that produces fertilizers and other chemical inputs. Government was actively participating in Agricultural research, extension and product manufacturing and many institutes were set up for the same. There are also various research centers one of which was the FIB itself. *Keralakarshakan* regularly brings up stories about these institutions as well.

Soil Testing and Soil Testing Labs were another frequently repeated theme in *Keralakarshakan*. This journal publishes a lot of write ups on the advantages of soil testing. The farmer may get inspired and send the soil from his/ her farm for testing. The soil testing labs would then recommend some chemical inputs to the farmer as a suggestion to maintain the right balance of the soil. Again the farmer may buy a fertilizer or other chemical input from a company either in the public sector or in the private sector, the application of which may help him maintain the balance of his/ her soil. Thus, a nexus of FIB-farm journal-soil testing lab-farmer-fertilizer manufacturing company can be found here. This is just one example of the

nexus developed in connection with agricultural research and extension. Farm journalism has been strengthening these nexuses.

In the nineties, a good number of organic fertilizer manufacturing companies emerged and their advertisements were very frequent in the pages of *Keralakarshakan*. Around the same time, the nurseries also became more common than ever. All these formed new nexuses like the farm journal-farmer-organic manure producing company; or farm journal-nursery-farmer in that pattern. Thus, viewing *Keralakarshakan* as part of a network would give a different dimension to the present study. These nexuses did have a coloring in the imaginative process of the farm journals which will be explained more in the next section when the journals published by private publishing houses like *Karshakasree* and *Karshakan* are analyzed. The present section would end with the analysis of a few more examples that would throw more light on the aspect of imagination in *Keralakarshakan*.

The editorial of *Keralakarshakan* for the October 1975 issue speaks with much enthusiasm about the effects of the white revolution in Kerala. The editorial goes in the following way: Earlier the cattle growers in Kerala were of the opinion that there should be cattle in the cattle shed; let them be of any breed. This mentality has changed for good. Now the owners prefer the *Jersy* or *Swiss Brown*; two better breeds of cattle in terms of the quantity of milk. These breeds can provide three or four fold more milk than the desi breeds. The editorial continues to shower praise upon the then ongoing Indo-Swiss Project aimed at producing highly productive cattle. With great zeal, the editorial states that the project could produce around eleven thousand foreign breed cattle. Through many centers, foreign cattle varieties were produced by means of artificial insemination. The zealous editorial observes that more owners have started opting for the foreign breeds instead of the desi varieties. The editorial board is not

satisfied with this; according to them, the cattle owners should show more vigor and the speed of the project is less compared to the target¹⁶ in mind (“Sankarayinam” 4).

The discourse on improving the productivity has been so consistent in all the farm journals. In the case of milk production, it is about replacing the desi breeds with the foreign breeds. The desi varieties of cattle have been viewed as less productive and less efficient by the researchers on this field as well as the government officials. They advocate the foreign breeds as a solution. It will not be the aim of this thesis to see whether the foreign breeds are better than the desi breeds or vice versa. The aim here is to find the nature of the narrative and how it is connected with the process of imagining. The discourse on the inefficiency of the desi cattle breeds survives to this date.

In a different issue from 1995, *Keralakarshakan* reports a speech delivered by the then agricultural minister about the state of milk production in Kerala. The minister states that compared to the international standards, the standard of milk production in Kerala has been very poor. He attributes the reason to the still surviving and less productive desi breeds. It was in order to overcome this deficiency that the desi cattle were crossed with the foreign breeds and as a result, the minister points out that 60% of the cattle in Kerala are mixed breeds (George 3-5). The government, the scientists, the officials, the farm journals and the farmers (here the live stock farmers) are all part of a network. The ultimate aim of each link in this chain has become to increase the production. The path to the increase in production was believed to be the new seeds and new breeds. This logic was the integral part of the Green Revolution/ White Revolution that aimed the same at a global level. In India, this logic of Green Revolution influenced the policy

¹⁶ The target then was to produce 24 lakh ton milk in Kerala itself.

makers at the national and state levels. It is the same logic that governs the imagination of the farm journalists.

The agricultural experts are highly excited while speaking about more production. The scientists and the state officials are of the same view in this. The sole aim of cultivation according to them became achieving more production. This was directly associated with new breeds or seeds which necessarily meant a breach with the traditional and desi. This dream could never have been nostalgic about the traditional farming model. Instead, it envisaged a new imaginary land teeming with crops the seeds of which are developed in science laboratories. This dream could never have been nostalgic. It did not look back to the traditional cultivation practices with a touch of nostalgia; instead, it looked forward to a more productive and scientific future. *Keralakarshakan* has been the official voice of this dream.

2.4 *Karshakan*: a journal with a political vision

The importance of *Karshakan*, a farm journal by the famous media group of Deepika, is that it introduced a tradition of presenting the problems of the farmers. Deepika is one of the oldest news papers in Kerala. It was started in 1887 with the name Nazrani Deepika. The word ‘Nazrani’ connotes Christians in Kerala. This media group is generally thought to reflect the interest of the Catholic Church in Kerala. The one year long centenary celebrations of Deepika was inaugurated by none other than Pope John Paul II. The religious ties of the Deepika group have relevance while analyzing the content of *Karshakan*. The Christian community in Kerala, over the years has gained good reputation as farmers.

Karshakan started in 1993, two years after India started following the policy of globalization. This affected the farmers of Kerala, especially those in central Kerala. *Karshakan*

could raise their voice. Despite their support to the Congress party, *Karshakan* boldly challenged the government's policy of globalization. Also, it pointed out how the farmer has been victimized in a globalizing world which majority of the farm journals hesitated to do. *Karshakan* had its own way of imagining the farmer and farming in a new way. Some of the major tendencies of the other farm journals can also be seen in *Karshakan* as well but its way of imagining a new farmer and new farming had some distinct elements too.

The vision of *Karshakan* about the present was bleak. It clearly saw the farmers fighting with an antagonistic market, insensitive governments, and cunning middle men. It presented relevant statistics and argued for the case of the farmer with fervor. It criticized the government, state or central, and stood for a change. Despite the differences in priorities and subject matter, the imagination of a new agricultural paradigm remains central to the overall perspective of *Karshakan*. Globalization provided the context for the launching of *Karshakan*. The editorial board clearly saw it as having dangerous effects for the Kerala farmer. Even though it did not ask its readers to go back to the traditional way of cultivation as a remedy to the effect of globalization, it did suggest locally conceivable methods to remodel the farming in Kerala. If the emphasis of *Keralakarshakan* was to urge its readers to introduce new and high yielding varieties of seeds developed by scientists, *Karshakan* laid its emphasis on adapting to the new trends in the market. Both these journals were persuasive in their tone; while *Keralakarshakan* persuaded the farmers by providing more information about new seeds and breeds; *Karshakan* persuaded the farmers by providing more innovation. The general outlook of *Karshakan* and its specific way of imagination can be understood by discussing selective examples.

The July 1995 issue of *Karshakan* can be taken as an example to illustrate the specific way in which it handles the subject matter. The issue has a number of articles on coconut

farming and the challenges the coconut farmers face. The coconut season had ended by then and the editorial draws attention to the major problem faced by the coconut farmers in Kerala. According to the editors, the most important problems are the absence of a fair support price and nonexistence of procurement of coconut. The editorial does not hesitate to criticize the governmental policies and raise political demands. They also provide alternatives to the farmers. The solutions they offer are innovative and striking. According to the editor, the remedy for the plight of the coconut farmers is to increase the consumption of coconut oil and the diversification of the coconut products. If coconut oil can retrieve its prestigious status it earlier had in the Malayali's kitchen, the coconut farmer will have a solution. There is a growing propaganda that coconut oil causes cholesterol which has reduced the consumption of coconut oil and thus, the consumption of coconut in the state. This propaganda has to be countered. If each Malayali in the state can consume one coconut in every five days, then the coconut farmers will be able to find a market for their product within the state itself (Abraham 3).

This is the line of argument of the editorial. These arguments have been further elaborated in the next articles. One of those articles is explicitly political. It argues that the governmental policies are determined by a palm oil lobby outside Kerala and that the government is not giving due respect to the farmers in Kerala. In a language very much alien to *Keralakarshakan*, the writer says: "Who will listen to the heart beat of the Kerala farmer? The voice of the politicians who swear in the name of the farmers rises ritualistically but fades very soon. The Kerala farmer is a victim of the partisan politics, money power and power politics. He has to find a way out by himself (Prasad 8)." The article ends with the following manifesto:

No solution can be found merely with the governmental help alone. The day should come when the coconut farmer is able to shake the thrones in Trivandrum

and Delhi. The preparations for that should start from our own kitchens. The use of coconut oil should be increased instead of using other vegetable oils. Bottled water should be boycotted in favor of coconut water. Innovative initiatives should be taken in the field of industries based on coconut tree's wood and midrib. The number of people procuring coconut should be increased by giving them more encouragement. Thus, let the coconut farmer stand straight with pride in the soil of Kerala. (9)

This way of outright political analysis has been the very nature of *Karshakan*. While criticizing the apathy of the politicians towards the problems of the coconut farmer, it provides innovative measures to overcome this and urges the coconut growers to follow a new path. This political outlook influenced its subject matter and its way of imagination of a future farming. Coming back to the same issue, the other articles of the same issue emphasize the need to “find a way out” of the present misery of the farmers by the farmers themselves. Those articles urge the coconut farmers to be more innovative.

The title of one such article is “Are coconut oil, toddy, and coir enough?” The title itself is suggestive of the general outlook of *Karshakan*. The point the writer wanted to stress is very clear. “The perennial curse of the farmer in Kerala is that they are circling around the pivot of tradition.” The author points out the fact that in Kerala, the coconut production is used for food related needs and coconut oil where as other countries are using it for producing different products like milk powder, cream, cookies, charcoal from coconut shell, coir pith(coco peat powder), etc. (Santhosh 10-11). The need to be innovative is emphasized. The author stresses on the need for diversification of the crop. There are two more articles in the same issue in which the authors suggest that the coconut growers can make use of the different possibilities of the

coconut shell and market coconut cream and scrape. All these result in the critique of being traditional and the need to be more innovative. The coconut oil, toddy, and coir are all part of the tradition of Kerala and Malayali's nostalgia. Here the need to be innovative overpowers that nostalgia which is quite common about *Karshakan*. The vision of *Karshakan*, like most of its counterparts, is about the future. It calls for a change of things at present.

This issue can be compared with the special issue of *Keralakarshakan*, 1999 February 10 which was on coconut farming. This issue does have two articles about the need for diversifying the coconut products and getting proper support price; but the focus of this issue has been on the researches in this field, cultivating high yield varieties instead of the traditional ones, better irrigation, pests and insects affecting coconut tree, etc. Such is the general pattern followed by *Keralakarshakan*. *Karshakan* brought in a change to this pattern. But that does not mean that it was different from *Keralakarshakan* and the other journals in all respects. To take an example, *Karshakan* is no less enthusiastic than *Keralakarshakan* about using the new seed varieties instead of the traditional ones.

An article on *Pokkali*¹⁷ cultivation came out in the July issue of *Karshakan* in 1995 can be a very good sample to illustrate the similarity between the journals. The writers of the article describe this way of cultivation as a traditional one. They praise the merits of this method, but according to them, the farmers should aim for more productivity. "Farming has been modernized in the nearby places but in *Pokkali* lands, farmers still use the old method of cultivation. If, at least the productivity of the seeds have not improved through modern technology, the *Pokkali*

¹⁷Pokkali cultivation is a traditional way of paddy cultivation. The seed, the method, and the place where this cultivation is done are all known by the same name *Pokkali*. This cultivation is done in the coastal areas of Kerala. The salinity of the soil is more in these areas yet the seeds have the power to resist it. This cultivation has become world famous due to this reason.

cultivation will fade into memory soon (Sashidharan and Nair 56).” The writers appreciate the quality of the desi seeds to survive salinity, but at the same time their low productivity is seen as a demerit for them. What is called as desi and traditional are questioned for their comparatively low productivity here. Also, there is no nostalgia about the local varieties of seeds. All other qualities are subsumed to the productivity of the seeds.

The advertisers of *Karshakan* include producers of chemical and organic fertilizers, nurseries and agricultural machineries. See the appendix 3 which includes some of the advertisements of July 1997 issue of *Karshakan*. As the appendix shows, it has advertisements of a chemical fertilizer, an organic fertilizer, a nursery, and also agricultural machinery. As a magazine, *Karshakan* had started new features which were followed by *Karshakasree* and other farm journals later. They published articles on many crops and cultures that were not very popular in Kerala at that time or even now. This was an important part of *Karshakan*’s imagination which was shared more or less by the other journals. An article about a relatively less known crop is not just giving information about that particular crop; instead it also encourages the farmers to cultivate that crop.

Another major trend found in this journal is the write ups on the successful farmers. The fourth chapter deals with this theme in greater length and seriousness, so this will not be dealt with at length here. But one thing has to be mentioned here. The trend of writing success stories of farmers is an important element of the imaginative process discussed here. Even though these articles bring out the stories of real life farmers with flesh and blood, these examples are not the most representative ones of an ordinary Malayali farmer. Rather, they are exceptions; i.e. these stories are about exceptional farmers. At the heart of the farm journal’s imagination of a new cultivation, there is the concept of an “ideal” farmer. What constitutes this “idealness” may differ

from journal to journal. But the concept of an ideal farmer is common to all these journals and journalists. This ideal farmer is also the embodiment of the future perfection they strive to achieve. The image of this ideal farmer is not more concretely incarnated anywhere else than in these stories of the successful farmers. The stories of the successful farmers are not simply a record of the present achievement of a few individual farmers; instead, they are a model of the future perfection to be achieved by all farmers. The individual farmers in the successful farmer genre are the prototypes of the ideal future farmer. The details of this will be dealt with in the fourth chapter.

Thus, even while criticizing GATS and intellectual property rights, *Karshakan's* imagination remained similar in many ways to the other farm journals in Malayalam, most importantly, with that of *Keralakarshakan*.

2.5 *Karshakasree*: forging a professional farmer

Karshakasree is the agricultural monthly of the media group of Malayala Manorama. They started a new style in farm journalism in Malayalam. They made farm journalism more attractive and appealing to the readers. They introduced attractive features in their journal and talked about the wonders that can be achieved in farming. From the very beginning, *Karshakasree* had a grand manner in appearance. They started this monthly with over seventy pages and are still continuing with the same size. This allowed them to talk about agriculture elaborately. Their coverage of farming related content has been good. Most of the features in *Karshakasree* are about the attractive productivity and commercial viability that can be achieved in the cultivation of each crop. They presented a glorious picture of agriculture in times of despair and crisis. Just like their lay out and pages, agriculture was also presented in colorful

terms. One important aspect of *Karshakasree* is that they always present agriculture in a hopeful manner, creating a feeling that agriculture is a profitable business. They presented different possibilities and provided solutions to the farmer. The result of all this was the vision of a “professional farmer” and imagined prosperity.

The elements of *Karshakasree*’s imagination can be found easily by analyzing its articles. They have articles on almost all varieties of crops and breeds and the related issues. Their emphasis is on the cash crops. Rubber plantation has also got comparatively more importance in *Karshakasree*. It can be doubted whether the concerns of the ordinary farmer having a small amount of land are addressed in this magazine or not. Though *Karshakasree* deals with farmer’s issues like lower price, lack of sufficient price for the primary level farmer, the exploitation of the middle men, the impact of globalization, etc.; it does make an effort to make the overall appearance of the magazine look less political. *Karshakasree* lacks the kind of rigorous criticism that *Karshakan* offers. Except that, the line in which *Karshakasree* imagines a better farming community is similar with the two other farm journals – *Keralakarshakan* and *Karshakan*.

Four aspects separate *Karshakasree* from the other main stream farm journals. First of all, *Karshakasree* presents more successful stories of farmers than any other journals. These success stories have become the hall mark of *Karshakasree*. Secondly, the success stories are complimented by colorful pictures. These pictures are of the farmers who achieved success and their achievements. Their cover page has to be read in line with this. This colorful visual effect endorses the view of prosperity that the magazine projects. The third aspect of *Karshakasree*’s imagination of a better farming community is the number of advertisements it contains. One may be tempted to view this as separate from the core content of the magazine. But it is not. Most of the advertisements are the fertilizers, machineries and other agricultural related materials. They

complement the content of the magazine and vice versa. Last but not least, as a magazine, *Karshakasree* tries to be “professional” and they often tend to be “fashionable”. They tend to write about the most recent trends in the field. All these aspects can be elaborated taking examples.

The trend of publishing successful farmer stories was popular even before *Karshakasree* was launched. But no magazine uses this trend more than *Karshakasree*. In one issue, there will be at least ten such articles in this magazine. Such success stories do not present the complete picture. Farming may not be a success always. But the journalistic imagination envisions farming as a successful business and they don’t view the negative side of it. The propaganda of the successful farmer enables the farm journalist to imagine a better future for agriculture. This is the role of the successful farmer’s story. More will be discussed about the narrative of the successful farmer in the fourth chapter.

The cover page and the colorful pictures given with the success stories tell more about *Karshakasree*’s imagination. They add color to the imaginative course and support the premise of an alternative farming system. Most of the pictures have the same pattern: a farmer in his/ her farm with his/ her produce or animals. These produce will be the empirical evidence for their success. Each issue of *Karshakasree* will have many such images. They create the feeling of prosperity. The cover pages will do a similar function. In the cover page of October 2018 issue, a lady is seen holding a seedling tray in one hand and a plant on the other hand. The tray has been filled with soil and small plants grown up from each of the holes. On the other hand, she holds one of the plants taken from a hole. Even though the background has been blurred, many such plants can be seen in the picture. It is evident that this picture is a clear indicator of the changing trends in agriculture. The picture gives the message that prosperity could be found in agriculture

even in a terrace where there is no soil. The same image also reveals the magazine's effort to present the latest trend or to be fashionable.

The advertisements are complimentary to the function the main content of the magazine does. As said earlier, *Karshakasree* tends to spread the most recent trends. During the last decade, they have been regularly publishing articles about organic or green farming. Within this time period, most of the advertisements in this magazine are about organic manures, bio fertilizers, and such products.

In a nut shell, the concerns of being more professional and the tendency to be more fashionable have contributed largely to the imagination of *Karshakasree*.

2.6 *Nalikera Journal* and *Spice India*: Journals for Specific crops

Nalikera Journal and *Spice India* are two journals dealing with issues of coconut and spices respectively. Both of these crops have a cultural significance too. Traditionally Kerala has been viewed as the land of coconuts. The cultural identity of the Malayalis has a connection with coconuts. The case of spices is also similar. India-especially Kerala- has been viewed as a land of spices. Here, again the imagination about increased production stifles any kind of nostalgia about these crops. *Nalikera Journal* is a vernacular journal of the National level agency called Coconut Development Board.

As part of their imagination, *Nalikera Journal* proposes a lot of changes for the traditional way of coconut farming. The changes that they advocate are mainly due to the practical difficulties the coconut farmers encounter. For example, the lack of coconut climbers is a practical difficulty that the coconut farmers face. The enquiry to overcome these difficulties inevitably led to the development of the dwarf varieties of coconut trees. The lack of price for the

traditional coconut products like coconut oil, coir, etc. led the farmers and the intellectuals to think about the diversification of coconut products. All these are reflected in the journal and they naturally gave coloring to the imaginative process.

Spice India (Malayalam) is the official journal of the Spices Board India which comes under the Ministry of Industries. They mainly deal with the import and exports of Cardamom and other spices. *Spice India* does contain a lot of articles about the benefits of the spices that are used traditionally. But their focus on the marketing and related aspects again makes them less nostalgic and more pragmatic about the spices. Both these magazines are the official voice of the government. Their imagination is closely linked to the official imagination of the state. The theorization of *Keralakarshakan* is relevant in the context of these magazines also.

2.7 Other farm journals and alternative visions

Not all the farm journals are endorsing the Green Revolution's vision or are influenced by it in all respects. The case of *Haritha Bhoomi* is an example. The stated objective of this journal is to advocate organic farming and natural food. But it does not mean that they do not engage in the process of creating any kind of imaginaries. It means only that they were creating a different type of imaginary. The caption of this magazine is that it is an organic farming and food magazine. The perspective of the editorial board goes against the logic of the Green Revolution and chemical farming. They imagine alternative farming methods and alternative food habits. It is this alternative vision that determines the imagination of this particular magazine.

2.8 From the “New Agriculture Strategy” to Organic Farming: shades of imagination

The chapter so far has discussed the types of imaginaries that different farm journals in the context of Kerala were constructing and sustaining. Broad changes took place in the last sixty

or seventy years in the field of agriculture in Kerala. The agenda of the editorial board and many other factors determine this process of imagination. But the bottom line of their imagination is that they all create a feel good factor about agriculture in the state. Even in a decade of farmer suicides, the farm journals were talking about the possible accomplishments that farming can bring about. This unites all the farm journals despite their difference in intent and content. To maintain this tempo, the farm journals have been talking about the new developments in the field. The high yielding varieties, mechanization, new crops, agribusiness, poly house/ green house farming, etc. were all new developments at one point or the other. One should not be surprised even if some of them are contradictory to the others. For example, chemical farming and organic farming are two ways of farming opposed to each other but both of them were encouraged by these journals at different points in time since they became the up to the minute trends in different periods. Thus, farm journals have been talking about continuous change and remodeling. In this process they dismantled the old image of the farmer and installed a new image of him/ her. The stories of the successful farmers strengthen this image. The narratives about the new seeds, new breeds, and new needs led to the creation of a new image of the farmer.

This remodeling has some other unintended outcomes too. The farm journals started off by reducing the gap between the scientist and the practical farmer. But it strengthened this binary and created more binaries. The fashionable farmer who is not afraid of trying out new seeds/ breeds/ inputs/ methods was portrayed as a successful and ideal model. This role model image can be posited against the millions of farmers who do farming without any innovation. The vast majority of farmers belong to this category and not to the exceptional farmers.

Communication of farm information was the stated aim of the farm journals. For this, a type of narration had to be invented by them. The outcome of this narration was not just the

communication of information; but a colorful imagination. At a time when there is the general outcry that farming is an unprofitable business, such imagination would definitely inspire people to do farming and sustain it in the state. Their solutions for the issues of the farmers are not sociological but methodological. Instead of bringing changes by changing the land relations and economic conditions; the farm journals propose to bring out changes by cultivating new crops or changing the cultivation patterns and agricultural inputs. The vast majority of the farmers do cultivation according to the agricultural calendar and traditional knowledge, led by practical necessity more than individual creativity. Farmers have been more sociocentric than individualistic. But the farm journals are more about the individual farmers who come up with something new. They are eloquent about the farmers who reap success but more often than not silent about those who perish under the pressure of unfavorable surroundings. The nuances of this narrative of the successful farmers will be discussed in the next two chapters.

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Chapter III

Narrative theory in the study of farm journals

This chapter discusses the prospects of narrative theory in the study of farm journals in Malayalam. It analyzes narrative theory briefly and discusses how insights from this theoretical perspective can contribute to the study of farm journals. The analysis of the popular narratives on farmers and farming found in the farm journals will be incomplete without mentioning what is left out from these narratives. It is this dimension of the narrative that is known as ‘disnarration.’ The theoretical discussion on disnarration will be done at the end of the chapter. The present chapter progresses by discussing the meaning of the term narrative and discusses the ideas of three narratologists whose major concepts may give valuable insights about using narrative theory in the study of farm journals.

The three theorists mentioned here are Aristotle, Vladimir Propp, and Gerard Genette. Peter Barry observes that these three scholars’ contributions shaped the contours of narratology (Barry 223). They are from different time periods and discussing their ideas will be useful in understanding the major concerns of narratology as a method of study. The said discussion will also prompt questions regarding how narrative theory can provide a better understanding for the analysis of *Keralakarshakan*. Thus, the aim of the chapter is not to describe the history of narratology which would be redundant and unproductive; instead, it tries to understand how narrative theory can be useful in the context of the present project. As a result, the discussion is limited to three theorists though there are numerous theorists who deserve special attention in the history of this discipline. It is true that narratology has progressed a lot even after Gerard

Genette. This phase is known as postclassical narratology. But this chapter will be reserved for the discussion of classical narratology alone.

3.1 The meaning of “narrative”

Narratology was a structuralist project in the beginning. The aim of this theoretical paradigm was to read and analyze texts from a structuralist dimension. Over the decades, narratologists started taking interest in narratives of several genres. Now narratology has become an interdisciplinary area between literature, popular culture, and social sciences. Narratology is about the study of narratives. The word “narrative” is widely used in our day-to-day lives without any theoretical baggage associated with it. One would be astounded to see the number of texts on narratology if s/he tries to prepare a bibliography on the subject. Scholars and scholarly works have defined and redefined the discipline and the meaning of the term ‘narrative’; still the term ‘narrative’ has different meaning in different contexts at different time periods in history. However, narratology has been expanding its boundaries. The use of narratology can be found in many disciplines. Since the theoretical ambivalence still prevails on many aspects related to this branch of literary theory, it would be difficult to give a perfect definition of the term ‘narrative’ though it would not be impossible to make an attempt to uncoil the meaning of the term ‘narrative.’

One way of defining the term ‘narrative’ is to identify a few narratives in a specific context and try to define it with reference to the said narratives. The present study is about the recurring narratives in the farm journals of Malayalam in general and that of *Keralakarshakan* in particular. In the context of the present study, the meaning of the term narrative can be explained in the following way. Narratives are constructed through narration. Narration involves

the narration of actions and/ or agents. Narratives can be thematically identified and classified. Each classification will have a peculiar narrative structure. Actually, it is this structure that determines the narrative and narration. It is this structure that helps one identify whether a text can be called a narrative or not.

In the case of *Keralakarshakan*, different narratives of this magazine have been identified in this study. Thus, there is a narrative about pests; there is another narrative about diseases; there is yet another narrative about exotic crops. There are many such narratives that can be easily identified. What makes them a particular narrative is not just the similarity in theme; it is also the narrative structure and the narrative conventions associated with each of these narratives. That is why different write ups on pests can be called as the same narrative. They not only have the same theme; they also have same narrative structure and narrative conventions. From the analysis of this type of narrative, i.e. the narrative on pests; the next chapter arrives at the conclusion that the narratives on pests are meant to project the villainous image of the pests. The details of this will be discussed in the next chapter. What is worth repeating here is the difference between any group of utterances and a narrative. Not any group of utterances can be called as a narrative. A group of utterances on pests cannot be called as a narrative on pests unless and until they follow the similar narrative structure and narrative conventions that other narratives on pests follow. It is in this sense that the term ‘narrative’ has been used in this study.

Keralakarshakan has many such narratives, which in fact inspired this study. For example, the topic of modern technologies in agriculture has been a recurring one in *Keralakarshakan*. As a result, some conventions were formulated for the write ups dealing with this topic. So, when a writer writes about this subject today, s/ he will have a pre-model to follow. Even if s/ he deviates from this model, the editor can correct him/ her. The same is the

case with the articles that introduce crops. *Keralakarshakan* has many articles that give the details of specific crops. These crops can be anything ranging from paddy or coconut to tea or coriander. Mostly these articles follow a pattern. For example, first they may mention the place of origin of these crops and then they may describe how these crops reached India, etc. The article may move on to explain with statistics the status of India and Kerala in the production of the said crop in the world map. The article may progress by explaining the right season to plant this crop and the right season to harvest it. It may also mention the possible diseases and its cures. It does not mean that every article introducing a crop will have all these elements. But this is a general pattern. They may or may not follow each step but they will adhere to the general pattern. Thus, the category of narratives studied in this project is selected thematically; and their structure is analyzed.

Here one more aspect of the narratives can be outlined and the discussion on the meaning of narratives can be concluded. That aspect is the existence of larger narratives. Each of the narratives in *Keralakarshakan* is pointing to a larger narrative that this magazine has been popularizing. This has been explained in the next chapter. What is crucial here is that, even the smaller narratives make sense when read in the background of some larger narratives. This chapter is an attempt to understand how the insights of narratology can be used for a better understanding of the narratives of *Keralakarshakan*. It does not intend to discuss the theories of all the scholars who contributed to narratology or touch upon each and every aspect of this theoretical paradigm. So, theories of three major scholars will be discussed here with special emphasis.

3.2 Aristotle

The first theorist to deal with the different aspects of narratology in so much detail could be Aristotle.¹⁸ Aristotle lived in a different age and his concerns were different; still he is treated as a pioneer philosopher of narratology. It would be worthwhile to understand the reasons for it. Any study treating him as a useful figure in a narratological context is bound to lay down the justifications for it. The present attempt is no exception to this.

Aristotle's comments on literature in general and tragedy in particular as concretized in his famous treatise called *Poetics* is thought provoking to a modern day student interested in narratology. His comments on the plot (*mythos*),¹⁹ mimesis²⁰, characters,²¹ tragedy, and different genres may offer useful insights to the study of narratology. It is interesting that in *Poetics*²² he

¹⁸ It is true that Plato also touched upon many aspects of narratology but he is more of a point of reference than a useful source.

¹⁹ In English, *muthos* and *mythos* are used by different scholars. In this study, the more popular word *mythos* is used in contexts where it is necessary. Seth Benardete and Michael Davis comment that *muthos* or *mythos* meant the tale of gods before Aristotle appropriated the term to connote plot (vii). These authors have used the English word tale for *muthos*. In narratology, these terms represent different aspects of a narrative. Michael Davis in his introduction to the same book points out the different possible meanings of the word *poiesis*. It can be poetry or the imitation of an action (Davis xvii).

²⁰ According to Aristotle, the objective of art is "mimesis" or imitation (7). Tragedy, the highest form of literature, imitates the actions of the noble class where as comedy imitates the actions of the people from the lower classes (7-9). Aristotle gives the justification that only the lives of the men of noble birth have the elements essential for a tragedy. In the case of the successful farmer stories that the farm journals in Malayalam highlights quite regularly, it can be found that they tell only the stories of farmers who achieved success in their career. Thus Aristotle and the farm journals prompt the question that why the lives of a few (wo)men are worthy to be described in a particular genre while the lives of others are not worthy to be narrated. Here, it should be remembered that no writer in any of the farm journals have brought in stories of farmers who have committed suicide. They have come up only with the stories of the successful farmers. This issue has been discussed in much length in the next chapter

²¹ "We must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are," says Aristotle in *Poetics* (11). The farm journals including *Keralakarshakan* give a glossy picture of the farmers. They intend to create a feel good factor among the reading community. In this regard, they follow the first part of Aristotle's statement; i.e. representing the farming community as better than in real life.

²² Aristotle wrote *Poetics* also as a reply to the views of Plato, his master, outlined in *The Republic*. Plato banished the poet from his ideal "republic" saying that he is the imitator of the "unreal" world which is not ideal but a mean thing. Though Aristotle justifies poetry, he justified only one brand of poetry. He discarded the other brands as artistic works of lesser merit. Tragedy in those days was about people whose social status was quite higher than the laymen. Aristotle believed that only their downfall can evoke pity and fear among the audience, which is of course the aim of tragedy. Similar tendencies can be seen in the literary and other genres of modern day including

makes observations on such aspects of narratology as the plot²³, point-of-view,²⁴ narrative conventions, etc. Narratologists do take special interest in these aspects. What follows below is a brief description of some of these topics that Aristotle discusses in his text. Apart from such direct connection of Aristotle to narratology, sometimes his ideas have influenced this field indirectly as well. The formalists of the early twentieth century and their influence of classical narratology is a case in point. Scholars of Russian formalism especially Boris Eikhenbaum was influenced by Aristotle (Habib 61). Again, Russian formalism has shaped the classical narratology, starting from Vladimir Propp. It would not be unrealistic to sense an indirect influence of Aristotle on Propp via Eikhenbaum.

Aristotle gives the definition of the plot and character while discussing the elements of a tragedy.²⁵ According to him, plot is the “arrangement of incidents” where as character stands for that aspect “in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents (23).” In general, plot and character are two elements that one finds in almost all types of stories including the stories of the farmers in farm journals.

One of the most important observations made by Aristotle with regard to the theory of narrative is about the point of view. He treats this as a matter of the manner in which an artist imitates his objects (11). He says, “... the poet may imitate by narration- in which case he can

the narratives of farm journals. The farm journals are particular about narrating the story of the successful farmer and the unsuccessful farmer only. This prompts the researcher to ask the question why the lives of the successful farmers are worthy to be narrated where as the lives of others; such as the unsuccessful farmers, are not worthy to be narrated.

²³ Aristotle makes detailed comments on plot. According to him, plot is the first and most important part of a tragedy. A good part of Poetics is spent on describing the qualities of a good plot.

²⁴ Aristotle talks about the first person and third person narration. He also distinguishes between narrating and showing.

²⁵ Plot, character, diction, thought, scenery, song: these are the elements of a good tragedy according to Aristotle (23). Some of the translations translate these terms differently. For example, many scholars prefer the terms melody and spectacle instead of song and scenery. According to Aristotle, most important is the “structure of the incidents” or plot (24). Aristotle says that “plot is the soul of the tragedy” and character comes next in importance (25).

either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged- or he may imitate by making all his actors live and move before us (13).” One can find the categories of mimesis and diagesis implied in Aristotle’s statement. Also, according to him, the narration can be in first person or in third person.²⁶ Aristotle here makes a distinction between narrating and showing.²⁷ In the case of farm journals, first person narration is not very common. Mostly, the writers follow the style of what is technically called as the “third person objective” style. This is a type of narration where the narration is done in third person and the narrator tries to maintain a sort of “objectivity.” The science journals usually adopt this type of narration. The reason why the farm journals rarely use the first person narrative could be that these journals are about farmers but the writers are not farmers. The reason is so simple but it is relevant which will be discussed in the last chapter.

Aristotle’s comments on the subject matter of literature are important from a narratological dimension since it gives an idea about how some narrative conventions are formed. According to Aristotle, the great writers imitate the dignified actions or actions of great men. It is the more trivial writers who write about the actions of ordinary men. Aristotle’s comment gives the justification for the convention of the characters of a tragedy to be men of noble birth in those days.²⁸ Similarly, the farm journals talk about the stories of the successful farmers. They never talk about the stories of farmers who suffered loss in farming. The same is true about crops. *Keralakarshakan* and other journals promote different crops from time to time. Cocoa, Vanilla, Rubber, etc. are good examples. But if the crop fails or the market of the crop

²⁶ Aristotle does not talk about the second person narration which is understandable. This type of narration is common mainly in experimental literature or drama where the readers/ spectators actively participate in the plot.

²⁷ It has to be said here that Aristotle’s taxonomy follows that of Plato’s because Plato also talks about how the poet can talk in his own voice and how he can pretend as if a third person is speaking. By the first, he meant the narrative where as the tragedy and comedy falls into the second category of narration (Day 30).

²⁸ Aristotle adds that Epic poetry follows the same line of tragedy as it imitates the actions of the people of a higher type (22).

suffer a setback, these journals will not speak much about them. If the lives of noble men are suitable to be represented in a tragedy, the lives of the successful farmers provide good material for the writes up in the farm journals. So is the case with crops that create sensation. The farm journals including *Keralakarshakan* speak about the glossy side of agriculture rather than the plight of the farmers.

Aristotle's comments on the "unity of plot" offer more on the aspect of what is left out in the process of narration. According to Aristotle, the hero's life consists of so many events. Not all of them are worthy to be narrated. And narrating all trivial incidents will not lead to a unified plot. So according to Aristotle, plot is the most important element of a tragedy. And unity of plot is a necessity for any good plot (31-3). So some actions are not narrated for the unity of plot. Similarly, some aspects of farming become worthy to be narrated where as others are not to be narrated. The farm journals write about the individual farmers but not farmers who do group farming. Similarly, while describing the success of a farmer, the journals may mention the help s/he got from the agricultural officer but no story tells the contributions of the agricultural laborers. In fact, agricultural laborers are not even treated as farmers. Similar is the case with the cover pages. The cover pages of *Keralakarshakan* always give the feel of affluence. Never will they portray crop loss or similar scenes on the cover page. In Aristotle's words, evoking the feelings of "pity and fear" is the chief goal of a tragedy. In the case of farm journals, it is always instilling hopes in the farmer. The farm journals including *Keralakarshakan* present the glossy side of farming in Kerala.

A modern day researcher should not hesitate to borrow Aristotelian terms like *Peripeteia* and recognition²⁹ if they are of any use in his/ her research area. Citing Russel and Winterbottom, Gary Day explains that *Peripeteia* is “a surprise development in the action;” and recognition refers to a “move from ignorance to knowledge (36).” It is quite common that writers of *Keralakarshakan* use these narrative techniques frequently (without knowing that they are using them). The successful farmer narrative is the most popular narrative of *Keralakarshakan* and other farm journals. This popular narrative often employs the narrative element that includes a surprise development. This is similar to what is called in Aristotelian terms as *Peripeteia*. Now another popular narrative is the narrative of the farmer turned doctor/ engineer/ IT professional. At some point in their career, an engineer or doctor or an IT professional get the revelation that farming is their trade. They feel that getting engaged in farming would give them satisfaction. They start farming and they achieve success. The similarity of this narrative element with Aristotelian recognition is evident. The revelation or recognition aspect of the narratives brings the reader to the centre stage. Simon Goldhill observes that the role of the reader is crucial while analyzing the recognition part of the narratives (24). In the case of the farm journals, though it is a specific farmer who is recognized and celebrated, the farm journals are silently demanding the readers to make the same recognition.

Aristotle can be read and reread in order to find newer implications to matters concerning narratology. One may find the discussions of fictional and non-fictional narratives foreshadowing in Aristotle’s comments in *Poetics* on the difference between history and tragedy (33-5). Similarly, one may find the prototype of the narratological approach of breaking down a story into its constituent elements while he narrates the story of *Odyssey* (61). In the context of

²⁹ The three elements of a complex plot are the *peripeteia*, recognition and pathos. Pathos is not mentioned here as nothing related to this is seen in the magazine.

the present study, what has been discussed above is enough to serve its purpose. It would be better to move on to the next scholar, in fact, the first proper narratologist in the modern sense of the term; which happens to be none other than Vladimir Propp.

3.3 Vladimir Propp

Vladimir Propp was one of the first scholars who studied texts by breaking them down and finding their basic units. He used the linguistic method in his study of folk tales. He studied the Russian folk tales³⁰ and presented the basic narrative units in them. His influence on the structuralist movement is more than evident. Before analyzing the utility of his theories to the study of farm journals, it is necessary to introduce his most important formulations. His major work, *Morphology of the Folktale* was published in 1928. Its English translation came out after three decades in 1958. The attempt here is to touch upon the most important aspects of his work such as his methodology, his approach, his concept of ‘theme’ and ‘motif’; and also what he meant by ‘morphology’.

It will be convenient to start a note on Propp’s theories by decoding the meaning of the term ‘morphology’. Morphology is usually associated with two disciplines; Linguistics and Biology. In Linguistics, it is the study of the form of the words. In Biology, Morphology is associated with the study of the structure of living beings. To use the same term in the context of folk tales implies a number of things. First of all, Propp wanted the study of folk tales to be

³⁰ There is confusion regarding his primary source as his own text gives two different ideas about this. On one occasion, he has mentioned that his primary material is fairy tales. In the second chapter of *Morphology*, he has mentioned that by fairy tales, he means the tales numbered from 300 to 749 in the collection prepared by Aarne Thompson (Propp 19). In the introduction to the second edition of *Morphology*, Alan Dundes also states this (xiv). But Propp himself states later in his work that he is using the collection of Afanas’ev. Here Propp mentions that he uses Afanasa’ev’s collection of stories starting from no. 50 and concluding with no. 151 (24). Anyway, from the different references of Propp’s text, it is quite clear that Propp has studied both these collections.

“scientific.” Secondly, he places much emphasis on the aspect of ‘form’ or ‘structure’ in the linguistic sense of these terms. Each of these points needs elaboration.

Propp has repeatedly criticized the Russian scholars for their lack of a “scientific” approach. This is mainly evident when he criticizes their taxonomy. His objection to another scholar who studied the Russian folk tales named Volkov is that Volkov’s approach is not “scientific.” He expresses his skepticism whether Volkov’s classification can match the scientific precision with which plants and animals are classified in biology (Propp 8). He makes the same accusation against Aarne & Thompson³¹ as well. According to him, even Aarne’s classification is also not “scientific.” Though later, he praises Aarne Thompson for bringing the category of subclass in his classification. Propp says that no one until then tried to categorize the folk tales in the pattern of “genus-species-varieties (10).”

Even a lay man who has superficially acquainted with Charles Darwin can find that this mode of classification is a direct legacy of Darwinism. Propp uses the same Darwinian analogy when he says that the objective of his classification of folk tales is to distribute the available materials into groups and then find the relationship between these groups in the same way as the

³¹ Antti Aarne was a Finnish folklorist who studied Russian folk tales. His catalogue of folk tales was translated into English and revised by Stith Thompson. This index was once again revised by a German folklorist Hans-Jorg Uther. Now this catalogue is called as the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index or ATU Index. Propp takes up issue with this index for the thematic arrangement of the folk tales. This collection classifies folk tales according to certain repeating themes. The entire corpus of tales is first arranged under five broad themes. They are the Animal Tales, Ordinary Folktales, Jokes and Anecdotes, Formula Tales, and the Unclassified Tales. Some of them have subclasses. Sometimes these subclasses are again subdivided. For example, the first category, i.e. Animal Tales has seven subclasses. They are the Wild Animals, Wild Animals and Domestic Animals, Man and Wild Animals, Domestic Animals, Birds, Fish, and Other Animals and Fish (Aarne and Thompson 19). The story that comes under each class or subclass will be briefed into a few phrases or clauses. Then the motifs in the story will be pointed out. The motifs will be usually simple sentences like the “thief shams death and steals”; “Trickster throws fish off the wagon”; etc. This is one area that Propp takes up issue with. According to Propp, motifs are the most basic units and they cannot be subdivided. He uses the term ‘function’ instead of motifs. And his ‘functions’ are, unlike Aarne or other scholars, mostly dependent on the action and not the noun. This will be discussed in the thesis.

relationship of species to genus. According to Propp, the “basic task is the extraction of genera (25).” To quote from the text,

Actually, at a time when minerals, plants, and animals are described and classified precisely according to their structure, at a time when a whole range of literary genres (the fable, the ode, the drama, etc.) have been described, the tale continues to be studied without such a description. (13)

The view of Propp is very clear here. Propp finds a parallel between the biological world and the folk tales. There are diverse varieties of folk tales. But they can be classified into a few categories like the different varieties of plants and animals are classified into different species. Again, at the next level, the groups at the species level can be brought under different genera which are fewer in number. Thus, Propp’s attempt is to put different types of folk tales into a few categories and then bringing these categories under a few groups which are the most basic. In the reverse order, there are common models or basic elements of folk tales (genus level). From these common models, springs the different classes of folk tales (species level). Again these classes can be divided into subclasses (the level of varieties).

Can the study of discourses in a mass media be based on such a criterion? The answer in the context of the present project is that research can be done in similar lines as that of Propp’s. A classification completely based on the narrative elements is not possible in the case of a media like farm journals. A classification that relies on both narrative structure and theme is the ideal choice here. As mentioned earlier, narratives of a similar theme follow a similar narrative structure in the case of *Keralakarshakan*. That is how the narrative structure of all the narratives on flower cultivation follows the same narrative structure. It is also relevant to note here that the

three levels of Propp- i.e. varieties, species, and genus levels- are also useful in the present study. Accordingly, the individual narratives in *Keralakarshakan* can be there at the level of varieties. Various individual narratives can be classified into groups like the narratives on new crops, meat cultivation, aquaculture, seasonal agricultural activities, successful farmer, etc. This is the species level. The apex level, which is the genus level, can be the larger narrative that lies behind each of these narratives. The discussion of this larger narrative follows in the next chapter.

Anyway, decoding the scientific dimension of the term “morphology” enables one to see clearly that Propp wanted “scientific” precision in the taxonomy³² of folk tales. This scientific dimension was more or less related to his methodology. Now, as said before, the second dimension of the term “morphology” is a linguistic one. Decoding this dimension will give clues about his approach to the material he studied.

According to Propp, folk tales should be studied like language (15). Prop borrowed this view from the Russian Formalists and applied them in the study of Russian folk tales. He was a structuralist and formalist in his approach. He was opposed to the study of folk tales by placing them in their historical background (15). Historical analysis will often mislead the researcher (14). Unless and until the researcher is able to break down the folk tales and find the basic units, s/he will not be able to find the origin and development of folk tales. In fact, without proper morphological analysis, historical research is not even possible (15). He points out the similarity of folk tales throughout the world. These folk tales were created at a time when physical contact between these cultures was not possible. The problem with the historical analysis is that a historian may find similarities when there is no similarity and s/he may not find similarities were

³² “Classification,” says Propp, “is one of the first and most important steps of study.” He also laments that the existing criteria for the classification of the Russian folk tales are not “scientific.”

similarities do exist. Only a morphologist can find the right similarities. To solve the problems related to the folk tales, one must resort to, what Propp calls as the “study of forms (16).”

Propp’s approach is very simple and clear. He wants to avoid the context in the study of texts; the focus of the researcher should be on the text alone. To be more specific, the researcher should focus on the structure or form of the folk tales; a tendency that Formalism and Structuralism are always associated with. This study will be done by breaking down the fairy tales; finding their basic units; and then making a comparative study of these basic units. Propp defines his plans precisely and concretely in the following words;

For the sake of comparison, we shall separate the component parts of fairy tales by special methods; and then, we shall make a comparison of tales according to their components. The result will be a morphology (i.e. a description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole). (19)

The term ‘morphology’ will be clearer with the discussion about the ‘functions’. Before that, it is necessary to understand two other terms that quite frequently repeat in literary theory- they are the ‘theme’ and ‘motif.’ Propp’s methodological concerns lead him to the discussion of the themes and motifs in which he always prefers the latter to the former because it is a more fundamental category. He makes it clear that the classification of tales according to their themes would be a wrong one. A better classification would be one based on their motifs. The reason for this formulation is that, according to Propp, the “study on the basis of small component parts is the correct method of investigation (11).”

Propp quotes Veselovskij's definition of theme and motif and says that "'theme' is a complex of motifs." The theme is a "creative" and "unifying" category since it combines different motifs. Propp's definition of 'motif' is that it is "the simplest narrative unit (12)." According to Propp, motif should be "monomial³³ and indivisible". His disagreement with Veselovskij is that "Veselovskij's motif is not indivisible (13)."

In connection with the discussion on "theme" and "motif", he talks about "constants" and "variables." He cites instances from four folk tales as an example. In each of these examples taken from different tales, somebody gives the hero a gift; these gifts are an eagle, horse, a boat, and a ring respectively. The donors are the Tsar, an old man, a sorcerer and a princess respectively. The hero also has different *dramatis personae* in each of these instances.³⁴ In each of these stories, these gifted elements- i.e. the eagle, horse, boat, and ring- take the hero to a faraway place (19-20). Here, the reader can find how Propp distinguishes his concept of "functions" from other scholars' concepts like Veselovskij's "motifs" and Bedier's "elements." Propp's argument here is that one can find a pattern in all these instances. In all these instances, the characters or *dramatis personae* change. Their attributes also change. But their "function" is the same.

A reader may comprehend Propp's idea in the following way: If one formulates motifs by paying attention to factors other than the "functions", one may formulate a long list of motifs. In that case, one may say that the Tsar giving a gift to the hero is a motif. The old man giving a gift to the hero is another motif. A sorcerer giving a gift to the hero is a third motif. A princess giving

³³ A term borrowed from Mathematics meaning an expression consisting of one term. Again we see Propp's fascination with scientific terms like 'monomial' and 'morphology'.

³⁴ In the first case, Propp does not mention the hero's name and just says "the hero". In the second instance, the hero's name is mentioned as Suenko. In the third and fourth instances, the hero's name has been mentioned as Ivan.

a gift to the hero is a fourth motif. Now an eagle/ horse/ boat/ ring taking the hero to a distant place are four motifs. Thus, there can be many such motifs. But what good does it do to the analysis? This fallacy happens because the researcher focuses on the *dramatis personae* rather than their “functions.”

So Propp’s idea was to find out the “functions” from the different folk tales. They are the most basic units and they are indivisible too. Though Propp did not use the above examples on formulating the motifs, the reader can clearly understand that this was his idea. It is not just the functions but their sequence also matters. This is another important formulation of Propp. This can be explained with another example but again not taken from Propp’s text. Suppose we take “the king gives a gift to the hero” as a motif. We may find this motif in different tales. What if this motif comes at the beginning in one story and at the end in another story? For example, the king gives a gift to the hero in the beginning of a story with which he reaches another country. In a different story, the king gives the hero a gift as a reward for his bravery at the end of the story when he comes back home after all the adventures. In both cases the “functions” are different, but the motif is the same. This is the reason why Propp says that the sequence of the functions is equally important.

It should be kept in mind that Propp does not use the term ‘motif’ but prefers “function.” A detailed discussion on Propp’s ideas on these matters in the context of the present study will be more futile than fruitful. One point that has to be restated here is that Propp disagreed with the thematically oriented studies on folk tales and he advocated a study of folk tales based on structures or forms. He does it by bringing the concept of “functions.” By breaking down the fairy tales, he has found 31 functions which are common to all the stories he studies.

Propp's version of narratology does have its own merits. But a researcher should always be careful while using his theories in his/ her specific research area. Prop puts much emphasis on the structural features of the folk tales. But a study on farm journals that is solely based on the structural aspects of its articles will be least productive. Propp may be right in his emphasis on the context of the Russian folk tales. But in the context of a mass media, borrowing Propp without any changes would not do any good. For classification, the present study relies on the thematic aspect of the articles of *Keralakarshakan*. Thus, one can see the category of articles on the successful farmer; another category of articles on introducing exotic crops; yet another category of articles on the enemies of farmers, etc. Theme of the articles has been given a huge importance in both the categorization of the content and its analysis. But the present study does ask the question why a structure of certain category of articles is homogenous. Thus, the researcher is tempted to ask why the articles on the successful farmer always have the same structure and the same elements. It is in this sense that the present study relies on Propp. Moreover, Propp's methodology does provide a useful guide to the analysis of the content of *Keralakarshakan*.

Narratology, as a discipline, grew rapidly after the Second World War with the contributions from European and American theorists. Structuralism influenced literary theory during this period. Structuralism did not remain unchallenged for long. It faced biting criticism from the poststructuralists. Similarly, narratology, as a discipline, opened a new phase in the seventies with the growing influence of poststructuralist and cultural theories. Though there are many scholars to be mentioned here before moving to talk about the Postclassical Narratology, one of their theories will be given more emphasis here. Gerard Genette is the theorist whose ideas will be discussed now.

3.4 Gerard Genette

Gerard Genette could be the most important scholar of narratology in the twentieth century. Though there were scholars and their writings on narratology before and after him, his work on narratology titled *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method* remains, arguably, the most seminal work on narratology till today. Jonathan Culler was not exaggerating when he said on the preface to this book that Genette's book presented a "systematic theory of narrative" for the first time (Culler 7). Culler also observes that another achievement of Genette was that he has shown that the structuralist study of the narrative is not just suited for simple folk tales; Genette has used the same method in the study of one of the most complex literary forms; i.e. the novel (9). After Genette, the narrative theory progressed through the contributions of many other theorists. One aspect of narrative theory today is that it is used in the study of many genres other than folk tales or even the novel.

In the introduction to *Narrative Discourse*, Genette speaks about the different meanings of the word narrative. He says that the word narrative is used in three different senses. First of all, it refers to the "narrative statement" which means "the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events." The second meaning of this term is that it refers to "the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse, and to their several relations of linking, opposition, repetition, etc. (25)." The third meaning of this word is related to the recounting of the events or the act of narrating itself which happens during another event. This means that some events are unfolded and in between that, some of the actors recount something else (26).

What is worth noting here is the assumption that the words ‘narrate’ and ‘narrative’ are associated with events, real or fictive, in Genette’s theorization. This goes true about most of the narrative theorists from Aristotle to the present. In the context of the present study, the word narrative has been used in different circumstances. For example, the present study talks about the narrative of the “new seeds.” This refers to those articles that talk about the benefits of the newly developed seeds and also the way of their cultivation. It may not have any events. But still the use of the word ‘narrative’ can be justified in a different sense. The narratives of *Keralakarshakan* can be and should be read in the background of a larger narrative that the magazine has been popularizing. This larger narrative is called as “the peasant-hero fighting the pest-villains to save the crop-queen” in this thesis. Each individual narrative of *Keralakarshakan* will have a new layer of meaning if read in the background of this larger narrative. This larger narrative is eventful and it has the elements of a heroic narrative. The aim of the present study is to read the individual narratives of *Keralakarshakan* in line with this larger narrative. Hence, the use of the word ‘narrative’ is justifiable since the individual narratives are viewed as a link in a larger narrative that has many events. Next chapter will talk in detail about this larger narrative.

Coming back to Genette’s book *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method*, he speaks about five categories which are important in the understanding of a novel. “Order”, “Duration”, “Frequency”, “Mood”, and “Voice” are these categories. He defines and explains each of these categories in different chapters. Though these categories are used mostly in the study of the novel, they can be used in other narrative forms also since Genette’s emphasis is on the narrative aspect. One example could be what he discusses in the chapter titled ‘Mood.’ Genette talks about what is known as “focalization” in narratology. It is obvious that he does not agree with many of the scholars’ opinions on the focalization aspect and he clearly distinguishes between who tells

the story and from whose perspective the story has been told. He explains it in simple terms that “who sees?” and “who speaks?” are different (186). Without going in to the details of his theory, let us examine how the concept of focalization can be helpful in the study of farm journals.

The story can be told from the view point of one of the characters. This is known as the internal focalization. The story can also be told from the point of view from outside the characters. This is common with stories with an omniscient narrator. This type of focalization is known as the external focalization.³⁵ Since *Keralakarshakan* brings so many stories about farmers, it is legitimate to ask a question regarding the focalization or perspective of these stories. One can see that internal focalization hardly happens in these stories. It is also true that the stories will not be told from the farmers’ perspective. The reason is that the farmers rarely if not never feature as the writers in the farm journals. It is the journalists who travel to villages and bring out their stories. Now it is logical to seek the meaning of external focalization in the context of *Keralakarshakan* or other farm journals in Malayalam. I got the logical explanation to this from my field work among the farmers and the journalists and I did not try to come up with an explanation purely from a narrative angle. There is no internal focalization in these stories since it is always somebody else who talks about the farmers. An inquiry into the intricacies of this leads to the knowledge that most of the writers in *Keralakarshakan* are government servants working in the Department of Agriculture who have a degree in Agricultural Science. Their class is fundamentally different from that of the farmers. This again leads to asking questions about the complexities of this relationship between the writers and the readers/ objects of writing of the magazine which is done in the last chapter of this thesis.

³⁵A third case is the zero focalization.

Coming back to Genette, he explains that by the term ‘story’, he means the “signified or the narrative content” and by the term ‘narrative’, he means the “signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself.” He also defines the term ‘narrating’ as “the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place (27).” These terms, i.e. ‘story’, ‘narrative’/ ‘discourse’, and ‘narrating’ can be borrowed without any change in their meanings in the study of the farm journals also. The only difference is that there is the invisible presence of a ‘larger narrative’ which has been mentioned before and which will be dealt with in detail in the fourth chapter. This larger narrative-i.e. the “peasant-hero fighting the pest-villains to save the crop-queen”- adds a second “order semiology,” to borrow a term from Barthes, to the text. So, if “narrative discourse” was a term which meant the interrelationship of the story-narrative/ discourse-narrating for Genette (29), in the present context, focus is given to the interrelationship of these terms as well as each of their relationship to the larger narrative. It can be seen that it has become conventional for the farm journalists to narrate this story of the larger narrative and in that process; they have not been narrating other stories from the real lives of the farmers. This phenomenon known as ‘disnarration’ will be explained briefly next.

3.5 Disnarration

Ever since the publication of the essay titled “The Disnarrated” by Gerald Prince, the concept of disnarrated has become a popular one among the narrative theorists. In the said essay, the author explains how in certain narratives, “the representation of certain experiences” and “the recounting of certain actions” have become a “taboo.” He observes that some events have become “unnarratable or nonnarratable.” Some of the reasons he gives for this includes “social, authorial, generic” and “formal.” This can also happen due to fact that mentioning certain things

are beyond the capacity of the narrator or it is problematic to narrate them (Prince 1). By the term “disnarrated,” Prince does not mean just the “unnarrated” and the “nonnarrated;” he also refers to those events that are not narrated but referred to in some other ways (2).

The implications of this term to the present study are far too many. It prompts us to ask many questions regarding the content of *Keralakarshakan*. One may, for example, genuinely ask why the magazine is popularizing certain methods of cultivation while being silent about other methods at a particular point in time. The same can be asked about crops, seeds, etc. Several reasons can be found here from governmental policy to the market trends that determine what is to be said and what not to be said. In his essay, Prince himself talks about a good number of reasons for disnarration. Here, there is an important question about the representation of farmers in *Keralakarshakan*. The magazine represents successful farmers quite a lot. At the same time, those farmers who suffer setbacks in cultivation are never represented. The case of those farmers who commit suicide is also the same. They become the disnarrated.

The simple reason for this is that *Keralakarshakan* is an official publication of FIB and the Government of Kerala. FIB is doing nothing other than PR work for the government. A magazine tasked with giving publicity to the government and its programmes cannot speak about farmer suicides. They are only supposed to talk about the glossy side of the agriculture. Also, the magazine’s aim is to give hope to the farmers and to spread the message that farming is profitable. For that reason also, the magazine cannot speak about the plight of the farmers. There is a narrative dimension to the same issue. It is that, from its inception over the years, the journalists of *Keralakarshakan* are bound to follow certain narrative conventions and stick to a narrative structure that has been evolved by the pioneer journalists and perfected by those who came after them. They have been spreading the narrative of the successful farmer. All other

narratives are related to this narrative in one way or the other. The next chapter will deal more with these different popular narratives found in *Keralakarshakan*.

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Chapter IV

The Peasant-Hero Fighting the Pest-Villains to Save the Crop-Queen: An Analysis of some of the Popular Narratives from *Keralakarshakan*, 1954-2020

This chapter has two parts. The first part analyzes what is called as the liminal devices of *Keralakarshakan* such as the cover page, editorial, advertisements, letters to the editor, etc. The second part analyzes the core content of the same magazine which is the articles on agricultural related matters. In the context of the thesis, the articles of *Keralakarshakan* are not viewed as journalistic articles alone; instead, they are viewed as narratives of different types. The chapter tries to find out how both the liminal devices and the narratives fit into the larger narrative on agriculture that *Keralakarshakan* has been circulating.

4.1 The Liminal Devices

4.1.a Cover Page

“Don’t judge a book by its cover,” is what a popular proverb may advice the common folk. The message of this aphorism’s implications for real life can be ignored conveniently in the context of the present study. What is worth noting here is the fact that there is a commonsensical notion that goes against treating the cover page as an important component of the text as a whole. It even creates a dichotomy between the cover page and the content where the former is attributed no worth and the latter is attributed much worth. The study of the cover pages of *Keralakarshakan* from 1954 to the present day will give a different idea from what the proverb is suggesting.

The study of cover pages- their merit- can be justified in a number of ways. First of all, it can be viewed as an objective of study on its own merits irrespective of whether it has anything to do with the content. Secondly, based on the assumption formed in the second chapter that the farm journals are imagining the farmers in a new way; it can be argued that the cover pages are the most important multimedia component in a farm journal that concretely depicts the shades of this imagination. Here, the terms ‘image’ and ‘imagination’ are connected more than linguistically. A third justification for analyzing the cover pages can be found in the structuralist logic. According to structuralism, it is always important to study the relationship between the elements of a structure and its totality. The cover page, being one of the elements of the physical body of the farm journals, deserves careful attention. The analysis that follows addresses some of these dimensions.

In the earlier days of *Keralakarshakan*, the cover page used to be a simple one which contained a picture; the title *Keralakarshakan* written on the cover page; and the details of the particular issue and publisher. *Keralakarshakan* is older than the modern linguistic state of Kerala since the latter was formed only in 1956. It was the agricultural department of Travancore and Kochi that published *Keralakarshakan* in those days. This used to be written on the cover page. Still the title was *Keralakarshakan* meaning the Kerala farmer which at that time was an idea yet to be fulfilled through the formation of the linguistic state in the then near future. Here, one can see that the journal imagined the state even before it was formed. Since Travancore was the seat of administration, the magazine used to be published from there. Thus, the old issues of *Keralakarshakan* and its cover page give us an idea of the imagination that led to the formation of the linguistic state.

In the nineteen fifties itself, the cover pages of *Keralakarshakan* evolved from pencil drawings and water color images to photographic images. Most of the cover page images were meant to convey an idea related to farming and these images had a poetic feel. These images were eloquent about the rural life and the world of farming. *Keralakarshakan* was still in its initial days then. But by then, the editorial board must have realized that the cover page is more than a label that just gives information about a product. This could be the reason why the images in the cover pages were given a title which was described along with the publication details of the issue inside. Thus, the cover pages became a tool to convey an idea; sometimes an idea related to the articles inside; sometimes an idea related to the larger project of the magazine.

In the first chapter, it has been argued that in the early decades, the articles of *Keralakarshakan* did not show any romanticism when they talked about farming. The cover pages did not share this attitude completely. Though they do reflect the “scientific” temper and show lack of genuine emotion quite often, they also present “romantic” and “romanticized” images. In that sense, the cover pages exhibit a sensibility which is different from the content of the magazine. The reasons for this disparity will be discussed at the end of the present analysis. But prior to that; some examples from every decade will be examined here to get an understanding of the dominant trends in the design of the cover pages.

The most dominant trend seen in the design of the cover pages was to show images that were characteristic of farming in Kerala. It is also worth noting that these images were quite common in Malayalam literature. Even now, literature and movies that try to go back to a “golden past” presents such images. To cite a random example, the cover page of the 1957 November issue of *Keralakarshakan* is given in the appendix 4. The picture shown in the cover is titled as the “eternal treasure of Kerala” which is mentioned in the index page of the same

issue. In the said cover page, the image of a real life farmer who crosses a rivulet can be seen. He carries something in the two pouches hung in a stick that lies across his shoulder. He may be carrying some agricultural produce to be sold in the nearby market. A coconut tree that is slanted at an angle less than forty five degree can be seen across the rivulet. The farmer is naked above the hip.

The cover page of the December issue of *Keralakarshakan*, 1957 presents the long shot of some rural scenery which is given in appendix 5. The title of the image is given as the 'River side'. The said picture presents the curvaceous path of a river with a few coconut trees and a small dam meant for irrigation; everything eloquent about the rustic beauty and farming. The activities following the harvest are portrayed in the cover page of the January issue of *Keralakarshakan* in 1958 which is given in appendix 6. One can easily feel the "romantic" aura surrounding such images. These images depict familiar scenes from village life and are marked by their sensuousness and simplicity.

The cover pages in the 1960s show similar trends. The common cover page images in the 60's included pictures of crops, flowers, scenes from agricultural activities, etc. The November-1965 issue of *Keralakarshakan* has the picture of a soldier and a farmer. This has been attached in the appendix 7. The title of the cover page is 'two warriors.' This is a concrete example of how the farmer was imagined in line with a state agenda. The image gives the message that the farmer is not someone who cultivates for himself and his family. S/ he is someone who cultivates for the people, the nation. He helps the state achieve food security and gain foreign currency. This has been the popular narrative about the farmer ever since independence. *Keralakarshakan* is no exception when it comes to popularizing this narrative. The act of "interpellation" involved in this popular narrative is hard to conceal.

In the post-independent India, one of the most important concerns of people as well as politicians was the food security. The images of the Bengal famines were fresh in the memories of people. This was the context in which farmer was given a respectable status in certain narratives coined by the politicians. But, outside these narratives, how much of this respect remained in the actual governmental policies and the attitude of the public remains unanswered. The farmer suicide is a case in point. Since the farmer is a warrior just as the soldier; the farmer committing suicide in his attempt to feed the nation should also be treated as a martyr just as a soldier who dies in a war. On the contrary, the attitude of the main stream media is to overlook this issue or treat him/ her disrespectfully. The farm journals in Malayalam, including *Keralakarshakan*, are no exception to this. One cannot find even a single write up on the suicide of a farmer. *Keralakarshakan* is the official magazine of FIB and the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare in Kerala. It can be understood why it doesn't bring out the cases of farmer suicides. Since, the government has the moral responsibility of farmer suicide; no government will circulate the stories of farmer suicides through its official magazine. But it is not even a case of speaking in the official language since the other private farm journals owned by big vernacular dailies or independent firms also follow the same trend.

Keralakarshakan never speaks about land politics in Kerala and it has never spoken about the farmer suicides. In the case of the private farm journals, they mention farmer suicides as a general issue here and there but never cover a particular incident of farmer suicide. Though the life story of the individual farmers who achieve success in farming is a popular theme of the farm journals including *Keralakarshakan*, the plight of individual farmers is never featured on the pages of the farm journals. Narrative theory can offer more insights to this but that will be discussed while analyzing the successful farmers' narratives.

One real question to be raised here is how the science community and the government officials hailing from an agricultural science background view the problems of the farmers. They tend to find a technological fix to the problems of farmers rather than a sociological fix. This has been mentioned in the first chapter. The Green Revolution itself was an attempt to increase the production and thus fulfill the food requirements of the nation without radically reforming the land relations. Thus, being state officials and the preference for a technological fix were two reasons that prevented the farm journalists from writing about certain topics including farmer suicides. But from a narrative perspective, there is one more reason why some topics are narrated and other topics are unnarrated in a farm magazine like *Keralakarshakan*. This chapter will definitely address this dimension.

Coming back to the topic in discussion, i.e. the cover pages of *Keralakarshakan*, the sixties were a period when the research centers in Kerala developed a lot of new seeds and the cover pages tried to popularize these achievements through their images. The cover page of the January issue of *Keralakarshakan*-1967 has the image of a few farmers and an agricultural laborer all of whom pose for a photo with the then agricultural minister C. Achutha Menon in a paddy field. The description of the picture given inside reads like “Thenan stands holding the head high.” This cover page has been given in appendix 8. Thenan was a newly developed seed in the sixties. There were many articles about this variety in that decade.

The cover page of January-1969 issue of *Keralakarshakan* has the image of the top of a coconut tree and two images of coconuts below that give the close up shots of the coconuts of the same coconut tree. This is given in appendix 9. The said images were of a new variety of coconuts then commonly called T into D which is very popular among the farmers even now. The tendency to provide images that give the feel of affluence is visible in the cover pages of this

decade. The image of a big bunch of plantain in the cover page of July 1967 issue is an example. Two boys have held the bunch from the ground. A similar image can be seen in the cover page of the February 1969 issue of *Keralakarshakan* where a girl is seen with a bunch of bananas holding it upright. This is given in appendix 10. In this image, the size of the bunch and the size of the bananas are considerably long. Such images give the feeling of affluence.

The cover pages of the 70's were dominated completely by photographic images, mostly black and white. The narrative of the new seed continues in the 1970's also. The cover page of the April 16-1974 of *Keralakarshakan* presents the image of a cow pea plant with a few cow peas in it. The image of this cover page is given in appendix 11. The description of the picture is given as "Poosa Vaisakhi: PuthiyaInamPayar" which can be translated as "Poosa Vaisakhi: a New Variety of Cow Pea." The 1974 July 1-16 issue gives the image of the T into D coconut tree's top. This is given in the appendix 12. Thus, cover page itself becomes a media to popularize the new varieties and they inspire, motivate and give hope to the farmers. The same urge is seen in popularizing the modern machineries also. The cover page of the August 16-1979 issue has the picture of a harvesting vehicle on the field. See appendix 13 for the said cover page. In the inset, there is the picture of a man holding a plough on his shoulder. The picture tries to depict the new changes in the field of agriculture. In the eighties, the title cum description of the cover page images can be seen in the cover page itself.

The cover pages in the 80's followed the same conventions more or less. The cover pages were either black and white or color. But, by then, the photographers have started exploring the different possibilities of the camera. The April-1980 issue shows the image of a coconut tree from a different angle. See Appendix 14 for the image. The photographers have also started arranging artificial set up for their photos. Two examples of this are shown in the appendix 15. In

each of these, a woman is seen posing for the photo in a very natural setting. The scenes are not natural but set up by the photographer in the outdoors. In the first example, i.e. Jan 1st 1980 issue, a woman is seen sitting in a field, may be plucking the weeds out. In the second example, i.e. the one came out on 1st Jun 1980, a woman is seen standing in the midst of cardamom plants lifting her face towards the camera. In both cases, the costumes of the ladies and the background add a romantic aura to the image. The way the cover pages stand in direct contrast with the content of the magazine can be explained by paying more attention to the second image mentioned above.

The Jun 1st 1980 issue has a long article on cardamom cultivation, perhaps the highlight of the particular issue. That is why the cover page has the picture of a lady standing in the midst of a few cardamom plants. But the articles talk about cardamom plantation in an “objective” and “matter of fact” way leaving no scope for imagination or romanticizing. The said article talk about a disease that is very common in the cardamom plants. It also has a graph detailing the hills of South India where cardamom is cultivated. This “matter of fact” description of the cardamom plantation stands in direct contrast with the romantic feel the cover page gives.

Coming back to the professionalism seen in the design of the cover page, the designers had started using more image manipulation techniques like cut, paste, superimpose and merge. Appendix 16 has a few such images. As a result of this, the designers were able to present the ideas more precisely and clearly. They were able to avoid any chances of multiple interpretation of the image by avoiding open-endedness. A single image can be open ended. But multiple images pasted into single frame can monitor the onlooker’s thoughts. So the shift from a single imaged cover page to a collage like cover page can also be interpreted as the shift from open-endedness to preciseness.

The picture of a mango on the cover page of May 1-1980 issue of *Keralakarshakan* is a case in point. In appendix 17, the image of the mangoes alone is given. In appendix 18, the entire cover page is given. The image of a mango may trigger a long line of thoughts in the mind of a Malayali reader. S/he may associate it with her/ his summer vacation which is the season of the mango. S/he may also associate it with the poem “Mampazham” (meaning “Mango”) written by the famous Malayalam poet Vailoppilli Sreedhara Menon. Usually, a Malayali will learn the said poem at some stage in his/ her school life since this poem regularly features in school text books. Thus, an average Malayali may associate mango with many things or emotions. But the said cover page tries to contain any open interpretation by including another picture in the inset which is evident from the appendix 18. The image in the inset is that of a bud mango plant. This prompts the onlooker to associate the mango with the bud mango trees and their fruits. It gives the clear message that the bud mango plant below will grow up into a tree and give good mangoes as the ones shown above. There stops the imagination!

The same issue has an article in which the qualities of bud mango trees are mentioned. The editorial board might have wanted the cover page to express the same message. And they might have been specific about expressing this particular meaning instead of leaving it for open interpretation. It is this function that the second image, i.e. the image of the bud mango plant serves. Thus, the new image editing tools like copying and pasting more than one image into the same frame helped convey “the” intended meaning instead of leaving it open-ended. Often, this was a means to complete the description the cover page designers and photographers intended to convey. One example could be the January 16th issue of 1980 which is given in appendix 19. In the said cover page, a lady is seen plucking the fruits from a tree where the fruit cannot be seen. The fruits are separately shown in a superimposed image. The picture of the lady plucking the

fruits alone would have left the cover page more open ended but the super imposed image channels the thoughts of the onlooker towards the intended meaning of the cover page designer.

The cover pages of the nineties were multi-colored with better clarity. The images were mostly those of crops, fruits, flowers, domesticated animals, events, machineries, etc. Some examples are given in appendix 20. The romantic images of the village folk were still a major feature of the cover pages. Some examples are given in appendix 21. But the most prominent feature of this decade was to present close up images of crops, vegetables, fruits, plants and other such things. Examples are given in appendices 22 and 23. Definitely, it is the better cameras that made such close up shots possible. One thing interesting about these close-up images is that most of them use close up shots not to explore a new aesthetic dimension or an innovative view; instead, they highlight the properties of the fruit, vegetable or flower. The purpose of such images was not to give an aesthetically pleasing look but to have a close observation. The closeness of the camera sometimes makes one wonder whether the image is seen through the lens of a camera or an actual magnifying lens!

In Appendix 22, the image of a pineapple which is the cover page of a certain issue is given. In normal case, a photographer will not capture a pineapple from such a close distance unless s/he wants to observe it very closely. This urge to observe the objects of nature very closely directly arises out of the scientific attitude. Not just observation, they are also intended to help the reader take the same look. The kind of romanticism that had been associated with the cover pages at times in the past decades is less common during this period. It is the close-up images that are more common in this decade.

The trend changed again in the 2000's with a lot of cover page images depicting the rural farmers, mainly paddy cultivators. Some examples are given in appendix 24. In fact, this trend had started in the nineties itself. The trend of close-up images still continued. In the same decade, one would also see the tendency to romanticize the country life and cultivating folks. Certain symbols that are not visible in the present but were characteristic of the village life in the past feature quite regularly in the cover pages. Appendix 25 has a few such images. The irrigation wheel, the umbrella made of palm leaves and the costumes that appear in each of the images in Appendix 25 are rather archaic. But they were presented naturally and as though characteristic symbols of the day-to-day agricultural activities in Kerala. This is nothing but romanticizing! Now this phenomenon goes directly against the formulation made in the first chapter that the farm magazines in Kerala lack any romanticism for the past. The intricacies of this facet will be dealt with below. One more trend can be seen during the same decade which became most prominent today. That is the tendency to bring out the images of farmers located in urban areas and farmers who do farming on terrace, green house, etc. New generation farmers or tech-turned farmers became the newest face of the farmers in *Keralakarshakan*. Appendix 26 has the images of many such cover pages.

This trend of capturing the images of the new generation and urban farmers became all the more prominent in the last decade where a new image of the farmer can be seen. Another result of bringing more images of terrace farming is that the male image of farmer has given way to the female image. Appendix 27 which has the images of a few such cover pages will show this feature clearly. In an excitement, one should not think that this changing image reflects a changing trend where women come out of the domestic space to start doing farming and the cover page designers are forced to acknowledge this. That is not the actual case. In the last

decade, *Keralakarshakan* has been giving stories about doing farming in domestic spaces like terrace farming and farming on the yard in grow bags. Mostly, it would be the women folk who are in charge of this type of farming. While the term ‘karshakan’ (farmer) brings the image of a male farmer, the terrace and grow bag cultivation brings the image of woman; or such an association has been found in the cover pages of *Keralakarshakan*. The case of poly house or green house farming reflects the same trend. The farmers shown in the images associated with these types of farming are mostly men as a result of which a male farmer’s image may come to the minds of the reader when these terms are heard. Thus, the male and female images of the cover pages reflect both the gendered nature of farming and the stereotyping involved in the representation.

As a concluding note to this section, it can be said that the cover page as a device do not stand in complete contrast with the different types of narratives that *Keralakarshakan* has been presenting. In fact, it compliments these narratives more often than not. But, as pointed out earlier in this section, sometimes, they do reflect a different sensibility; that is why romantic and romanticized images appear on the cover pages. A short note on the possible reasons for this is given below.

There are a number of binary opposites associated with farming. To list a few,

- i) Farmer v/s city dweller
- ii) Farmer v/s agricultural professional
- iii) Farmer v/s nature
- iv) Farmer v/s enemies of farming
- v) Country v/s city

- vi) Organic/ chemical inputs v/s enemies of farming
- vii) Crop v/s pests
- viii) Folk common sense v/s science, etc are some of the common binaries associated with agriculture.

The narratives in *Keralakarshakan* reflect the conflict between some of these binaries. For example, the narratives on certain crops will definitely reflect the binary between crop v/s pests since no discourse on a particular crop will be complete without mentioning the common pests that attack these crops. If a writer is introducing a new method through an article, such an article may reflect upon the conflict between the folk common sense v/s sciences. For example, an article on the benefits of drip irrigation will definitely say that the present ways of irrigation has demerits and the farmers should follow more scientific methods of irrigation like drip irrigation. Coming to the case of the cover pages, the cover pages will reflect either the contents of a particular issue or the larger project of *Keralakarshakan*. For example, an issue that has a lot of articles on bananas may have the image of a banana tree or some other images related to banana cultivation. If the cover page is not related with the specific content of an issue, then the option left is to show an image that represents agriculture/ farmer in Kerala in general. That is, the cover page will show an image that evokes a feeling about the agriculture/ farmer in Kerala. In all probability, such an image will reflect any of the binaries of i) or v) which means the farmer v/s the city dweller or the country v/s the city. It is not unlikely that to show what is characteristic of the farmer or the country side in Kerala, one would contrast them with their binary opposites. Romanticizing the farmer and the country side would be a good idea to contrast them with the city dweller and the city respectively. This is why the cover pages show a tendency to romanticize farming.

Moreover, there are more stereotypes than realities about the ideas of “farmer” and “countryside.” For example, the concept of *Keralakarshakan* or Kerala farmer itself is illusory since there is no Kerala farmer as such. There are only farmers of Travancore, farmers of central Kerala and the farmers of Malabar and so on. This is also not completely true since farming is different in each district of Kerala and it is also different within each of these districts. Also, a paddy farmer is different from a vegetable farmer who in turn, is different from a tea or coffee planter, who in turn, is different from a rubber planter who in turn, is different from a person growing cows. Anyway, they all come under the category of ‘Keralakarshakan’ or ‘the Kerala farmer.’ In an effort to represent this all encompassing entity, i.e. the ‘Kerala farmer’, a cover designer will have to resort to some of the already existing stereotypes and romanticized images.

In literature and movies, there are so many such images. To quote a familiar example from Malayalam poetry;

“Poor is the city where guises reign supreme

Rich is the country with all its virtues.”³⁶

Quite understandably, the cover page designers will have to depend on such images to represent the ‘Kerala farmer’ and the ‘Kerala Villages.’ This is why the cover pages sometimes add a touch of romanticism in its images which is uncharacteristic as far as the content of the magazine is concerned. At the same time, it has to be maintained that this is an exception to the larger trend seen in the journal. The analysis of more liminal devices like the editorial and advertisements will give more clarity in this matter.

³⁶ These lines are my own translation of Kuttippurathu Keshava Menon’s lines from the poem “Grameena Kanyaka.”

4.1.b Editorial

The editorial of *Keralakarshakan* is a feature that addresses its readers most directly. The editorial may be a note by the editor as a representative of the editorial board. In the larger sense, the editorial presents the official view of the publisher in matters of agriculture and related affairs. The nature of the speaker(s) and reader(s) and the relationship between them largely determines the message here. A brief analysis of the editorials of *Keralakarshakan* from the days of its inception to the present day will be done here drawing concepts from narratological theory related to the speaker and reader.

The speaker of the editorial note is almost always the Chief Editor. The Chief Editor is rather a position than a person. As a result, what s/he writes is not her/ his personal opinion; but the opinion of a collective called the editorial board. The editorial board is also not an independent collective. It is bound to reflect the official view of the Government of Kerala in matters related to agriculture. In fact, FIB, who publishes *Keralakarshakan*, is a separate wing of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of Kerala. This institute is responsible for agricultural extension, information dissemination and smooth communication of information between the government and the farmers. At another level, the Government of Kerala cannot frame policies completely free from the National policy on agriculture which will be framed by the central government. In a nutshell, the view of the editorial collective reflects the view of the state government and to a lesser extent, central government also. The following analysis tries to uncover some key aspects of the editorial notes of *Keralakarshakan*.

The titles of some of the editorial notes in the initial days of *Keralakarshakan* show the vision and thrust of the editorial board. A few examples of the editorial titles from its initial days include: “Agricultural training”, “Use more local manures”, “Gliricidia week”, “Gliricidia month”, “Make the maximum out of fertilizer loans”, “Use pesticides in coconut trees”, etc. The editorials mostly focus on popularizing the different schemes of the government and give suggestions to the farmers as indicated by the editorial note “Make the maximum out of fertilizer loans.” This editorial note is given in appendix 28. The editorial board is conscious of their task and they try to do maximum justice to it. Apart from being independent individuals and professionals trained in Agricultural Science, the members of the editorial collective and the writers of *Keralakarshakan* are supposed to assume the roles of a category of intellectuals who mediate between the actual farmers and the government. Here, the parameters of these intellectuals are always already set in the form of the policies of the state government and its department of agriculture. Neither the editorial collective, nor a writer writing in *Keralakarshakan* can go beyond these set parameters.

In fact, the agricultural professionals come across these parameters much before they become professionals. They encounter them as soon as they join an institution for getting a degree in Agricultural Science. These institutions are run or controlled by the government. Their curriculum will be framed with a view to achieve the goals of the governments at the state and centre. The point to be seen here is that, as a community trying to impart scientific knowledge to the farming community, what the editorial collective and the writers are doing is not presenting scientific/ universal truths before the farmers. What they present is suggestions, advice and instructions that are helpful in achieving the goals set by the government.

In the early issues, there are editorial notes asking the farmers to “Use more local manure (“Kooduthal” 2).”³⁷ Another editorial asks the farmers to observe the ‘Gliricidia month (“Gliricidia Maasam” 3).’³⁸ One more editorial can be mentioned here that tries to popularize gliricidia. This time, the editorial asks the farmers to observe ‘Gliricidia week (“GliricidiaVaaram” 2).’³⁹ In those days, chemical fertilizers were not sufficiently available in India and so was the case with Kerala. There were only a few factories producing chemical fertilizers. The only way to compensate this was by using more locally made manures and by growing plants like Gliricidia that can be used as organic manure.

This changed later especially after the Green Revolution. The state and central governments started setting up more factories producing chemical fertilizers. Many factories were established in the private sector as well. The policy on Indian Agriculture had also changed by this time. The Green Revolution was preaching the heavy use of external chemical inputs as a result of which the farmers were prompted to do the same. Quite naturally, the trend of asking the farmers to use more local manures and promoting Gliricidia was not as common in the seventies and eighties as it used to be in the fifties and sixties. Thus, the editorial notes and articles were articulate about using the available external chemical inputs. An example can be the editorial note of November 1958 that urges the farmers to use chemical pesticide on coconut trees (“Thengukalkku” 3).

One thing that has to be clarified here is the fact that Kerala cannot be compared to a state like Punjab that is often projected as a successful example of Green Revolution. The Green Revolution did not affect the agricultural sector in Kerala. Also, the agricultural professionals in

³⁷ The complete note of the said editorial is given in the appendix 29.

³⁸ The said editorial has been attached as appendix 30.

³⁹ The said editorial has been attached as appendix 31.

Kerala did not recommend the blind adherence to the new methods; instead, they handled the new developments more judiciously. This is reflected in the editorial policy of *Keralakarshakan* also.

Coming back to the trajectory of the editorial note, the story took a turn again in the nineties when the farmers in Kerala and the state government started taking notice of the ill-effects of the use of chemical farming. The editorial collective then started appealing to the farmers that the irrational use of the chemical inputs should be stopped! A good section of the professionals and the government of Kerala itself started promoting the advantages of eco-friendly farming by then. Slowly, this attitude gained more currency and today it is somewhat stronger than ever. This is visible in the tone of the editorial notes and the articles of *Keralakarshakan* in the recent decades. Two examples can be cited here to illustrate this point. One is the editorial note of the November 2006 issue of *Keralakarshakan* which is titled as “Tubers, please come back.” With a touch of nostalgia, the editorial reminds the readers that the cultivation of tubers like tapioca, yam, arrow root, purple yam, lesser yam, etc. were most common in Kerala a few decades ago but now they are not very common (“KizhanguVargangale” 2).⁴⁰

The observation made here is true. It is a fact that these tubers were part of the regular diet of the Keralites and that tapioca was even a staple. At the same time, it has to be kept in mind that rice became the major staple of Kerala only after the Green Revolution and because of the countrywide shift to cereals. It is not that people willingly abandoned certain crops and went after cereals. It is due to the changing trends, incentives provided by the state and central governments in doing the cultivation of certain crops, the changing market, etc. that the farmers

⁴⁰ The said editorial has been attached as appendix 33.

were forced to shift to a few crops. Governments' agricultural extension programmes have played a part in this change. *Keralakarshakan* was also part of this change. But that will be conveniently overlooked by the editors more often than not.

Another telling example in this regard is the editorial of May 2016 which is titled as "The messengers of holy harvest." The editorial note says that "the calamity of chemical farming, which was the need of the hour, is haunting the human race like a nightmare." "In order to end this ominous chapter, let us return to the eco-friendly organic farming. There are trained experts serving the right message ready to help you at your arm's length. Please receive them and make them active." The editorial views the present way of chemical farming as disastrous and holds the farmers responsible for it indirectly. The editorial views professionals who are capable of comprehending the situation and advocating changes as the representatives of a group capable of making an end to this ("Vishudha Vilavinte" 2).⁴¹

The two groups communicating in the pages of *Keralakarshakan* are the professionals and the farmers. Quite ironical to these terms, the term '(agricultural) professionals' does not mean that they practice cultivation. Equally ironical is the assumption that the practicing cultivators are supposed to gain knowledge from a group due to the latter's training in a subject. The last chapter discusses this dynamics in more detail. Here a few observations can be made on the nature of the editorials and the articles in general.

First of all, the speaker of the editorials, as indicated in the beginning, is not a person. S/he expresses the opinions of a collective that is backed by larger collectives and his/ her tone is modulated by set principles. S/ he speaks on the capacity of the government as well. The receiver

⁴¹ The said editorial has been attached as appendix 34.

on the other hand is also not any ordinary individual. The receiver or reader is addressed as a farmer. Two terms that can be borrowed from narratology to help define the situation are the ‘Implied Author’ and the ‘Implied Reader’. To put most simply, the Implied Author is not the flesh-and-blood author as we know him/ her as a person. The Implied Author represents that persona whom we know through a specific author’s works. Similarly, the reader, better be called as the target audience, is not anyone capable of or interested in reading a farm journal. The identity addressed to in the farm journal is that of a farmer. The farming community who subscribe to *Keralakarshakan* is the Implied Reader.

The communication is made on the basis of some assumptions about these two entities. Oddly enough, these assumptions are formed by the Implied Authors alone. The assumptions of the Implied Authors about themselves and also about the Implied Reader determine the nature of communication and what is communicated. This is why the editorials and articles introduced new methods of cultivation in the early decades of *Keralakarshakan*. The Implied Author assumes that the Implied Readers do a certain way of farming because they lack the knowledge of another way of farming. Later when the Implied Authors changed their opinion about the same method, they have appealed to the farmers to change that way. This was done by conveniently forgetting the fact that they are also responsible for the method of farming that the farmers commonly follow these days. What is visible here is the concrete division between the intellectual world and the world of practice. The professionals representing the intellectual world speak about what is theoretically correct at a given point in time. The farmers representing the world of practice are supposed to listen to the opinions of the intellectual world. The editorials and articles can be understood better by keeping this dynamics in mind.

The analysis of the liminal devices show, as hinted earlier, that they are part of the book not just because it is customary to add them; in fact, they convey the general message that the content of the journal tries to convey through its articles. The analysis of this main content will be more informative as far as knowing the narrative dimension of this journal is concerned.

4.2 Popular Narratives from *Keralakarshakan*

Apart from the regular features of a magazine like the cover page, editorials, advertisements, letters to the editor, etc. there is the main content of the magazine which is its articles on various matters related to agriculture. As can be seen in the following analysis, these articles of *Keralakarshakan* are characterized not by their journalistic kind of reporting; but by their narrativity. It can be argued that as a magazine for a particular social group, what *Keralakarshakan* has been doing is not just information dissemination, but creating certain motifs and constructing some of the most popular narrative models.

Merely by looking at the titles of articles in the index of *Keralakarshakan* over the decades, one can see the major types of articles in this journal. There are the articles about crops, pests, governmental programmes, fertilizers, pesticides, real life farmers, etc. In the first few decades of *Keralakarshakan*, the journal had been trying to present “scientific” information on crops, pests, methods of farming and also information for solving the practical difficulties of farming. But in recent decades, especially after 2000, *Keralakarshakan* has started bringing out more stories of real life farmers. In fact, even from its initial days, *Keralakarshakan* had stories of real farmers who achieved success in real life. The following analysis tries to understand the narrative dimensions of such stories.

4.2.a The Narrative of the Farmer Hero or the Successful Farmer's Narrative

One of the most popular features of *Keralakarshakan* today is the real life stories of successful farmers. Every issue of *Keralakarshakan* will have at least three such real life stories. Though such stories have been featuring in this magazine for more than six decades, some of the narrative elements remain the same. In order to get into the structural elements of such stories, one small example can be analyzed here as a sample. The example is taken from the July 2019 issue of *Keralakarshakan*. This piece is written by Sajeev Chandran Sreevaraham, a prominent writer of *Keralakarshakan* and the present Assistant Editor of the journal. The story he presents is that of a real life farmer, Vinod, who achieved success in plantain cultivation. The piece begins with a small description of Vinod's background, how he became a plantain farmer and what makes him so special. What makes him special is his interest in collecting different plantain varieties and then selling the corms to people who seek different varieties. Thus, he earns a good amount of money. Now he has about 306 plantain varieties and his name has been featured in the Limca Book of World Records for that (8-9).

One would get the most basic narrative structure of the narrative of the successful farmer from this example. This narrative has the following narrative elements through which the story unfolds:

- i) Vinod starts (plantain) farming (Beginning).
- ii) He starts collecting rare varieties of banana plants (Turning point).
- iii) He makes money out of selling the suckers.
- iv) His son helps him these days.
- v) He achieves fame (ending).

Each of the steps through which the narrative unfolds can be called as narrative elements. The characters that play different roles in this narrative can be called as agents. Considering the specialty of the narratives in *Keralakarshakan*; the term ‘agents’ should be applicable even to non-humans. In the present story that was discussed above; the banana plants, suckers, etc. are all agents since the banana plant plays a role in the step (ii) and the suckers play a role in the step (iii). His son is also an agent in this case. Now these agents can be named also. The farmer around whom the plot is constructed is always ‘the hero.’ He begins his mission, faces challenges and successfully completes his mission. His son can rightly be called as ‘the helper.’ The banana plant can be called as the ‘crop queen’ that brings luck to the farmer. As one can rightly see, many of the exciting elements and agents are missing in this simple narrative. A more complex narrative would provide a broader framework for analysis. For that, another example can be taken here.

This time, the example is taken from the January 2012 issue of *Keralakarshakan* written by Lalsuna P. K. It has a story about a farmer named Poulose who does vegetable farming in Kodancheri in Calicut. He is the Harithamithra award winner which is given by the government of Kerala for the best vegetable farmer. The story of Poulose as given in *Keralakarshakan* by Lalsuna P. K. can be written briefly in a few sentences. He lost his mother at an early age. He had to go a long way to buy vegetables in those times. In order to save time and money, Poulose started growing vegetables. He became a full time vegetable farmer twenty years ago. He started doing farming by taking up areca nut orchards on lease where the trees have gone useless due to disease. He would chop the areca nut trees at a man’s height and use the stub as pillars for pandol. He would cultivate vegetables on the same land. He would cultivate vegetables in rubber plantation lands also but only in the first three years after the rubber plants have been planted. He

divides his entire land that he took up on tenant basis and divides them into plots. He does the cultivation of different crops in different plots according to the season. He uses different manures prepared by him along with some chemical fertilizers. He insists that the cleanliness of the land is the most important factor in cultivation for which he has to deal with the weeds. He also uses *Pseudomonas* and *Tricoderma* to control diseases (40-41).

By breaking down this seemingly small summary, one would get the narrative elements and agents of this narrative. The narrative elements are:

- i) Poulose starts cultivation to overcome a certain difficulty in his life (Beginning)
- ii) Twenty years ago he becomes a full time vegetable farmer
- iii) He brings in innovation in vegetable farming by taking up areca nut and rubber plantations that can be used for vegetable farming for a limited period (turning point)
- iv) He cultivates different varieties of vegetables in different plots in different seasons
- v) He uses a number of fertilizers and pesticides including the ones available in the market and also the ones prepared by him
- vi) He gets the state government award for the best vegetable farmer

Now the agents of this narrative are:

- a) Poulose – the farmer – the hero
- b) Vegetable crops –The hero loves this agent and does everything to protect her – the crop queen
- c) Factumphose, Pottash, Neem Cake, *Pseudomonas*, *Tricoderma*, etc. – Chemical and other inputs and inputs prepared by Poulose as cure to certain diseases and as a medicine for the health of his plants– The magical agents

- d) The weeds and pests – the agents that attack the crops and ruin the hero's plans - the villains
- e) The hero's son – helps his father in his mission - the helper

Agent a) in the above list denotes the hero and agent d) denotes the villain. The agent b) has been handled by the hero with all parental care and b) occupies the role of a queen in a heroic narrative. To protect the queen from the villains, the hero gets the assistance from the magical agents. The hero has helpers like his wife, children, agricultural officers, etc. who will help him/ her in his/ her mission.

Thus, the narrative of the real life farmer follows the same mythical structure with a farmer hero, his crops that he cares a lot, the villains like pests and weeds, helpers like the farmer's wife or children, magical agents such as chemical/ organic fertilizers, pesticides, etc. A broad list of elements and agents of this narrative can be prepared and this list can explain any successful farmer's narrative. Such a list prepared from my reading of the narratives of the successful farmers in *Keralakarshakan* is given below.

The elements of the successful farmer's narrative:

Stage I – The hero starts his/ her mission

- i) The farmer hero starts farming under a certain situation.
- ii) S/ he leaves his/ her present profession/ occupation and turns into farming.
- iii) S/he makes it her/ his full time occupation.
- iv) S/he buys more land or takes more land on lease.
- v) S/he expands her/ his cultivation gradually.

Stage II – The hero gets help from a helper

- i) The hero is helped by an Agricultural Officer where the latter gives him suggestions or ideas.
- ii) Or he is helped by a bank that provides him credit.
- iii) The hero's family members start assisting him in his mission.
- iv) It is not unlikely that the farmer hero gets help from *Keralakarshakan* itself!

Stage III – The crisis

- i) The hero encounters particular problem.
- ii) Certain pest affects her/ his crop or s/he has crop loss due to a disease/ natural calamity or there is a market failure for his/ her crops.
- iii) The crisis may also arise due to certain issues in the farmer hero's personal life.

Stage IV – The solution

- i) The hero finds a solution for her/ his problems.
- ii) Some magical agents help him find a solution/ cure.
- iii) The help may be provided by the same agents that are mentioned in stage II.

Stage V – The innovation

- i) The hero brings in an innovation.
- iv) S/he focuses on a particular crop/ breed or method.
- v) S/he develops a new method.
- vi) S/ he invents new fertilizers, pesticides, etc.
- vii) The innovation becomes successful.

Stage VI – The hero establishes himself/ herself

- i) More than as a farmer, the hero achieves fame as a path breaker.
- ii) S/he starts a nursery or turns into selling seeds/ rhizomes/ plants etc.
- iii) S/ he starts a start up or becomes an entrepreneur or agripreneur.

Stage VII – The hero gets recognition

- i) The hero achieves fame and recognition.
- ii) S/ he gets an award from the state government for the best farmer.
- iii) S/ he gets a certain title or is recognized as an expert in his/ her field.

Stage VIII

- i) The hero has his heirs in his/ her sons/ daughters/ disciples.

These are the basic narrative elements that can explain any successful farmer's narrative in *Keralakarshakan*.

Now some of the most popular agents of the successful farmer's narrative can be listed as:

- a) The Hero- always the farmer irrespective of gender
- b) The villain – the pests, the weeds, etc. They range from single cell organisms like virus and fungus to some of the tallest creatures on earth like elephants.
- c) The Queen – certain crops/ plants/ trees/ breeds, etc.
- d) The Helper – the husband/ wife/ children/ relative of the farmer or an Agricultural Officer or a bank or the government or another person with a lot of experience in the field of agriculture. *Keralakarshakan* itself acts as a helper in some situations.

- e) Magical Agents – certain seeds/ chemical or organic pesticides/ fertilizers, etc.
- f) Universal Panacea – certain agents mentioned in e) that can solve a lot of problems and comes in handy in many situations. Eg: Bordeaux mixture, *Pseudomonas*, *Tricoderma*, *Verticellium*, Fish Meal, some slurries, Jeevamrutham etc.

Not all successful narratives will have each and every element of these; nor will they appear in the same order. But every successful farmer's narrative can be reduced down to some of these elements. Similarly, these narratives will have some of these agents but not all as a rule.

The blue print of the successful farmer's narrative also helps understand the larger narrative that *Keralakarshakan* has been narrating over the decades. All the articles in *Keralakarshakan* have been in one way or the other narrating parts of this larger narrative about the farmer hero. There are articles about certain crops that are meant to give the relevant information about them. A close reading of it will expose the image of the crop queen that the farmer has to protect at any cost. The villainous pests will try to abduct or harm this queen but the hero has to be vigilant against this. A few examples from *Keralakarshakan* having the details of the crops and pests will uncover this fact.

4.2.b The Narrative of the Crop Queen

The sub-heading refers to all the articles on some kind of crops; let it be cereals, oil seeds, plantation or other crops. This can also be some animals/ birds/ aquatic creatures. The pattern, style, and language of such articles would disclose the fact that these articles present the crops in a female image with majestic attributes. A number of factors contribute to this fashioning. First of all, fertility has always been connected to the female sex. This provides an easy option to view the crops in a female image. There are certain crops in whose case this line

of imagination is easier like the plants cultivated for their flowers. The flowers provide a female image. The case is similar in the case of creepers, climbers and some other plants. Though almost all plants and trees have both the male and female flowers in them, the dominant tendency is to view the plants and trees in a female image. Ancient myths in different languages point towards this tendency. Persephone, the Greek goddess of vegetation and Flora, the Roman goddess of plants are two examples.

In the context of Kerala, there are many examples from the folklore that show the parental image of the farmer and the female image of the crops. There is a proverb that says “Seeds sown in Aswathi;⁴² children raised by the father; and mango put inside the Chinese clay will never be spoiled.”⁴³ The proverb gives a parental image of the farmer. As for the female image of the crops, many examples from the folklore can be cited. The vast majority of the village level local deities in Kerala are of Pre-Hindu origin. The local festivals (*Poorams*) associated with these deities are also harvest festivals of those villages. There is a clear connection between the female goddess worship, which is most common in Kerala; and agriculture. One would exhaust pages by citing examples of this which is not required to make the connection between these two aspects. One common assumption that can be formed here by way of reference to the local beliefs alone and without drawing much from elite literature is the assumption that the female image of crops is deeply rooted in agricultural communities. What is

⁴²Aswathi is a Njattuvela according to the Malayalam Agricultural Calendar. There are twenty eight Njattuvelas and each Njattuvela has thirteen and half days. Aswathi is the best Njattuvela to sow paddy seeds.

⁴³ Just like the protection a tender mango put in Chinese clay gets, the seeds covered with dried cow dung and ash will also get similar protection. The meaning of the proverb should be grasped considering these details also (Thazhakkara 6).

relevant here is the fact that *Keralakarshakan* has retained and popularized the image of the parental farmer and the female image of the crops.⁴⁴ A few examples will testify to this point.

The first example is taken from the January issue of *Keralakarshakan* in 1958. There is an article about ginger written by T Gopalan Nair and P K Gopalakrishnan. The second paragraph of the article reads like,

In the Malabar area, ginger is cultivated as an alternating crop. The farmers will cultivate chilly and finger millet in the first two years respectively. On the third year, they will cultivate ginger. After the harvest of the previous season, in the beginning of the summer, the land should be tilled properly. In April, when there is first rain, the soil should be tilled three times. Then prepare the beds and drainages with the beds having nine feet length, three feet width, and nine inches height. There should be drainages that are one foot wide between two beds. To plant the ginger seeds, pits should be made at a distance of nine inch and the pits should be having two inches depth. The ideal ginger seeds should be having two sprouts in them and they should be having a weight of two ounce. For one acre of land, one thousand kilos of ginger seeds is needed. (8)

The detailed description and the care with which each of the minute aspects are detailed deserve the special attention here. This interest in the details of the object/ process described is the most striking character of an article about a crop. In literature, one would often come across the detailed description of the heroine/ heroine's beauty. The case is similar here. It is not the researcher's intention to say that in literature, the love for details is always associated with the

⁴⁴ The practice of giving female names to plant varieties, both traditional and new hybrid ones is a long held practice.

heroine/ her beauty or to say that in *Keralakarshakan*, the love for details is always associated with the crops and the way they are cultivated. The intention is to point out a similarity which could not be accidental. Just like the heroine's beauty provides ample scope for careful detailing to the poet/ writer, the crops and other aspects associated with them provide the same to the farm journalist too. Also, the archetypal triangular relationship of the hero-princess-villain survives in the popular narratives of farm journalism with the pattern of the peasant hero-crop queen-pest villain. More examples would throw more light on this matter.

The second example in this section corresponds to the first example largely since it is about Musk Turmeric (*kasturimanjal* or Wild Turmeric) which is more or less similar to ginger so that the pattern of description would also be similar. The article is taken from a more recent issue of *Keralakarshakan*, the October 2009 issue to be exact. The article is titled as "Musk Turmeric: for health and beauty," written by B. K. Jayachandran. It gives the detailed description of Musk Turmeric cultivation. The writer gives the details of the beds to be made, the pits on which the seed should be inserted, the average length to be kept between two plants, etc. Instead of quoting those details, the quotations from the article would be limited to that part which describes the Musk Turmeric and the East Indian Arrowroot.

The leaves of the Musk Turmeric will have green color and the rare part of the leaves will be tender. But the East Indian Arrowroot has a violet line starting from its bottom part and reaching the top of the leaf. This will help distinguish between these two varieties. (8)

Thus, the article is also about the authentic variety and its fake genotypes. The case of false heroes and false heroines are not exclusive to literature! The article goes on to say some of

the pests that may attack the plant and some diseases. A common villain of these plants is the shoot borer or stem borer (*thanduthurappan puzhu*). Using organic fertilizer will be a good cure for this. The article mentions some diseases like leaf blotch and mosaic disease (*ilappullirogam*) for which Bordeaux Mixture (bordo mix) is a good cure (9).

Thus, the crops are those agents in the narratives that occupy a role between the farmer hero and the pest villains. The magical agents like organic fertilizers and Bordeaux Mixture can help the hero in fighting the villains out. A detailed discussion on the villain's role follows next.

4.2.c Villain with a thousand faces

One of the most important outcomes of the popular narratives of *Keralakarshakan* is the introduction of the pests as a major character into the narratives related to farming. The folk literature did have a lot of stories about the farmer and farming, but the pests and other villains do not have a prominent role in them. Recently; the you-tube channels, face book pages, and whats-app groups have created weighty discourse on farming and related matters. But in those discourses also, the villain's presence is minimal. In the digital platforms, the thrust is placed upon the diseases more than the agents responsible for them. Thus, a major feature of *Keralakarshakan* is the presentation and representation of the pest-villains with genuine attributes in the farming related narratives. This section checks some of those attributes and their mode of representation.

The discourse on the enemies of farming is present in *Keralakarshakan* from its initial days. To quote an excerpt from an article titled "An Absolute Enemy of Rice" that came out in the April-Jun 1955 issue,

There are about forty different breeds of insects in our country that damage rice plants. Most of them are not seen in all seasons. But the Rice Bug (*Ezhiyan* or *Chazhi*) attacks the paddy cultivation in almost all seasons. So the Rice Bug can be considered as the most important enemy of paddy plants. (40)

The article then goes on to narrate the life cycle of this insect and tells how it affects the cultivation. The next and perhaps the most important part of the article is the remedy for this pest attack. According to the writer, a chemical called BHC can control this pest effectively. “Ever since the medicine called BHC was discovered, the control of this pest has become very easy,” says the writer. The writer gives the directions for the use of this medicine and ends the note with an advice to the farmers to contact their nearby agricultural officer (41). The article also has a couple of graphical representation of the bug.

The article mentioned above leaves a number of clues about the characterization of the pests in the narratives of *Keralakarshakan*. First of all, the introduction of the villain provides a different dimension to the narratives on farming in general and the narrative of the farmer-hero in particular. It is the narrative on pests that gives a glossy image to the ordinary farmer. The heroic figure of the farmer will be complete only when there is at least one villain. The villains have been introduced through the discourse on pests, weeds, etc. The presence of these villains demands the hero to show off his heroism. In the absence of the villainous element, the hero wouldn't be as heroic.

Secondly, the villain is presented as a fierce enemy of the hero. The villain has extraordinary abilities that may fail the hero. An example could be the Rice Bug that can attack the paddy plant in all seasons and cause considerable damage or even complete loss of crop.

Thus, the attributes of the hero has been kept to the minimal in the narratives while the villain has an overabundance of attributes. The villain comes in different guises. In the case of paddy cultivation, the villain may be a Bug; but in the case of the cashew cultivation, the villain may be a mosquito with altogether different attributes. The same goes with all the other crops. In some cases, the villain is even invisible to the naked eye. Villains of the fungi and virus family are examples. Thus, the villainous figure has a thousand faces like the virus, fungi, bugs, pests, worms, flies, mosquitoes, mice, pea cocks, pigs, elephants, etc. The representation of the villain creates awe in the minds of the readers. The graphics add special effects to add to this effect.

Thirdly, the villain's presence makes the introduction of the magical elements an absolute necessity. In the early days of *Keralakarshakan*, the magical agents were mostly chemical pesticides/ fungicides/ weedicides, etc. But later on, the organic substances started taking up their place.

4.3 Conclusion

The mission of *Keralakarshakan* was to popularize the achievements of Agricultural Science among farmers who are not acquainted with it. The journal tried giving concrete directions to the ordinary farmers in matters related to agriculture. It also communicated the government's vision on agriculture. It began from the realization that to meet the challenges of the new age, farmers need to have more than their traditional wisdom; for that "scientific knowledge" must be imparted to them. But for all these, it needed to talk in a language that would catch the attention of its readers. It had to invent new modes of articulation that would win the minds of the ordinary farmers. Thus, the persons responsible for running the magazine had to think about "how to say" which became equally important as "what to say." As a result, they

knowingly or unknowingly followed the conventions of the heroic narrative which is deeply rooted in the folk consciousness for a long time. So, as the mission progressed, the *Keralakarshakan* team invented narrative models the elements of which were borrowed from the folk tradition wittingly or unwittingly. Once a narrative model is established, then the narratives will be adjusted and readjusted according to this model. Perhaps this can explain why certain stories about the farmer appear in the journal but why certain other stories do not appear. To ask why there are no stories of farmers who commit suicide in *Keralakarshakan* is equally farcical like the question that asks why there are no Comedies at the end of which the hero dies a tragic death. The truth is that the comedies are not meant for that. Similarly, the narratives of farm journals are not meant for discussing the tragic suicides of farmers.

Bringing the narrative dimension in the study of *Keralakarshakan* does not deny the role of the editorial board or the policy of the government in determining and controlling the narrative altogether; but it opens up a new way of reading the text which exposes the different dynamics that shapes the structure and meaning of the text. The irony is that the project that started as a mission to swap the folk wisdom with science started borrowing from the same folk tradition that they intended to replace! The heroic narrative is not the invention of the modern age, nor is it the creation of the scientific temperament. They are part of the human psyche from time immemorial. It was by borrowing the elements of this tradition that the present narrative models of *Keralakarshakan* are formed.

Before concluding the note, a few things have to be made clear. The argument that there are set narrative models does not deny the possibility of change in them or the agency of the writers who pen these narratives. In fact, there are concrete examples that show such changes. In the early two decades, the narratives of *Keralakarshakan* were centered more on the villains than

the hero; though, at large, the structure of the narrative remained the same. In those days, there were more articles on the enemies of the farmer/ crop. The general view in those decades supported chemical farming which viewed pests and other organisms as the enemies of farming. Slowly, the overuse of the chemical inputs led to the extinction of many organisms which were acknowledged to be congenial for agriculture. Moreover, the use of chemical inputs created new enemies that were hitherto unknown. All this led to a new perception on agriculture. In this scenario, the narrative on the villains was pushed to the back seat and the narrative centered on the hero-farmer came to the fore. Thus, the narrative construction was always influenced by a number of factors. What is relevant is that the narrative structure overcame the changes in details. As for the question of the agency of the writers, it has to be researched separately. The next chapter, in fact, addresses this question.

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Chapter V

Polyglots writing Mega Narratives: Farm Journals as an Intellectual Platform

This chapter maps and outlines some of the intellectual discourses in Malayalam- oral and written- related to the farmers and farming. It then tries to place the farm journals and journalists within this sphere and theorize them. The chapter gives special emphasis to the category of “intellectuals.” It proposes the theory that farm journals occupy the space between the territories of science and folk. As a media, the farm journals incorporate and try to conflate the elements of the folk and science but these three realms; i.e. the science, folk and the popular; retains their independence to a large extent even when they are interdependent. Similarly, I argue here that the farm journalists write in a language which is termed as the “hybrid language” since they use references from the folk, popular, and science cultures alike. The articles in the farm journals are characterized by the abundance of historical, sociological, scientific, folk cultural and statistical data. This style of writing becomes polyglotic and the end product turns out to be “meganarratives.” “Hybrid” is the term used to define the language of the farm journals where as “meganarratives” is the term used to characterize their intellectual output.

Before elaborating these ideas, it would be good to begin by classifying the intellectual work related to farmers and farming by mapping them. To start with it, the question of what constitutes an “intellectual work” should be answered. From sowing to reaping to marketing, farming involves a lot of activities. Each and every step requires a certain amount of mental or intellectual effort. The farmers have to do this on their own; either as individuals or as groups. The farmers cannot exist without this. Thus, it can be said that all farmers are intellectuals.⁴⁵ But

⁴⁵ It cannot be denied that there is an obvious allusion to Gramsci in this statement. But at the same time, it has to be said at the onset that Gramsci’s concerns while theorizing the intellectuals and the concerns of this thesis are

at the same time, they are not intellectuals by profession. The emergence of the professional intellectuals in the field of agriculture is a phenomenon that started with agricultural research and extension. Research activities in the field of agriculture in India started during the colonial periods. The idea of agricultural extension was given prominence during after independence when the rulers were anxious about the scenario of another Bengal famine. The idea of agricultural extension and the green revolution are the two factors that shaped the farm journals in India.

The intellectuals in the area of farming can be classified into the following categories.

- a) Farmers b) professional intellectuals c) inventors d) philosophers e) narrators (practically all farm journalists)

The discussion that follows will try to define and theorize these categories and their relation with one another.

5.1 Farmers

Farmers are not intellectuals by profession but engage in intellectual work due to the requirements of their occupation. Though all farmers are intellectuals, there are some who are exceptional. Their exceptionalism is acknowledged by the other farmers due to their experience, knowledge, the innovation that they brought about, the special tasks that they took up etc. The president of a *Patashekharasamithy*⁴⁶ or a veteran in the farming of a particular crop is an example of the exceptional farmer among the farming community. They stand out from the rest

clearly different. Gramsci was more concerned about the revolutionary movement and the role of intellectuals in it. Here the concern is not about any movement, but about knowledge production and transaction.

⁴⁶Patashekharasamity is a group of paddy farmers in an area. The president of this group represents the farmers in front of the agricultural officer and other bodies.

and can influence them. I have visited many farmers and felt that all of them can be called as intellectuals. But I have also felt that some among them stand out as intellectuals. This point can be elaborated from my field work experience.

Ananthakrishnan who does vegetable cultivation in a leased land in a small village called Vithinassery near Nenmara in Palakkad district is an example for the exceptional farmer or farmer intellectual. He started vegetable cultivation twelve years ago. He used a locally available ladies finger seed in his farm land. Earlier this seed was used only in *Parambu Krishi*⁴⁷ (compound cultivation). The practice of cultivating this seed on the field was unheard of till he started cultivating it 10-12 years ago. Earlier, in the small ridge between fields, this variety of ladies finger or *bhindi* was cultivated, but only 10 or 12 numbers in one ridge. Even when it was cultivated in the house hold lands when *Parambu Krishi* existed, it was not cultivated at a large scale as he does it today. He realized the quality of this seed and started cultivating it on the fields. The farmers in his village took inspiration from him and they also started cultivating this variety of *bhindi* on their fields along with other vegetables. Now, he has given the seeds of this variety to the VFPC⁴⁸ who distribute it statewide.

Basically what he has done is the same thing that many scientists would have done. Scientists or rather research institutes have developed and introduced many new varieties of seeds to the farmers. That is what Ananthakrishnan has also done. But instead of developing a new seed, he has found the quality of an already existing one and put it into a different use. The ultimate result

⁴⁷Parambu Krishi or Orchard Cultivation is a method of farming where vegetables were cultivated in bulk quantity in the compounds around houses. This type of farming was prevalent till 40-50 years ago. Then the joint families were broken and the family properties were divided among the family members. Thus it was impossible to carry out this type of farming in comparatively small plots. This type of farming does not exist today. Now most of the vegetables used in Kerala are coming from other neighboring states. In some areas, farmers do vegetable cultivation in rice fields for a certain period in the year and they cultivate rice for one crop (mostly the second crop). It is also true that some farmers do vegetable cultivation on a full scale.

⁴⁸Vegetables and Fruits Promotion Council Keralam

is the same anyway. Many farmers all over Kerala would get this variety of seed now through the VFPCCK. Ananthakrishnan has done this favor to the farmers through VFPCCK's participatory research programme.⁴⁹ The point here is that though, the nature of the intellectual work is different, it has to be admitted that farmers can and they do perform intellectual activities. The same farmer has told me that they know more things than the agricultural officers. In fact, "it is from the farmers that the agricultural officers gain knowledge," Ananthakrishnan claimed (Personal Interview). Whether he is right or wrong, the fact remains that the intellectual world of the farmers may differ from and conflict with that of the professional intellectuals.

A farmer named Jyothish, who is doing rice cultivation in Pullod village, near Thenur in Palakkad district told me that the Agricultural Officers do not know anything about cultivation. He is the president of one of the *Patashekharasamities* in that village. Quite naturally, he will have to meet the Agricultural Officers more frequently than the other ordinary farmers. The agricultural officers would say that one sack (35 k.g) rice seeds are enough to sow in one acre of farm land; but the farmers in his village add 15 Kilograms more and sow 50 Kilograms per acre, Jyothish told me (Personal Interview). There is no evidence here to suggest which the right proportion is and it is not my intention here to find out the right proportion. What is worth noting here is the difference between the farmer intellectuals and the professional intellectuals. It should also be noted that their world views conflict.

The farmers can be called as Organic Intellectuals though not strictly in the Gramscian sense.⁵⁰ This is because of the organic relation between their intellectual work and the purpose

⁴⁹ In this programme, VFPCCK has collected forty different varieties of indigenous seeds from farmers all over Kerala and they are reproducing and distributing it in bulk.

⁵⁰ According to Gramsci, Organic Intellectuals are those intellectuals who come from a specific class and represent that class. It seems that he uses this term to refer to the intellectuals of the proletariat. Gramsci cannot be used directly to study the intellectuals that I refer to in my thesis due to the difference in the context and the difference

for which their intellect is used. The farmers' intellectual work is directly aimed at carrying out their agricultural activities properly. This may be of a repetitive or imitative nature. For example, a paddy cultivator does his agricultural activities according to the *Njattuvela*⁵¹ calendar in Kerala. According to this calendar, there are specific instructions to the cultivator regarding what is to be done in each season of the year. Farmers in Kerala follow this calendar while carrying out the agricultural activities. S/he must possess this knowledge; otherwise s/he will not be able to do the cultivation. Just as the professional intellectuals possess the scientific knowledge which is a collective possession, the farmer possesses the folk knowledge about cultivation.

The folk knowledge is not a static one. Most of the farmers today use chemicals in their cultivation. They know quite a lot about these things. Now the knowledge of NPK⁵² has become part of their folk knowledge. The use of hybrid seeds is another example. Farmers use hybrid variety seeds; sometimes along with the heirloom seeds they have been using; sometimes separately also. The farmers have updated their traditional knowledge with the new developments. From the Green Revolution onwards, there has been much enthusiasm about the high yield varieties. Research stations in Kerala have also developed many high yield varieties.

in the nature of the intellectual activity studied. When Gramsci speaks about the intellectuals, he had in his mind the peculiar case of Italy, especially the transition of Italy from Medieval to Modern times. Italian Risorgimento was one of the concrete socio-political movements against the backdrop of which Gramsci developed his theses. Thus, his ideas have to be viewed in connection with this. One cannot mechanically apply them into his or her context without properly understanding the difference in the context. Also, when Gramsci uses the term "intellectuals", it mostly connotes the category of people who influences people with their ideas which helps preserve or destroy a social order. In a nutshell, Gramsci's major concern was social and political movements and the role of the intellectuals in it though Gramsci considered intellectual activities for purposes other than social movements. In the context of this thesis, the "intellectual activities" referred to here are more about the production, transaction and challenging of knowledge.

⁵¹ The Malayalam word *Njattuvela* literally means the motion of the sun. This is a calendar designed for the cultivators to carry out their agricultural activities. It mentions the growth of different crops in different periods of the year and the different pest/ insecticide attacks, their remedies, etc. In this calendar, a year has been divided into 27 *Njattuvelas*. Each *Njattuvela* is for 13.5 days. Each of these *Njattuvelas* has been named as the 27 different star cluster names in Malayalam.

⁵² Nitrogen Phosphorus and Potassium: an attractive formula for the growth of the crop popularized by the Green Revolution.

The farmers have accepted many of these seeds. But they may not always accept all the claims about those seeds/ breeds.

Vasudevan, a farmer in Pullod village in Palakkad district, who cultivates brinjal along with his main crop rice, told me that he is cultivating both hybrid and the traditional varieties of brinjal. He accepts that the hybrid variety gives more productivity. But at the same time, he said that the desi variety is always tasty and will be sold easily in the market. When the hybrid plant gives 10 brinjals at a time, the local variety may give only four. But those four will look better and it will be tastier as well. As a result, it can fetch better prices in the market, Vasudevan told me (Personal Interview). I have heard similar points from many other farmers during the course of my field work.

Another example can be taken from dairy farmers. Chandran, a dairy farmer in my village told me that he has both desi and foreign breeds of cows. The desi cow will give only four liters of milk a day where as the foreign one will give up to ten liters. He appreciated it since it helps him earn more money. But at the same time, he mentioned that the desi cows' milk will always be thicker than the foreign breed. If you take the same amounts of desi cow's and foreign cow's milk, you will be making more cups of tea with the desi cow's milk. Moreover, the desi cows are healthier and they have immunity against diseases, Chandran told me (Personal interview). The farmers are clearly voicing their opinions and they are doing it from their experience. They might not have read any well known scholars who argue about the indigenous seeds or breeds. But they have realized the qualities of the desi seeds and breeds from their own experience. The point here is not to argue that the farmers are always in favor of the indigenous seeds against the hybrid varieties which is not the case actually. The point is that the farmers may not always accept the claims of the professional intellectuals.

This helps us understand an important element of the farmer consciousness. The farmers, even when they seem to be accepting the new developments in the field of agriculture, either as choice or due to compulsion or persuasion, may not accept knowledge passively. They can manipulate and even question the so called “scientific” knowledge they get through governmental agencies by way of agricultural extension programs or private agencies like seed-fertilizer companies/ sellers.

The organic nature of the intellectual activity of the farmer has greater implications. The farmer engages in intellectual activities for their existence, survival and prosperity. If the farmer sows the seed and then does not get the rain in time, his cultivation will be ruined. If the farmer cultivates something at the end of which he gets attractive production but fails to get the market, then also he will be ruined. If the farmer spots a disease and follows a wrong pest control measure, then also he will be ruined. No agricultural officer or market analyst or pathologist or soil testing lab is at stake when they engage in their intellectual work; but the farmer engages in their intellectual work staking their own existence. This is the difference between the farmer as organic intellectuals and the professional intellectuals. This point can be developed further in the next section which is about the professional intellectuals.

5.2 Professional/ Official Intellectuals

Professional intellectuals are intellectuals by profession. In this respect, they are different from farmers. They must have the eligibility to be professionals. The eligibility criterion is mostly a degree in Agricultural Science. The agricultural officers are the most common professional intellectuals in Kerala.⁵³ They are government officials. In this sense, they can be

⁵³ This may be true about all of India as well.

called as Official Intellectuals also. They have to complete the Bachelor of Science course in Agricultural Science in order to be in this post. As part of the project, I have interviewed more than twenty agricultural officers in the districts of Palakkad and Thrissur.⁵⁴ Mostly, an agricultural office has the jurisdiction of a Panchayat. The agricultural officer deals with the problems of the farmers there. S/he also has to distribute the governmental aids to the deserving farmers. Most of the agricultural officers I met had the degree of B. Sc. in Agricultural Science. Some of them had Msc. as their degree and some even had Ph. D. as their qualification. In three agricultural offices, there was no agricultural officer. In their absence, the assistant agricultural officer will take charge of the office. They need not necessarily have a degree in Agricultural Science.

Apart from the agricultural officers, there are the researchers and scientists in research institutions, faculty members in universities, and officials in the department of agriculture⁵⁵ who can be called as the professional or official intellectuals. It is impossible to study the nuances of each of these professionals' intellectual work and their implications to the present project within its limited scope. So here the focus will be limited to the agricultural officers, limited number of researchers/ scientists⁵⁶ working in some research institutes and academicians.

The agricultural officer of a Panchayath is the closest government official the farmer encounters. The farmers approach them to clear their doubts. The doubts can be about their crops or subsidy related enquiries. The major doubts about the crops is the different diseases affecting

⁵⁴ Though these officers work in the two districts mentioned, many of them have worked in other districts in the past. They will not stay in one office for a very long time. As a result, I could get information about their experience in the other districts as well. Thus the geographical limitation of the field work was compensated to a certain extend.

⁵⁵ In Kerala, the full title of the Department of Agriculture is "Department of Agriculture Development and Farmers' Welfare."

⁵⁶ Limited in number because they are very busy and it is difficult to get their time. So, not many were interviewed.

them. Most of the agricultural officers I met said that the farmers go to them with doubts about certain diseases. From the description itself they may be able to diagnose the disease. Sometimes, the farmers take the disease affected parts of the plant to the agricultural officer. These days, farmers capture the disease affected plant in their mobile and show it to the agricultural officer. If the diagnosis is not possible at this stage, the agricultural officer may pay a field visit. If the agricultural officer is not able to diagnose the disease even after that, then they may ask some of the senior agricultural officers or send the samples of the disease affected plants to the Kerala Agricultural University. This is the pattern of communication that happens between the agricultural officers and farmers regarding the disease as told to me by the agricultural officers in interviews.

I asked some farmers why they need the help of the agricultural officers when they themselves are experts in farming. Udayan, a paddy cultivator who cultivates vegetables told me that this is mainly because they are unable to identify some of the diseases these days. Earlier the number of diseases and insects were predictable. But these days, some of the diseases and insects are never seen before. He showed me some brinjal plants affected by a kind of blight. He said that if the plant is affected by this blight, the only solution then is to destroy the plant before it spreads to the other plants. He showed the plant to the agricultural officer of his Panchayath but who was unable to identify it, Udayan told me (Personal interview). But that part of the story is irrelevant to the present purpose. What is relevant here is that the farmers need the help of the agricultural officers because they are facing new challenges like new diseases and pests. The change in the traditional way of farming is what makes the farmers dependent on the agricultural extension programmes of the government. The farmer needs science because his traditional knowledge about pests and diseases becomes useless in the wake of the new challenges.

Same is the story about the seeds. Many farmers, especially paddy cultivators, get rice seeds from the agricultural office. Earlier, the farmers used to keep seeds from the previous years' harvest. Majority of the farmers in Kerala continue this system even now. But a good number of the farmers get rice seeds through their agricultural office. The farmers buy seeds when they want more productive seeds instead of the traditional variety. Here also, the desire for more productivity, which could be a result of the continuous propaganda for better productivity by the government officials and institutions, is what makes the farmer dependent on the agricultural office.⁵⁷ Along with rice seeds, the agricultural offices also distribute coconut live plants and vegetable seedlings. The dwarf variety of the coconut tree is something that the farmers demand a lot. The agricultural offices, in such cases, provide them with this whenever they have the stock.

Coming back to the present topic, i.e. the intellectual world of the agricultural officers, one can see that the agricultural officer is scientific knowledge personified in front of the farmer. The body of knowledge s/ he possesses is scientific knowledge and not the folk knowledge. But just as the farmer updates his knowledge with scientific information, the agricultural officers also learn from the farmers. Without that knowledge, it will be really difficult for them to survive. Reshma, an agricultural officer presently working in the two Krishibhavans of Kongad and Keralassery Panchayaths in Palakkad district told me frankly that the knowledge of an agricultural officer is comparatively less when compared to the vast knowledge accumulated by the farmers through experience over the years (Personal interview). Like in the case of many other agricultural officers, I asked her whether she came from an agricultural background or had

⁵⁷ One thing has to be stressed here that the interference of the government through the agricultural office or other mechanisms saves the farmers from private parties. What if the farmers were depending on the private seed companies instead of the government for getting more productive seeds?

any practical engagement in cultivation before she did her bachelor's course. She and most of the agricultural officers answered in the negative here.

The basic qualification for an agricultural officer is to have a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Science but that is never the qualification required to be a good (or bad) farmer. No farmer I met as part of my field work had a degree in Agricultural Science. It is equally true that no agricultural officer I met was a farmer in the true sense and spirit of the word. Some of them are doing farming-mostly in grow bags- as a leisure time activity which cannot be considered as a measure of being a farmer. Being a farmer is never the eligibility criterion for an agricultural officer. If the eligibility criterion of an agricultural officer points at anything, that is the difference between theory and praxis. A student of medicine becomes a practicing physician and a student of engineering becomes an engineer in the future. Similar is the case with any other profession. But in the case of Agricultural Science, a student of this discipline does not become a farmer except as an exception. To put it in a different way, one does not study Agricultural Science to become a farmer. Instead, they become farming intellectuals! The whole category of the professional intellectuals in the agricultural sector is thus trained to be intellectuals and not to be farmers. A student chooses Agricultural Science as his/ her major to be a professional intellectual in the agricultural sector and not to be a farmer.

The case of the scientist/ researcher/ academic is different. They don't come face to face with the farmer, at least in normal case. In that scenario, the chance of one body of knowledge challenging and absorbing elements of the other body of knowledge is not in existence as in the case of the agricultural officers. But even in the case of those who work in the government sector, especially in research centers, they will have to deal with the actual farmers. This happens in certain contexts. Some of them can be mentioned here. When a research centre invents a new

seed, it has to be practiced by the farmers unless and until which the authenticity of the seed-or the claims associated with the seed- will not be justified. If no farmer uses the particular seed in their cultivation, the purpose of the research will not be fulfilled. For that, the researchers will have to give the farmers concrete instructions regarding activities to be followed.

Many training programmes are offered by different governmental and private institutes to the farmers. But here the communications is mostly one sided. The experts are giving instructions to the farmers. I have visited the Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS) at Pattambi and the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council (VFPC) Seed Processing Plant at Alathur; both in my district. In both these places, I could see that the experts are hiring laborers to do the agricultural works. Since, these are governmental institutions; the officials do not have to worry about the funds. Also, what they are doing is experimentation so that even if the crop fails, it will be justified. Anyway, neither the experts, nor the workers hired are stake holders. In the case of VFPC- Alathur; this unit is producing seeds in their plant as well as giving contract to farmers to produce agricultural seeds in bulk. In the former case, i.e. when seeds are manufactured in their plant, the world views of the officials and the laborers do not come together. The workers will follow the instructions of the officials in manufacturing the seeds. The communication seems to be one-sided in this case. Here, the officials are not running any risk. In these institutes, unlike in the case of agricultural officers, the officials need not take information from the farmers. They just need to give the directions. So in their case, unlike in the case of the agricultural officers, the encounter between two world views does not happen.

In the second scenario, that is when VFPC gives contract to farmers to produce seeds in bulk, their world views do come together. It has to be said that VFPC has been exploring for

desi seeds and they have been regularly manufacturing these seeds with the help of farmers. In this case, they do take and acknowledge the help of the farmers.

This section can be concluded by summarizing the nature of the intellectual work of the professional intellectuals. The professional intellectuals⁵⁸ are trained in a scientific discipline. But when they begin their actual intellectual task which happens when they enter the government service, they come into contact with another intellectual world; here it means the intellectual world of the farmers. More than conflict, the encounter leads to the assimilation of the folk elements into the scientific body of knowledge that the professional intellectual has already gained. The identity of the science student will be refashioned into becoming the professional intellectual the part and parcel of whose identity is “hybridity.” The “hybridity” here refers to the phenomenon of how the scientific knowledge first conflicts with and later conflates the folk knowledge. It can mean the other way around also.

5.3 Inventors and path breakers

New seeds, new equipments and new methods in cultivation are not always monopolized by the agricultural universities and research centers; or even by multinational corporations. Sometimes farmers themselves come up with what is new in agriculture. Within the concrete context of Kerala, numerous examples can be found to illustrate this. Some of the nurseries are the best examples. Other than that, there are individuals who make their intellectual contributions. This may be new variety of seeds/ plants for cultivation, new equipments, innovative technology, etc. Their invention will be worthless if not popularized and commercialized. The farm journals do take active interest in popularizing the achievements of

⁵⁸ Here in this context of theorization, the term Professional Intellectuals imply only the Agricultural Officers as it is already mentioned in the above paragraph that the case of the scientist, academic, etc. has to be studied separately.

these parties whether they are individuals or nurseries. Sometimes these individuals/ nurseries advertise on the farm journals regarding their product or service. Studying a few such cases will help throw light on these individuals and their intellectual contributions.

Suresh Babu, an ex-NRI who turned to farming when he returned home is an example. His contribution is something called as tire farming. In Kerala, the used tires of vehicles are mostly burned. His desire to reduce the carbon emission caused by the burning of tires led him to the innovative idea of using them in cultivation. He started collecting these used tires. He used them in the same way one uses a grow bag or pot in a home garden. He made containers out of these used tires which he filled with treated coco peat, compost, and dried cow dung. He found that any plant that doesn't have a tap root can be planted in such containers. This includes most of the vegetables. Such containers are best for growing ornamental plants (Personal interview).

He started cultivating beans and other vegetables in bulk inside these containers. These tires can hold more pot mixture than a grow bag or even a pot. Apart from cultivating in these containers, he also makes them and sells them at a comparatively less cost. Finding this innovative idea, the department of agriculture in Kerala gave him financial aid. These days he conducts classes for farmers explaining this seemingly easy method of farming. Using used materials including tires in cultivation is not solely his idea. But no one has practiced it in such an efficient way with this magnitude before. He used the used bike tires for making containers for bonsai trees. May be this is something that no one has done before. A manufactured container for bonsai trees may cost up to 2500 rupees where as he sells his containers made out of bike tires for 50 rupees. He has visited so many schools and given training to the students regarding using tire pots in their gardens. Apart from reducing the carbon emission, these containers also

help reduce the use of plastic in agriculture. Moreover, these containers can be shifted from one place to another easily, says Suresh Babu (Personal interview).

Along with these personally manufactured containers, he also shares his knowledge of cultivation which he earned from his personal experience in cultivation. He said that he never uses soil in his containers. According to him, along with the soil, come most of the diseases. Blight is a common disease that comes from the soil. In the tropical areas' soil, the threat of blight is very much immanent. So he does not mix soil at all in his containers; instead, he uses treated coco peat which one can get at a comparatively cheaper rate from the Coirfed⁵⁹ outlets (Personal interview).

Suresh Babu's invention may seem trivial when posited against some of the much celebrated inventions of agricultural universities and private companies. But still, the agricultural department has taken active interest in popularizing his new technology. Moreover, more farmers are into this mode of cultivation taking inspiration from him. His innovation can be seen in line with the drip irrigation, wick irrigation, etc.

Another example for inventions from the grass root level can be that of an organic farmer who invented a new cure against some insects found in vegetable plants especially in beans. His name is Sunil and he has got the state government's award for the best organic farmer. Since he is an organic farmer, he cannot use chemical pesticides in his farming. But the attack of pests is too severe in his farm. He found that a fly, called as *chazhi* in Malayalam, extracts the sap from his beans plants as a result of which his beans plants are fading. He knew that strong smell can drive these insects away. He also knows that dried fish has very strong smell. So he

⁵⁹Coirfed is the apex institute of the primary cooperatives in the state functioning in the manufacture of coir and related products.

experimented with a combination of dried fish and neem oil. He crushed the dried fish into powder. And then put it in water. The next day he extracted its essence. He mixed it with neem oil. He sprayed it in his plants and saw the amazing result. Sunil told me that the insects have never come back ever since he started using this organic pesticide (Personal Interview).

This invention proved to be very effective for him and the other organic farmers in his surroundings. For the organic farmers to get certification, they should not use any chemical pesticides. If they use this combination, it will not affect their certification since it does not contain any chemical substances. *Krishi Jagaran*, one of the farm magazines in Kerala, has popularized his invention through an article in their 2019 May issue. He is also doing experiments with some locally available plants and trying to extract medicines from them which can be used on plants (Personal interview).

These inventors are different from the farmers whom I put in the first category, i.e. the farmers as intellectuals. They are also different from the outstanding farmers among them, in the sense that they develop something new. Sometimes the difference is too narrow. Sunil is different from Ananthakrishnan whom I mentioned in the first section in the sense that the latter has put the ladies finger seeds into a new use- i.e. to use them in the fields- where as Sunil has invented something new that people never used before. Sometimes farmers reinvent something that existed before but not practiced for a long time now. The case of Thankayyan, a farmer in the village of Vlathankara in Chenkal Panchayath, Trivandrum District, is such an example. A variety of spinach, now popular in the label of Vlathankara Cheera by the VFPCCK, is something reinvented by him. The cultivation of this variety has not been done by farmers for a very long time. But the older generation farmers remember this one. He found some plants from a forest and started cultivation. Now VFPCCK, which is responsible for the development of vegetable

cultivation in the state has collected the seeds of this variety from him and plans to distribute it statewide, Thankayyan told me in a personal interview (Personal interview).

It has to be accepted that sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish between the farmers as intellectuals, outstanding farmers, and the inventors. At the same time, it also has to be accepted that these inventions are outside the academia and are made by farmers through their careful observation and intuition. As a category of intellectuals, they produce the knowledge of something new which will be later popularized by governmental agencies and farm journals. The inventors mostly do not belong to the traditional farmers group, nor do they belong to the academia that produce knowledge based on their scientific education. Instead, they may draw from both or either of these knowledge systems. But their major intellectual capital is their own observations and intuition.

5.4 Philosophers

Philosophers are those intellectuals who have a grand scheme about agriculture. The relevance of the philosophers in the context of the present study is that unlike any of the other categories of intellectuals mentioned here, they deny any type of hybridity and defend their scheme against all others. The case of a few philosophers can be analyzed here. It should be made clear that the intellectuals I am mentioning here are not Keralites but their ideas and books have considerable influence in Kerala.

5.4.a M S Swaminathan

Known as the progenitor of the Green Revolution in India, Swaminathan could be the most popular figure among the category of philosophers that I will mention here. He was the key figure in introducing new seeds, new methods, and new technologies in farming as part of the

Green Revolution in India. The Green Revolution was celebrated on par with the industrial revolution. His idea was to find a “scientific” solution to the farmers’ problems. Swaminathan advocated the supply of inputs from outside the immediate surroundings of the farmer which includes high yield variety seeds, chemical inputs, etc. These inputs are not made by the farmers, but supplied to them by the government or private parties. Since the farmer has to depend on the government and seed manufacturers for the seeds and the other inputs, they also need to depend on them for their knowledge. Thus, the farmers were forced to get knowledge from the governing officials along with the seed and other inputs. Though the farmers were still the producers of crops, they became the consumers of knowledge produced by an external agency. This was one of the outcomes of Green Revolution, along with its many positives.

Swaminathan’s basic vision was that science can provide a solution to the problems of farming and food security. He encourages new developments in agricultural research such as biotechnology. In his own words,

The challenge to those in charge of technology development is to bring about a continuous improvement in the productivity of major farming systems per unit of land, water, time, and energy without detriment to the long- term production potential of soil. Bio- technology can help in this task. (967)

One thing that has to be stressed about M. S. Swaminathan is that he has been open minded enough to evaluate and criticize methods that were once advocated by him. He did not support everything that happened in India in the name of Green Revolution. In the sixties itself, he called for an “ever green revolution” in the sense that ecology and sustainability should be given priority while implementing new methods. He has actively criticized those agricultural

reforms in the name of Green Revolution due to which agriculture and ecology suffered in the long run. In a paper written by P. C. Kesavan and co-authored by M. S. Swaminathan, the authors observe that after the remarkable increase in the production of food grains, the Asian countries are now showing a decline in the production of the same. The authors also observe that “intensive agriculture practiced without adherence to the scientific principles and ecological aspects has led to loss of soil health, and depletion of freshwater resources and agrobiodiversity (Kesavan877).”

In fact, M. S. Swaminathan has never recommended the indiscrete use of pesticides and fertilizers. He recommended them only in a pragmatic way. In an interview with V. T. Yadugiri, M. S. Swaminathan says that:

Normally in my talk to farmers, I say, a child has a running nose. It requires vitamin C. There are two methods of addressing it - take a 200 mg tablet or six oranges. If you tell a very poor child, 'Take six oranges', where will it go? The same is true with one quintal of urea. Otherwise, the farmer has to buy so many cartloads of farmyard manure. (998)

Swaminathan and Green Revolution are relevant when analyzing the knowledge aspect of farming in the sense that the Green Revolution presented a new criterion for measuring the efficiency of cultivation. This criterion was nothing other than productivity. The ecological cost of cultivation and sustainability of it were ignored. Also, the productivity was always measured in terms of the net production of the food grain alone. The efficiency of the new inputs, which were a direct intellectual output of the international and Indian research centers, is measured

through how much produce they give. In short, the ultimate aim of knowledge or “scientific” knowledge was thought to be increase in the production of the crop.

It has been said before that Swaminathan himself has criticized many of these tendencies as early as the sixties. Even then, M. S. Swaminathan was held responsible for most of the ill effects of the Green Revolution. Two books that raised serious questions against the Green Revolution are Vandana Shiva’s *Violence of the Green Revolution* and Mridula Mukherjee’s *The Myth of the Punjab Exceptionalism*. In her book, Vandana Shiva writes,

With the Green Revolution, peasants were no longer custodians of the common genetic heritage through the storage and preservation of grain. The ‘miracle seeds’ of the Green Revolution transformed this common genetic heritage into private property, protected by patents and intellectual property rights. Peasants as plant breeding specialists gave way to scientists of multinational seed companies and international research institutions like CIMMYT and IRRI. (63)

A discussion on Vandana Shiva’s ideas would throw more light on the philosophers who opposed the Green Revolution and envisioned agriculture in a different way.

5.4.b Vandana Shiva

Dr. Vandana Shiva is famous for her critique of the Green Revolution and its logic. She opposes the logic of the “technological fix” or the idea that science can provide a solution for the problems of farmers. “The science of the Green Revolution was offered as a ‘miracle’ recipe for prosperity. But when discontent and new scarcities emerged, science was delinked from economic processes (Shiva 20).” It is this absolute authority of science that she tries to

dismantle. Science “offers technological fixes for social and political problems, but delinks itself from the new social and political problems it creates (21).” She adds that, “science takes credit for successes and absolves itself from all responsibility for failures (23).” She takes up issue with the “uniformity” and “centralization” in the agricultural sector. The “uniformity” that the state strives to achieve leads to the system of “monocultures”. Dr. Shiva observes that this inevitably leads to what she calls as the “monocultures of mind”. She explains this in her book titled *Monocultures of Mind*.

While talking about the evils of Green Revolution, Shiva finds an alternative too. She finds the solution in the indigenous farming. The indigenous farming methods and the indigenous seeds are the alternatives she finds. This has been developed through the careful observation of nature through millennia (Shiva, *Genetic Modification* 1). Science can never be an alternative to nature. At the epistemological level she questions the authority of science and the tendency to cultivate monocultures. She stands for diversity, both in thought and in seeds. She argues that “biodiverse systems have higher output than monocultures. And organic farming is more beneficial for the farmers and the earth than chemical farming (Shiva & Jalees).” Shiva and other critics of Green Revolution have developed an alternative diction to talk about the same. For example, what a supporter of the Green Revolution would call as “modernization” will be termed as “industrialization” or “chemicalization” by these critics. Anyway, after the Sri Lankan agricultural crisis of 2022, Shiva has been criticized heavily by many as she was one of the advocates of Sri Lanka’s transition to organic farming.

5.4.c Debal Deb

Like Vandana Shiva, Debal Deb also criticizes the epistemology behind the “technological fix”. He does it on a larger framework. He criticizes the enlightenment ideology which justifies man’s encroachment upon the nature. This ideology had a perception that wilderness has to be tamed. The subjugation of the indigenous people has been justified in the name of the civilizing mission of the west. The same logic operates behind replacing the indigenous seeds with the seeds manufactured in labs. Going beyond the Enlightenment Criticism, he also criticizes the Capitalistic world view (Deb 1).

In the name of the European model of development and developmentality, the value of the natural and agricultural resources has been measured in terms of money. The Green Revolution has extended this logic to new arenas. The utilitarian philosophy was criticized by him sometimes with and sometimes without the theoretical framework provided by Marxism. He analyzes the process of how different disciplines emerged and aided the service of capital (Deb 2-3). He disapproves the “intensification of a few crops” at the cost of genetic diversity. The modernization of agriculture happened at the cost of robbing the soil of its nutrients (4). The agricultural modernization in the global south became an agenda of the west and the international agencies like the World Bank that provided credit for that. Research on food crops flourished. The MNCs started operating in the south with a view to interfere in their vast market. Seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides were the three areas of profit for them (6). The producers of the high input-responsive crop varieties were also the producers of fertilizers and pesticides (6-7). Deb writes: “Agricultural modernization involved not only introduction of new technology, seeds, and marketing rearrangements in which multinational companies were to control the agricultural market, but abolition of traditional agricultural practices (8).”

Deb views what he calls as ‘Ecological Agriculture’ as an alternative to the Green Revolution and the present method of farming called as chemical farming by the critics of the Green Revolution. According to him, different indigenous cultures have developed different models of organic farming which are called as ‘organic’ or ‘biodynamic’ or ‘biological’ or ‘regenerative’ or ‘ecological’ agriculture in different contexts (48). He calls the Green Revolution as “fake” Green Revolution and argues that the true Green Revolution is yet to take place. He views that the “past experiences of indigenous societies” and the hundreds of domesticated crops which are the achievement of “ancient farmer breeders” can lead the way as that is the very basis of what he calls as Ecological Agriculture (68). He also argues that the government should encourage these indigenous and organic farming methods and cites Cuba as a successful model of this (69).

5.4.d S A Dabholkar

Dabholkar was a visionary farm philosopher and educationist. His farm philosophy has influenced many including such noted thinkers as Subhash Palekar and Deepak Suchde. Dabholkar’s philosophy is explained in his book titled *Plenty for All: Prayog Pariwar Methodology*. On the cover page of the book, Dabholkar’s promise is stated concisely which reads like: “No Wasteland, No Wasteland, Anywhere on this earth.” It is also hinted in the title page that the book is about the experiences from the “networking of self-experimenting ventures for nature-friendly and human friendly prosperity.”

In fact, the peculiarity of S. A. Dabholkar is that he does not make a distinction between his farming philosophy, educational philosophy and way of life. All these are intimately connected with each other in his vision. He recollects occasions where he has been compared

with Gandhi⁶⁰ and Ivan Illich.⁶¹ While India was witnessing a revolution in the production of food grains, Dabholkar made a silent revolution in the production of grapes among a group of farmers to whom he communicated over post card regularly. Later on, this change spread far and wide over Maharashtra among the grape farmers (36-37). His entire philosophy takes its roots from his own experiments in farming and teaching. In order to explain his ideas, he has sometimes coined new terms and other times used idioms in a new way. He has defined all these key terms for the readers to understand. Without understanding these key words, one would find it difficult to understand his philosophy. A quick glance on some of his key terms will provide an understanding of his vision.

In the glossary to his book *Plenty for All*, he gives definition to twenty eight such terms out of which six will be explained here for the purpose of the present discussion. The first term that will be discussed is “demystification of science.” By this, he means the process of explaining the principles of science even to the last man on earth in a language comprehensible to him/ her. The purpose is to enable him/ her to understand these principles and use them in his/ her own field. The second important key term in his philosophy is the “deprofessionalisation of education.” Dabholkar was a lifelong educationist but he was always disillusioned by the existing system of education and the curricula. He wanted to learn as a group where everyone learns. By learning, he meant addressing a problem and resolving it as a group. Everyone should share their bit of knowledge here. The problems he talks about are actually the problems one encounters in real life situations.

⁶⁰ He says that when he addressed some Gandhian social workers in a meeting held in Wardha, they came to him and said that his philosophy resembles that of Gandhi's (33).

⁶¹ The comparison with Ivan Illich was made none other than Illich himself. When Illich was in India in 1972, he came across a news paper article about Dabholkar's “learning exchange network” and Dabholkar was invited to a seminar where Illich was giving a speech on de-schooling which was organized by the Indian Council of Social Science Research. Later on, he was invited to another conference on the same theme in Mexico. Dabholkar says Illich expressed the feeling that there was some deep resemblance in their respective philosophies.

“Deschooling society” is the third term that would be helpful in understanding his philosophy. His concept was that everyone is entitled to get the latest knowledge without the help of an institutional framework which actually acts as a constraint to gain knowledge. Anyone should be able to gain knowledge of any level at any time. The one word that can catch the essence of his vision of farming is Natueco⁶² Culture or Natueco Farming. His farm philosophy is popularly called as Natueco Farming. Dabholkar believes that modern science has learned the way the nature has built the ecosystem. This knowledge can be brought in the practice of farming.

Another key term that would help one understand his vision is Prayog Pariwar. By the word “prayog” he meant experiments. Experimenting in any field of life can be called as “prayog”. The word “pariwar” connotes the sense of belonging to the group. In order to tackle a real life problem, people can form a network, share their knowledge, and try to find a solution. If they feel this togetherness till they achieve their goal, then they can be called as belonging to the “pariwar”. Sagriculture is another key term that he uses. By this term, he meant doing agriculture with the help of sun, science, sharing and sovereignty. Since it is impossible to explain his whole philosophy in detail here, the discussion on his philosophy will be limited with this. What will be done next is to place him in the context of the present study and what his philosophy implies to the discussion of the subject matter of this chapter.

As mentioned above, Dabholkar was against any kind of formal education. He would be equally against educating the farmers in the name of agricultural extension programmes. According to his philosophy, farmers should learn themselves from their experience, that too collectively. His philosophy doesn't support the use of seeds and technologies developed in some

⁶² Though this word is spelt Natueco, it is pronounced as NaCheCo.

national or international laboratories popularized through agricultural extension programmes. He wouldn't agree with the kind of "scientific achievements" popularized by Green Revolution as his concept of "science" was different. It is equally true that his philosophy is also different from that of Vandana Shiva and Debal Deb. He doesn't agree with passive knowledge even if it is passed on to us through generations from the ancient farmers' centuries of experience. Dabholkar always encourages knowledge production and sharing.

5.4.e Deepak Suchde⁶³

Deepak Suchde is a disciple of Dabholkar and follows the Natueco method of farming. He maintains his own farm called Krishi Theerth where he does farming according to the methods developed by him which are in line with Dabholkar's philosophy. His farm is located in the district of Devas in Madhya Pradesh on the banks of the river Narmada. He practically proved the claims of Dabholkar that a farmer can gain the same income of a professor from the cultivation in twenty five cents of land if it is done properly and scientifically (Suchde 8). He has studied different methods of farming prevalent all over the world and critiques their limitations. His alternative model of farming is Natueco farming.

He divides the farming systems around the world into nine. They are the traditional farming, chemical farming, nature farming of Fukuoka, bio dynamic farming, organic farming, homa farming, zero budget farming of Subhash Palekar, and perma culture or permanent agriculture. The ninth method of farming is his own method known as Natueco farming (9-13).

⁶³ Deepak Suchde had been called to the University of Hyderabad once to deliver a lecture. Many famous scientists attended the same seminar but Suchde denied to participate in the meeting telling that a seminar on agriculture cannot be conducted in an air conditioned room. He went to the farm and plucked a few plants and asked everyone around him to find the differences between them. Everyone found the differences between their stem and leaves but Suchde showed them the differences in their roots. Suchde believes that truth lies underneath the soil (Suchde 26).

Many of these farming methods have their own philosophers and ideally their philosophy should be mentioned here. Subhash Palekar and Fukuoka are two examples. Similarly, K. V. Dayal and Nelvayal Raman are two figures from Kerala whose philosophy deserves to be explained. For lack of time and space, only six people's philosophy is mentioned here. Also, writing about the philosophy of all the farming philosophers would be difficult and that may take us away from our focus.

Natureco farming uses something called amrit water which is prepared from cow dung and some other organic materials (14). Suchde's view of agriculture is that it is not just food production but a love of compassion for all the creatures on the earth. He believes that man has been evolved through agriculture and he can even become a trans-human through the same (17). He is a fierce critique of the Green Revolution and he is of the opinion that the Green Revolution has undermined the self-reliance of the farmer (40). Farmers have great knowledge about farming which was trivialized with the implementation of chemical farming (41).

Analyzing the above philosophers' theory and their theoretical interactions, it can be seen that the peculiarity of the philosophers when compared to the other categories mentioned here is that they resist what is called in this thesis as "hybridity". They are not eclectic and try to defend their philosophy against all others. All the philosophers mentioned above except M. S. Swaminathan criticize the logic of Green Revolution and chemical farming. Thus, they are against M. S. Swaminathan's philosophy. That doesn't mean that they all agree with each other in all other aspects. They disagree with each other on many aspects related to agriculture. The case of farm journalists is different. They cannot resort to one philosophy alone. The analysis of the farm journalists as a class will show this. They straddle between the folk culture and science culture. The dynamics between these two reshapes their identity into a hybrid one. Now I will

analyze how the same dynamics shapes the identity of the farm journalists. It should be mentioned in the beginning that the category of farm journalists mostly come from the second category of intellectuals, i.e. professional intellectuals.

5.5 Farm Journalists

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the first farm journal in Malayalam, *Keralakarshakan* started in 1954. Much before that, farm journalism existed in Malayalam. Books on agriculture were published as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Suresh Muthukulam, one of the most prolific farm journalists in Malayalam, these books were written with a view to record the knowledge of the farmers (Personal Interview). Written materials to circulate the knowledge statewide were published as soon as the State Agricultural Information Unit,⁶⁴ the predecessor of today's Farm Information Bureau, was established in 1956. Recording knowledge and writing it for popular understanding are different. It is this same difference that distinguishes between researchers in the area of agricultural researches writing in a peer reviewed journal and a write up about the same topic in a farm journal for popular comprehension. It is the same difference that makes the farm journalist unique as an intellectual among the other intellectuals in the farming world. Also, knowing this difference will enable one to place the farm journalist properly in this intellectual world. This will be dealt with in more detail here. But before that, a small note on the nature of articles in the journals of *Keralakarshakan*'s earlier issues, which is retained more or less today, will throw light on the intellectual function behind farm journalism.

⁶⁴⁶⁴ This institution was restructured and given the name of Farm Information Bureau in 1959. Before then, there were the Information Service Unit under the Department of Agriculture and the Information Unit of the Animal Husbandry. Today the FIB co-ordinates and governs the circulation of Farm Information in the state.

The first article from the first available issue of *Keralakarshakan*⁶⁵ is about areca nut.⁶⁶ Let me quote the first paragraph from it,

The areca nut resembles tree resembles the coconut tree and like the latter, it is closely associated with the economic condition of the farmer. The areca nut is cultivated in the eastern countries like India, Burma, Pakistan, Philippines, Ceylon, Malaya, Sumatra, and Java. Though it is impossible to state its country of origin, it will not be wrong to assume Philippines as its country of origin. (Nair 1)

The way the article begins is noteworthy here. The “farmer” implied here represents the farming community in Kerala which is more concretely articulated later in the article. Also, it brings the global picture of the cultivation of areca nut and places the areca nut farmer within this frame. Then in the following paragraphs, it is stated that seventy two percent of the areca nut production in India comes from Kerala and stresses the state’s intimate relation with this cultivation. What is interesting here is that the state of Kerala had not formed then. But the regional consciousness was already in its prime. As a result, the article distinguishes the farming practices that existed in the Malabar region and the Travancore and Cochin region. It also calls for a radical change in the cultivation of areca nut in the state of Travancore and Cochin. It advises the farmers in the Travancore and Cochin area to learn from the farmers of the Malabar area, who according to the article, followed better farming techniques. Similarly, the article also advises the areca nut farmers of Kerala, both in the Travancore and Cochin and in the Malabar areas, to learn from the farming practices that existed in the Karnataka areas.

⁶⁵ Though *Keralakarshakan* was started in 1954, no issues of its year of inception are available. The FIB has bound volumes from 1955 onwards.

⁶⁶ Also called as betel nut.

The article also details the style of areca nut cultivation and other common place matters about the same. There is no need to write such common place matters about areca nut cultivation if the purpose of such articles is just to impart knowledge since the farmers are well versed with it. More than the stated objective of imparting knowledge, *Keralakarshakan* does a more important function here. As a farm journal, *Keralakarshakan*, through its pages was trying to construct a new image of the farmer and was trying to redefine the identity of the farmer along the lines of the national imagination and regional consciousness at the same time. As pointed out above, according to the article in consideration, the areca nut farmer is not someone limited to his immediate environment, but he is the link in a global network. If the farmer has not thought along these lines, they have to think so now. This is nothing but imagining the farmer in a new way. As argued in the second chapter, *Keralakarshakan* was imagining a new “agricultural community” through its pages and imagining the farmer in a new style was part and parcel of it.

The style of the articles continued to be the same for the initial years. The structure of one more article can be analyzed to illustrate this. And this article is taken from the July issue of *Keralakarshakan* in 1955 written by V. Gopalaswamy who was a chemist and was working in Lemon Grass Research. The article is titled as “Karutha Swarnam Athava Kurumulaku (Black Gold or Pepper).” Like the first article, this article also gives the classification of the crop, here it is pepper, then narrates the global history of pepper and then comes to its history in Kerala (5). It talks about the world market of pepper and then describes the way of cultivation of pepper in Kerala (7). It calls for a radical change in the method of cultivation and calls for more inputs and irrigation (8). The commonly found diseases in the cultivation of pepper are also mentioned in the article (10). It concludes by encouraging the farmer to adopt “scientific methods” (11).

Analyzing these two articles as samples, it can be found that the structure of the journal articles includes

- i) A global history of the crop and then viewing the history of the same within the state where as the latter is always connected to the former.
- ii) Classification of the crop.
- iii) Description/ recording of the method of cultivation of the specific crop in the state.
- iv) A section that calls for the need to be more “scientific” in cultivation”.
- v) Providing solutions to the farmer.
- vi) A new variety of language.

The basic structure continued to be the same till today for the writers where as they opt to discard a few elements according to the nature of the article. Each element in this structure had its own unique functions. For example, the case of the “history” element, it always reminded the farmer of how they are linked with the global market. It took the farmer away from his immediate surroundings and placed him in a global net work. The classification of the crop is also not a process that did not have any consequences. The classification aspect always suggests that the way we view the crops is different from the way you (the farmer) views it. It tells us that our classification is more “rational” or “scientific” than your classification. For example, the first article emphasizes that there is only one variety of areca nut that is cultivated in Kerala though globally, there are thirty six identified varieties. The farmers classifies the areca nut based on their size into different categories but in the scientific view this classification is wrong (Nair 2).

The third element of the article, which is the recording and description of cultivation, gives the writer the status of an ethnographer. The fourth and fifth aspects, i.e. the call for an improved system of agriculture and providing solution to the problems of the farmer reminded the farmers of what is wrong with them. It can be seen from this that, the farm journalist here takes up the roles of the historian, market expert, scientist, ethnographer, etc. as a result of which the nature of their intellectual output becomes something written on a large canvas. This can be called as “Mega-narratives” in this sense. The language aspect also deserves specific treatment here. Most of the farm journalists, old and new- in their interviews, underlined the fact that the farm journalist should write in the language of the farmer. It can be seen that in both the articles, while mentioning the season, the writers specifies the season according to the Malayalam calendar and the Njattuvela calendar. They have avoided using the English calendar. But this has changed later. Regarding the terminology, they use Malayalam words for technical terms (for eg: “Rasathanthra Niyanthranam” for Chemical Pest Control) along with many technical terms. This makes the language a hybrid one. This can be called as the “hybrid language”. In the ultimate analysis, it is the construction of the “Mega-narratives, use of the “Hybrid Language” and the ability to “Narrativize” that distinguish the farm journalist from other categories of intellectuals in the farming world.

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Conclusion

The major arguments of the study have been summed up in the previous four chapters. The thesis is titled as “The Narrated, Disnarrated and Imagined: A Study of the Popular Narratives from *Keralakarshakan*, 1954-2020”. The terms “narration,” “disnarration” and “imagination” are crucial to the present study as they help find another layer of meaning in the reading of *Keralakarshakan*. These terms also help one understand the sociological mechanism behind the production and reception of this farm journal. What is “narrated” in *Keralakarshakan* is not just the directions for cultivation or the seasonal guidelines for farmers or the latest information for practicing agriculturalists. It is the larger narrative of the heroic farmers leading their fight against hostile conditions to preserve their cultivation. To present this larger narrative, the narrative conventions of *Keralakarshakan* have been formed which were later adopted by the other farm magazines in Malayalam. Whatever content does not suit these conventions became a taboo to be mentioned in this magazine and other similar ones. Thus the “disnarrated” themes became unacceptable not just because of the governmental directives or the editorial board’s policy. It is also because of the way the narrative conventions have been formed. It is also due to the target audience’s preference for listening to a heroic narrative or parts of it. *Keralakarshakan* has been narrating this story.

At the heart of this narration, there is an act of imagination. What is imagined is a new civilization, a new society. The imagined progenitors of this new community are none other than the farmers. The better farmers of the future have their predecessors in the successful farmers of today. Thus, through the narration of the successful farmers’ story, the farm journalists find a comparative parallel for the imagined agricultural communities. This is how imagination and narration are interlinked in the pages of *Keralakarshakan*. The successful farmers’ narrative has

yet another function if not many other functions. That is to act as a negative comparable to the farmers who fail in their business. Thus, the act of narration links the present with the future imaginary on the one hand. It also reminds the readers of the unsaid through an indirect comparison on the other hand.

I had raised certain questions when I started my research which I think were answered at the end of the project. My first question was about the aspect of imagination implicit in the narratives of *Keralakarshakan*. I have come up with the conclusion that the search for an ideal farmer and the quest for a better future were the driving force of this imagination. Another question I had was about the narrative structure of the articles of *Keralakarshakan*. Regarding that, I have come up with the conclusion that the narratives of *Keralakarshakan* follow certain conventions and they remind the reader of a larger narrative which has been termed as the “peasant hero fighting the pest villains to save the crop queen.” One important question was about the intellectuals functioning in the field of agriculture. I have reached the conclusion that ‘hybridity’ or the tendency to borrow from the folk culture while firmly footed in the science culture is their character. One more relevant question I had was about the farmers and it was that whether they have been receiving knowledge from the government officials passively. From my field work experience, I have found that they have not been receiving information passively. In fact, there are farmers who produce knowledge; and even when they receive knowledge, they modify it according to their convenience.

The present study has been designed as a textual analysis of *Keralakarshakan* from its year of inception, i.e. 1954 to 2020. The articles of this magazine have been classified into different categories and viewed as narratives of different sorts. The study arrives at the conclusion that each of these narratives can be viewed as part of a larger narrative which is the

farmer hero fighting against all the enemies to protect his/ her crops. The study has its limitations. The analysis is confined to the textual matter. The response of the actual readers could not be included and studied in the present project. A theoretical paradigm like the Reader Response Criticism can help a researcher do more on this area. Looking at this limitation from another angle, it can be seen that textual analysis does not always take into consideration how the reader produces meaning which would be the major concern of a researcher if s/ he approaches the texts from a poststructuralist view point. This is another area that should be addressed in future researches.

The relation between the farm journalists and the farmers is another area that is given due emphasis in this thesis. The category of farm journalists is a new one which is obvious. They became popular in Kerala after *Keralakarshakan* became popular among the farmers. This print publication might definitely have impacted the farmers. What has been emphasized in the present study is how the farmers shaped the identity of the farm journalists. This question is addressed in the last chapter. As mentioned there, Homi K. Bhabha's ideas of identity is worth mentioning here. Bhabha speaks about the colonizers and the colonized and his theories are based on the dynamics between these two. This cannot be mechanically applied in a different context. Here the dynamics is between the farm journalists who represent the science community and the farmers. But still it can be seen that some of his ideas can be used in the present context to get more insights. While commenting on Bhabha's *Location of Culture*, one commentator makes the following observation:

Central to Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* is the idea that the identities of colonizers and colonized (whether individuals or a society) are inherently unstable, fractured, and hybrid. That is, there is no "pure" identity,

since all identities are formed by the presence of traces of different cultures within the subject. (Fay & Haydon 35)

In the present context, the farm journalists as a category represent the scientific temperament and stand for scientific practices in farming. But it can be seen that they evolve and adapt in a different cultural setting justifying Bhabha's observation on identities. If it is the colonized that mimic the colonizer in the context of colonialism, it is the farm journalists, the more privileged group that try to mimic the language and culture of the farmers for better communication. This poses an interesting scenario. The studies and commentaries on or related to farm journalism in Malayalam have been trying to understand whether farm journalism has successfully communicated scientific ideas with the farmers and whether the farmers have been adapting their agricultural practices accordingly. Such studies view the farmers as a group meant to be on the receiving end, a target group. The difference between such studies and the present study is that the present attempt is more about knowing the farm journalists and the dynamics between the journalists and the farmers.

In fact, there is more similarity between the case of the nation as theorized by such theorists as Benedict Anderson and Homi K. Bhabha; and the case of farm journals. In Anderson's view, certain "cultural systems" preceded the nation (Anderson 19). Here, the farm journalistic tradition started by *Keralakarshakan* can be seen as a cultural system imagining a future promised land. Just as there are many old and ancient civilizations based on agriculture, *Keralakarshakan* imagines a future civilization based on new agricultural technology. Both the magazine and the writers contributing to this imagination are in a state of evolution. The nature and content of the magazine have changed considerably over the years. This has been explained in the chapters. The magazine that was keen on narrating the newly developed seeds and new

agricultural practices in the early decades is now also enthusiastic about organic farming and alternative practices to chemical farming.

This is also true about the journalists. R. T. Ravivarma- popularly known as Seeri- is an example. His writings in *Keralakarshakan* in the 50's, 60's and 70's can be contrasted with his writings in *Karshakasree* in the 90's. Earlier, R. T. Ravivarma was enthusiastically writing about the new seeds and technological advancements in the field of agriculture. Most of his articles in *Keralakarshakan* during this period reflect this sensibility and they were meant to motivate the farmers to adopt these techniques. But his articles on *Karshakasree* in the nineties and after reflect a totally different sensibility. He was more eloquent about the indigenous crops, breeds, individuals who provided an alternative view to the chemical farming practiced by most of the farmers and preached by officials. He regularly wrote about such topics in his one page column in *Karshakasree*.

Thus, there is some sort of ambivalence about farm journalism in Malayalam though not in the strict sense of the word as used by Homi K. Bhabha. The same goes true about the aspect of imagination. The shades of imagination have changed from time to time. This may be explained with a quote from Bhabha,

This turns the familiar two-faced god into a figure of prodigious doubling that investigates the nation-space in the *process* of the articulation of elements: where meanings may be partial because they are *in medics res*; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image. (3)

The ambivalence associated with farm journals' imagination has a parallel here. First of all, studying *Keralakarshakan*, in the present context is also about studying its narratives. These narratives are also about the imagination of a future promised land. The image and imagination of this future is "ambivalent" because they are "caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing.'" The difference of the present context from the theories about the nation and its narratives is too easy to go unnoticed. These theorists were looking at how certain narratives and other cultural productions were foreshadowing the political unit of nation and how they contributed to the making of it.

In the present context, the narratives of *Keralakarshakan* are not a precursor to a future political or cultural entity as the imagination of *Keralakarshakan* may never materialize. What is common is the act of imagination. Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation itself is that "it is an imagined political community (6)." Though the kind of imagination mentioned in the present context is different, it makes sense to use this definition of Anderson to define the act of imagination found in *Keralakarshakan*. Thus, it can be said that the sum total of *Keralakarshakan's* imagination is an "imagined agricultural community."

Thus, the study reveals that one of the most fundamental aspects of *Keralakarshakan* is how the story turns into discourse. Narrativization gives the stuff and shape of the magazine. Actually, the importance of narrative theory in the study of journalism has long been recognized. This is how there is a separate branch of media studies called narrative journalism. It is also known as New Journalism, Narrative Non-fiction, Reportage Literature, Non-fiction Novel, Literary Non-fiction, etc. (Rajendran 9). The term is usually associated with a number of American journalists who have radically changed the traditional way of reporting, the most prominent of them being Tom Wolfe. The other major journalists of this group included Truman

Capote, Michael Herr, Joan Didion, Norman Mailer, Jimmy Breslin, Gay Talese, Hunter S. Thompson, John Sack, etc. They were not just journalists, they were great writers too. Their way of writing is what made them different. They wrote in a gripping way. They wrote about Vietnam War, some of the murder stories, space mission and many other topics. Tom Wolfe and other such writers brought journalism much closer to creative literature. In fact, they even challenged novelists and argued that their writing, which was often called as “creative non-fiction” was far more superior to novel (Weingarten 1-2). ‘New Journalism’ was the word used to denote these writers. Actually Tom Wolfe titled his anthology with pieces from many similar writers like Gay Talese as “New Journalism.” The *New Yorker* contested his nomenclature stating that the techniques used by Tom Wolfe and other writers were in prevalence for more than two hundred years and that it cannot be called a new trend (Weingarten 1).

Both Tom Wolfe’s claim and the *New Yorker*’s refusal to accept his claim are relevant from a narrative angle. When Tom Wolfe was claiming their brand of journalism as a new one, he was indirectly stating that they are different since they resorted to narrativization a lot. When the *New Yorker* refuted his claim, they were indirectly stating that narrativization was always part of journalism. What is relevant here is the fact that both of them realized the power of the narrative very clearly.

As mentioned earlier, narrative journalism was closer to literature. The language aspect has great importance in it. A moderate language avoiding any sort of exaggeration, fact-oriented reporting, and a distinct style of narration were the characteristics of narrative journalism (Davis 19). The priorities of *Keralakarshakan* are clearly different from Narrative Journalism. Where it stands closer to Narrative Journalism is in the aspect of language. The difference of

Keralakarshakan is that; though the narrative construction in *Keralakarshakan* is done by journalists; part of it happens due to the collective unconscious of the readers.

This collective unconscious also provides explanation to the question of why the readers still prefer a magazine like *Keralakarshakan* to the numerous you tube channels and face book pages that give authentic information about farming related matters. The readers/ viewers or even social media users do not expect just information alone. They long for stories. Superhero motifs are still active in the collective unconscious of the readers/ viewers/ social media users. They find the reflection of these motifs and archetypal hero figures in the narratives of *Keralakarshakan*. A you tube channel or face book page may give information in a better way. But they may not cater to the needs of their users in terms of enjoying a narrative, probably the narrative of a farmer super hero. Without the help of the Narrative Theory, this insight would not have been possible.

Narrative theory has developed a lot after Propp and Genette. There is so much of theorization and it is difficult to outline the fundamental principles or basic concerns of Narrative Theory. Even narrative theorists of our age would agree with this. To quote a theorist no less than Jonathan Culler,

So much work has been done in the field of narratology that to attempt any sort of synthesis, identifying areas of fundamental agreement and the principal issues in dispute, would be a massive task. (188)

Despite all this confusion, it can be seen as mentioned many times before that the most central concern of narrative theory traditionally has been the relation between the story and discourse. This has been mentioned in the third chapter. Coming to the same issue, it can be

stated in the context of the present study that the story-discourse relation is slightly altered here in the narratives of *Keralakarshakan*. In the traditional sense of Narratology, the story and discourse are, to put them in very simple terms, nothing but the actual course of events (story) and how they are represented in the said narrative (discourse); be it a story, novel, movie, an art form, etc. In *Keralakarshakan*, the story- for example the story of a farmer- may be narrated in an article making it a discourse; but this may again remind the reader of the larger narrative which is the “peasant hero fighting the pest villains to save the crop queen.” This forms another level of narrativity. Though, it is not present in the actual text, its presence is felt by the reader either through the shared collective unconscious, or from years of reading *Keralakarshakan*, or from reading a single issue also. Now, this third level of signification may be called as the “second order semiology” to borrow a phrase from Barthes. This is the larger image presented by *Keralakarshakan* to its readers. In fact, this is the image the readers want to see in a farm magazine. In this way, *Keralakarshakan* is also doing the function of a story teller.

Stories and Story tellers are part of every culture. Folk myths and folk stories reflect the society as well as people’s wishes. For a long time before the mass media entered the scene, knowledge about agriculture was encrypted in the folk lore. *Keralakarshakan*, the first official farm magazine of the Government of Kerala, was occupying this space. The creation of the image of the farmer hero was an inadvertent outcome of the narrativization of the message the farm journalists wanted to convey.

The farm journals and the entire project of agricultural extension open up scope for research in the areas of literature, social studies, media studies and cultural studies. Research projects in comparative literature that demands collaboration with social sciences will definitely contribute to the specific research as well as the discipline of Comparative Literature. Such

projects will give a fresh impetus to this discipline. The idea of Comparative Literature collaborating with the Social Sciences was expressed by many eminent comparatists. Spivak, for example, has repeatedly said this in her book *Death of a Discipline*. The second chapter of her book is titled as “Collectivities.” She makes a reference to Derrida’s book *Politics of Friendship* and talks about the formation of ‘collectivities’ in academics. In Spivak’s words, “that book is an example of how the humanities and the social sciences must supplement each other (27).” The present research project itself is an example of a student of Comparative Literature collaborating with Social Science in an attempt to nurture his own research project which is supposed to contribute something to the discipline as well. Students of Comparative Literature can take this way in order to help themselves and the discipline. Though, in general, comparatists of different viewpoints agree with the centrality of “textuality”, it will be valuable to cross borders and add another level of insight to each researcher’s research project. This may be a priority for the students of Comparative Literature.

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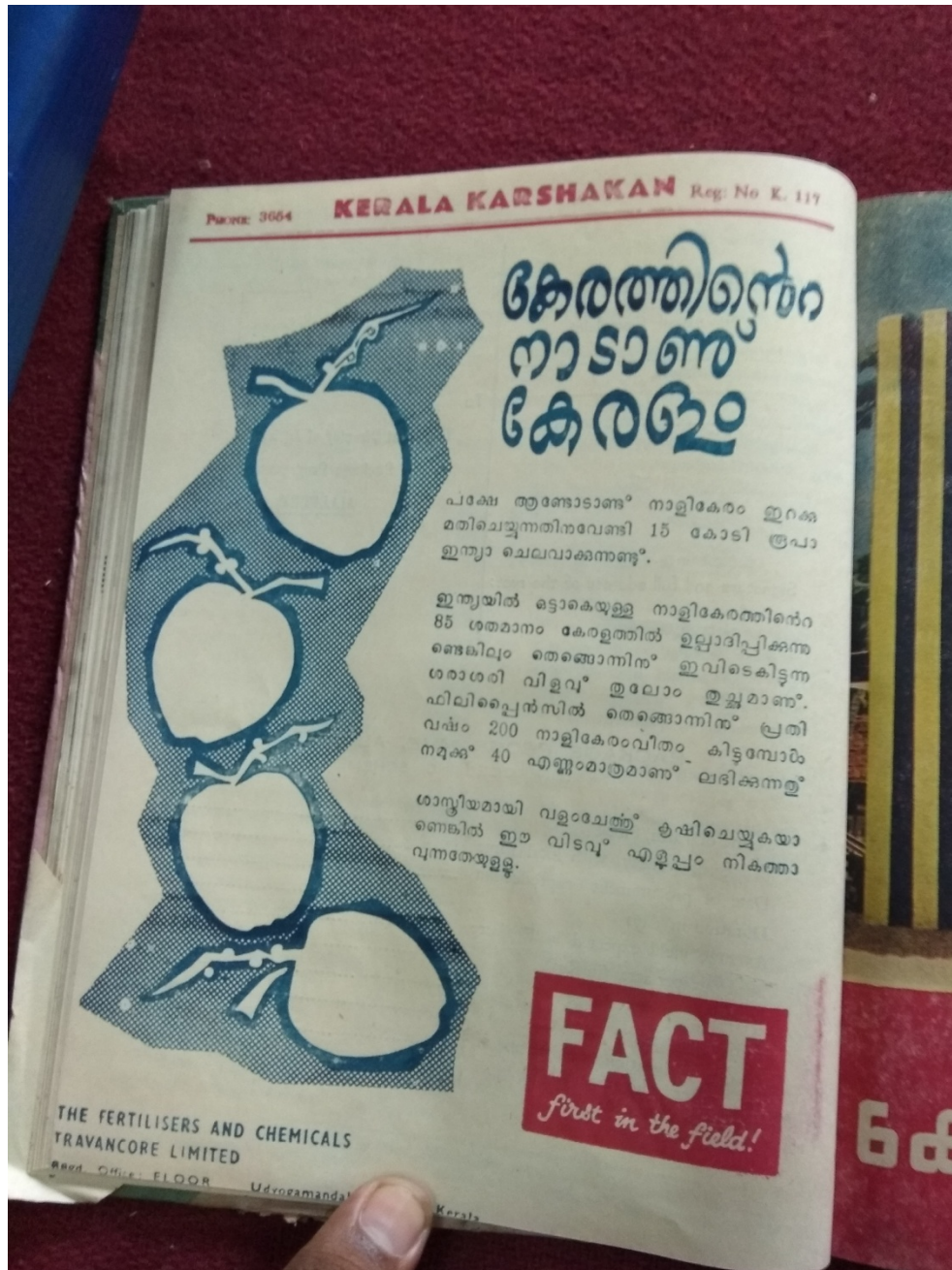
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Appendices

Appendix 1

An advertisement given in the last page of *Keralakarshakan*'s February 1966 issue.



പര്യവേക്ഷണങ്ങൾ നാളികേരം ഇറക്കി
മതിയായതിനുവേണ്ടി 15 കോടി രൂപ
ഇപ്പോൾ ചെലവാക്കുന്നു.

ഇന്ത്യയിൽ ഒട്ടാകെ ഉള്ള നാളികേരത്തിന്റെ
85 ശതമാനം കേരളത്തിൽ ഉല്പാദിപ്പിക്കുന്നു
ഈയിടെയെന്നിട്ട് ഇവിടെ കിട്ടുന്ന
ശരാശരി വിളവ് രൂപോം ഇരുമാണ്.
ഫിഫിപ്പെന്റിൽ തെങ്ങെന്നിട്ട് പ്രതി
വർഷം 200 നാളികേരംവിതം കിട്ടുമ്പോൾ
നമുക്ക് 40 എണ്ണം മാത്രമാണ് ലഭിക്കുന്നത്

ശാസ്ത്രീയമായി വളംചേർത്ത് ഉഷ്ണിച്ചെടുക്കുകയാ
ണെങ്കിൽ ഈ വിഭവ് എളുപ്പം നികത്താ
വുന്നതേയുള്ളൂ.

FACT
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THE FERTILISERS AND CHEMICALS
TRAVANCORE LIMITED
Head Office: FLOOR, Udyogamandalam, Kerala

ഓരോ പുൽക്കൊടിയിലും കണ്ണെത്തുന്ന
 കരിഷകൻ അനിയേണ്ടത്



ചുക്കിനെ സിംഹാധിപ്യനായിക്കൊ ചുക്കിന്റെ വിജയംതൊട്ടു എന്നു പറയാറുണ്ട്.
 കണ്ടാരു ഏതു ചുക്കിനും കഷിക്കിന്റെ തീർ അതാണെന്നു അമ്മയും ചിലർക്കുമുള്ള
 അഭിപ്രായമുണ്ടുണ്ട്. വിജയംതൊട്ടു എന്നും ഏതിനു തന്റെ വിജയംതൊട്ടു
 ചുക്കിന്റെഅഭിപ്രായംതൊട്ടുനോക്കി നൂറു കഷിക്കർ അമ്മപറഞ്ഞാൽപോലുള്ള
 ഒരാൾ അമ്മ അഭിപ്രായമുണ്ടാവില്ല.

അമ്മപറഞ്ഞാൽ ഉടക്കും ഏറ്റവും മിനുസമുള്ള പൊട്ടു പ്രാമാണ്ഡ്യനായിക്കൊ കണ്ടാരു.
 പണ്ഡിത്യംതന്നെ ഉടക്കുംതൊട്ടു സാധാരണ പൊട്ടു വിശുദ്ധ വസ്തു കഷിക്കു നോക്കുംതൊട്ടാണു.
 തൊട്ടുതന്നെങ്കിൽ ഒന്നുതന്നെ തൊട്ടു സുഷിക്കുന്ന തൊട്ടുപോലും ഏതാൻ ചാക്കുമ്പോൾ
 ചീ വി നീ പൊട്ടു തൊട്ടു ഉടക്കിൻ ചാക്കിന്റെ തന്നെ ഉടക്കും അമ്മകൾ
 ഒന്നിനേ ഒന്നു തൊട്ടുതൊട്ടുനൂറു.

ചമ്മത്തോ നമ്മെക്കൊട്ടുതൊട്ടു തൊട്ടു ചാക്കി ചാക്കി പൊട്ടുതന്നെ തൊട്ടു
 പ്രാമാണ്ഡ്യനായിക്കൊട്ടുതൊട്ടു.

ചാക്കി പൊട്ടുതന്നെ ഏതാൻ ചാക്കിന്റെ തൊട്ടു എന്നു തന്നെ തൊട്ടു.
 പൊട്ടു പൊട്ടുതന്നെ പൊട്ടു ചാക്കിന്റെ തൊട്ടുതന്നെ തൊട്ടുതന്നെ തൊട്ടുതന്നെ തൊട്ടുതന്നെ

നമ്മെക്കൊട്ടുതൊട്ടുതന്നെ തൊട്ടുതന്നെ തൊട്ടുതന്നെ തൊട്ടുതന്നെ തൊട്ടുതന്നെ

PEARL BLACK
P V C P I P E S

ബുദ്ധിയെക്കൊത്ത ഗുണം കിടയെക്കൊത്ത വിധം

Neyiyara Extrusions Pvt. Limited, Kodanad-683 544. Phone: 0484 - 649364, 649365, 649366 Fax: 0484 - 649366

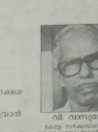
നെല്ലിന് ഏറ്റവും അനുയോജ്യമായ രാസവളം

ഫാക്ടോഫോസ് 20-20-0-15



ഏറ്റവും ഉത്പാദനക്ഷമമായ നല്ല നല്ല കട്ടയുള്ള ഏതാ ഏതാ സാമ്പത്തിക ഹർഷഫോസ് 20-20-0-15 ആണ് ഏത് കൃഷിയിലും അനുയോജ്യമായ ഹർഷഫോസ് 20-20-0-15 പാക്റ്റൈം, ഓംപിംഗ്, ഗ്രീനുകൾ എന്നിവയുടെ സമ്പാദകമാണ്.

ഏറ്റവും കർഷകർക്ക് അനുയോജ്യമാണ് കാരണമായ ഹർഷഫോസ് 20-20-0-15 നിലത്തു സമൃദ്ധിയും അനുയോജ്യമായ ഏറ്റവും ഉത്തമമായ നല്ല നല്ല



പി. സാബുദാസ്
കുറുപ്പ് ഹർഷഫോസ് ഏറ്റെടുക്കുന്ന അതിർത്തി



വ്യാപാരികൾക്ക് കൈമാറുന്ന വിജയരഹസ്യം

ഫാക്ടോഫോസ്

20-20-0-15

നിംഗ്ലിഷ് വെർഷൻ: ഏറ്റവും ഉത്പാദനക്ഷമമായ നല്ല നല്ല കട്ടയുള്ള ഏതാ ഏതാ സാമ്പത്തിക ഹർഷഫോസ് 20-20-0-15 ആണ് ഏത് കൃഷിയിലും അനുയോജ്യമായ ഹർഷഫോസ് 20-20-0-15 പാക്റ്റൈം, ഓംപിംഗ്, ഗ്രീനുകൾ എന്നിവയുടെ സമ്പാദകമാണ്.



FACT
PIONEERS IN PROGRESS

ഫാക്ടോഫോസ്

20-20-0-15

നിംഗ്ലിഷ് വെർഷൻ: ഏറ്റവും ഉത്പാദനക്ഷമമായ നല്ല നല്ല കട്ടയുള്ള ഏതാ ഏതാ സാമ്പത്തിക ഹർഷഫോസ് 20-20-0-15 ആണ് ഏത് കൃഷിയിലും അനുയോജ്യമായ ഹർഷഫോസ് 20-20-0-15 പാക്റ്റൈം, ഓംപിംഗ്, ഗ്രീനുകൾ എന്നിവയുടെ സമ്പാദകമാണ്.

സമൃദ്ധമായ വിളവിനും മണ്ണിന്റെ രക്ഷയ്ക്കും



ഫോസ്മിൽ പ്ളസ്

ഒരു സാമ്പ്രദായിക ജൈവവളം

Marketing Offices:- Puthukadu - Trichur
Vayapparapadi - Manjeri - 676121.

SOUTHERN FERTILIZERS

THURUTHY P.O. CHANGANACHERY

PH: Off: 427930, Resi: 424779

കുറിപ്പ്: 1997 ജൂലൈ 31

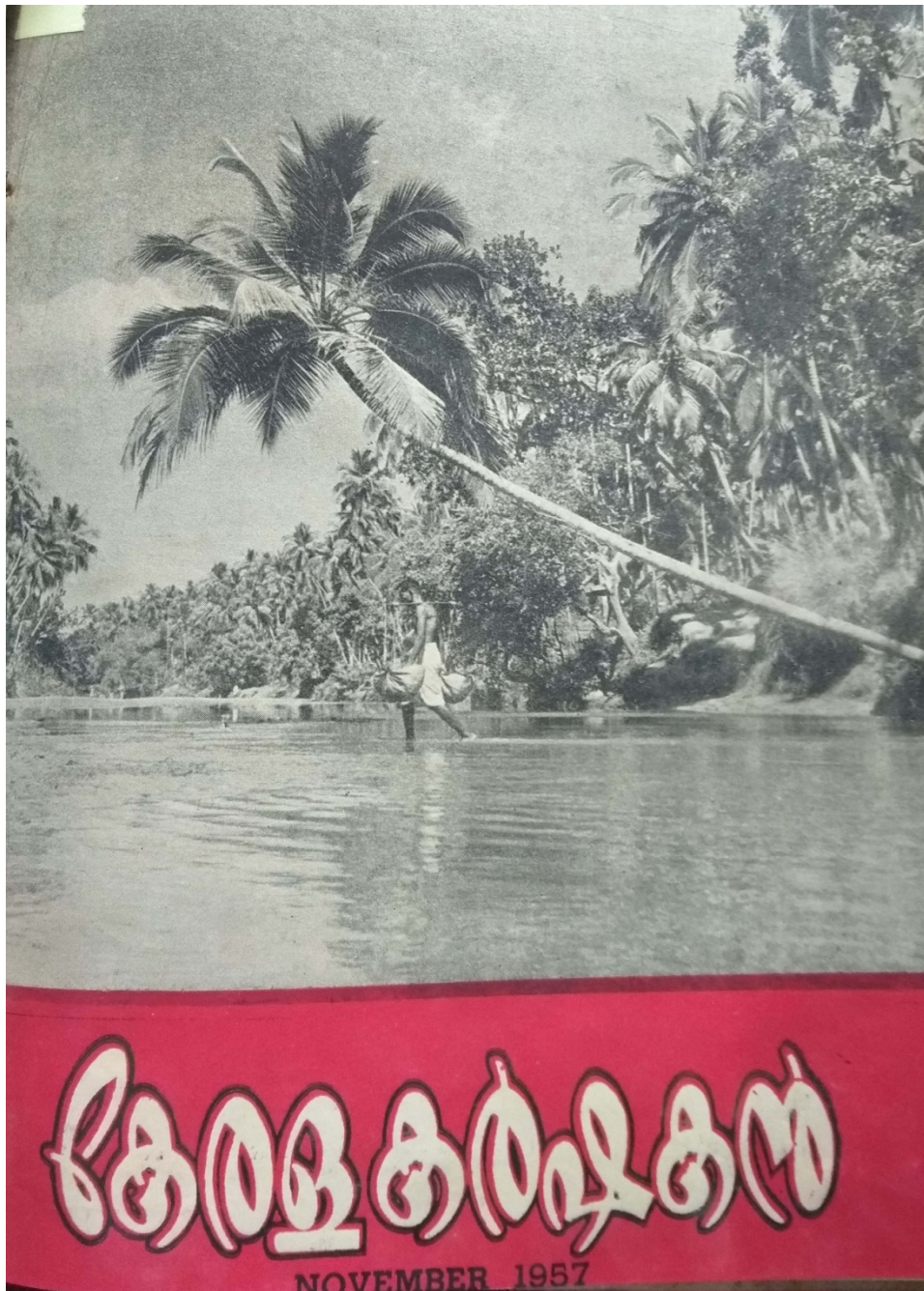
തൃശ്ശൂർ നഗരസഭ
റബ്ബർ നേഴ്സറി
മുഴുവർ P.O.
കോട്ടയം Dt.
അയക്കുന്ന - പള്ളിക്കത്തോട് റൂട്ടിൽ
ഫോൺ - 0481- 551210, 506026
(റബ്ബർ ബോർഡ് & ലൂഷി വകുപ്പ് അംഗീകൃതം)
എല്ലായിനം ബഡ് തൈകൾ, കുട
തൈകൾ 10,000 മീറ്റർ ബഡ്ഡ് വുഡ്
കുടാതൈ കുറ്റാടി തൈങ്ങിനെയെ,
മംഗള, കാസർകോടൻ കമുക്,
കാവേരി, റോബസ്റ്റ്, C & R കാപ്പി,
തേക്ക്, മാഞ്ചിയം, മഹാഗണി സർവ്വ
സുഗന്ധി തുടങ്ങി എല്ലായിനം
തൈകളും പൂർണ്ണ ഉത്തരവാദിത്വ
ത്തോടുകൂടി വിറ്റുവരുന്നു.

Prop. ജോസുകുട്ടി ആന്റണി

കിരീടം 1997 ജൂലൈ ൨7

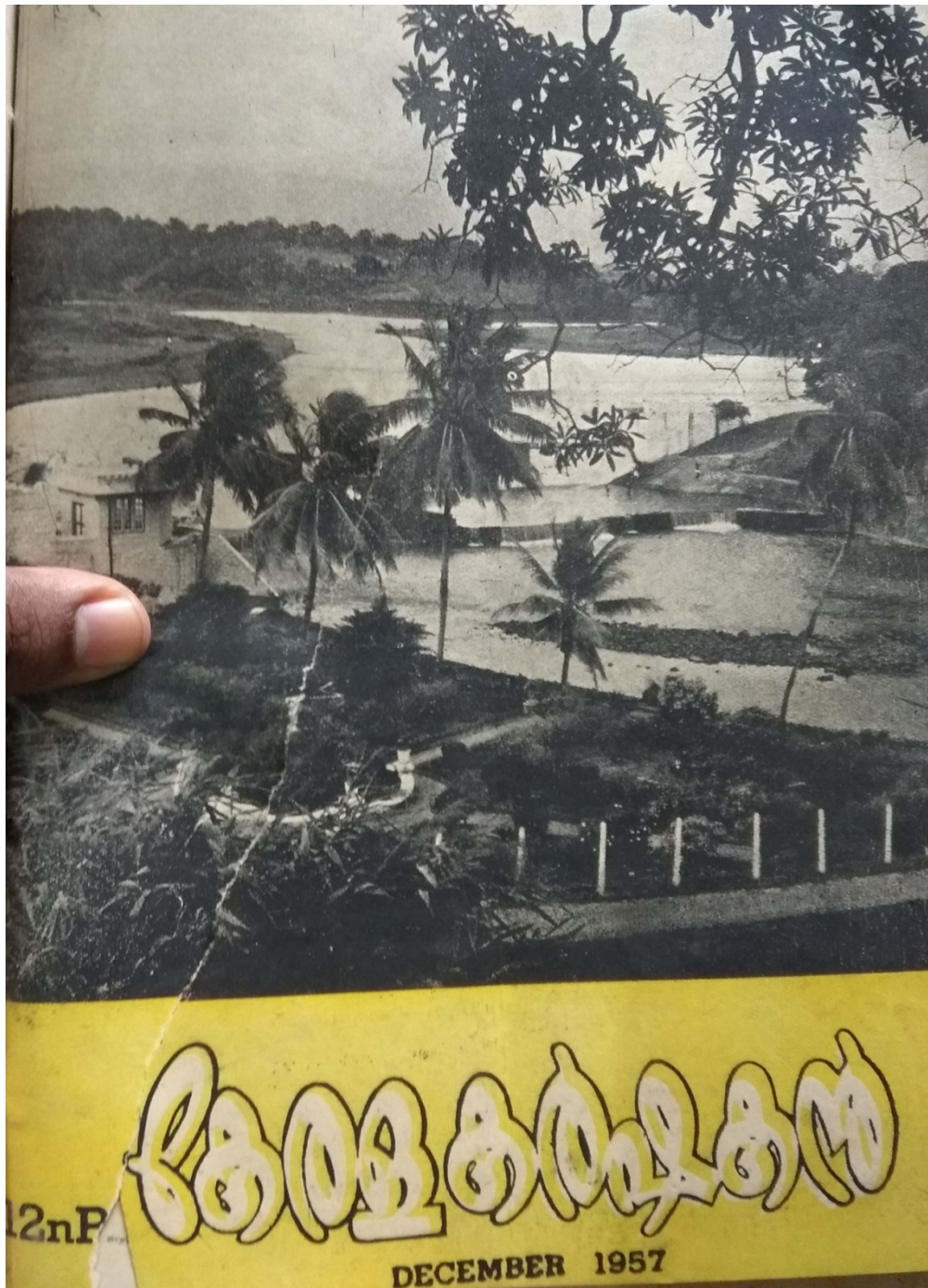
Appendix 4

The cover page of November 1957 issue of *Keralakarshakan*.



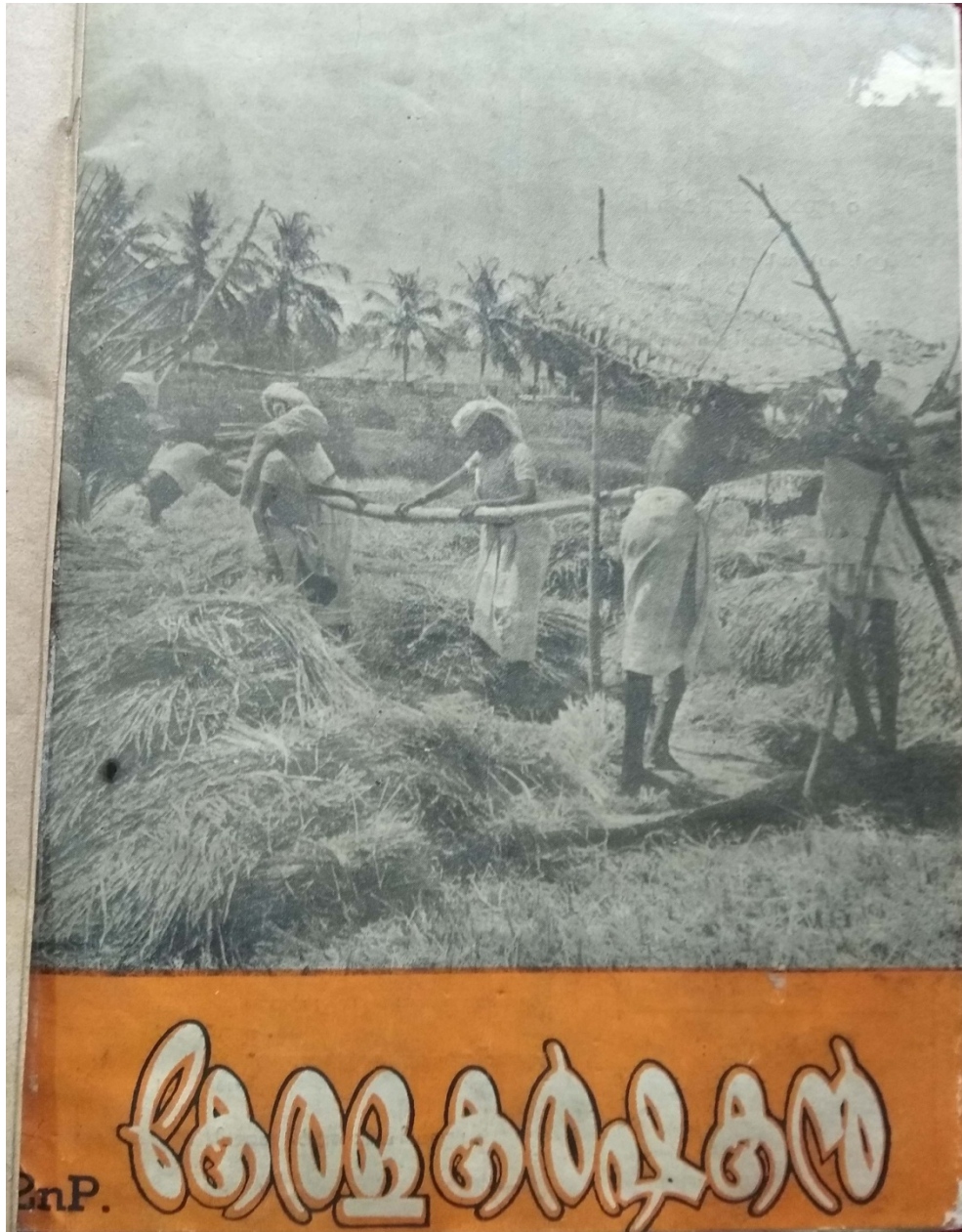
Appendix 5

The cover page of the December 1957 issue of *Keralakarshakan*



Appendix 6

The cover page of the 1958 January issue of *Keralakarshakan*



Appendix 7

Cover page of the November 1965 issue of *Keralakarshakan*.



Appendix 8

The cover page of January 1967 of *Keralakarshakan*



Appendix 9

The cover page of January 1969 issue of *Keralakarshakan*



Appendix 10

The cover page of February-1969 of *Keralakarshakan*



Appendix 11

The cover page of April 16-1974



Appendix 12

The cover page of July 1-16, 1974 of *Keralakarshakan*



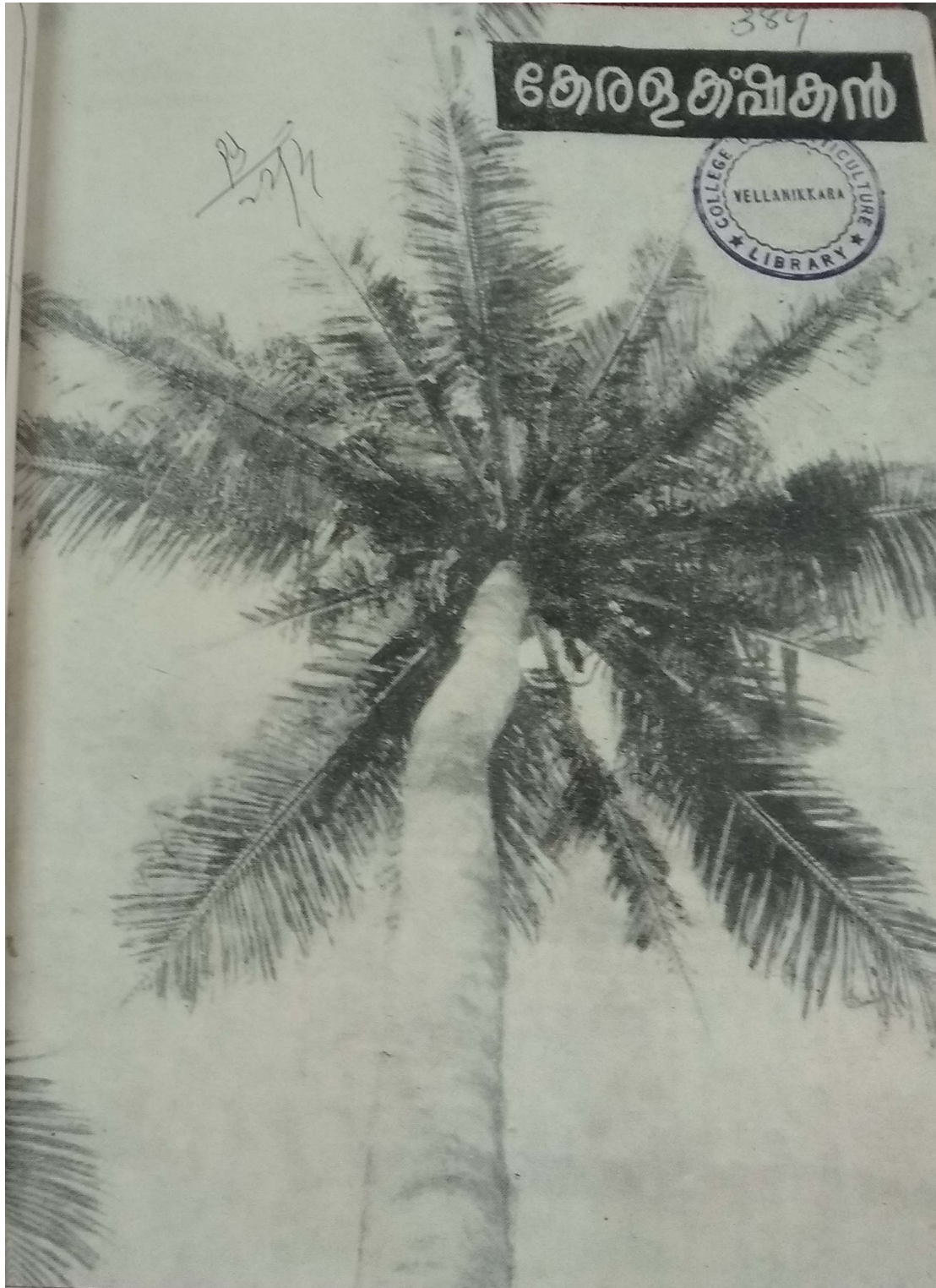
Appendix 13

The cover page of August 16-1979



Appendix 14

The cover page of April 1980



Appendix 15

The cover pages of January 1 and Jun 1 of *Keralakarshakan*



Appendix 16

Some of the cover pages in the 80's that used multiple images pasted into the same frame creating a collage like experience.



Appendix 17

The image of the mangoes in the cover page of May 1-1980.



Appendix 18

The cover page of May 1-1980.



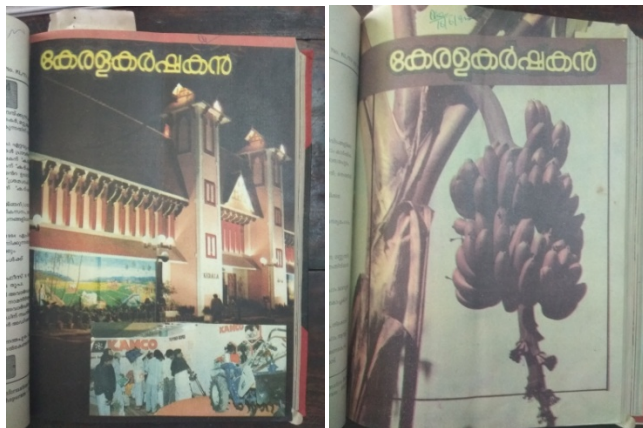
Appendix 19

The Cover page of January 16-1980



Appendix 20

The cover pages of the 1990's. The popular trends in the design of the cover pages can be seen.



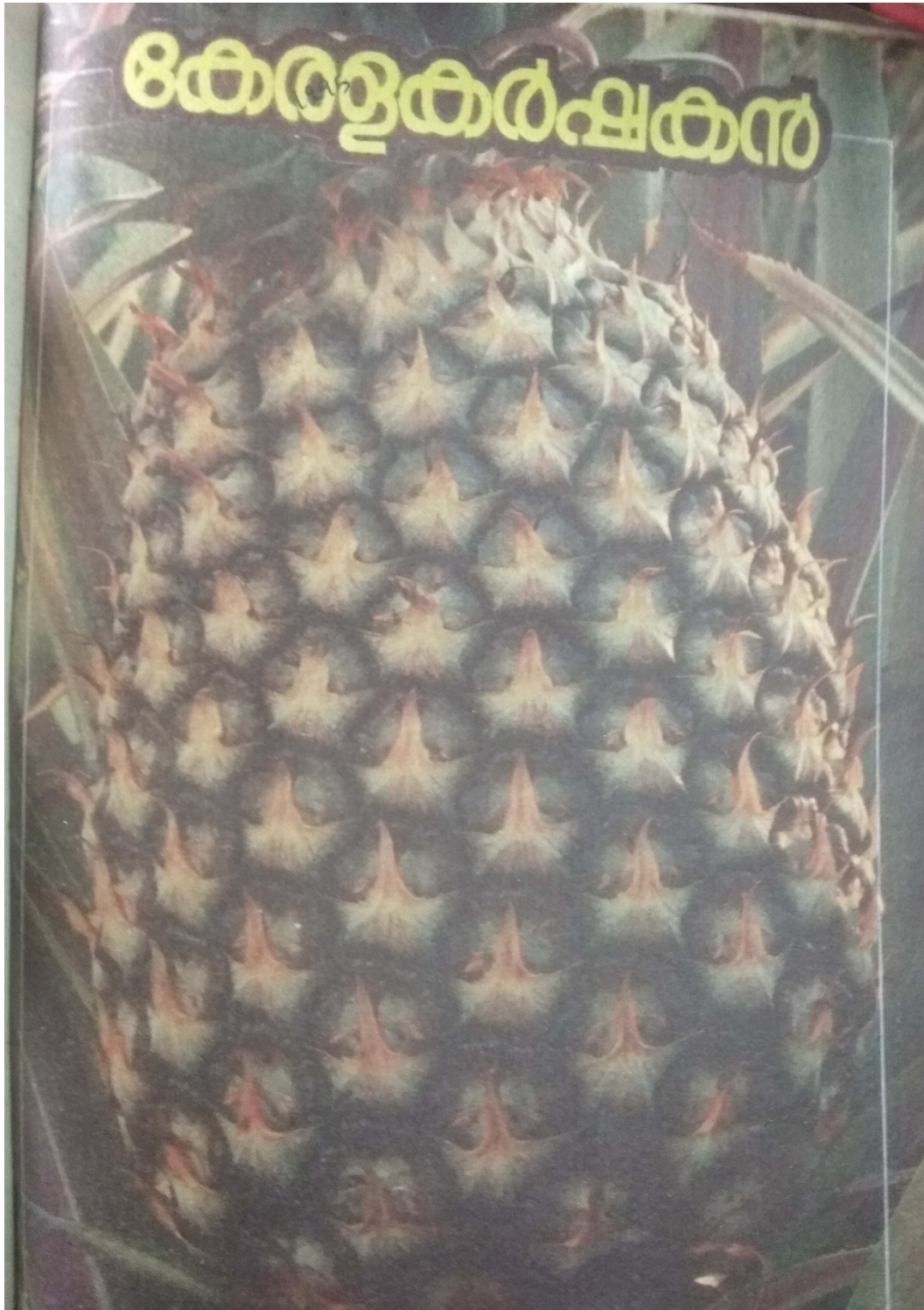
Appendix 21

Some of the cover page of the 1990s that present romantic images from village life



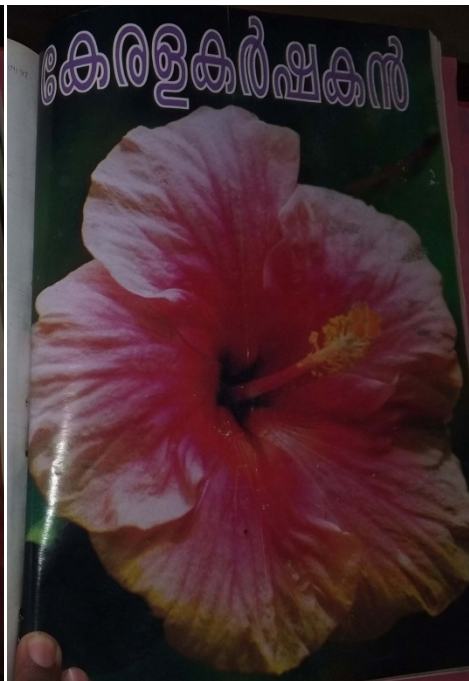
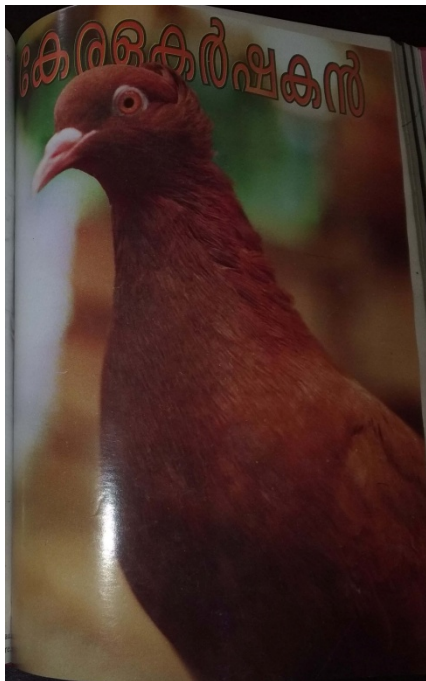
Appendix 22

Cover page of December 20-1995



Appendix 23

Some other cover pages of the 1990's that exploit the possibilities of the close-up shot



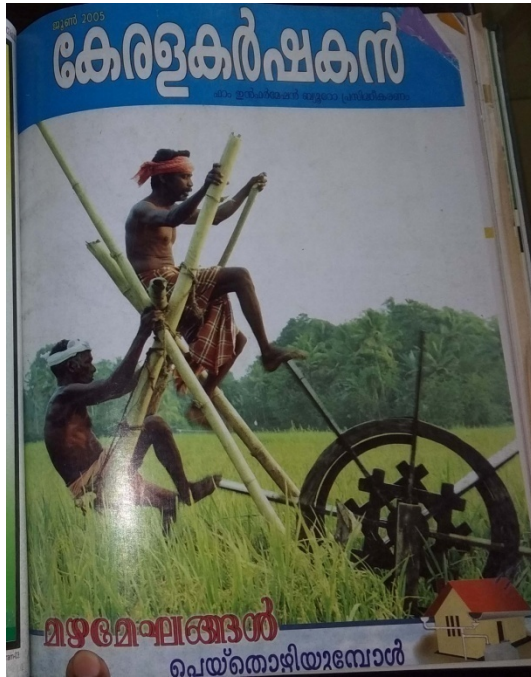
Appendix 24

Some of the cover pages of the 2000's that depict the rural farmers



Appendix 25

Some of the cover pages in the 2000's that romanticize the village life



Appendix 26

Some of the cover pages in the 2010's with the images of the newgen farmers



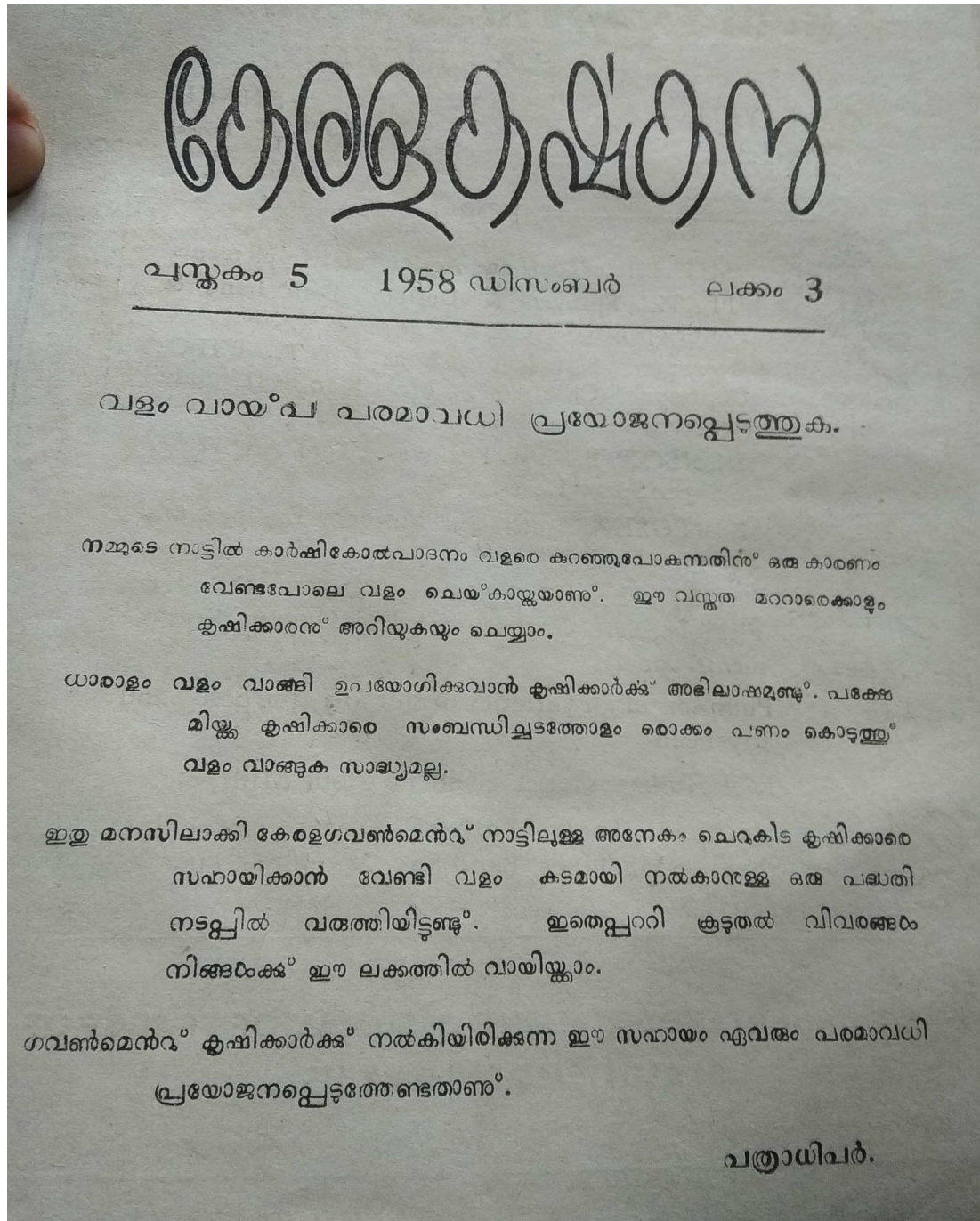
Appendix 27

Some of the cover pages in the 2010's with images of the female farmers or entrepreneurs



Appendix 28

The editorial note of December 1958 titled "Make maximum use of the fertilizer loan" that advises the farmers to make maximum use of the fertilizer loan given by the state government. Such editorials show how the editorial collective wanted to popularize the governmental schemes.



Appendix 29

Editorial note of January 1958 (Book 4, Issue 4) that advises the farmers to use more local manures.

കേരള കർഷകൻ

പുസ്തകം 4 | 1958 ജനുവരി | ലക്കം 4

കൂടുതൽ നാടൻ വളങ്ങൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കുക

ഇന്നും നാം മുരടിയത്തോതിലെ വളങ്ങൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നുള്ളു. വേണ്ടിടത്തോളം വളങ്ങൾ കിട്ടുവാൻ വിഷമമുള്ളതാണ് ഇതിന് കാരണം.

അവരവർക്കു ആവശ്യമുള്ള നാടൻ വളങ്ങൾ സ്വന്തം കൃഷിസ്ഥലത്തു് ഉണ്ടാക്കുവാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചാൽ നമുക്കു് ഇതിന് ഒരു പരിഹാരം കാണുവാൻ കഴിയും. സ്വന്തമായി വളം ഉണ്ടാക്കുവാനോ ചിലവു് മുരടിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുമെന്നും ഓക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ടു്.

ചുറ്റും കാണാവുന്ന കരിയില തുടങ്ങിയ പാഴ്സാധനങ്ങൾ ശേഖരിച്ചു വളമുണ്ടാക്കുന്നവർ ഇന്നു് വളരെ മുരടിക്കുന്നു. ഇത്തരം സാധനങ്ങൾ കൊണ്ടു് ഒന്നാംതരം കമ്പോസ്റ്റ് വളം നിർമ്മിക്കുവാൻ എല്ലാവരും ശ്രമിച്ചേ തീരൂ.

നമ്മുടെ നെൽകൃഷിക്കും മറ്റു വിളവുകൾക്കും പച്ചിലവളം വളരെ പ്രധാനമാണു്. എന്നാൽ ഈ ഇന്നും വളവും ഇപ്പോൾ ആവശ്യം പോലെ ലഭിക്കുന്നില്ല.

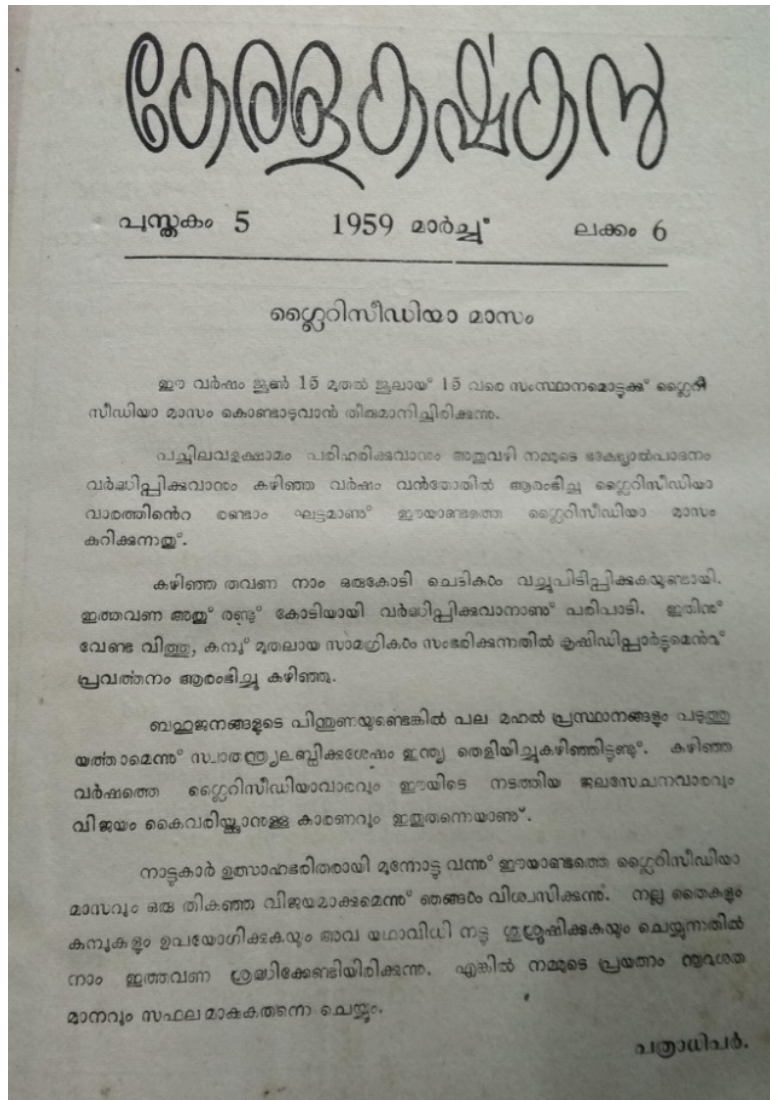
ധാരാളം പച്ചിലകൾ നൽകുന്ന ഗ്ലറിസീസിയ, ഇൻഡിഗോഫെറ മുതലായവ വേലിപ്പത്തലുകളായി നമ്മുടെ പറമ്പിനു് ചുറ്റും വെച്ചു് പിടിപ്പിക്കേണ്ടതാണു്. ഇതിനു പുറമേ വയലിലും പറമ്പിലും ഇടക്കാലത്തു് വളത്താവുന്ന പലതരം പച്ചില വള ചെടികളുമുണ്ടു്.

നാടൻ വളങ്ങൾ തന്നതായി ഉൽപാദിപ്പിക്കുന്നതു് കൃഷിപ്പണികളിൽ ഒരു ഭാഗമായി എല്ലാവരും കണക്കാക്കേണ്ടതാണു്.

പത്രാധിപർ

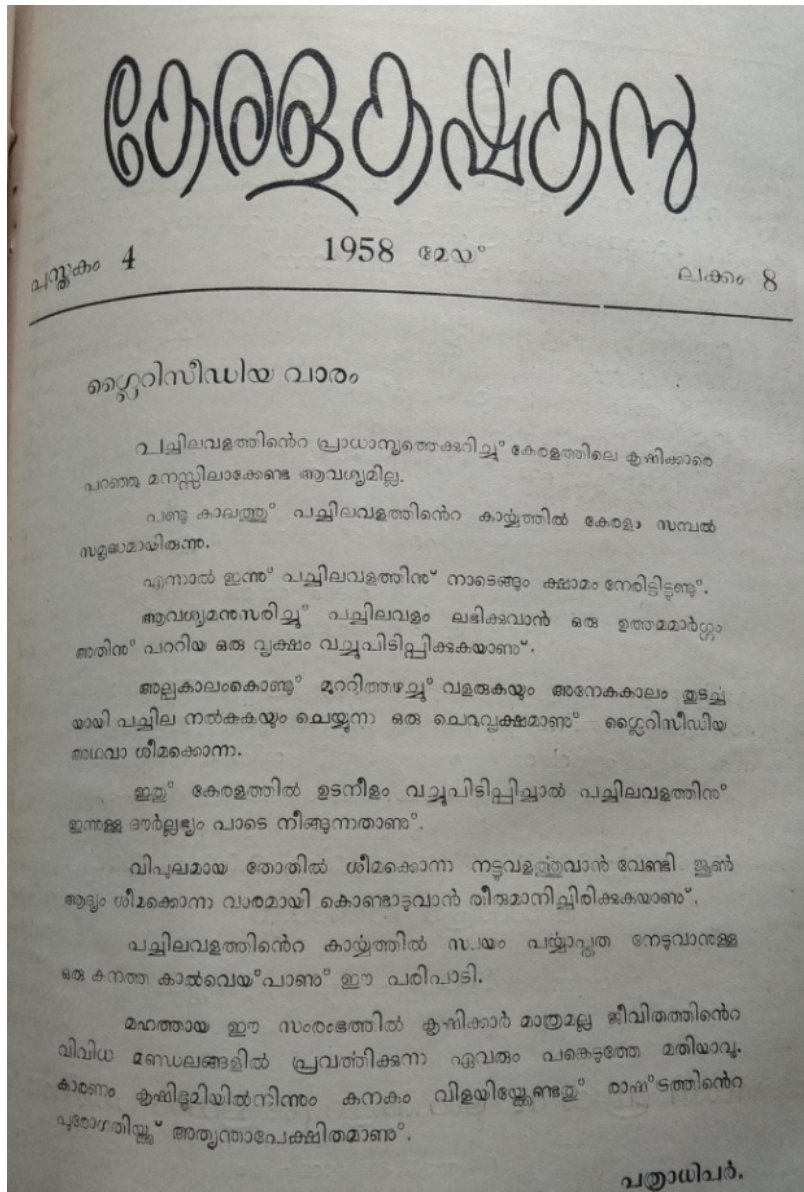
Appendix 30

An editorial note that urges the farmers to observe the gliricidia month



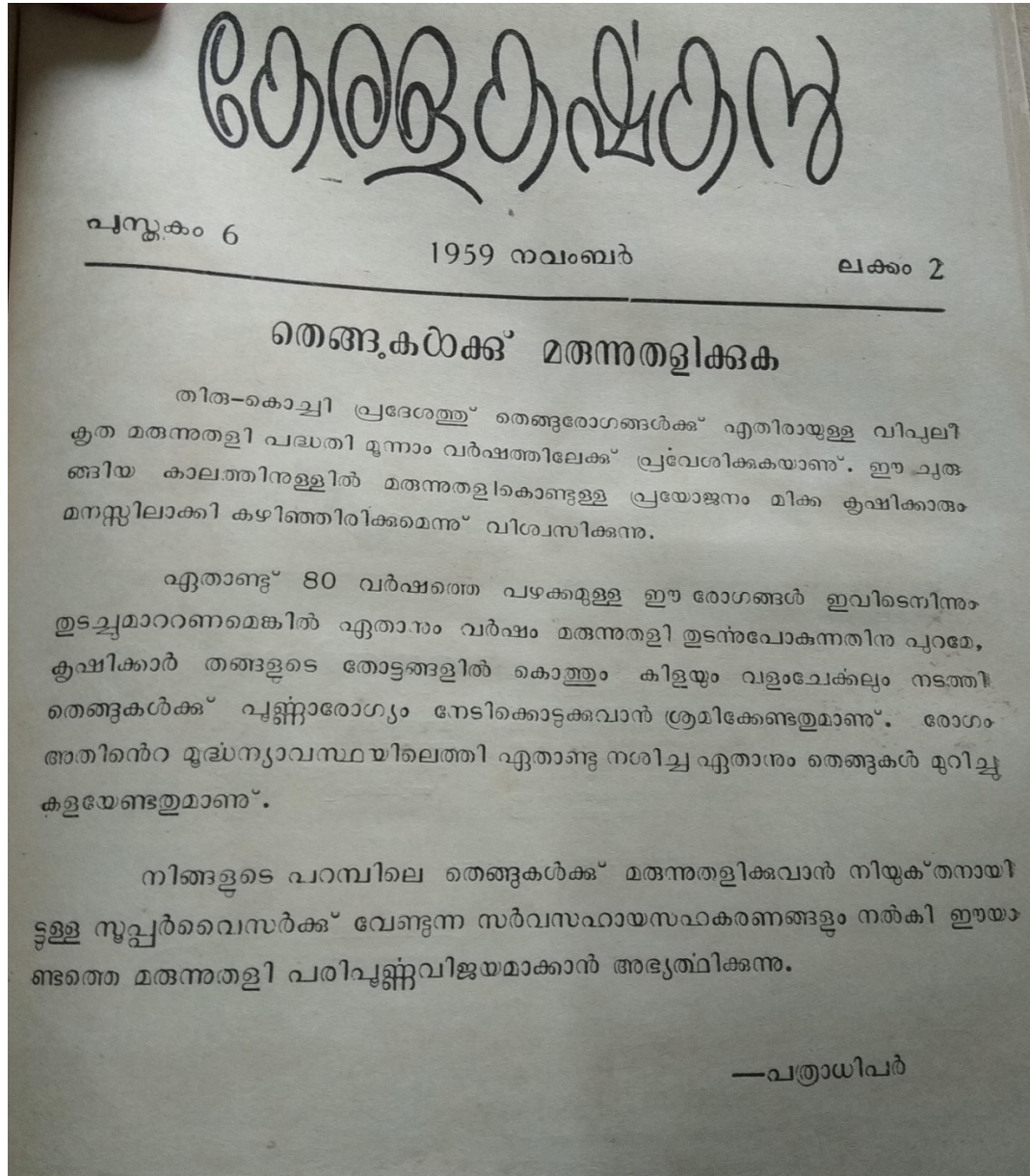
Appendix 31

An editorial note that urges the farmers to observe the gliricidia week



Appendix 32

The editorial note of November 1958 titled "Apply pesticides on coconut trees". By this time, these pesticides were available in Kerala and it was possible for *Keralakarshakan* to recommend their use.



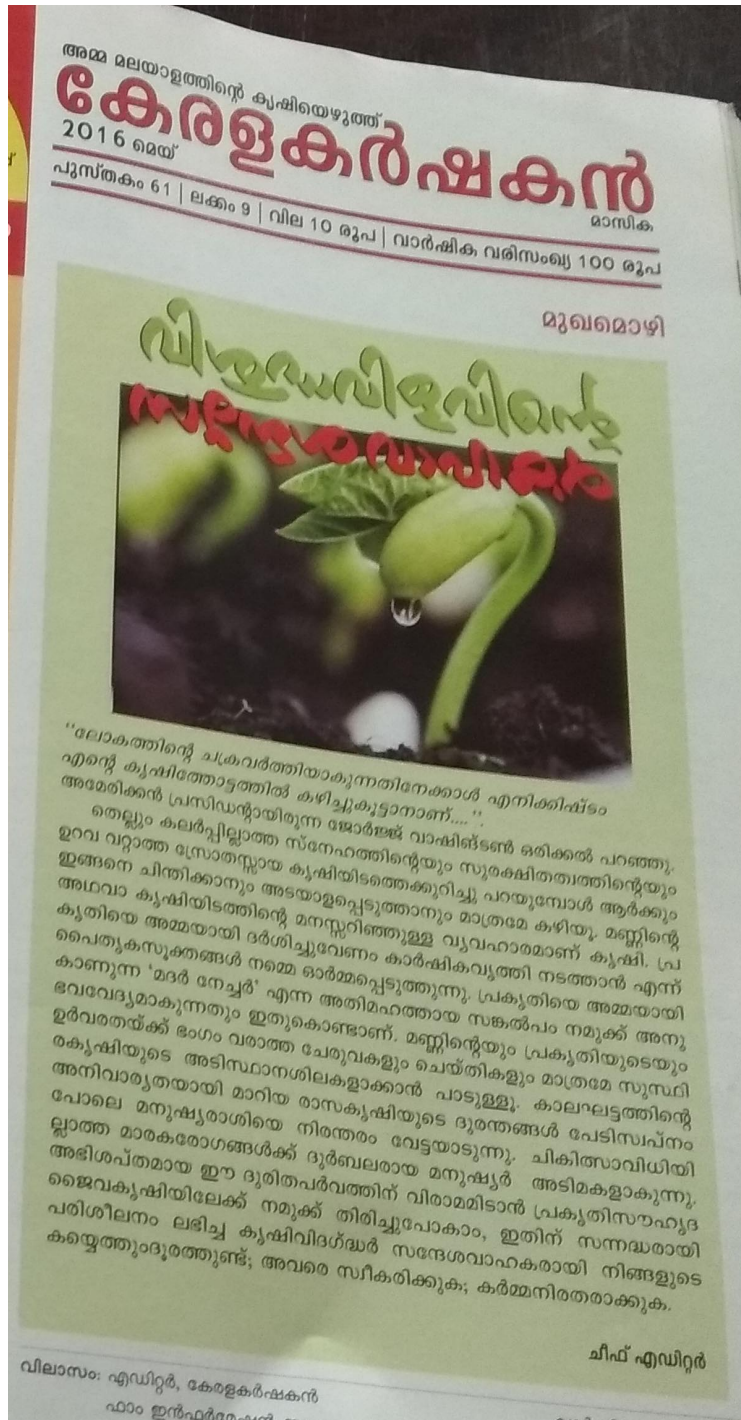
Appendix 33

The editorial note of November 2006 issue of Keralakarshakan which is titled as "Tubers, please return".



Appendix 34

The editorial note of May 2016 titled as "The messengers of the holy harvest".



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by Sandeep K

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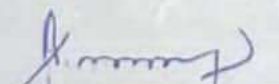
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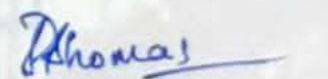
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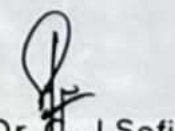
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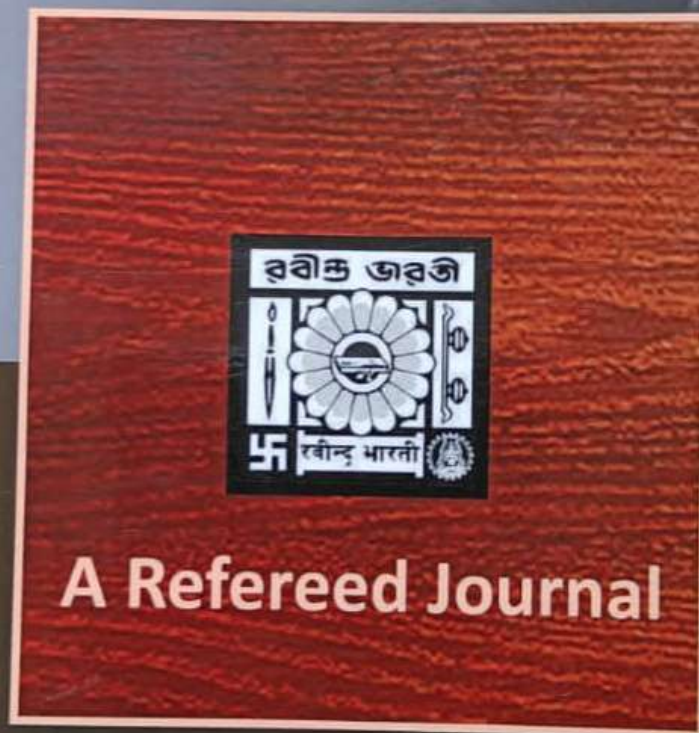

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FARMERS AS THE ANTI-THESIS OF ARISTOTLE'S TRAGIC HERO: THE CASE OF
KERALAKARSHAKAN

Sandeep K

Research Scholar, Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad
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Abstract:

The present paper compares Aristotelian concept of the tragic hero with the image of the farmer hero in the discourses of *Keralakarshakan*, a popular farm journal in Malayalam. After summarizing some of the major attributes of Aristotle's tragic hero, the paper goes on to find out how the figure of the real life farmer featuring in *Keralakarshakan*'s articles creates a totally different heroic figure that can be called as the anti-thesis of Aristotle's principles about the tragic hero. The paper also argues that even the theories of classical scholars may prove useful in the study of mass media and popular cultures.

Keywords: Aristotelian tragic hero, *Keralakarshakan*, farm journals, narrative theory, mass media culture, comparative cultural studies.

Aristotle's definition of tragedy and tragic hero are popular among students of literature. But more often than not, the same students treat Aristotelian principles as archival, having no use in the study of literature of our times. The influence of cultural studies has created a feeling that principles of the masters such as Aristotle has to be viewed as part of an elite tradition, or more popularly, to borrow a term from English literary historiography, "the great tradition". Cultural Studies is often seen as a revolt against this "great tradition". The philosophers of this tradition studied only canonical authors and their texts. Cultural Studies urges students (of literature) to study the contemporary popular culture instead of canonical texts. The cultural theorists tried to subvert the so called elite notions of literature and culture. By taking the special case of *Keralakarshakan*, a popular farm journal in Malayalam, the present paper will go on to show that even classical scholars' texts can be used in the study of popular culture of our day by way of comparative cultural criticism. It will be useful to analyze some of the key concepts of Aristotle before going to the major arguments of the paper. Aristotle has defined tragedy; in fact the qualities of a good literary work of his times, in his treatise called *Poetics*. According to Aristotle, tragedy is a superior art form as it imitates the lives of men of noble birth (Aristotle 5). Their noble actions should be the theme of good literature. This was the view of Aristotle. For the same reason, Aristotle doesn't regard the comedy or other literary forms of his day as much as the tragedy as tragedy is the only literary form that imitates the actions of men of noble birth. Many scholars have pointed out the fact that Aristotle's distinction of tragedy and history is an important one. According to Aristotle, the objective of tragedy is to elicit certain emotions on the viewers where as the objective of history is to state the truth (Ullman 25). In the case of farm journals including *Keralakarshakan*, the objective is not to elicit emotions but to state facts as the journal is run by government officials with a science background. The journalists are also coming from a science background.

Now let us examine some of the important attributes of an Aristotelian tragedy so that we can compare it with some of the popular discourses in *Keralakarshakan*. The most important aspects of the tragedy according to Aristotle are the following. The tragedy should imitate the actions of a noble man who would be the hero of the play. The objective of the tragedy is to explore the pitiable and fearful dimensions of life. The emotion of pity will be aroused in us due to the undeserving misfortune befall on the hero. The feeling of fear is the result of getting anxious about ourselves when we imagine ourselves

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Chapter 6

DOING ANTHROPOLOGY BY MEANS OF NARRATOLOGY: A STUDY OF NARAYAN'S THREE NOVELS

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Ph.D. Research Scholar
Centre for Comparative Literature
University of Hyderabad, Telugana

Abstract

Narayan is known as the first Adivasi writer in Malayalam. Through his novels, he tried to portray the world of the different Adivasi tribes in Kerala. His novels, thus also offer a parallel to the anthropological attempts to represent the tribal communities of Kerala, in addition to their literary value. But, in fact, his description of these communities provokes more questions than answers. How does his attempt to represent the Adivasis differ from the attempts of the professional anthropologist/ ethnographer? Is it only the first hand information or the status of being an insider that differentiates his narratives from the narratives of the anthropologist(s)/ ethnographer(s)? Or is it the fact that the genre(s) of creative literature/ novel is fundamentally different from the anthropological literature that makes the difference between Narayan and the professional anthropologists? Also, what constitutes the binary of insider-outsider? Can a writer hailing from a particular Adivasi community be an insider to all the Adivasi communities? The present paper is an attempt to address a few of these questions.

Keywords: Adivasi, anthropologist, ethnographer, chathrams. muthuva, tribal.

Introduction

Narayan was born in 1940 in an Adivasi family in the foothills of Kudayathoor Hill, Idukki. His name was Narayanan which was changed into Narayan by the local primary school head master since there were many Narayanans in his class. After completing his matriculation, Narayan became a clerk in the postal department in 1963 (Paruthikkad 7). Narayan belongs to a tribe called Mala Araya or Malayaraya who live in the eastern hills of Kerala. His first novel *Kocharethi* that came out in 1998 is about this tribe (Narayan 10). Narayan says that his novels are works about the Adivasis written by an Adivasi (10). This is one point that he stresses always;